

LYRICAL PRESS



PLAYING
WITH
FIRE

MINA CARTER

Playing With Fyre
by Mina Carter

Lyrical Press, Inc.

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When you play with Fyre, you just might get burned.

Raelyn Borne has a fiery passion to save her home. Unfortunately, lawyer Logan Fyre, is as ruthless an opponent as they come. With him, she can't bribe or threaten her way out of this one.

When backed into a corner, Raelyn has a tendency to get sassy. And now she's desperate enough to enter into a dangerous game with Logan.

Does she have the strength to play with Fyre—without getting burned?

Content Warning: Hot, ruthless lawyer, scorching sex and a woman with a secret. Chocolate cake optional.

Highlight

"But that was when I thought you were human, with a heart to reach out to." She whispered, her courage in the face of his anger only extending to an answer, not the volume of the answer. She was surprised she could talk at all past the tightness of her throat.

He laughed, a derisive little chuckle. "Honey, I'm a lawyer. We don't have hearts. You'd do well to remember that."

Rae fought the urge to step back, nearly flinching as he brought his hand up. His lips compressed as he flicked the top button of her shirt open.

"We are, however, practical people." His voice was silk over steel, a terrible combination that had all her survival instincts yelling at her to run, get out. Get as far away from this man as she could. "So I'm going to give you another chance to achieve what you set out to do..."

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Dedication

As always, my friends—Will, Doug and Jake. My editor (and friend) Charlotte, who makes me look far more talented than I am. Renee and Frank, you guys are the best!

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Chapter 1

She had less coming in than she had going out, which was all well and good when it came to diets, but not when it came to her bank balance. In Rae's experience it meant she was in it up to her neck. The financial version of up a creek without a paddle.

Raelyn Borne sighed, slumped back in her chair and ran her hands through her hair as she searched the ceiling of her tiny office for inspiration. Hoping for some sort of divine intervention that would make the figures on the screen in front of her magically add up in her favour. Hell, she'd even throw in a prayer or two if she thought it would help, despite the fact she was definitely not religious. She couldn't remember the last time she'd been in a church. Not since childhood—a harvest festival or something. She vividly remembered the tables laid out behind the pews, covered in tins and baskets of fruit and vegetables interspersed with corn dollies and whatnot. It was bizarre what avenues Rae's mind took when she was trying to avoid facing facts.

She dropped her hands, the heavy mass of red brown hair falling about her shoulders, and glanced at the screen again in defeat. She'd have been all right; everything would be fine if not for bloody Jensen and Fyre. Her eyes narrowed. A flash of annoyance and hatred surged through her at the mere thought of the name. A property development company, they'd bought up a lot of properties in the area, including the Big House. It had another name of course, Ashton Grange,

but locally it was known as the Big House. Jensen and Fyre had bought it a few months ago and rumour had it they wanted to turn it into some swanky hotel.

Rae didn't have a problem with that. A hotel would bring in much needed business for the local area. A small town, Ashton on Sea had to compete with the larger, more popular tourist destinations along the coast. Trouble was, a little off the beaten track it didn't have the resources to attract the visitors, with no big shopping centres or piers like the bigger towns. So a big, posh hotel would provide lots of visitors and jobs for the locals. It would be just the boost the local economy needed.

No, a hotel she didn't have a problem with. The problem was they wanted her place, the Gatehouse, too. A small building set to one side of the long, impressive drive up to the Big House, it had once been a part of the Grange Estate. Even as a small child Rae had dreamed of living in the quirky little house. So when the last owner had decided to start selling off pieces of the estate, Rae had been first in the queue, determined to get her little house.

Now though, she realised she'd overstretched herself by borrowing over and above what she had really been able to afford, justifying the risk with the fact she would be running her own business from the adapted front room of the house. But that wasn't the real problem. She sighed, resisting the urge to bang her forehead against the desk, and reached forwards to shut the PC off.

No, her real mistake had been entrusting her mortgage to small town independent bank Bennett and Bennett. Her teeth

ground again in anger, her jaw aching from the pressure. Because when she'd refused the offer they'd made for her house, Jensen and bloody Fyre had decided to play dirty. They'd bought the bank she had her mortgage with.

The doorbell rang, signalling the arrival of her last appointment. Rae sighed again, twisting the heavy fall of her hair into a sloppy pleat and securing it with a silver clip before heading out of the office to greet her client.

* * * *

Logan Fyre was not a patient man, unless it suited him to be. At the moment, however, it didn't suit him to be as he waited at the front door of 'Gatehouse Aromatherapy.' This place was the fly in the ointment of his plans for Ashton Grange, a really annoying fly. He pressed the bell again, frustrated at the wait now that he'd decided to come down here and put an end to this messy situation.

He turned in the doorway, ducking down and trying to catch a look through the window. Was anyone even in there? Surely they had to answer the door to customers. A tall, lean figure dressed in a black trench coat over a sharply tailored business suit, there was no way he'd be mistaken for someone wanting 'aromatherapy.' His pale eyes narrowed in irritation. Bloody load of rubbish if you asked him. The owner was no doubt some weird old cat lady who made all her decisions by reading the tea leaves of her morning cuppa, waving a bottle of lavender around and claiming to be able to cure all his ills.

He snorted, spotting a figure inside heading his way and straightened up. If she could do that, he'd be amazed. Not that he had any ills, other than being irritable and stubborn. Oh, and a jackass apparently. His latest ex, Jane, had thrown that one at him as she'd stormed out.... *Logan Fyre, you ... you vain, manipulative piece of shit ... You're a jackass, and one I hope never to see again as long as I live...*

Now the last part he understood. He'd just told her it was finished, their relationship over. She'd had her six months in his life, in his bed, and it was time to move on. In his experience, women tended not to take the news too well and Jane had been no exception. He shrugged to himself; it wasn't a problem. The spot she left in his bed was easily filled.

But vain? That had cut deeply. He wasn't vain. Not by a long stretch of the imagination. Sure he liked to look good. There was a big difference between checking in the mirror to make sure your hair wasn't standing on end or that you hadn't missed a spot shaving, and the full-on male bimbo thing. Metro-sexual they called themselves apparently. Didn't make a blind bit of difference to him what name they used, any man that had more cosmetic products than a woman needed his head checked, in Logan's opinion.

* * * *

The door opened to reveal Cat Lady in all her glory. Only she wasn't what he was expecting. She wasn't a cat lady at all, at least not the stereotypical crazy old cat lady. His imagination had conjured up a woman in her late forties with

thick bottle-bottom glasses and bad hair. Instead, a younger woman who couldn't have been older than her late twenties stood in front of him. Not only was she not a cat lady, but she was stunning to boot. Warm chocolate eyes, a pert little nose, and full, full lips that just begged to be kissed; the combination gave her an elegant, exotic look he was sure should be gracing a screen somewhere since she looked a little like Audrey Hepburn.

Speechless, Logan's gaze carried on downward. Slender and petite, she was dressed in a white tunic and trousers, her rich, dark hair twisted into a haphazard pleat. His hands itched to pull the clip out and watch her hair tumble around her shoulders. A loose, dark mass for him to slide his hands through, use to pull her head back whilst he claimed her lips...

Shaking his head to dislodge the image, he realised she was looking at him in expectation. Shit, she'd spoken and he'd been so wrapped up in his own little fantasy world he hadn't heard her. He chastised himself; he knew better than that. He'd learnt early in his career not to take his eye off the ball, that was a sure-fire way to get bitten in the ass.

"I do apologise, I was speechless for a moment. I didn't expect to find such a beauty out in the middle of nowhere like this." He recovered in a heartbeat, giving her his most charming smile. Behind his blue eyes the cogs turned as he rearranged his initial thought that the cat lady was the wife of the guy he'd come here to see.

The guy who owned the place. Ray Borne. It gave the impression of an older guy, middle aged at the least. In which

case he'd netted himself a much younger and gorgeous wife, the lucky bastard, or Daddy had bought the property for his daughter. Hopefully, it was the second. Yeah, that would be so much easier to work with.

Her lips compressed a little, the brief flash of irritation concealed before Logan was sure he'd seen it. Okay, kitty didn't like charm then. Pity, he'd like to find out what it took to get her to purr. Logan ignored the thought and smiled.

"No worries. Please come in." A small smile played at the corners of her lips as she stepped back. Very polite, a professional mask. "Have you had a massage before?"

Logan's face set. Massage? What sort of dodgy place was this? Wasn't aromatherapy sniffing weird oils with a towel over your head or something? Not get your kit off and a bit of 'how's your father'? His mood took a nose dive, the promise she'd initially presented souring under the possibility she could be a high-class hooker. Ray Borne was no doubt her pimp, Logan decided in disgust.

However, if this was just a front for a brothel, then getting them shut down and acquiring the property was going to be so much simpler, which was what he should be concentrating on rather than his disappointment over Kitty here. But then, when were women ever what a guy thought they'd be?

However, to prove what was going on he needed some sort of proof. So he had to go in and see exactly what sort of 'services' were on offer. He smiled again.

"Not recently. And most definitely not that sort of massage, how much do you charge for 'extras'?"

* * * *

No matter how many times she heard that line Rae's temper rose each and every time. Most of the time it was a joke from old school friends she treated for sporting injuries. But no one ever had the sheer audacity to say it to her as cold and calculated as this man. He wasn't local so he didn't know her, or the struggles she'd had to get the business—her dream—set up. No one who did would ever dare say that to her.

When she'd opened the door, she'd been surprised to say the least. She'd known straight away he wasn't local. Rae had lived in Ashton on Sea all her life and she knew everyone. More than that, she also knew the names of people's extended families, even the odd cousin who had moved over to Brittany. It was a close community to say the least.

It was more than that, though. It was the way he was dressed—stark black coat over an expensive suit. Rae might not have been well travelled but she watched enough TV and film to recognise designer tailoring when she saw it. He was dressed the way she expected a secret agent or a high class businessman to be dressed. Since secret agents tended to be few and far between in Ashton on Sea, Rae's bet was on the latter.

"Mr. St. James." Her voice was professional but with a firm hint of censure and disapproval in it. "I am a professional massage therapist, not a prostitute. Comments like that are inappropriate and insulting. Please respect that or I shall have to ask you to leave."

He didn't bat an eyelid, just looked her up and down with that cool, blue gaze. Rae stood her ground. If she hadn't been so mad, she'd have thought he was quite attractive. No, scratch that, *very* attractive. Possibly the hottest thing on two legs she'd ever seen.

Pity he was a rat with a mind in the gutter. Extras indeed!

"Actually that's where you're wrong," he drawled, still looking at her. A direct look that said he could look into her eyes and know all her secrets. Examine them like a butterfly under a magnifying glass being pinned out for display.

"Is that right?" Rae's temper not only fluttered like a flag in the breeze, it went into full sail in the blink of an eye. How dare he? Booked client or no, he wasn't getting a bloody massage now. In fact, the sooner she got him out the door the better! "Wrong about what, may I ask? The fact that I'm a professional, or the fact that you've already insulted me?"

He smiled. Not a nice smile, a ruthless one. Rae shivered; it was the sort of smile that said its owner was used to getting exactly what he wanted when he wanted.

"No, I'll believe you if you say you're a professional. I'm sure you're extremely good at what you do. What you were wrong about was my name."

Rae was too annoyed to catch the small start of warning her instincts gave her. If she'd been thinking clearly she'd have realised snapping at a complete stranger wasn't such a good idea.

"If I didn't need a name to report to the police I wouldn't give a damn." Her voice cut through the silence in the cold corridor, made colder by the still open door. "Now please,

leave ... It would be a pity if poor Mr. St. James got lumped with a charge of harassment when he's done nothing wrong, now wouldn't it?"

She'd gone too far. Anger flared in his eyes as he moved. The door slammed shut in the next instant. Rae ignored it, her attention on the man stalking towards her, backing her against the wall.

"Well, if I'm going to end up with a charge like that, I might as well do something to deserve it." His voice was soft, but the tone in it, the look in his eyes made her shiver.

Run, scream. Kick him in the shins. Her instincts all screamed at her to move, do something, but Rae was frozen to the spot, her view of the world blotted out by his broad shoulders. She'd taken him to be lean at first, but up close he was a lot bigger than she'd thought. A shiver went through her, one that had nothing to do with the possible danger she might be in. Instead it was a thrill of awareness.

"Look here, you can't do this. Or would you like me to add assault to the charges as well?" Rae's heart rate tripled as he reached out to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear, the leather of his gloves brushing her skin in a sensual caress. A small gasp escaped as her eyes darted to his.

"I hardly think a little kiss would stand as assault, do you?" His words were a whisper against her lips before he claimed them with his. His first touch was exploratory, the second a long slow tasting of her lips and the third blew her mind.

Warm and firm, his lips coaxed hers apart, his tongue sweeping in to taste her. She shivered at the touch as he

moved closer, so close she could feel the brush of his coat against the front of her tunic.

She lost all sense of time, heat and need hitting her in the same moment. That she was trying to throw him out a moment ago slid away as he kissed her. Shock held her immobile for a moment but then her lips moved beneath his. Within seconds she was kissing him back, her hands reaching up and her fingers spearing into his short blond hair to hold him to her. She was breathless when he lifted his head. Her lips formed a small pout of disappointment as the kiss ended.

"Very good at what you do," he breathed, his pupils dilated and his breathing ragged. Obviously the kiss had affected him as much as it had her. "So who's this Ray Borne? Your boyfriend, lover or pimp?"

Rae gasped as the implication of his words hit her like a sledgehammer. He was serious, he thought she was a prostitute!

"None of those things." She gritted her teeth and pushed at the broad expanse of his chest. "Get away from me, you bloody oaf!"

"So who is he? I'd like to have a word with him." He backed off, amusement in his eyes as he looked her up and down. "Perhaps hire your 'services.'"

"The only thing you'll be getting from me is a knee where it hurts." She marched past him and yanked the door open so hard the bell on the back rang madly, almost dancing out of its curled bracket. "Now, leave. Or I'll be calling the police."

He grinned, a smile of amusement crossing his face. Rae just wanted to slap it off. Repeatedly. She took a deep

breath, reining in temptation. She didn't need a charge of assault against her. And much as she'd like to, she knew there was no way she could charge him for assault on that kiss. Not when she'd enjoyed it so much herself. She was one sick puppy, probably needed therapy. Lots of it.

"I thought you needed a name to call them? Tell me where Ray is and I'll give you my name." He adjusted the fit of the leather gloves on his hands and speared her with a direct look.

"You're looking at 'him.' Raelyn Borne. I'd offer my hand, but you're just leaving Mr...?" She trailed off, her head tilted in curiosity as she waited for him to supply his name.

"Fyre. Logan Fyre."

She felt the blood drain out of her face. *This* was Fyre? Of Jensen and Fyre? It had to be. There was no way it couldn't be with her luck.

"I'd like you to leave, Mr. Fyre. Now." She lifted her chin to look straight into his eyes. "And please don't come back. I have nothing to say to you or anyone from your company. Any further contact will result in a charge of harassment."

His lips, surprisingly sensual in the very masculine face, quirked as he started for the door. He paused just next to her, looking down into her face, his eyes flicking over her features.

"You could try, but be careful who and what you threaten ... Because if you try to play games with me, Raelyn, you're going to need a shit-hot lawyer or you'll get burnt."

"Haha. Fyre, burnt. Cute." She picked up the pun and made fun of it. That was her problem—when backed into a

corner she got sassy. "Don't let the door hit you in the ass on the way out. I don't do first aid."

Then he was gone, Rae closed the door on his broad shouldered form as quickly as she could, throwing the lock as well for good measure. She leaned back against it with a shudder, her knees weak.

Thankfully, the absent Mr. St. James was her last appointment of the day, so she could fall apart in peace now. Turning, she watched through the frosted glass as the form of a car left the tiny car park in front of the gatehouse. Even the indistinct form looked expensive and threatening.

Letters asking her to sell and meetings with her bank manager over the state of her finances were one thing. She could handle those. She had business plans and forecasts. Charles Bennett, her bank manager, wasn't daft; he could see she had solid projections and a sound plan. She just had to get over this sticky patch and she'd be fine, whatever the Jensen and Fyre people alluded to.

But seeing these people, one of these people, in person made it all the more personal. More real almost, as if her money worries weren't real and immediate to begin with. Rae sighed and pushed away from the door. As if she needed more pressure on top of her financial troubles, it now seemed Jensen and Fyre were into harassment.

Her thought was cut off by the screech of brakes outside and a horrendous bang. Without thinking, she turned on her heel and wrenched the door open. Living near a main road she recognised the sounds of a car accident when she heard one.

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Chapter 2

Concern lent wings to Rae's heels as she sprinted over the two space 'car park' and round the corner onto the path. Skidding to a halt, she drew in a quick breath. It was worse than she'd feared. The black car—Logan's car—protruded from the hedge, the side mangled and scraped. A huge dent in the driver's door made her wince. Nearby a smaller car rolled to a halt, its front end bent and twisted.

"Oh hell." Her dark eyes flicked over the carnage. She'd never been squeamish, but she hoped no one had been hurt. Oh God, there were kids in the other car—the tops of the car seats were just visible in the back window. She reached its side in seconds and peered through the window, eyes flicking over the occupants to check for injuries. To her relief they all seemed to be fine. Even the kids, if the furious squeal from the baby seat in the back was any indication. Rae had been around enough of her cousin's kids to recognise a squeal of fury.

She motioned to the driver to roll the window down, repeating her motion when he gave her a dazed look.

"Turn the engine off and put the handbrake on," she ordered, standing up straighter to assess where the car sat on the road. It was near enough to the curb. It could be parked up here until the emergency services arrived.

"Is everything alright? Can I do anything to help?" A voice behind Rae got her attention. Another driver had stopped, pulling up a safe distance away and putting his vehicle's

hazard lights on to alert other drivers of the accident. He looked at Rae, waiting for orders. It was the white therapy tunic, her uniform. Had to be. It gave her a medical appearance, and in a situation like this people obeyed medical staff by default. She seized the opportunity.

"You can." She adopted a brisk, no nonsense attitude. "Call the emergency services. Tell them there's been an accident outside the Gatehouse on Ashton Road heading towards Newbolton near..." She rattled off her address and left him by the first car, phone in hand, as she headed over to the second car.

Logan Fyre's car.

She reached it in seconds, barely aware of sprinting over the short distance. The engine had cut out, sort of. A weird mechanical clicking sound emanated from under the hood—a wrong, tortured sound that worried her. She peeked inside. The airbags had either deployed and deflated or not gone off at all because she couldn't see them.

"Mr. Fyre, are you alright?" She kept her voice level as she called out, picking her way over the grass. The side windows of the car were out, the shattered glass spread on the ground catching the light like diamonds. Not bulletproof glass then. With his charming personality she'd have thought people would be gunning for him on a regular basis. Her calls gained no answer from the car and when Rae reached the door she saw why.

"Oh shit."

Her eyes widened at the blood. Blood splattered down the front of his shirt, scarlet on white. She took a deep breath.

Everything would be fine, he wasn't dead, couldn't be dead. She'd only been insulting him a minute or so ago...

Turned away from her, Logan's head rested against the back of the seat. Scarlet trails of blood stood out against his skin, paler than a few minutes ago. Her heart lurched in her chest. Sure, she didn't like the guy, but she wouldn't have wished this on him. She wouldn't wish a car accident on anyone, not even her worst enemy.

Right at this moment Logan Fyre *was* her worst enemy.

"Mr. Fyre? Logan?" She kept her voice light, confident. She remembered reading somewhere that the unconscious could still hear. She hoped so.

"Everything's going to be fine. You're going to be okay," she told him, as much to reassure herself as him. Leaning through the window she turned the key in the ignition, switching the engine off. The strange clicking noise stopped. She breathed a sigh of relief. A stray spark setting off an explosion was the last thing she needed. She shuddered, reminded that the situation could go from bad to worse in a heartbeat.

He was breathing. The soft rise and fall of his chest reassured her, so she turned her attention to the wound on his head. The purple of a nasty bruise spread its fingers across his forehead and temple, the skin split and oozing blood in sluggish waves. She winced. That had to hurt—no wonder he'd been knocked out.

"Everything's going to be fine." She reached in, even though his eyes were closed, to try and take his hand. Tactile contact was important wasn't it? So he knew he wasn't alone.

Where the hell was that ambulance? She looked around for the guy on the phone. The phone still at his ear, he talked rapidly, his words lost over the distance. From his hand gestures he was giving details of the accident. Good, that should mean some help would be forthcoming.

A cough sounded and Logan's hand tightened around hers. Her head whipped around to see his head move, turning toward her as he blinked. His blue eyes were unfocused and dazed, as though he couldn't reconcile the view of the hedge in front of him with what he last remembered. As she watched, his eyes focused, sharpening as he looked at her.

"Don't do first aid huh? Just moral support? What happened? Are the people in the other car okay? Ahh, shit—" A hiss of pain escaped him as he tried to shift in his seat and sit up. His gaze flicked to hers, something stirring in the depths. Fear. Fear that made her heart slam in her chest.

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"I'm trapped, and I can't feel my legs." The fear disappeared under the cool facade even as she watched. "Get someone to call an ambulance."

Rae gritted her teeth at the order, snapped in an imperious tone.

"Already done. We're not stupid in this neck of the woods, despite what you might think." She managed to keep her tone calm. Not responding to his arrogant manner in any way, shape or form, even if the temptation to slap him rose again. She needed a medal for this.

"The people in the other car are okay ... Well, apart from possible hearing loss. Apparently the baby didn't think much

of your reckless driving." She was unable to resist the last dig. Bloody men and their super-cars, no doubt he'd been speeding.

He chuckled, leaning his head against the seat again, watching her through half-hooded eyes. "Regular angel of mercy, aren't you? Wonderful bedside manner you have, sweetheart."

Rae frowned again. "What do you mean?"

"Oh nothing, just the fact that you assumed the accident was my fault."

She snatched her hand out of his, but didn't relinquish her position against the side of the car. Sirens wailed in the distance. The ambulance would be here soon and her job would be over. She couldn't wait; he was easier to get on with unconscious.

"Wasn't it? Car like this, you sure you weren't speeding?" Her chin lifted, her eyes alight with challenge.

He laughed again, a laugh which turned into a cough. He winced, his hand coming up to hold his ribcage. Rae watched in concern, her hand on his shoulder until the spasms subsided. He must be more injured than she'd realised. Horror stories of people hitting their chests on the steering wheel in accidents came to mind. People who seemed fine as they bled to death inside.

After what seemed like an age to Rae he opened his eyes, their blue clouding again as he spoke. "They hit me in the side, Ms. Borne ... Not me ... That was speeding." His voice trailed off at the end of the sentence, his eyes closing as his head dropped back again.

Guilt slammed into Rae as she remembered her view of the car as she'd approached. He was right. The other car had hit *him*. His door was all smashed in, traces of red paint scarring the side. They must have hit him at high speed to cause this amount of damage.

"Hey no! Stay awake, stay with me!" She reached in to grab his hand again but it was limp. He'd slipped back into unconsciousness. "Crap, don't you dare die on me, you awkward bastard!"

"Miss, we're going to need you to move out the way for us please. What's his name?" A firm voice broke across her worry. Rae turned, sighing with relief when she saw the paramedics. The ambulance had arrived.

She stepped back, clearing the way for them to check Logan in the car.

"His name's Logan, Logan Fyre. He was awake and talking up until a moment ago but then he..." She broke off, pressing the back of her hand to her mouth. Tears threatened, obscuring her vision. What if he died? What if she'd been the last person he'd spoken to in this life and she'd been nasty to him? She couldn't cope with that, couldn't live with herself if that happened.

The paramedic, an older man with kind, faded brown eyes, smiled and reached out to squeeze her arm in reassurance as his partner moved in to check Logan.

"We'll look after him love, do you want to sit in the ambulance until we have him out?"

* * * *

Doctor Marissa Davies sighed as she left the trauma room. She rubbed the back of her neck as she headed to the nurses' station in the middle of the Emergency department. It had been a long day, but thank the lord it was almost over. Her last patient had turned out to be a fairly simple one, which she had been grateful for. Head injuries had a habit of turning nasty in the blink of an eye. Marissa shuddered, she'd seen too many of those to want to see any more. But she would; it was the nature of the job.

This one had been kept talking though, only slipping into unconsciousness just before the paramedics had arrived. It always helped when they knew how long a patient had been unconscious. A frown settled between her brows as she rifled amongst the clipboards on the desk for her patient's file.

In a swift scrawl she noted the patient's memory loss. Not unknown for a head trauma, like the brain resetting itself after a shock, so the doctor wasn't too worried about it. With any luck, after a good night's sleep things would start coming back to Mr. Fyre.

"All sorted, Doc?" A voice sounded behind her as Marissa bent over to add her notes to the file, her hand moving in a quick scrawl. Like most doctors, her handwriting could be nigh on illegible, especially after a long day like today. She smiled up at the senior nurse.

"Oh hey Jo, I didn't realise you were on tonight. Coming in or going out?" Marissa nodded towards the other woman's coat.

"In, more's the pity. Been here a while but got collared, haven't had a chance to take this off until now. I understand

we have a head injury?" Jo shrugged out of her coat as she walked past Marissa, disappearing into the small staff room behind the station to hang it up.

"Yeah, he's been cleaned up and checked out. No fracture, but some bad bruising and concussion. Memory loss too, but I'm hoping it clears up with sleep. I'm just going to inform his wife now, any idea where they put her?"

"She's in room two, although I'm surprised you haven't seen her yet. The girls said she's been out here every five minutes asking for news, near panic because they couldn't tell her anything. They went with the usual prescription..."

Marissa grinned, unable to resist the twinkle of amusement in Jo's eyes.

"Weak tea and soggy biscuits? Okay, I'll go have a chat with her then I'll get gone. See you in the morning if you're not around when I get out," she said by way of farewell, folding the clipboard against her chest and heading towards room two to tell Mrs. Fyre her husband appeared to have forgotten everything.

Including the fact he had a wife.

* * * *

He was going to die, Rae just knew it. She'd been nasty to him and he was going to die. She mangled the thick fabric of Logan's coat in nervous fingers. The paramedic had given it to her whilst they were waiting for Logan to be unloaded at the intake doors, along with his wallet.

"Best not leave them in the car ma'am, too many light-fingered people about. Besides, you'll probably be sitting

around a bit, that's a good thick coat, that is. You might be glad of it later."

The instant he'd thrown it around her shoulders, she'd been enveloped in a masculine scent. The scent of Logan's aftershave, familiar from that kiss in her corridor. She bit her lip, nerves and guilt hitting her anew as she sat alone in the little waiting room. The tea and biscuits they'd brought sat on a plate on the low table next to her. Untouched. She couldn't have stomached anything if she tried.

A sense of foreboding crept over her. She'd sat in a room like this when her dad had had his accident. Even years later the place looked the same. Didn't they say that about all hospitals? The same the world over, as though the dramas played out in them needed the familiar bland settings to operate in.

The door opened and she started, looking up into the kindly eyes of a doctor. At least Rae assumed the woman was a doctor. She had the requisite white coat and manner. In a heartbeat Rae was on her feet, Logan's coat still in her hands.

"How is he? Is he okay?"

The other woman smiled, an honest smile which did a lot to ease the ache in Rae's chest. "He's going to be fine, Mrs. Fyre, but I do need to talk to you. I'm Marissa Davies, the doctor dealing with your husband's case, shall we sit down?"

Rae nodded, sinking back onto the plastic covered chair as the doctor took one kitty-corner.

"Okay, first off, I need you to confirm Mr. Fyre's name, date of birth and home address please." The doctor flashed

her a quick smile. "Just procedure to make sure I have the right file."

"Logan James Fyre, born on the sixth of December..." Rae rattled his details off. Information she'd been asked for three times already. The sort of thing a wife would know without checking. It wasn't the sort of thing a stranger like Rae should know. She'd only met him this afternoon. But Rae had been blessed with a photographic memory, a bit of a boon in college. A quick glance at his driver's license earlier and she reeled the information off like they'd been together for years.

"Thank you." She smiled again, obviously happy with the reply, and folded her hands on top of the clipboard.

"Okay, physically your husband has some nasty bruising and needed a couple of stitches to a cut in his hairline. It's small so it shouldn't scar too badly. Given the location, it should be barely noticeable. However..." she paused and sighed a little.

Rae's heart lurched. However? It wasn't good when a doctor said however, was it?

"I'm not quite sure how to tell you this but ... Well, your husband has sustained some memory loss. He doesn't remember you."

A wave of relief that her deception hadn't been revealed crashed over Rae, followed by another wave of guilt as the doctor's words sank in.

"He doesn't remember anything?"

"Well, you have to understand that although his physical injuries weren't too bad we still don't understand all the functions of the human brain. He remembers his name at this

point but is a little confused." The doctor explained. "Now, it could just be the brain's way of coping with the trauma of the accident. He struck the steering wheel with some force to sustain the concussion. A good night's sleep may reset everything and he'll be fine when he wakes up, or he could take a little longer to recover his memory. Fortunately in cases like this it's unlikely to be permanent."

Rae breathed a sigh of relief. She couldn't imagine losing her memory. It would be so confusing to wake up and not know who you were, where you were or how you got there.

"So he just remembers his name at the moment? That's a blessing at least, waking up and not knowing who you are must be terrifying."

The doctor nodded. "Indeed, I'm glad you understand that Mrs. Fyre, it's so much easier when a patient's relatives can approach this with the right attitude." Her eyes flicked down over Rae's white tunic. "You're a therapist yourself?"

"Massage and aromatherapy, yes," Rae replied with a wan smile. "I keep getting mistaken for a nurse here, even though I'm wearing a different colour. When can I see Logan?"

The doctor's lips quirked a little. "Yeah, sorry about that. They tend to see the uniform and don't look beyond it. I can take you through now but he'll be asleep. We gave him a mild sedative so he'll be out for a couple of hours, I'm afraid. You're quite welcome to wait or come back in the morning...?"

* * * *

Rae hadn't wanted to come back in the morning so she'd asked to wait. For one, she'd come in the ambulance with Logan so she didn't have her car here at the hospital. She had no idea how she was getting home. Deep in thought, she nibbled her lip. She could ring Reg from the garage and get him to drop her car off. She'd known him since she was a child and he always serviced her car, so she knew he had a spare key in his workshop. But it was late, edging into the early hours, and Reg would be long in his bed. It wouldn't be fair to wake him.

She sat in the chair next to Logan, watching him sleep. Far better to wait until the morning now. If she couldn't get hold of Reg she would have to get the bus. There was one that went between Newbolton and Ashton about mid-morning. She'd have to be careful not to drop off though; otherwise God knows where she'd end up. Probably some bus terminal somewhere with a janitor shaking her awake and wondering at her mental state.

She turned her attention back to Logan. He looked ... peaceful, lying there on the bed. Stripped of the suit he wore like armour, and asleep, he still had a strong look about him. Something about the set of his mouth and chin, a determined set. She had a feeling he'd have been a formidable man regardless of what field he'd gone into. Just her bad luck he happened to be in property development. She leaned back in the chair and stifled a yawn.

What was she still doing here? He was in the best place, and the doctor said he'd be fine; his injuries should heal and his memory should come back before long. She'd done more

than anyone would expect from her. So why hadn't she left already? When she'd shut her front door on him earlier she'd vowed if she never saw him again it would be too soon. Especially after forcing that kiss on her...

She drew a ragged breath, her fingers running through her now loose hair. Okay, that was a little unfair. He hadn't forced the kiss on her. He'd given her plenty of chances to pull away, or slide past him. However much she might dislike him because what he and his company wanted—her home—she couldn't accuse him of being little better than a rapist.

She'd enjoyed it, if she could enjoy something which rattled her to her very core. She'd never felt such instant heat, such chemistry, with any man before.

Was that why she couldn't leave now? Because of the kiss? She leaned her head against the high back of the chair, allowing her eyes to half close as they rested on the figure lying on the bed. No, not even a kiss would have kept her here considering how she felt about Jensen and Fyre. Not even that hotter than hell kiss.

No, it was because he was alone. In all the time she'd been here, waiting for him whilst they checked him out and cleaned him up, no one had called for him or arrived to see him. Not in all the hours she waited as they took him down for x-rays. Nor as she sat here watching him sleep.

He didn't have any contact numbers in his wallet, just a couple of his business cards. Since she assumed the number on the front was for the sleek silver cell which had been in his pocket, they weren't much help. Feeling like a snoop, she'd even been through his phone to check. Scrolling through the

numbers and messages and looking for the name or number of someone she could contact. Either he was the most organised man she knew, or he didn't have any friends or family.

She gnawed her lip. She should let someone know, perhaps his office? The card had a landline number. No doubt his office; they'd know who to ring. She'd do that first thing in the morning. No point in trying now, business hours were nine to five. Even for hotshot property developers.

Yawning again, Rae shook out his coat again and snuggled under the thick fabric, breathing in his scent. She'd always been a sucker for someone or something in need. She wouldn't, couldn't leave him to wake up on his own with no memory and only the nurses around him. The least she could do was pretend to be a family member and be concerned about him until someone got here to take over for her. If anyone did...

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Chapter 3

Logan woke slowly, his head pounding like he'd been out on a three night bender. He'd never been on a three night bender but he'd been drunk enough before to appreciate how it would feel. Something similar to the way he felt at the moment—as though a herd of elephants were stampeding around in his skull. Not a pleasant sensation. He swallowed painfully, the tiny movement threatening to make his head drop off his neck as a fresh surge of pain thudded across his temple.

Even the light creeping in at the corner of his eyelids hurt, the glare so bright that someone had to be shining a bright lamp in his face. Like a scene from old-fashioned spy movies, when the bad guys captured the hero and tried to make him talk. In fact, he wouldn't have been surprised if a male voice drawled '*Oh no Mr Bond, I intend for you to die*' or something equally dramatic.

He lifted his hand carefully to his head. If he was honest, a toddler could easily take him down at the moment. He'd have to hope no marauding gangs of them appeared any time soon. Amusement filled him. It was rare he drank a lot, but a hangover of this magnitude meant he must have had a *really* good night.

His hand stopped halfway to his head as a sharp pain shot through it. Even in his dazed confusion Logan registered the pain as wrong—a sharp scratch *under* his skin. Blearily he

opened his eyes, squinting against the low lights to locate the source of the scratching.

"Ugh."

There was a needle in the back of his hand, which meant he was in hospital. He dropped the hand back to the bed and winced as the slight impact jarred his head again. Eyes closed, his mind started to put the pieces together. Hospital, faded impressions of being in a car and the squeal of brakes and a huge bang. A bang he'd felt more than heard. Then pain and a view of a hedge. A soft female voice, caring and concerned.

He'd been in a car accident. It must have been a good one for him to be in hospital rather than ... He frowned again. He'd been doing something, something important, but he couldn't put his finger on what. It was hardly important at the moment so he let the thought slide away, whatever it was. After he'd oriented himself, then he'd worry about it.

He tried opening his eyes again. This time the lights didn't assault him as badly. Even dimmed, they were still painfully bright. Lifting his head clear of the pillow, he searched with his free hand for a call button. If he was in a hospital then there were nurses nearby, ready and waiting for patients to need them.

But instead of the square plastic he expected his hand touched soft hair. Surprised, he looked down, his fingers automatically curling around the silky red-brown strands they found. A woman lay half across his bed, fast asleep. Ignoring the warning throb in his head he studied her more. Slender and petite, she looked like an angel, peaceful in sleep.

Logan made a noise deep in his throat, somewhere between surprise and contemplation. Okay, now he knew where he was, he just had two more questions.

Who was the girl? And why the hell couldn't he remember more than his name?

* * * *

Exhausted by her night at Logan's bedside, Rae took a while to wake. The first thing she became aware of was a soft touch on her hair. The gentle caress of a large hand stroking the hair away from her face.

She opened her eyes, blinking as she focused, and found Logan smiling down at her. Instantly nerves burned the sleep out of her brain as she waited for him to say something, sure her deception was about to be uncovered.

"This might be a stupid question." His voice was little more than a soft rumble in the quiet of the private room. Confusion swam in the clear blue of his eyes. "But I have no clue who you are."

Relief washed through Rae. He didn't remember her! She hadn't been found out yet. As soon as she thought it, guilt followed on its coattails. How could she be relieved another person had lost their memory? That was an awful thing to be relieved about, and probably revealed some deep flaw in her personality.

"That's not a question," she replied on automatic, her tongue buying time as her brain frantically played catch-up. Dammit, she shouldn't have fallen asleep. Or at the least she

should have set her phone to wake her up earlier, so that she could get her story in place before Logan woke.

She checked her watch, five to six in the morning. Five to six! What a god awful time. No sane person should be awake at this time. She thought longingly of her comfy bed with its thick duvet and soft pillows.

"The doctors said you'd be asleep until morning."

"Well, from the looks of that, it is morning," Logan nodded to the morning light just visible through the cheap hospital curtains. His lips quirked. "Okay, let's try this one again. *Who* are you? Obviously someone I know unless you're in the habit of breaking into hospitals and going to sleep across the beds of complete strangers. Of course, you could be ... I don't know..."

"Well, they don't come much stranger than you," Rae threw back, the quip rising easily to her tongue as she tried to work out what the hell to say. She couldn't just admit who she was, could she?

Yeah, I'm Rae Borne. You thought I was a man, kissed me senseless in my hall. Oh, and you're trying to kick me out of my house. I thought I'd just pose as your wife, see if I couldn't get you to change your mind somehow...

Salvation arrived in the form of the nurse who swept into the room with a bright smile. "Ahh Mr. Fyre, you're awake. Good, Doctor Davies will be pleased. How are you feeling this morning?" Brisk and efficient, she moved around the small room with the force of a small tornado, tidying up in an absent manner.

"Like I've been hitting my head against a brick wall."

Logan's reply surprised Rae. Usually guys like him would die rather than admit a weakness. The nurse—Judy, her name tag proclaimed—smiled as she plumped his pillows energetically. "Not far from the truth from what I hear. Still, you had a very lucky escape, I'm pleased to say." She diverted her attention to Rae. "The tea trolley just arrived on the ward, Mrs. Fyre. I'd hurry and grab something if you want. Hot water doesn't last long in this place."

* * * *

"Married, whoa! You didn't tell me we were married!" Logan's eyes turned to her in surprise.

I didn't tell you because it's not true, she wanted to wail, finding herself pulled deeper and deeper into the deception. Instead she shrugged and managed a small smile, trying not to fidget as Logan looked her over with incredulous eyes, as though she were some new species unknown to mankind.

"Bloody hell!" He breathed after long seconds. "How the hell did an ugly bastard like me manage to get with someone like you?"

What could she say to that? Nothing. Deciding discretion was the better part of valour, Rae stood and smoothed her hair down. "I'll get us some tea. Nothing better than a good cup of tea," she said over her shoulder as she grabbed her bag from the chair and made her escape.

* * * *

Married. Well wasn't *that* a turn up for the books?

Logan lay back against his pillows, now fluffy and comfortable after the nurse had gone. No doubt off to wake some other poor soul and abuse their pillows as well. Married. Well, that was one thing he hadn't seen coming. Actually he hadn't seen anything coming. That was the thing. He couldn't remember anything past his name.

Logan Fyre.

It was a good name. Sounded strong, respectable. He approved, which was a damn good thing since he was saddled with it. He probed the edges of the blank spot in his mind. Most people would panic, waking up in a hospital with no memory. Not Logan. Instead he approached the problem like a puzzle, trying to slot the pieces into place.

"Analytical," he said aloud. Yes, that felt right. Whatever sort of person he was, problem solving played a large part in it. Even contemplating his own memory loss as a puzzle to be solved was exciting as a concept.

"Yes, definitely analytical. Competitively so?" He tried the thought on for size, deciding that yes, he definitely had a competitive edge. But as what? What did he do? Analytical and competitive was an odd combination. Usually one cancelled the other out.

"Astronaut?" He chuckled, remembering a childhood ambition. Odd he should remember things from being a child and not the woman who had just been here. The wife who had spent the night at his bedside, worrying over him. Leaving the puzzle of who he was and what he did for a living for a moment, he allowed his mind to settle on her.

She was pretty. No, scratch pretty, the right word was *gorgeous*. He hadn't been joking when he'd asked how the hell someone like him had managed to get together with someone like her. Sure, she wasn't the supermodel kind, but false tits and plastic Barbie doll features had never been his cup of tea.

He preferred real women. The ones who had curves in the right places. And from what he could see of 'Mrs. Fyre' she definitely had curves in *all* the right places.

He shook his head, then winced as the ache started up again. Okay, he needed to remember not to move until he found a doctor and got hold of some medication. The feeling his head was falling off his shoulders was not a pleasant one. Logan eased himself back against the pillows, the bed in a half raised position now, and glanced out the window.

How he knew what type of woman he preferred he had no clue. But it was another piece of information he filed away, working to fill the void where his memories should be. His eyes on the trees swaying in the breeze outside, he probed the feelings which came to mind when he thought about his wife.

Frustration and exasperation were the main ones, mixed with a healthy dose of desire and heat, which made sense if they were married. That description matched most of the married men he knew. Even J ... Logan frowned as the hazy image of a face came to mind, the name almost forming on the tip of his tongue. But it was gone as soon as it arrived, and the more Logan tried to hold onto it, the more it slipped away from him.

"Dammit!" His curse was soft but heartfelt. If only he could remember *one* thing for definite, then he could chip away at the rest. Break down the problem and build the solution. He waited for the ache to subside again and turned towards the door, trying to see past it into the corridor outside. Hoping to catch a glimpse of his wife.

Wife. He shrugged to himself. That felt odd. Despite his memory loss, he still had a strong sense of who he was. A man in control, used to dealing with people, probably in a managerial position. No doubt he had a fast car, which may or may not have landed him in here. He wouldn't have seen himself as marriage material though. He snorted in amusement. "Probably find out I'm some second rate office runner with grand ideas, or a bus driver or something."

Still, he was glad someone cared enough to wait for him to wake up, to be around when he did. He shuddered; at least he wasn't one of those heartless bastards he saw in films. The ones who had died and no one found out for days.

* * * *

Rae fled the room on shaky legs, needing to escape Logan's disturbing presence for a while. She'd had no trouble while he'd been asleep. No trouble at all convincing herself there was anything wrong with what she was doing. She considered it an act of kindness even. But what had seemed noble as she sat next to an unconscious Logan seemed very different, much more dangerous, when he was wide awake and those blue eyes were intent on her. Analysing her. She

shivered at the thought, walking past the tea trolley and toward the exit.

One thing was for sure, she couldn't stay in here a moment longer. The long corridors of the ward were crowding in on her. Recognising the onset of a panic attack, Rae turned to head outside. She needed air, open spaces. She hated enclosed spaces and still had a touch of claustrophobia left over from trapping herself in a linen cupboard as a child.

Walking through the main doors, she emerged into the weak sunlight of a late autumn morning. She filled her lungs, relishing the nip in the air which warned of colder weather on its way. The winter months were her favourite time of year.

Shivering a little she stood to one side of the door, rubbing her arms in a brisk motion. Why the hell hadn't she thought to pick Logan's coat up? Although she liked the cold weather, the crisp air and the frost on the windows, she didn't fancy catching a cold and ending up in the bed next to Logan.

Reminded what she came out here for, she squashed some entirely inappropriate thoughts about joining Logan in any bed, never mind a hospital one. Swinging her bag around, she rooted in it for Logan's phone. The sleek silver case was easy to find even in the chaos at the bottom of her bag. There was no way she could mistake it for hers, not unless it had morphed into a dependable and easy to use brick. Rae didn't do phones. It had taken her long enough to work hers out so she didn't plan on changing it any time soon. Perhaps the next decade or something...

His phone in her hand, she slid it open, a frown on her face as she worked through the unfamiliar controls. She'd spent at

least an hour last night trying to find his text messages and address book. Eventually she'd given up. She punched in the numbers for the landline on his card, the phone automatically converting the display to read 'London Office.'

Rae frowned. London Office? She'd have expected 'work' or 'office,' but not a location as well. That indicated he had more than one office to pick from. She nibbled her lip; perhaps this company, Jensen and Fyre, were a little bigger than she'd thought. Perhaps a national rather than the up and coming upstarts taking advantage of the property price slump she'd taken them to be. Perhaps she should have checked them out more...

...Wish to keep the original estate together ... Offer considerable remuneration ... In today's market a better offer is unlikely ... She'd read the first few lines of each, her lip curling as it became obvious what they wanted. Her house. So she'd stuck the letters behind the clock on the mantelpiece and forgotten about them.

Her thumb hovered over the call button. She might have ignored the letters, but Jensen and Fyre obviously hadn't. But they were clever; the next contact had been from her bank manager, Charles Bennett, asking about her finances and concerned about the state of her overdraft. Unfortunately for Mr. Bloody Fyre, Rae was more astute than Charles Bennett. She'd recognised the logo on the paperwork on Charles's desk, using the few minutes he'd nipped out of the office to scan the letter. Which had been when she realised Logan's company had bought out Bennett and Bennett.

Her face hardened as she glanced down at the phone again, an idea forming in the back of her mind. A risky, underhanded idea. But all was fair in love and war, wasn't it? And Logan couldn't claim his dealings had all been above board, now could he?

Sliding the phone shut with a decisive click, she slipped it into her bag. So far Logan had accepted the presence, her presence, as his 'wife' easily. Who said she shouldn't carry on the deception a little, try to get to know him? Try to get under his skin. Who knew, she might even strike it lucky and get him to sign an agreement to say her property was safe from this bank buyout thing. A small smile on her face, Rae turned to go back in and join her 'husband.'

* * * *

"How are you feeling?" Rae's calm voice broke through Logan's reverie, breaking him out of his contemplation of the scenery as they passed. Gentle English countryside garbed in the colours of autumn, a peaceful scene which belonged on the front of a chocolate box or greetings card. Logan shivered, glad of the glass between him and it. He was rapidly discovering he was not a country-type person.

"I'm okay, good. Thank you." He turned and smiled, allowing his eyes to drift over her again. She'd filled him in on at least the important details when she'd returned this morning with the tea. Weak as dishwater, it had revealed another fact about him, about both of them actually. They were both coffee drinkers, the stronger the better.

He leaned his head back against the seat, fighting the urge to close his eyes. He didn't want to sleep yet, a bizarre fear plaguing him that next time he'd wake up alone. Something deep inside told him that having someone—having Rae—there when he woke up had been miracle enough. He might not be so lucky the next time.

Rae. Raelyn. An odd name, one which sparked a sense of familiarity with him. He shifted, watching her movements idly. He was glad it had been familiar; it was embarrassing enough asking your wife what her name was in the first place. Lucky for him, he'd been spared that. When the doctor had left after checking him over, he'd snagged the chart off the table and pretended to read it as he scanned for 'next of kin.'

He smiled a little. Hadn't fooled her for a moment though; she'd fixed him with those dark eyes, eyes like the colour of warm caramel, and asked if he'd remembered. An odd expression had passed over her face, somewhere between hope and worry, maybe even pain. He'd relented, not wanting to offer false hope, telling her he'd read her name on the chart. She'd been through as much, if not more, than he had. At least he'd been out of it for the most part; she'd been sitting awake, probably worried out of her mind.

"You nibble your lip when you're concentrating." He was learning more and more about her the more time they spent together. Like a sponge soaking up information.

She shot him a startled glance, their eyes colliding for a second before she returned her attention to the road ahead. "I do?"

"Yeah, you get this cute little pout, and then you pull the bottom one in, sort of twisting your lips a little. It's sexy." His voice was low in the confines of the car, a soft drawl just audible over the engine.

Another thing he'd noticed was he had little to no accent, unless it was a cosmopolitan one, indicating he spend a fair amount of time abroad. Time abroad was to be expected though, if he was a property developer. Maybe he had sites on the continent or even further afield. He hoped he didn't spend too much time away though, or some other guy would be after Rae like a shot.

Perhaps already had, he realised with a sinking feeling as her face set at his teasing comment. He'd noticed that a couple of times earlier too—the slight reserve, as though she remembered not to trust him and pulled her shields around herself.

Logan didn't know what bothered him more, the fact that she was doing it or the fact that he'd seen it often enough to recognise it. What sort of bastard was he if his wife didn't trust him?

"Err, okay, touchy subject, moving on quickly." He cast about for something else to say. He didn't get the time to find a suitable subject as she started to slow, indicating to turn off the road. Logan looked out of the window with interest as she pulled up in the space in front of a quaint little building. *Gatehouse Aromatherapy*, the sign on the front proclaimed. Gatehouse, he remembered the name, something stirring in his memory. Must have been from when they bought it. He

could see why; it was an odd little house, small but beautiful all the same.

"We both live here?" he asked as she put the hand brake on and turned the engine off, twisting in her seat to reach behind his for her handbag.

"Err, no. Just me."

"Ahh, I was afraid of that. Rae ... things between us aren't good, are they?"

Rae closed her eyes as she rooted behind the seat. She'd been dreading him asking. There was no way she could play all happy, loved up couples with him so she'd prepared a cover story, going over it in her mind until she had it perfect. She'd deliberately kept the details simple so she wouldn't be caught out, even under cross examination. She almost laughed at her own thoughts; anyone would think she was a spy or something.

She emerged, bag in hand.

"No, they aren't. We're separated, have been for a while now." There, it was out. Her get-out clause to explain why she flinched when he touched her, why she went still when he made a flirtatious comment.

"Oh." His face fell, his expression wary and worried. Guilt writhed in Rae's chest like a knot of snakes. He looked like a man who'd had the stuffing kicked out of him. Surely her being married to him, them being together, hadn't meant *that* much to him?

No, it couldn't. Logan Fyre wasn't a man who needed any sort of connection. The lack of personal numbers or texts in his phone or pictures in his wallet said as much. He was a

man who didn't need anyone. Period. The sort of corporate rat who had sold his soul to the devil long ago.

"Well, I don't remember why, or what I did to cause everything to fall apart so badly. But I'm here, and perhaps we can try again..." His soft words, taking the blame, caught Rae by surprise. She froze, like a rabbit caught in a car's headlights, as he lifted a hand to smooth his fingers across her cheek. She still didn't move as they slid into her hair, his lips descending towards hers. He was going to kiss her again.

She shouldn't let him. It might spark memories of their kiss in her corridor. It might start to unravel this whole thing before she was ready. But she couldn't move. Just watched him move closer to her, allowed him to tilt her face up to his. Then he claimed her lips in the sweetest, gentlest kiss she could imagine.

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Chapter 4

She was nervous around him. Sitting at the small table in the equally tiny kitchen, Logan could've kicked himself. He shouldn't have kissed her. He hadn't been able to help himself though. All day he'd been looking at her, at her lips and wondering what it would be like. And in the car, he'd needed to taste her lips more than he'd needed his next breath.

The kiss had been sweet, like lemon meringue pie. Sugary sweet on top with the lemon bite of lust underneath. He hadn't been prepared for the sudden wave of heat that assaulted him as her lips had parted under his, letting him gather her closer and deepen the kiss. With effort he'd managed to keep it light, enough to tantalise and leave her wanting more.

That last thought had been playing on his mind since. The thought of a jaded Casanova; it wasn't sitting at all well with him. What sort of person thought that way? As though kissing the wife who'd left him was just another move in some sort of relationship chess game? Not the sort of person he wanted to be; no wonder Rae had told him to get lost.

"That was delicious, thank you." He stood, gathering his now empty plate to join her at the sink. The compliment was genuine. He'd never enjoyed a meal so much. "You're a good cook."

"Thank you. Lived on my own for years, you get used to cooking for yourself." She held out her hand for his plate, plunging it into the suds to wash.

"On your own for years?" A frown of confusion creased Logan's brow. "We weren't married for long?"

She paused, just a fraction of a second but long enough for him to notice. But just as quickly she shrugged. "Not long enough to get out of the habit. Besides, you were always away."

He grabbed a towel and started drying. "I thought I might have been." He tsked in annoyance at himself—at his past self. "I was an idiot, a total idiot. I'm sorry."

She slid him a sideways glance, her beautiful dark eyes still guarded, but perhaps with a little bit of hope in them. Logan hoped so; he'd give anything to see those eyes unguarded. Looking at him with hope and affection, the look of a woman in love. A woman in love with *him*. He had a feeling that hadn't happened often in his life, and he would be an idiot to let this chance go. And he was going to make sure it didn't slip away.

He put the last pot on the side, dropped the towel next to it and turned to her. Watching as she soaped down the side with a soapy sponge, cleaning up after them with the practical efficiency he'd noted before. A smile curved his lips. She'd make a good mother. He bit back a groan as the thought of her, belly swollen with his child and glowing, filled his mind. The image took his breath away as he realised he wanted that, more than anything.

He moved towards her. She jumped as his hands slid around her waist, enclosing her in his arms to pull her back against his hard body.

"Logan! I'm cleaning up!" she protested, but he ignored her, burying his face into the curve of her neck and shoulder. Eyes closed, he sighed, absorbing the feel of her against him, breathing in her scent. She smelt fantastic, the faint scent of shower gel and shampoo, apple shampoo, enveloping him like an aromatic security blanket. He moved and kissed her neck as she wriggled to get free, letting go with reluctance.

"Sorry." He chuckled as she slid out of his grasp and retreated to the other side of the kitchen. "I always seem to be apologising around you. Suppose I should get used to it. Okay, is there anything else I can do?"

Rae shook her head, looking around the little kitchen, now returned to its former spick and span condition. "Not at the moment. How about you head on in and I'll bring the coffee through in a moment?"

Logan nodded, recognising when a woman needed a bit of space, and tactically withdrew. He paused in the doorway, his broad back to her. "Rae, what I said in the car ... I meant it. Whatever went wrong, we can fix it, I promise."

* * * *

Rae released a ragged breath after he disappeared through the door. Okay, this was getting harder and harder now. Logan was, simply put, sweet. Without the arrogant attitude he'd had when they first met—*the attitude he'd had when he had all his memories you mean*, a little voice in the back of her head said snidely—he was just a really sweet, romantic sort of guy. A guy who was determined to make this 'failed marriage' work. One she could find herself falling in love with.

Which was the trouble—she needed Logan to fall for her, not the other way around.

She leaned back against the counter and ran her hands through her hair. She could handle this. She had to handle this, she was in too far to quit now. Besides, how did she tell the hot guy wandering around her living room she wasn't who he thought she was?

Sorry Logan, slight mix up at the hospital, the woman you thought was your wife got mixed up with the wife of the guy in room eight. If only it were that simple. It wasn't like a mix up in the delivery room, which was thankfully rare these days. She had to see it to the end.

* * * *

Logan stood in the middle of Rae's living room, looking around. He'd seen it earlier, when she'd given him the 'grand tour,' a tour which hadn't taken long given the size of the place. With two bedrooms—one of them used for storing Rae's therapy supplies, one bathroom and three reception rooms, it had been tiny to start with. That was before the dining room had been converted to a therapy room for Rae to run her business out of.

He shook his head, pacing around the clear space in the centre of the room, a space barely big enough for him to take two or three steps. Logan's inner businessman told him a business this far out of town would struggle from the get-go. Especially with the main house all shut up and deserted as Rae had mentioned.

What she needed, Logan decided as he looked out of the back window and into the darkened garden beyond, was the Manor converting to a hotel. Perhaps something swish and exclusive to draw in customers—the sort with an expendable income and three different therapists on call. His lip curled, a slight derisive sneer threatening.

He'd never understood that, the need for 'therapy' on a regular basis. At least with what Rae did, there was a physical benefit. That he could understand and appreciate. Not sitting in a chair having some guy tell him the reason he had trouble staying with one woman was because his mother hadn't paid him enough attention when he was a child. No, thank you very much. His amnesia seemed limited to recent events—he remembered his mother clearly enough, far more clearly than he wanted to. Even as a child he'd wanted to have as little to do with the drunken cow as possible.

But massage therapy he could understand as being beneficial. Perhaps he should ask Rae to look at his shoulders; they'd been aching all day. Probably muscular tension from the accident. He rolled them again, standing in front of the large log fire to absorb the heat. The gatehouse was an old building and even though Rae kept it heated, it was still cold outside the range of the fire.

He moved as close to the fire as possible without burning his jeans. His eye wandered idly over the mantelpiece. The usual sort of knickknacks littered the top—an eclectic little collection of small pot dragons and cats. Logan smiled to himself, that Rae collected such things didn't surprise him.

There were letters stuffed behind the clock, no doubt left to be dealt with at a later date.

Logan frowned, the logo on the corner of one was just visible. It seemed familiar to him. Reaching out, he tweaked the edge from the stack a little further. A combined J and an F in a curly font. It struck a chord deep in his memory. He'd seen this logo before. It meant something to him. He pulled the letter free and flicked it open, feeling guilty for spying.

"Dear R. Borne..."

"What the bloody *hell* do you think you're doing?"

* * * *

The bedroom was shrouded in darkness, with only the soft light of the moon filtering through the curtains at the small windows. With the heating off, the chill from the thick stone walls stole into the room and started to settle in for the night.

The tall figure spread across the bed filling most of the room didn't seem to notice. Either that or he didn't mind the cold, the floral patterned duvet pushed down to his waist and one arm raised to pillow his head. His eyes, turned to silver in the filtered moonlight, studied the ceiling above him.

Something was wrong here. Very, very wrong. His ears still rang from the dressing down Rae had given him after she'd caught him with her letter. He hadn't had chance to scan past the name before she'd snatched it out of his hands, ringing a peal over him for reading her mail. For invading her privacy like he owned the place. He'd tried to apologise but she'd been stiff and on edge for the rest of the night.

Damn it, what a prize idiot! Why couldn't he have respected her privacy? Everything would have been fine. She'd started to warm up to him, relaxing a little into his arms when he'd held her in the kitchen. He shifted on the bed, settling into a more comfortable position. But the niggling feeling he was missing something just wouldn't go away, his brain picking at the edges of the puzzle like a schoolboy picked at the scab on a grazed knee.

She was wary around him. They were separated, so who knew what sort of crap he'd put her through. Not physically though, he was sure of that. Logan knew without asking or thinking he'd never hit a woman, no matter what the provocation. No, he suspected it was along the lines of a mind game.

He half turned and pummelled the pillow viciously. He couldn't sleep. No matter how hard he tried he couldn't forget this was Rae's bed. She should be lying here in comfort under the thick feather duvet instead of him. Instead she was cramped up on the couch downstairs in a sleeping bag.

He lay back down, a heavy sigh expanding his broad chest. Okay, it wasn't just that. He was having trouble with the idea of her lying naked between these sheets, all soft curves waiting to be explored.

He groaned and buried his head under the pillow. His body leapt to full attention, his cock hardening in an instant, fed by the erotic images in his mind. Images of how Rae looked, the feeling of her soft body pressed against his ... Her taste.

Oh God, how she tasted! Like strawberries and champagne on a hot summer's day.

Unbidden, his hand smoothed down his taut stomach, cupping his stiff cock under the sheets. He slept naked, another thing he knew instinctively, so there was nothing in the way as his fingers wrapped around his shaft. He fisted himself slowly, unable to get images of Rae out of his head as his need grew.

He shivered, pushing the pillow back as his neck arched, the hand on his cock coiling the lust in him tighter. His hips jerked, his ass brushing against the cool crisp cotton as he imagined burying himself in her warm depths over and over again. She'd feel fantastic, like warm silk around him. Like coming home.

He pushed the duvet out the way, goose bumps racing over his skin as the cool air hit. His fist worked faster on his cock. His eyes shut tight, he shuddered, lips parting as the ache in his loins intensified to near pain. He needed to come, and badly. Rae's image held in his mind, he fell into a fantasy of seducing her. His grip grew firmer until, with a stifled cry, his body jerked. He moaned, holding his cock against his belly as it pulsed and spasmed, spurts of white-hot come splattering over his belly. Gasping, he waited until the pleasurable aftershocks faded away, and rolled off the bed to clean himself up.

Much later that night he woke abruptly, his eyes snapping open in the darkness. Eyes crystal clear as his memory started to flood back. Back to the accident and what he'd been doing in Ashton on Sea in the first place.

His breath hissed from his lungs as his eyes narrowed. Tracking down a guy called Ray Borne, who'd turned out to be

a siren of a woman called Raelyn Borne. The same siren who was posing as his wife for some unknown reason.

He sat up, running his hand through his close cropped blond hair. His two sets of memories were meshing badly at the moment, sleep still lingering in the recesses of his brain. There were some fuzzy patches, but he was fairly sure he wasn't married. In fact, he was sure he'd *never* been married. Where was his phone? He needed his phone. He needed to talk to JJ. His best friend for years, long before they'd joined forces in their pet project, Jensen and Fyre.

He paused in the middle of pulling on his jeans. The letter! No wonder Rae hadn't wanted him to read it! It was from him about buying her property. He remembered signing the damn thing a couple of weeks ago. A muscle in his jaw jumped, the only outward sign of his irritation, and he headed for the door on silent feet.

It took him less than a minute to make his way down the stairs, pausing every so often to make sure they didn't squeak. Why he was being so secretive he didn't know. But for the moment, he didn't want Rae to know he had his memory back. At least not until he knew what her game was.

He reached the door at the bottom of the stairs, placing his hand on the wood and pushing it open slowly. The fire had died out now, the embers glowing in the grate. It looked pretty but cast no heat, the chill from the rest of the house invading the living room. Rae was curled up in a tiny ball, a rounded mass of pink flowered sleeping bag with a ponytail.

Pink sleeping bag? Who on earth bought a *pink* sleeping bag? With yellow flowers? He shook his head as he padded

over the carpet, heading for the kitchen. At six foot three he'd never have fit in the thing, not without the risk of serious cramping in the morning. Rae was so tiny, though, she could almost lie down full length and not worry.

He stopped just inside the kitchen, closing the door with a soft click. He hissed as his bare feet contacted the cold floor tiles.

"Jesus, how cold is it in here?" he muttered, his toes curling up to try and avoid the cold as he headed over to the table in the corner. His phone was where he'd left it, on the table next to the salt and pepper pots, the charging lead tethering it to the power point.

He picked it up, snapped the connector out of the socket with a practised motion and slid it open. Quickly he thumbed through his address book, looking for JJ's number. The familiar number flashed up and he hit dial, lifting the phone to his ear and leaning back against the counter.

Almost instantly the call connected and started to ring. Logan flicked a glance towards the closed door, worried about the sound of a conversation waking Rae in the other room. The door was good, solid wood though, and she hadn't moved or murmured when he walked through. If he kept his voice down, he shouldn't wake her.

The call was picked up and a sleep-roughened male voice demanded, "Logan, this had better be fucking good. I *just* got Lexi back to sleep and if I don't get some sleep myself that bastard Ryland's going to be all over my ass in that merger meeting tomorrow."

Logan grinned, a broad expression that completely altered his features. Even the sound of JJ's voice was enough to bring back another rush of memories, things settling into place in Logan's head and making more sense now.

"It is. Have I ever been married?"

There was a snort from the other end of the phone. Whether it was one of amusement or surprise Logan couldn't make out. "I'm not going to ask what you're on. No, you've never been married. You've never even *contemplated* marriage. In fact, at my wedding you expressed the opinion I'd suffered temporary insanity as a result of stupidity. Of course you said this out of Zette's hearing—otherwise we'd still be looking for bits of you."

Logan closed his eyes, his head dipping. He wasn't married. Which meant Rae *had* been stringing him a line. His lips compressed into a thin line, unexpected pain searing through his chest, through his heart. Intellectually he'd known he wasn't married, but a small part of him had clung to the fuzziness of his memories, protesting that somehow it might, just might be possible.

JJ's words squashed that little hope before it took root and flourished. He sighed and nodded. "I didn't think so, thanks mate. I'll let you get some sleep. You look rough enough with a full eight hours, I wouldn't want to see what your ugly mug looks like on less."

He got a chuckle in reply. "Cheers mate, I love you too. You owe me an explanation when you're up here next weekend. And it better be a good one. Night."

"Night," Logan said to the dead line, his hand lowering as he slid the phone shut. His eyes were fixed on the door to the living room. He wasn't married—not to Rae, not to anyone. So what was Rae playing at?

* * * *

Monday was always a slow day for Rae, but today she'd been glad to escape into the tiny office hidden under the stairs. Burying herself in 'paperwork' so she didn't have to face Logan. She nibbled on her lower lip, staring at the screen in front of her but not seeing.

She'd spent most of the day researching memory loss on the internet. The news wasn't good. Apparently a random image or phrase, even a piece of music or a smell, could bring everything rushing back. A ray of hope for an amnesiac's *real* family. Not so good for someone pretending to be family, and those memories were going to blow her story out of the water.

A hard knot of worry settled in her chest. What was she doing? This was suicide. Any moment now Logan would remember and she would lose her house. For a moment this morning she thought he'd remembered already. When she'd turned from making the toast he'd been watching her, a hard look in his eye she hadn't seen since he'd turned up on her doorstep convinced Rae Borne was a man. Her father, boyfriend or pimp.

Pimp! Her face flushed again, even the memory enough to make her temper simmer. Mention massage to a guy and nine times out of ten they got the wrong impression. Even if

she was wearing the less than sexy standard therapy 'whites' and ugly clogs rather than stockings and high heels. It only went to prove how thick some men could be—

"Hey, you planning on hiding in here all day?" A teasing voice broke her out of her thoughts. Rae looked up to find Logan leaning in the door, a soft smile on his face. Her heart turned over in her chest at the warmth in his eyes. A tiny voice sounded in the back of her mind, telling her that if only she'd met him somewhere else, under some other circumstances, and he looked at her like that...

She switched off the PC, glad the screen was angled away from the door, and stood. "Nope, all done now. I'd best get dinner on," she said as she joined him at the door.

He didn't move out of the way, instead he pulled her into his arms and kissed her gently on the forehead before she could pull away. "All sorted, why don't you go upstairs and have a nice hot bath and I'll have everything ready for you when you get down."

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Chapter 5

The bath was already run by the time Rae got upstairs, the scent of her favourite oils tempting her. She shucked her clothing off and slipped quickly into the hot water to escape the chill. The tiny radiator in the corner of the room didn't work well and only kicked out a minimal amount of heat.

Unlike some of the other radiators, she had to have her hand on it for a few seconds to feel any heat. Yet she only had to brush past the one in the kitchen to get burnt ... She really needed to get them sorted out. But a plumber cost money she didn't have at the moment. So the bathroom radiator got turned up and the kitchen one turned down.

She stayed in the bath until it started to turn cold, luxuriating in the scented water. Living on her own she didn't often get waited on, or have her dinner cooked for her. Another side of Logan she hadn't expected, would never have expected from the bullish attitude when they'd first met. Getting out of the bath, she wrapped a towel around herself for the short dash across the landing and into the dubious warmth of the bedroom.

With the chill nipping at her, she briskly rubbed herself dry and dressed in her usual evening attire of jeans and a t-shirt, coupled with a pair of fluffy purple monster slippers. Not the sexiest thing in the world, but the floors in the house could be damn cold.

Finger combing her loose hair, she padded down the stairs and pushed the door open to the main room. A step inside the door she froze, eyes wide as she looked around.

The room was in darkness, lit only by the gentle glow of candlelight. Light from the candles on every surface dotted around the room. Soft music played in the background, a gentle romantic track from one of her favourite CDs. The fire crackled in the grate and on the hearth, and on one side, out of the heat, sat an ice bucket complete with what looked like a bottle of champagne.

Rae blinked in surprise. Where had that come from? She didn't even *own* an ice bucket! Venturing further into the room she knew her surprise would be etched on her face. Usually she was pretty good at concealing her feelings, but this had totally blindsided her.

"Oh there you are. I thought I'd have to send out a search party," Logan called from the kitchen. Rae headed that way, only to find it had been given the same treatment as the main room. He'd set the table for two, an intimate little scene with candles in the centre. Logan smiled over his shoulder from the counter. "Have a seat, I'll be done in a moment."

Rae nodded, not trusting herself to speak as she slid into a seat and looked around. A lump formed in the back of her throat. No one had ever gone to this much trouble for her before.

A plate was slid in front of her. Chinese. Chicken fried rice if she wasn't much mistaken. Her favourite. Surprised, she looked up, her eyes meeting his warm blue ones.

"I'm not much of a cook I'm afraid." Logan took his seat at the other side of the table. "Plating a takeout is about as much as I do in a kitchen."

Rae picked up her fork and started heaping the little bits of chicken into the middle of her plate so she could eat the rice first. It was a bad habit—something she did with a lot of food—separating it out into separate foods and eating them one by one. Perhaps a nervous habit or something, her therapist side said.

"How did you know I loved chicken fried rice?" She looked up, a frown on her brow. "Did you remember, I mean?" Considering their situation she'd be amazed if he had.

He shook his head, digging into his own dinner. "Nope, I'm afraid not. You'd circled it on the takeaway menu next to the phone so I took a guess."

Rae let out a sigh of relief and applied herself to her meal. Logan kept up a light flow of conversation she couldn't help but respond to. Surprisingly, he was entertaining and funny, regaling her with anecdotes from the daytime TV he'd been forced to endure all day.

"You should be banned from watching TV," she told him as she cleared the dishes away, only to have them firmly taken away from her. "Tomorrow I'm stealing the remote. You can go out for a walk or something."

He gasped, an expression of mock horror on his face as he shooed her towards the main room. "Torture! I get out of the hospital and you want to send me out into the wilds of the countryside. Who knows what'll happen to me out there! I might get lost and die of hypothermia."

Rae shook her head. "Wuss," she teased, and disappeared into the main room with a small squeal as he flicked the tea-towel out at her.

On automatic she checked the fire, using the poker to stab at the coals and bed them down. Putting it back in its place in the corner of the hearth, she turned her attention to the bottle in the ice bucket. Her slender fingers reached out and turned the bottle gently to read the label.

Rae was no expert on champagne. Hell, she wasn't even an expert on wine. A cheap and cheerful plonk from the village store was about as far as her expertise extended. But this looked expensive, very expensive, if the gold detailed label was any indication. Her eyes widened as she read the name *Dom Pérignon*. Shit, she'd been right, this stuff *was* expensive! She remembered drinking it once at some well-to-do relation's wedding but she'd never consider buying a bottle. Hell, she could buy a mobile therapy couch for that kind of money.

* * * *

With the kitchen cleaned and as near to its former pristine state as possible, Logan folded the towel over the rail and headed into the main room. Rae crouched by the ice bucket, checking out the label on the bottle. She looked up, surprise in her chocolate caramel eyes. "This stuff is expensive, what's the occasion?"

Logan hid his amusement at her bluntness. Actually, for him, the price of the champagne was irrelevant. Rae seemed to think he was some small-time property developer, which

wasn't a surprise as that's what he'd led her to believe. She had no clue what he really did, that Jensen and Fyre was merely a sideline. An ambition from his childhood to play architect and an expensive hobby he could afford to indulge in.

She really had no idea what she'd gotten herself into, but he sure as hell was going to enjoy this game. Enjoy seeing how far she was prepared to take this whole charade. As a rule Logan hated liars. Deception was his stock in trade in a way, a sort of legalised deception. He preferred to think of it more as sleight of hand with the facts.

But he was always brutally honest when it came to relationships. His childhood hadn't been a good one, his parents more into playing mind games with each other than looking after their only child. Him. So he'd grown up seeing what lies could do to a family and it wasn't pleasant. As an adult he'd always been up front in his relationships—his lovers knew he didn't love them and he wasn't going to marry them. He laid the facts on the line from the start.

Even so, some balked a little when he ended it, using tear-filled arguments that left him cold as they tried to claim they'd thought he'd changed his mind. Pleaded they thought he'd fallen in love with them at least a little because of his romantic manner and gestures.

All an act. A part he played more than convincingly and one he intended to play to the hilt with Rae. In fact, he intended to play this game to the end, and it was one he intended to thoroughly enjoy. He smiled and walked further into the room, two glasses in his hand.

"I thought we'd celebrate ... the start of the rest of our lives."

He bent down to put the glasses next to the bottle, the crystal clinking as he set them on the hearth. Reaching out with his free hand he caught her at the back of the neck, gentle pressure from his fingers tilting her head up so he could kiss her. He felt the tiny, instinctive start and ignored it.

When he'd first woken up after the accident it had bothered him that his 'wife' was wary of him touching her, but he knew the truth now. She was wary because they didn't know each other. They'd never been the lovers he'd thought they were. He told himself that by the end of the night that would change.

He pulled back a little to look into her eyes, as though searching for something. His voice rang with sincerity as he whispered, "I'm sorry for where we went wrong ... Where I went wrong before." He paused, his lips quirking a fraction. "And I'm learning enough about myself, about the way I think, to realise this had to be my fault. I don't want to lose you Rae. I've only just found you."

It worked, as he'd known it would. Women fell hook, line and sinker for the sensitive, 'new man in touch with his feelings' type. An act Logan played to perfection. Her eyes softened, emotion swirling in the coffee-cream depths. The sudden darkness in them hit Logan like a punch in the gut. Sudden, swift arousal racing like fire through his blood.

With hard-won control he clamped down on it—this had to be a slow, gentle seduction. Despite her fiery response when he'd kissed her on his first visit, he knew if he pushed she'd

retreat into her shell. Using the mask of 'separated wife' to keep him at bay.

Which meant he wouldn't get so much as a sniff of any action between the sheets and that was definitely *not* how he wanted things to go. Tonight he didn't intend to resort to a quickly concealed jerk-off on his lonesome. No, tonight he was after the real deal. He lowered his lips to hers again, touching, teasing and finally tasting. Just the touch of her lips was addictive as he pulled her closer, drawing her into his lap as he sat down in front of the fire.

* * * *

Jesus Christ, the way this man kissed should be illegal! It was all Rae could do not to melt into a puddle on the rug in front of him. Instead she settled for smoothing her hands over the front of his shirt, crumbling the fabric in nerveless fingers. He moved, turning her in mid-kiss. Cradled in his arms he lowered her to lie on her back in front of the fire. His fingers stroked the sensitive skin at the nape of her neck as he leaned over her.

The firelight turned his pale eyes to amber. Amber laced with a dark expression that made her shiver as he reached out, winding a strand of her hair around his finger.

"You're beautiful, absolutely beautiful." His soft words captivated her, curled around her heart, and Rae was lost. This was wrong, she knew it was wrong. She wasn't who he thought she was; she wasn't his wife, and to let him carry on with thinking that was a huge breach of trust.

"Logan." Her hand stopped him before he could kiss her again. He did and she wouldn't have the strength to stop this, to put things right.

He paused, looking down at her in concern. "What's the matter love? Am I going too fast? I'm sorry ... I'll stop ... I shouldn't have pushed you." He sat up, his back to her as he looked into the fire broodingly. Behind him Rae sat up slowly, worry and nerves twisting in her gut.

"I'm sorry." He sighed, a deep heartfelt sigh and racked a hand through his close cropped hair. His hand was shaking.

"I don't want to screw this up. I have this weird feeling I won't get a second chance." He paused and laughed. A derisive little sound that pulled at Rae's heart-strings. "But then I kiss you and I can't help myself. You're driving me mad, Rae."

She crept forwards, her hand stealing out to touch him on the arm. A gentle touch to reassure, to give comfort. His hand closed over hers. He looked over his shoulder, the expression in his eyes one of anguish.

"Please Rae, just let me hold you." He begged and she was lost. She couldn't refuse a plea like that, not from another person only wanting comfort. She nodded, settling against him as he lay down on his back and pulled her into his arms. She rested her cheek on his chest and closed her eyes. Comfortable in front of the fire and nestled against the length of his body, she started to drift off.

Logan felt the instant her body started to relax, and smiled up at the ceiling. Everything was going perfectly. She'd had a long day and had been on her feet for most of it. The hot bath

had been calculated to relax her and with a full stomach she'd actually started to nod off. Far from being annoyed Logan was pleased. It meant she was getting more comfortable with him. Which meant he could move the evening into phase two. Sure, he'd gotten the champagne, but getting a woman drunk to seduce her was for amateurs. Logan's game was far longer reaching.

He rolled to his side, careful not to disturb her too much. She murmured a little at the change in position, her eyes opening for a second and fluttering closed again. Yeah, she was almost under. Almost but not quite. Leaning in he brushed his lips against hers, sighing in pleasure as she responded, the warm silk of her lips moving against his.

He moved half over her to deepen the kiss, a thrill running through him as she responded automatically. Her eyes flicked open as she came to, for which Logan was grateful. He was into seduction, not rape. Taking an insensible woman was unforgiveable, and sort of sick in his opinion. No, she had to be aware of her surroundings, capable of making her own decisions. This evening was about lowering her inhibitions. Making her comfortable and getting past her guard. He wanted the thrill of her surrender, of being so swept away and turned on she couldn't resist him.

He carried on kissing her, sweeping his tongue along the seam of her lips. A silent request for access to their honeyed recesses. She stiffened a little and he held his breath. Surely she wasn't going to stop him? Pressed against her from breast to thigh, he could feel her heart pounding, knew she was as affected by this as he was.

Triumph filled him as she relaxed, opening up for him. A thrill shot through him, through his veins and straight to his cock, as he deepened the kiss. A groan escaped him as he swept his tongue into her mouth, drinking at her lips as though he couldn't get enough. He never would be able to get enough of this; the thought hit him from nowhere as his hand swept up her side. He needed to touch her, needed to get these clothes off her and bury himself up to the hilt in her softness.

His need transmitted itself to Rae, a shiver running through her body as his hands caressed the curve of her waist. Large hands which pushed the fabric of her top up so his hand could slide against her bare skin. His touch left fire in its wake, a tingling trail along her ribs. His thumb swept the under curve of her breast, not quite touching it but near enough to have Rae gasping. Under her t-shirt her nipples beaded, visible as they pushed against the thin fabric of her bra. Absently she was grateful she'd picked nice underwear that matched, rather than the mix-matched underwear she normally wore.

His lips nibbled and drank at hers, blocking any chance she might have had of forming a coherent thought sometime this century, before he moved along her jaw and down her neck. Her back arched automatically, her body accepting and welcoming his touch even as her mind started to slide into blissful oblivion.

How long was it since she'd had sex? Not since ... Her mind tried to count up and came to a tally which surprised her. God, it can't have been *that* long could it? Three years

without sex? No wonder she was ready to leap on the first guy to show an interest. Another shiver hit her, a wave of goose bumps rising over her skin as he pushed her top up higher, baring her stomach.

She sucked her breath in as he moved down, planting gentle kisses over the newly revealed skin. Why had no one told her the stomach was an erogenous zone? A moan tried to break free from her lips as he worked his way around, adding small licks between his kisses until the fabric of her top stopped him. He started to lift up but Rae moved, stopped him, making a decision and reaching down to pull the fabric up and over her head, discarding it over her head.

She watched him nervously, lying underneath him in her bra and jeans, and putting the details of how they came to be here at the back of her mind. She wanted this, needed this. No man had touched her this way before, had made her this hot with just a few touches. But now that she was here and he was looking at her in all her glory, she was nervous. Shivery, shaky kneed and hot. She wasn't the supermodel type, she knew that, but she had a good figure, curves in the right places.

His eyes flared with heat as they travelled over her. "Gorgeous," he murmured. "Just fu ... gorgeous." His last words were muffled as he leaned down and buried his face in her cleavage. She had an impressive cleavage and her bra displayed it to best advantage. His lips branded her skin as he kissed down the valley between her breasts, then over the soft mounds where they pushed up against black satin fabric.

"Sorry babe, this is pretty but it's got to go." Rae didn't get chance to argue or even absorb the words, Logan's fingers snaking between her breasts to flick the catch on her bra. She gasped as it fell away, her breasts spilling from their confinement into his waiting hands. The next second his hot lips closed over one sensitive nipple, sucking it into the warm cavern of his mouth and suckling. This time the moan did escape, a soft breathy sound of complete arousal which had him smiling against the silky skin of her breast.

"Oh you like that? Good, because I like doing it ... I like the way you feel, how you taste..." Logan's voice was sheer temptation as he fondled her breasts, his hands cupping and shaping them. He held them in place, lavishing attention on them until Rae was nearly squirming under him and begging him to take her, to fuck her, there and then.

"Logan..." Her hands smoothed over his shoulders, along the side of his neck, through his hair. Anywhere she could touch him. She didn't care, she needed to touch him.

"It's okay babe, I know." His hands stroked down her rib cage and lower. "How about we get rid of these now, hmmm?" His fingers started worked at the fastener and zip of her jeans but he was too slow for Rae. With a small sound of impatience she pushed his hands away, unsnapping them herself and pushing them down her legs with quick movements. Finally she managed to kick them off, her attention on him.

His nostrils flared slightly as the rest of her body was revealed to him, naked except for the tiny scrap of satin masquerading as underwear. He didn't say anything, stripping

off his own shirt, a dark look in his eyes which made Rae quake with need and anticipation.

She'd never seen anything quite as erotic in her life. The look in Logan's eyes as he looked at her was sheer lust, terrifying and beautiful. Primal in its intensity. She reached a hand out to smooth down his naked chest, fingers flicking over his flat male nipple gently before smoothing down his stomach to the impressive hardness tenting the front of his jeans.

"Oh no doll, not yet." His voice was somewhere between a growl of warning and one of need. "Touch me at the moment and I'll lose control, you'll be flat on your back under me before you can blink."

A thrill of pleasure shot through Rae at his words, pleasure and triumph that she had so much control, that she could reduce him that.

"Oh yeah? And if that's what I want?" She grew bolder and moved her hand down to massage him through the denim. His hand closed around her wrist, his eyes locked on hers as he pulled her hand away gently.

"I have other plans, like making you scream with pleasure a couple of times beforehand." He pushed her back down to lie on her back. He scooted down, his hand stroking down her front as he knelt between her thighs. Parting them with one hand he used the other to roll one of her nipples between his fingers.

"Logan, plea—"

He chuckled and gave in, trailing a finger up her inner thigh towards the part of her which ached for his touch. Her

pussy clenched hard as he drew closer and closer to the damp scrap of satin between her thighs. But when he reached it he didn't give Rae the touch she desperately needed, instead skipping over and stroking down the other side. She groaned in frustration, driving her hands in her hair, her back arching helplessly as he did it again. Teasing her, making her hotter and wetter with need.

"You're a tease," she accused, peeking down at him through the tangled mess her hair had become. He grinned up at her unrepentantly as he slowly dragged her thongs down her legs.

"Sweetheart, you ain't seen nothing yet." He promised as he settled down. Her eyes fluttered closed, the first touch of his lips by her knee making her jump a little. Oh god, how embarrassing, she was so turned on that a kiss on the inside of her knee nearly made her come!

Her breathing stuttered, air difficult to draw into her lungs as he worked his way up her inner thigh. Doing exactly the same as he had on her stomach, soft kisses and small licks. She shivered, anticipating the touch of his tongue probing her folds, the first brush of his warm tongue against her clit. Her body tightened hard as he got closer, his hands spreading her thighs to allow him better access. Rae moved eagerly at his silent order. She bit her lip as he used his thumbs to spread her, anticipating his first touch ... and nearly howled as he moved his hands, kissing down the inside of her other thigh.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me!" If he didn't touch her soon, she was going to explode from sheer need and

frustration. She started to lift up, to drag him to where she needed him most, when he chuckled and moved.

The first stab of his tongue into her heated flesh took her by surprise. A whimper escaped as he spread her folds again and slowly licked all the way up from her entrance to her clit. Once he'd found the small nub of flesh he stopped, licking and nibbling, drawing it into his mouth and suckling until Rae moaned aloud in pleasure.

"Oh god yeah, that feels good." She encouraged him, her hips rocking as he played her body expertly. As though he knew exactly where and how to touch her to bring her to instant arousal, knew which parts of her were the most sensitive, which touches and strokes she liked the best. If she hadn't known better even she'd have been misled into thinking he was actually her husband, he seemed to know her body so well.

He slid his finger into her pussy, eliciting a loud moan from her. A moan that was nothing compared to the one she gave as he added a second blunt ended digit. His fingers moved in and out of her body, fucking her.

She bit her lip, trying to hold in her moans. Trying to hold back the impending climax as he curled his fingers up inside her, finding the sensitive spot hidden behind her pelvis, and stroking it.

"Come for me Rae." He urged between licks and sucks at her clit. "I want to hear you scream, hear my name on your lips."

She shivered, trying to hold on as long as she could, but it was impossible. With a small cry her body tightened, hips

bucking against him as white hot pleasure radiated out from her core to fill every cell in her body. She moaned, riding the sensual waves as he slid his fingers from her.

Her back arched, her hands cupping her breasts as he watched her, standing up to pull his jeans and boxers off with short, jerky movements. His erection bobbed up, freed from its confinement to stand proud against his taut belly.

"Christ, don't look at me like that Rae, or this is going to be the quickest fuck you've ever had." He dropped to his knees between her thighs. His big body trembled as he hooked his hands under her knees and pulled her towards him with a quick movement.

Rae laughed, on the tail end of her climax and feeling better than she had in months, years. "Whoa! Slow down Casa—" Her eyes widened as, without warning, he reached between them and slid the broad head of his cock against her heated flesh, slick from his tongue and her own excitement. "—nova, I'm not going anywhere."

She caught her breath as he pushed into her. A small movement, just the head of his cock pushing into her, stretching her. He moved again, sliding in a little more, then sliding out almost all the way again. His eyes locked onto hers, watching her every second as she watched him. Saw the heat in the pale orbs flare each time he pushed forwards, working himself deeper inside her with each short movement. She shuddered, almost on the verge of coming again as her body welcomed him, stretching around him.

He growled as he pushed the last half inch, sliding into her to the hilt. Rae shivered as she felt him pulse within her, his

cock jerking in response to the wet heat of her body. "That feels good," she whispered as she stroked a hand along his ribcage.

"Good, because this is going to feel fan-bloody-tastic." He moved, sliding nearly all the way out and driving back in with a power that took Rae's breath away.

"Oh god, yes!" She wrapped her legs about him as he set up a hard and fast rhythm. Her body was slick and wet, more than prepared for him, so his forcefulness only added to her excitement. The heat between them drove higher with each thrust of his hips against hers, the only sound in the room the slide and slap of skin against skin and her soft moans. It was just the sort of sex Rae liked, not violent but strong, powerful sex. The sort of sex that had her hot and bothered for days afterwards just thinking about it.

She whimpered as the tension she thought had been relieved by her earlier orgasm returned tenfold, her pussy clamping tighter around him as he drove into her. Braced on his arms above her his expression was tight, controlled as he moved over her, within her. As though he was holding on to every last bit of control he had. She moaned, the need and pressure growing in her core as he thrust into her again and again.

"That's it Rae, come for me, I want you to come all over my cock." He buried his face into the curve of her neck, his voice a growl as his lips found the sensitive spot under her ear again.

She shuddered, his words opening the floodgates. Her back arched, pleasure exploding out from her core in a lazy

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spiral. The wet heat of her climax flooded her channel, bathing his cock. He gasped as the heat and tightness of her body around his drove him over the edge. With a hoarse cry he slammed into her one last time, his cock pulsing and jerking as he came.

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Chapter 6

She was such a hypocrite. Much later that night Rae lay on her back, Logan fast asleep next to her, and studied the cracks in the ceiling. She should really get that sorted. With a bit of filler and a lick of paint, it would be as good as new. Well, maybe not as good as new, since the building was over two hundred years old. She shook her head, folding her arm under it as sleep continued to evade her.

She fidgeted, her eyes moving over Logan's sleeping form. He was an incredible lover. Rae enjoyed sex, always had, but there was sex and there was sex. Logan elevated the mere act into something approaching an art form. How many women had he been with to have learnt all that? And why did she care? She was using him to get what she wanted; his sexual history shouldn't matter a jot to her.

They'd made love three times, twice downstairs and once after he'd carried her up the stairs, giggling and protesting he couldn't carry her weight all the way. He'd silenced her with a kiss so hot she'd almost melted into a puddle on the stairs right then.

She sighed, resisting the urge to reach out and stroke gently along his arm. As his 'wife,' she had it all—his love—and she was finding out that he was a very loving, affectionate guy indeed ... She huffed and turned over, away from him, and pressed her eyes closed. Putting temptation from her mind as she tried to sleep.

But she wasn't his wife. And the deeper she got into this, the more worried she got that he *did* have a wife somewhere. He'd accepted the presence of a wife, her presence, so readily. Surely he'd know, deep down, if he was married or not? If he loved someone enough to make a life-long commitment to them?

Would she? She'd never felt that sort of love, the all-encompassing deeply romantic love she'd have to feel to marry someone.

Perhaps that was why she was single at the moment. She'd wanted what her parents had before her mother's death. A deep, true love that had lasted years, even beyond the grave. Her father had been in love with Rae's mother to the day he had died, when he had succumbed to the cancer he'd been successfully fighting. As though he lost the will to fight.

She sighed and punched the pillow, mangling it into a more comfortable shape for her head. This time when she closed her eyes, she started to drift into an uneasy sleep.

* * * *

The next morning dawned bright and early, Rae slithering from the bed long before Logan woke to shower, and headed downstairs to make breakfast. She worked most Saturdays so she treated herself to time off during the week, depending on what appointments she had on what days. Today she had the entire morning free; her first appointment of the day was Mrs. Collins at two o'clock.

"Heya sleepyhead." She smiled as Logan appeared in the doorway. Bare chested, with his hair mussed from sleep, he looked adorable. Just looking at him set her pulse racing. Perhaps it was the way he moved, a loose-limbed walk as he headed for the coffee machine with a grunt, hand scrubbing at his short hair.

He poured a mug of the rich, dark liquid, his dark eyes closing in bliss as he raised it to his lips and took a deep breath of the aromatic steam. Rae busied herself at the stove, bizarrely pleased she'd gone to the trouble of digging the thing out and cleaning it up so he could have real coffee this morning. She made do with instant but she'd wanted to do something, well, special. From the look on his face, somewhere between relief and bliss, she knew she'd got it bang on.

"How do you like your eggs?" She nodded towards the chair to indicate he should sit down. Deftly she moved pans around the stove, scooping tomatoes and bacon onto a plate for him and adding toast.

"Err, well done, flipped on both sides please." Logan moved over to the chair, collapsing into it to hunch over the table, his hands wrapped protectively around his mug.

"Coming right up."

Within a minute she pushed the plate onto the table next to him. She might not be a gourmet cook but Rae knew all about hearty, home cooked meals. She didn't do them often—her hips would definitely *not* have thanked her for that—but when she did cook breakfast, she liked to do it right. Lean,

crispy bacon, griddled tomatoes ... The whole nine yards. All topped off by thick toast with lashings of butter.

"I hope it's all right." She felt a twinge of guilt as she slid into the seat opposite Logan. She'd have to do another hour on the treadmill at the gym to work this all off. Her teeth sank into the toast with relish. Oh, but it was worth it.

"It looks fantastic." He assured her and silence fell as they ate. Before long both their plates were clear and Logan leaned back in his seat with a contented sigh.

"If that's the way you cook, will you marry me?" he asked, a teasing twinkle in his eye.

"We ... we're already married. Technically." Rae paused a little on the lie, her cheeks flaring scarlet and avoiding his gaze as she cleared up the plates to carry them over to the sink. "So no, I can't marry you. You can't marry someone twice."

* * * *

You can't marry someone twice. The words revolved around in Logan's head as they walked along the narrow footpath down to the beach. He'd managed to persuade Rae out of her planned cleaning routine to accompany him on a walk. Just the sort of thing a guy desperately trying to mend relations with his estranged wife would do.

He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye as they walked in companionable silence. He had to admit, even now, dressed for the cold in a thick waxed jacket and boots, with her glorious hair covered by a cap, she still stirred his blood.

That was a surprise; he'd never considered the country bumpkin look to be sexy.

But it was less the clothes and more the woman in them. Usually he went for the leggy model types. For no other reason than they littered his preferred social scene and they were easy to pick up and discard. He avoided women like Rae—women who didn't play the game, women who wanted the whole romantic fairytale of the two point four kids and cutesy little house—as though they had the plague. He shivered and jammed his hands further into the pockets of his borrowed jacket. It was miles too big for him—she'd said it was her father's—and every time he moved cold air tried to worm its way up under his shirt and thick sweater.

Actually you could marry someone twice, provided you were already married to them—a renewal of vows. But Logan hadn't said anything, the way Rae had turned her back telling him that subject was well and truly closed.

His lips quirked a little as she led the way down the ever-narrowing path, an arrangement which should have allowed him to ogle her pert little ass at his leisure. If not for the long foul weather jacket she had on. Now *that* was why he liked the models ... Skimpy little dresses showing nearly all they had.

But, somehow, even though the jacket was as unsexy as hell and was blocking his view, *not* being able to see her figure swaddled under the shapeless mass was even more alluring. His imagination worked overtime, drawing on his memories of last night, as he imagined what she looked like under there.

Last night, now that had been something else. Logan considered himself a connoisseur of women. He loved women, loved the way they looked and felt. The little things they did, the perfume they wore. But always, always he was the one in control, a player on the top of his game.

Not last night.

As untutored as she was, Rae had wrested his honed control from him and reduced him to a man desperate to claim the woman in his arms.

"I don't know why you wanted to come down here, it's not sunbathing weather." Rae grumbled as she unlatched the gate that led to the beach and held it open for him to come past her. "Hurry up, this thing's heavy and it's got a hell of a kick on it when you let go."

He frowned, hurrying past her and turning to watch as she scooted through, holding the gate at arm's length to let go. Sure enough, the pressure on the spring hinge snatched the wrought iron gate out of her hand, the metal smacking against the post with a clang.

"Isn't that dangerous? You could have health and safety down on you like a tonne of bricks for that."

"Actually, they'd be down on *you*," she pointed out, burying her hands in her pockets as quick as she could. "This scrubland and path are part of the Manor property, and you, well your company at least, own it. So, your gate, your problem."

Logan laughed. "Right, serves me right for being picky. I'll ring in and get someone onto it. I wouldn't want a kid taking their fingers off or something."

Rae wrinkled her nose, feeling guilty for needling him. This situation was getting to her, really getting to her. She shouldn't have let last night happen—no way, no how—and the guilt was eating her up inside. "Oh, it's okay. The local children know to be careful."

"Hmm, the locals might but I assume you get tourists in the summer? There might be an accident. Better safe than sorry. Anyway, enough depressing stuff. We're supposed to be relaxing..." With that he scooped her up, Rae squeaking in surprise at the sudden movement.

"Logan! What are you doing?" She grabbed his shoulders tightly as he spun her around and around, although she knew there was no way he'd drop her. In his arms she felt safe and secure.

"Having fun!" He dropped a quick kiss on her lips as he put her down. "Come on, last one to the water washes up later!"

Rae laughed and shook her head as he took off along the sand like a big kid. She followed at a more leisurely pace, wondering how long it had been since he relaxed, really relaxed, like this. Their walk took them the length of the beach, Logan becoming quite the beachcomber, investigating each washed up clump of seaweed tangled debris with an enthusiasm that reminded Rae of her father.

Logan, for his part, was surprising even himself. Much as he'd grumbled mentally about being stuck here in the back of beyond for the next few days, he was finding the place did have its charms. Well, other than Rae.

He squatted by a clump of brackish seaweed, sorting through it with a short stick he'd picked up earlier for

anything interesting. It was surprising what could be found washed up, he mused, shifting a clump of seaweed. Then he saw it.

Buried under the wet mass was a perfectly heart-shaped shell.

He reached out and plucked it from the wet sand, using his fingertips to brush off the grains that clung to it. He wasn't a shell expert but even he could tell it was unusual, the shape not caused by damage but seemed to have formed that way. There was even a tiny hole in the vee at the top of the heart, perfect for a chain.

He smiled to himself, standing and looking around for Rae. She seemed to be buying his act so far, all bar the sticky moment last night when he'd thought she'd been about to come clean. He couldn't let her do that, not yet. This game wasn't finished yet. Not now that he'd had a taste of her. It would take a lot more nights like last night before he had her out of his system.

She was a little way ahead of him, her eyes on the skyline out to sea. He trotted over, slid his arms around her waist from behind. "I have something for you." He planted a kiss on the side of her neck. God, she smelled so good.

"Oh? It had better not be slimy seaweed mister!" she warned and arched her neck in unconscious invitation. Logan chuckled, dropping another kiss on the soft skin and reached around her to reveal his find.

"Nope, not seaweed. It's pretty, just like you."

Her intake of breath was answer enough as she reached out with delicate fingers to pick the shell out of his palm.

"That's beautiful. I've never seen one shaped like a heart before."

"That's because it was waiting for me to come along and find it for you," Logan whispered, playing the game, wrapping her up in the moment and using emotion against her.

Trouble was, he felt the pull too, the temptation to believe in this and fall under his own spell. Perhaps it could work. No matter how they'd gotten together didn't they say true love conquered all?

What the fuck? Since when did he start buying into the fairytale? Next he'd be believing in Santa Claus and bloody 'happily ever afters.' Clearing his throat, Logan forced his mind away from dangerous waters. "We can get a chain for it if you like. I should get back into the office. Get back into the swing of things and see if that kick-starts my memory."

She stiffened slightly in his arms. "You're leaving already? The doctor said you couldn't drive until you had your check up next week."

Was that relief or disappointment in her voice? Logan couldn't tell, but there was a slight hesitation. It *should* be relief with the dangerous game she was playing here. Relief to get rid of him so she wouldn't be anywhere near the fallout when he 'regained' his memory. But his ego wanted it to be disappointment he was going, his male pride clamouring for her to want him around. Not that it mattered; she wasn't getting rid of him that easily.

"I can't, so I got a rental company to send a car down. They're dropping it off later so I was going to ask you if you'd drive me back up? I checked your appointments diary and I

saw your appointment tomorrow had cancelled..." he trailed off, as though waiting for her answer. But he didn't give her time to speak, wrapping his arms tighter around her and snuggling his face into her neck to kiss her again.

"I'd really like you to Rae, I don't want to be away from you. In case I wake up again and can't remember anything at all."

* * * *

This was nuts. This was not only nuts, it was dangerous. She needed her head checked for agreeing, Rae berated herself silently as she sat behind the steering wheel in the plush car Logan had rented, heading towards the capital.

London. She must be mad! What if they ran into his *real* wife? Rae wasn't an idiot, she knew time was running out on her little charade. Before long the house of cards she'd built was going to come crashing down, burying her under it.

What on earth had she been thinking? This was such a stupid idea to begin with. She kept her eyes firmly on the road ahead of her, trying her best to ignore the tall, lean form lounging in the passenger seat. She was trapped now, trapped by a web of her own lies and for the life of her, she didn't know how to get out of the mess she'd gotten herself into.

There was something about the monotony of a motorway journey that allowed her to think, really think, about things. Rae nibbled her lip, wondering what on earth to do. What if they got there and his wife was waiting for him? His real, loving wife. She winced as her teeth broke the skin a little

and stopped nibbling her lip, laving the small cut with her tongue.

'Loving' was probably pushing it a little. Whoever she was, she hadn't bothered to ring Logan or try and contact him in anyway, even though he'd rung into the office to inform them of the accident. But if he'd said he was with his wife, they wouldn't ring her, would they?

Rae shook her head, her head pounding with the onset of a headache as the thoughts whirled around in her head. One thing was for certain, she couldn't just admit her lies. Logan would be devastated...

* * * *

She was getting quieter, tension radiating from her slender figure the nearer they got to their destination. Logan had been pretending to nap in the passenger seat since they'd left, his head resting back against the headrest and his eyes closed. Well, almost closed. Every so often he'd crack his eyelids apart a little and take a look to see how Rae was doing.

She was a very competent driver, he had to give her that. Most women he knew drove small cars and would have a fit at driving something this big and powerful. But Rae hadn't murmured or made a complaint, sliding behind the steering wheel and starting to familiarise herself with the controls without a word. He liked that about her, the no nonsense attitude. It reminded him of Zette, his friend JJ's wife. A woman Logan had had a passing fancy for until JJ had sorted his act out and told the woman he loved her.

Since meeting Rae, Logan hadn't thought about Zette, or any of the women he'd been dating, which surprised him. It was rare for one woman to hold his attention so completely. And it was more than the sex. Logan had a high sex drive and although he treated all his mistresses with the utmost respect, he had to admit that he struggled to remember some of them after a while. All much the same as they paraded through his bed. But Rae was different. He'd remember her for sure. But was it because of the game she was playing, or something else? He shook his head, not really wanting to think too much on that one. He didn't do deep and meaningful.

Clearing his throat he sat up as though he'd woken up, and looked around. "Sorry about that, I must have dropped off. Always happens to me in a car no matter how I try and fight it."

Rae smiled, sliding him a sideways glance. "It's okay, I'm used to it. My dad used to do the same thing. I was just going to leave you to sleep until we got there. Well, unless we'd been stopped or something. I am insured for this thing aren't I?" A worried note crept into her voice. She hadn't checked before they'd set off and it had been playing on her mind since. Especially with the high numbers of police patrol cars which had been on the road.

"Oh yeah, I meant to tell you ... The office needs a copy of your license to add you to the company insurance. The insurance company put you on without it, but we do need to prove you are who you say you are at some point."

Rae's stomach lurched. There was just one problem with that. She wasn't who she said she was. "Err, I changed to my maiden name a while back, will that cause a problem?" she asked lightly. Too lightly, damn it. Even she could hear the slight crack in her voice as she answered.

"You did? It shouldn't but I'd better let them know in the morning. What name are you using..." he trailed off, then admitted. "I'm afraid I don't remember your maiden name honey."

"It's Borne."

"Borne, Borne. Yeah, that does seem familiar. Kind of ... Makes me think of a man though. Oh fuck it." He slammed his head back against the seat. "I'll be bloody glad when I can remember things properly, this is so damn frustrating!"

"Don't push it, it'll come back in its own time." Rae reached out to pat his arm. *In fact, don't push it at all*, she wanted to say.

She had to tell him. If he was remembering his first impression of Ray Borne as a man then his memory wasn't far from returning, and when that happened she was sunk. She was under no impressions about what would happen when Logan realised the truth. Either way she looked at it, she was going to lose her house. But maybe if she said something now, with him being romantically inclined, he might go easy on her.

She gathered her courage and opened her mouth. "Loga—"

"Hey, I didn't tell you, did I? I had a little chat with Estelle at the office. She's my PA, I have a PA, can you believe that?" Logan said suddenly, cutting her off. He was beginning to be

able to read her, the little tells she had when she was uncomfortable. Like now. He had the feeling she was about to come clean again and he couldn't allow that. He was having far too much fun with this game. It was the most fun he'd had with a member of the opposite sex for years. Well, that didn't involve getting naked anyway.

She shook her head, lapsing into silence again to gnaw at her lip. He'd have to kiss that better later...

"Oh, it's a good one. She's quite a nice girl ... Young I think, eager. Anyway, she was telling me about one of our material suppliers. The guy was pulling a fast one with the plumbing supplies we ordered. We'd paid for a certain line of goods but he'd substituted them with a similar, cheaper alternative. It wasn't until a customer asked why the design was different that the switch was picked up." He sighed as he shook his head.

"One thing I cannot abide is liars, people who set out deliberately to deceive. Should be strung up as far as I'm concerned..."

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Chapter 7

It was worse than she'd thought. Rae stood in front of the huge wardrobes in 'their' bedroom and looked in dismay at the contents. Not only did Logan have a wife, but the woman was at least a size smaller than Rae and a tart to boot.

She flicked through the rails, a fluffy white robe swaddling her from neck to mid calf, trying to find something to wear. Since the conversation in the car with Logan she'd been silent, hoping for some sort of divine intervention or the answer to her current predicament to pop into her head. No luck so far, and now she had to contend with this.

"A leopard skin mini dress?" she murmured in disbelief as she pulled a dress from the rail. Yeah, animal print had been all the rage this season, but in tasteful little accents. Not all over bloody animal fur. Wrinkling her nose she put it back, flicking through to try and find something that she could squeeze into. Preferably something that didn't make her look like a hooker out to make a quick buck.

Ten minutes later she stood in front of the full length mirror in the corner of the room, surveying herself with a critical eye. Okay, so the black skirt was this side of too short, but at least it didn't threaten to ride up and flash her panties to every Tom, Dick and Harry. Teamed with a purple satin shirt and a pair of knee high boots covering part of her legs, she didn't look too bad...

The top button of the shirt popped, revealing more of her cleavage. Rae sighed. Okay, it would be better if it didn't look

as though she'd been poured into her shirt. Wriggling a little, she tried to use her bra to flatten her bust a bit then refastened the button. She checked in the mirror again. And made the mistake of breathing.

The button popped open.

Rae gritted her teeth. She'd have to ask Logan if he had a sewing kit. A couple of stitches would sort the problem and save her dignity. She left it for now. There was only her and Logan in the apartment, and he'd already seen everything she had.

Leaning forwards she checked her eye makeup in the mirror and started to reapply her lip gloss. Her hands shook, but she managed to slick the gloss on without too much trouble. It was clear; just a little sparkle for her full lips, so any little mistakes wouldn't show up.

They were going out for a meal but even though Logan had told her which restaurant, Rae couldn't remember for the life of her. Dropping the gloss into her hand bag, she zipped it up and checked the vanity for anything else she might need to take with her. Then, with no further excuse to linger and avoid Logan, she headed out to join him in the main room.

* * * *

Logan stood by the floor to ceiling picture windows, whisky glass in hand, as he waited for Rae. He took a long swallow, his pale eyes sharp as he studied the glorious view. He hadn't looked at it, really looked at it, for months. Rae's gasp of delight as they'd walked in earlier, one quickly smothered as

she recalled she was supposed to have been here before, had made him look again.

Rolling his shoulders in his expensive suit, Logan breathed a sigh of relief. This was more him, not waxed jackets and jeans on a beach. He was a corporate shark, lethal when it came to legalities and the fine nitty-gritty of a contract. He'd lost count of the opponents he'd tied in knots at the negotiation table, walking away with what he wanted and leaving them wondering what had hit them. That they couldn't afford to lose those negotiations never crossed his mind. It was business, what he did.

His fingers tightened around the nearly empty glass, tapping it against his thigh. Somehow he knew Rae would see things differently.

"So, how do I look?" The voice from behind him took him by surprise and Logan turned. His mouth opened, his jaw damn near hitting the floor. He closed it again quickly and gave her an assessing look.

She'd done the best with what she had and, if he was honest, she'd pulled it off well. When he'd rang his PA earlier to tell her he wanted the spare closets in his apartment filled with women's clothing and fripperies, he'd specified two things. Tarty, and a size smaller than Rae's.

Bless her soul, Estelle hadn't batted an eyelid at the request. As he looked Rae up and down he reminded himself to give Estelle a raise for this. He'd checked the closets earlier whilst Rae was in the shower, smiling at what was in there and wondering if she'd brazen it out or fold her hand.

He'd only known her a couple of days but even so, he knew it would take some balls for her to flaunt herself in the clothing Estelle had picked out. It all depended how much she wanted to keep that little house of hers and how far she was prepared to go.

But she hadn't folded and, somehow, she'd turned tarty into classy. The almost too tight shirt and short skirt gave her a naughty secretary look, but teamed with boots. Her messy pleat and smoky eyes screamed 'take me to bed.' Logan's body leapt to instant attention, something possessive inside him demanding he just hustle her back into the bedroom and take his time stripping the seductive outfit from her body. He ignored the temptation and checked his watch.

"You look fantastic but if we don't hurry up, we'll be late." He put his glass down on the sideboard and walked over to her. Without a word he slid his hand into the nape of her neck and pulled her to him for a brief but thorough kiss. She opened instantly for him. Oh yeah, he had her. Hook, line and sinker. Now to just reel her in...

* * * *

Despite Rae's nerves, the meal went well. Once she let herself forget the precarious situation she was in the conversation flowed easily, Logan more charming than she'd ever seen him. Somewhere in the middle of it all she paused, realising again he really was a nice man. She'd thought he was a right bastard, ready to rip him limb from limb when he'd turned up on her doorstep the other day. Could she have

been wrong? She watched him as he poured her another glass of wine, smiling as their eyes locked over the glass.

"You look very serious there." His blue eyes reflected the warmth of the candles set in the middle of the table. They'd been seated in a small alcove at the back of the main room, a spot Rae easily picked out as the best in an exclusive restaurant. So exclusive they had bouncers on the door turning away people without a reservation. And there were no prices on the menu, which said far more about the place than the expensive décor or the fine crystal and china.

"Can you ... Can we afford this Logan?" She whispered under cover of the dessert menu. Her eyes twinkled with amusement, an amusement covering a very real worry.

"Because if we end up doing the dishes, I am so not letting you forget it, you know!"

He laughed, the rich sound of his amusement surrounding them and making several diners glance their way.

"Sweetheart, seriously. Don't worry about it. I might not remember the last couple of years but I'm afraid you've been labouring under a misapprehension about me. I'm not a property developer."

Rae frowned.

"Of course you are, you have your card in your wallet and I have a le—" She cut herself off quickly; he didn't need to know about that letter. Thank God she'd caught him before he'd done more than look at the logo.

He shook his head, an enigmatic little smile curving his lips. He had sensual lips, not too full but not thin either, just

... perfect. And the things he did with them! Rae shivered, dragging her mind back to the present as he spoke.

"I do have a card but the property development is just a hobby. I'm a lawyer Rae, a good one."

Logan watched her as the news of his occupation and what it implied for their situation registered and sank in. Panic showed plainly for a moment before she got herself under control and she lifted a shoulder in a casual gesture.

"You always told me you were a property developer," she replied, applying herself to the dessert which arrived at that moment, and avoided his gaze.

Oh, well recovered, good girl. Logan smothered his smile, delight and challenge filling him as their game took another step along its intricate dance. She'd actually given herself away, but managed to pull it back. Bizarrely, even though she was trying to play him, he was proud of her ... Proud of the quick responses and the quicker wits required to keep up with him. If he found those in a paralegal or a legal secretary, he'd move heaven and earth to get her working for him. It took a special sort of skill to do what he did. Even though she was new at the game, with coaching she could even give him a run for his money. The perfect partner, the perfect challenge.

Logan shifted in his seat. Even the thought was arousing. He'd found few men with the capability to match him, and far fewer women. The ones he did know were either married or complete ball-busters he wouldn't want to get in a lip lock with, much less get into bed. But Rae was all soft curves and sharp wits. He smiled. The game was afoot and *hell* was it fun...

"I know." He didn't offer an explanation. The waiter hovered at his elbow so Logan requested the bill. Rae cast him a quick, sharp look but didn't say anything when he turned back to her.

"You look beautiful." He slid his hand out, covering hers on the table. "I still don't understand how on earth I managed to capture your heart. How did we meet?" He tilted his head curiously, his expression open and honest. He was a good actor—it was necessary in his line of work—and he was interested to see what tale she'd spin him. Before he took her home and screwed her senseless of course.

"I thought we were talking about the future, about trying again?" she prompted, neatly diverting him. He was still smiling about that as she climbed into the taxi ahead of him a little later.

* * * *

Logan folded her into his arms as soon as the door closed behind them, taking her lips in a no-holds-barred kiss that had her hot for him in a heartbeat. She gasped and wriggled against him, all her previous worries and concerns drifting away as she wrapped her arms around his neck to kiss him back with passion. The unaccustomed alcohol swirled in her system, conspiring with his kiss to make her giddy.

"You..." he whispered against her lips, sliding his hand up under her skirt. "...are gorgeous. I can't wait to get you home and strip these off you."

"Logan ... the driver." Rae protested as his hand slid higher, trying to struggle up in the seat and push it away. He

was stronger though, ignoring her, his fingertips flirting with the lace of her thong under her skirt.

"Shhh, it'll be fine." His voice was quiet in her ear as he moved his hand long enough to flick his coat over their laps. His warm hand returned to her thigh, pushing her skirt up as he stroked his fingers over the dampened lace between her thighs.

Rae flushed, sure the driver knew exactly what was going on. But he kept his eyes on the road ahead, not as much as a flicker towards the mirror into the back compartment.

"You're hot and wet already." Logan's hand cupped her mound, massaging through the damp fabric. She was. There was something about him, the low level flirting, the occasional intense looks he sent her, that fired her blood and had her hot and ready for him.

His fingers dipped under the lace, into wet heat and Rae shuddered. She tilted her head to allow him better access. His lips wandered across her jaw and down the throat she bared for him as he urged her thighs further apart. His clever fingers moved and spread wet heat over needy flesh.

Then he found her clit, circling the tiny bud of flesh, soft brushes of his fingers followed by harder pressure, driving her arousal higher. Gasping, she turned into his kiss, their tongues duelling as she spread her thighs a little wider, desperate for his touch and the release it would bring.

He chuckled, a low rumble in his chest as he stroked again, bringing her almost to the brink. She moaned, trying hard to keep the noise down and her ass from wriggling at the delicious torment. Any minute now the driver was sure to

notice what was going on ... She broke the kiss, too close to the edge to concentrate, her head dropping back against Logan's arm.

He tightened his arm, pulling her closer to place a kiss on her forehead. A gentle, innocent kiss as, under the coat, he slid two fingers deep inside, massaging the silken walls of her inner channel as he used his thumb over her clit. Rae's eyes closed, rolling back as pleasure exploded through her. White hot pleasure that drove her hips against his hand then invaded every cell. She moaned in disappointment as he withdrew, smoothing down her skirt.

"Oh don't worry sweetheart, that was just the beginning," he promised. "We're home, and as soon as we get upstairs I'm going to take you every way possible."

They tumbled out of the cab, Rae barely aware of Logan paying the driver as she stood on the pavement waiting for him. She shivered as the bite of the oncoming winter found its way under the heavy coat, raising goose bumps over exposed skin. Skin humming with sensual pleasure, an empty ache between her thighs as she shifted from one foot to the other, trying to ease the effects of the climax in the taxi. It was no good, she needed more. Much, much more.

"Come on." He grinned, all but dragging her to the front door of the large and distinguished looking building looming over them. Logan's apartment, the luxury apartment she'd been amazed at when they'd arrived earlier, was on the top floor. She'd wondered when they arrived how a property developer could afford such a place. Of course, now she knew.

Rae's heels rang out over the marble in reception, her eyes down as she avoided the gaze of the security guard. She was sure what they'd been up to in the cab was written all over her face. She'd had her legs spread as Logan brought her off for heaven's sake. She was the slut the clothes in the closet said.

"Come here, you." Almost before the doors had closed Logan was crowding her into the corner of the lift. He pulled her up against his hard body, her soft breasts mashed against his chest. Their eyes caught, held, the sexual tension in the tiny space nearing breaking point. "I could kiss you all night." He growled, bending his head to kiss her.

Rae's lips parted, anticipating the warmth of his lips over hers when the doors pinged and opened. Mischief filled her as she slid past him, giggling as she evaded his grasp to dance onto the landing.

"Gotta catch me first," she called back, laughing as she ran. She had his key card in her hand, recovered from her handbag, and she was through the door in a flash. Quite where this light-headed mood had come from Rae didn't know, but she would enjoy it whilst it lasted. For the moment she just wanted to pretend they were a proper couple, with a real future.

"Oh no you don't!" Logan appeared, catching her in the doorway of the bedroom as she paused. She squealed, a sound more of delight and pleasure than anything as he grabbed her and kissed her deeply.

His lips descended, a single quick brush to orientate himself before he tilted his head and deepened the kiss. The

merest pressure of his lips coaxed hers apart and then his tongue swept in to duel with hers, a heated exchange that had fire coursing through Rae's already sensitised body.

She groaned, sagging against him as his hands slid into her hair, holding her still as he plundered her lips, taking his fill.

They moved towards the bed, hands helping each other remove clothing. Whose hands removed what Rae didn't know, didn't care. She sighed as her back hit the cool sheets, the sensual pleasure of crisp cotton almost ignored as the heat of Logan's body settled over her. Her thighs parted on automatic, cradling him in the softness of her hips. Her sigh became a gasp as he moved, the blunt head of his cock presented at the slick entrance to her body without warning. He thrust into her, stretching her and seating himself up to the hilt in one powerful movement.

Rae arched her back, the full sensation of being stretched rippling through her in a delicious cascade. Her legs had lifted to wrap around his hips as he started to pull out when there was a sound in the apartment beyond the bedroom. Rae didn't register it at first, pulling Logan down to her for another kiss.

She froze as a feminine voice rang out, "Honey, I'm home!"

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Chapter 8

Oh shit. There was only one person that could be. Logan's wife. His *real* wife, not the stand-in. Shit, she knew this had to happen. Knew at some point the real Mrs. Fyre would turn up and she'd be done for.

Panic filling her, she pushed at Logan's shoulders, trying to push him off. She couldn't see his eyes in the dark of the room but he resisted her for a moment. Rae shoved again, desperate to get him off. It was one thing to be caught in bed with another woman, quite another to actually get caught with your pants down and in the middle of the act.

He rolled off her with a sigh, lying on his back with his arm over his eyes. The light from the door fell across the bed, highlighting every inch of his beautiful male body, including the heavy and incredibly aroused manhood jutting proudly against his taut stomach. A mouth-watering display of male flesh. At any other time Rae would have taken her time and had a good look. Not now though; she was too busy grabbing a sheet and trying to cover herself.

She scooted up the bed, eyeing him in disbelief. He didn't seem to be at all bothered that there was another woman in the apartment calling him 'honey.' Which was weird, if he thought *she* was his wife, shouldn't that raise some suspicions?

"Logan?" she queried through the lump in her throat, dreading his response. In fact, she wanted the ground to open up and swallow her whole right at this moment. What

alcohol she'd had in her system had been burnt out by the sheer adrenalin surging through it. Adrenalin hurtled around her bloodstream by the manic pounding of her heart.

"Honey, are you in? You're waiting for me in bed aren't you, you sexy wickle beast?" The high, giggling voice made Rae wince. It was the kind of falseness she always associated with bleach blond hair and false eyelashes thick enough to be mistaken for a couple of caterpillars.

But 'sexy wickle beast'? What kind of self-respecting woman used that sort of language once they were out of their teens? The kind who used another of Rae's pet hate phrases—'ickle bunny.' *Ickle* was not a word, *wickle* was not a word. These women needed to get a dictionary. Or better yet, Rae would buy them one. Then beat them to death with it.

"I wondered when this would happen." Logan pulled the sheet over his waist to cover his nakedness an instant before the door opened to reveal the owner of the voice.

Tall and blond, she was the supermodel type Rae could imagine on Logan's arm. Which bizarrely made it worse. Rae was short, and had always struggled with those extra pounds padding her curvy frame. Supermodel she wasn't. Not even for a guy with a bad squint and beer goggles.

The newcomer's jaw hit the ground as her eyes swept over the bed. Registering not only Logan but Rae huddled against the headboard as she wondered how the hell she was going to explain about this one. And what did Logan mean about 'wondering when this would happen'?

"Who the fuck are you?" the other woman demanded, her eyes narrowing as they focused on Rae. "Logan, did you pick up a stray again?"

Bitch! Rae didn't care who the bloody hell she was, that comment was uncalled for. She opened her mouth to say something catty to the underfed stick insect when Logan rolled to his feet. The light from the hallway fell across his face and Rae shivered. It was like looking at a different man, not the lover she'd been with all night. The look in his eyes was cold, hard. Ruthless.

"Carrie, I told you ... It's over." Logan's voice was bored as he pulled his trousers back on. "I'll see you out and I'd like my key card back please. Rae, get dressed. You and I need to talk."

Rae watched with wide eyes as Logan ushered the complaining Carrie out. He knew. The look in his eyes as he said the last sentence, *you and I need to talk*, said it all. He knew she wasn't his wife, knew she'd been leading him on. Her stomach lurched, coiling in on itself as she sat for a moment in the darkness. He knew...

She slid from the bed in a slow movement, gathering up the clothes that had fallen to the floor en route to the bed. Moving as though in a dream she pulled them back on, fastening her skirt as she padded over to the door. Pausing for a moment with one hand on the darkened wood, she listened.

The sounds of a muffled argument filtered through the apartment to her. She winced as it ended on an angry exchange, voices raised before a door slammed. She hovered,

biting her lip. Should she wait in the living room for Logan? Or wait for him to come and find her? She'd never done this, the talk after she'd pretended to be someone she wasn't, so she wasn't up on the etiquette.

Logan's voice summoning her from the main room solved her dilemma. Smoothing her crumpled skirt over her thighs Rae lifted her head and walked out to face the music.

* * * *

He stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows that formed the wall on one side of the penthouse apartment, the city in all its glory showcased behind him. But beautiful as the view was, Rae's attention was all on Logan.

He watched her, his hands in the pockets of the pants he'd pulled on, his pale eyes unreadable. She swallowed nervously and walked further into the room, her chin up despite the nerves and guilt turning her stomach into a lead weight.

Something was wrong. He'd told the other woman it was over. Rae wasn't stupid, a man didn't just tell his wife it was over and she left with nothing more than a few sharp words. Besides, the clothes in the closets were too big for ... Carrie was it? Even Rae could see the woman had been something stupid like a size zero. The clothes were only around a size smaller than she took, which was definitely nowhere near size zero. Not by a long shot.

Her eyes wandered over him when he didn't speak, taking in the breadth of his shoulders, the toned physique. He was a tall, lean man, the strength in his wiry frame surprising. The top button of his pants was undone, the faint trail of hair

disappearing under the fabric enough to make her mouth go dry and her unfulfilled body clench.

"So, nothing to say for yourself, *Mrs. Fyre*?" he asked dryly after a long moment. "What a pity, I was hoping for yet another entertaining story. You do seem to be rather adept at them."

"Ho—How long have you known?" Rae refused to rise to the bait, trying to present a cool, confident front even as she quaked in her boots. Well, bare feet were more accurate at this point.

"Long enough. What I want to know is why." The last wasn't a question, it was a statement. A demand uttered with the unshakeable confidence of a man who was used to being obeyed.

Rae opened her mouth to speak but he held a hand up, cutting her off.

"Don't. Spare me the next outlandish tale or fairy story. I know what you were playing at. You were screwing me, using me to keep that sorry little house of yours. Hoping I'd go soft on you out of some sort of emotionally based sympathy or something."

Rae winced at the harsh tone, her cheeks flaring with colour as he approached. Moving so close she had to look up to see into his eyes. She refused to be cowed or frightened. She'd done nothing wrong; it was the hospital that had made the mistake about her identity, she'd just not corrected them. And as for the rest, she hadn't gained anything from Logan because of their supposed relationship. They'd just had sex. Which wasn't a crime; they were both consenting adults.

"You aren't married at all, are you?" she asked. It was the only answer that made sense. "That woman ... Carrie ... She wasn't your wife was she?"

He shook his head, a snort of laughter on his lips. "No. Carrie isn't the 'marriage' sort of girl, shall we say?"

"So what's with the clothes in the closet ... if you don't have a wife? What were they doing there?" Rae looked him directly in the eyes, looking for an answer to at least some of her questions. There were others she didn't want to ask, like where the loving, affectionate guy he had been went. Disappeared in the blink of an eye.

He shrugged, a dismissive gesture.

"Games within games, sweetheart. I warned you not to play with me when we first met, remember?" he asked, arching his eyebrow.

"Tell me I'm wrong, tell me you weren't just screwing me to soften me up." He looked down at her, rage swirling in the depths of his pale blue eyes.

"I can't." Her voice was soft, barely heard. He was right, that's what she had been doing. That's exactly what she had been doing.

"But that was when I thought you were human, with a heart to reach out to." She whispered, her courage in the face of his anger only extending to an answer, not the volume of the answer. She was surprised she could talk at all past the tightness of her throat.

He laughed, a derisive little chuckle. "Honey, I'm a lawyer. We don't have hearts. You'd do well to remember that."

Rae fought the urge to step back, nearly flinching as he brought his hand up. His lips compressed as he flicked the top button of her shirt open.

"We are, however, practical people." His voice was silk over steel, a terrible combination that had all her survival instincts yelling at her to run, get out. Get as far away from this man as she could. "So I'm going to give you another chance to achieve what you set out to do..."

Another button flicked free, the gap in the front of the shirt widening to reveal more of her creamy flesh. Rae swallowed, her eyes searching his. "What do you mean?"

Logan smiled, a predator's smile that didn't reach his eyes. "I'm going to give you another chance to save your pretty little house." He flicked the last button free and pushed the satin back from her full breasts. "And you're going to do it on your back sweetheart, just like you planned, or you can walk out now. Your choice."

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Chapter 9

She hadn't walked out, and a week later Rae was in hell.

Oh, Logan was looking after her well. Her mortgage and bills at home were all being taken care of and would be as long as she stayed, he'd assured her. She sat at the breakfast bar in the palatial kitchen and pushed fruit around her bowl with a spoon. Logan had left earlier, after their morning sex session, and she hadn't bothered to get dressed. There wasn't much point; Logan didn't require her company until lunch anyway. He had a business meeting with a friend of his—the other half of the property development company she'd thought was his main job—and she was required to put in an appearance. She sighed, fed up with the way he was showing her off.

She snorted. Now of course, she knew better. Logan wasn't a property developer. No, he was a rat bag lawyer who'd wrapped her up in his sick little game until she didn't know up from down. She'd thought she was being clever, playing him along, but she'd ended up the one being played.

Now, she was his mistress—until he got bored of her. His plaything in bed in the vain hope he might not foreclose on the bank that held her mortgage and she could keep her house. She was just a tart, prostituting herself for a pile of bricks and mortar. She shoved the bowl away with a little more force than she intended, watching dully as it slid to the end of the counter and disappeared, shattering on the floor seconds later.

On automatic she moved around to clear the mess up, grabbing paper towels to mop up the milk and fruit mixture before she piled the broken pottery on top. Her mind was only half on what she was doing as her thoughts churned over and over in her head. Was the house worth this? Worth degrading herself by sharing a guy's bed for it?

No ... yes, a tiny voice in her head shouted. It was when love was involved. Rae blinked, starting in surprise. Pain lanced through her fingertips and she hissed. Blood welled brightly at the end of her fingers, the skin sliced across the tops by a razor-sharp edge on a piece of the broken bowl.

"Oh fuck it!" She stood up, rushing to the sink. Holding her bleeding fingers over it, she grabbed a tea towel to stem the flow of blood. Paper towels just wouldn't do it, they'd break up and the last thing she wanted was bits of wadded paper in a bad cut.

She wrapped her injured digits in the towel and pressed hard to stop the bleeding. Tears welled abruptly, overflowing onto her cheeks to splash into the bowl below. She loved him. Somehow, somewhere along the way, she'd fallen in love with the guy she was pretending to be married to. *Idiot*, she berated herself. He was supposed to fall for her, not the other way around.

She certainly wasn't supposed to fall for him now, not when he knew and he was just using her for sex. A convenient temporary mistress who was so pathetic she'd do whatever he wanted for a chance of keeping her house.

She lifted her head, the steel in her spine reasserting itself as she dealt with the cuts on her hand. She was not a toy to

be played with and *no* house was worth losing self-respect over. Her lips compressed as she admitted the truth, her heart breaking.

Logan didn't love her, he never would. She laughed bitterly, the sound ringing around the empty kitchen. Her plan had been doomed to failure from the start. To fall in love with someone, you had to have a heart in the first place. She'd thought ... Hoped, maybe ... The sweet man he had been before they came here ... She shook her head.

"Get it together Rae, he was playing you all along. That guy didn't exist, he was as made up as Mrs. Fyre." She admonished herself, her voice firm as her tears dried on her face. She might love him, but this was a bad situation. There was no way she could stay now, not with how she felt about him. It would destroy her. "Face facts, get your act together and walk away whilst you still can."

* * * *

Something was wrong. Logan knew as soon as Rae stepped through the doors of the restaurant and paused in the doorway, looking around for them. He leaned back in his chair, his fingers idly turning the stem of the glass in his hand. His eyes lingered on her, appreciating the lines of her figure, the curve of her waist as it flared into wide hips. She was gorgeous, beautiful but in a real way. A way that was striking when compared to the plastic 'beauty' of the women he usually associated with. Models or wannabe movie stars, rich trophy wives trying to hold onto the looks that had landed them their husbands in the first place.

The only 'real woman' he knew other than Rae was the wife of the man who sat opposite him. JJ wasn't newly married, but some problems had kept him and Zette apart until just before the birth of their daughter, so he still had the 'honeymoon' look. The look of a man completely and utterly besotted with his family. Logan had spent the last half hour being shown pictures of them on JJ's cell phone, the proud dad eager to show off what seemed like hundreds of near identical photos.

Trouble was, Logan could understand it now. Even a month ago he'd have tolerated JJ's behaviour with amusement and rapidly brought the conversation back around to business. Today he'd happily studied each picture, his mind's eye envisioning a similar scene in the future. One in which *he* was showing off baby photos. He smiled to himself; maybe that day wouldn't be far off.

His eyes softened as Rae turned, spotting them and walking over. She had done that. Her little games had pissed him off at first, sparked his competitive instincts. But Rae had wormed her way in. He never knew what she was going to do next. Like last week, he expected her to walk out on him after the scene with Carrie. But she hadn't.

A frown marked his brow. That bothered him a little. He'd wanted her to say something, give him a hint to indicate this thing between them was something other than just about her house. That, possibly, there might be an inkling of feelings they could build on to make the fantasy they'd been playing since the crash real.

He wanted that. He wanted the dream he'd had when he first woke up, of a wife waiting faithfully by his bedside for him to wake.

Logan had spent most of his life alone. As a child he'd been shunted off to boarding school as soon as he was old enough, and any time he'd spent at home he'd dedicated to avoiding his parent's arguments. So the idea of someone who cared about him, worried about him and to cuddle at night was seductive.

He stood as she approached. He'd taken her shopping to replace the trashy clothes he'd had put in the apartment, buying her a new and far more tasteful wardrobe. Clothing he noted she wasn't wearing now, the black trousers and grey satin top ones she'd brought from home.

His frown deepened as he noticed the pallor of her skin. He moved, meeting her a little way from the table he and JJ were sat at. He needed a few seconds of semi privacy with her.

"Hey honey, you're late. I was getting worried about you." He caught her lips in a swift kiss as he reached for her hand. She hissed as he touched her, her eyes darkening in pain.

"Really?" she threw back, a slight note in her voice. Logan looked down. She had small white dressings on the ends of three of her fingers. Stick on butterfly stitches, covered with semi-sheer surgical tape.

"Oh sweetheart, what did you do?" he asked, bringing her hand up to kiss it. A surge of protectiveness took him by surprise as he ushered her to the table where JJ sat. "Here sit down, let me get you a drink ... JJ, this is Rae. Raelyn, this is

my business partner JJ." He made the introductions as he held her chair out, looking around for the waiter.

"It's okay, I won't be stopping long. Logan, it's over, I brought you your key back." Her voice was firm, with only the slightest hint of a tremor as she dropped his key card into his hand. He accepted it without thinking. Stunned speechless he just stood there, looking at her.

Her lips quirked, sadness in her brown eyes. "I'll be out of the Gatehouse by the end of next week. You can have the bank take possession then. I'd say it's been a pleasure doing business with you Logan, but it really hasn't. You take care of yourself." Then she was gone, leaving Logan staring at her back and then the swinging door.

He shook his head, unable to believe what had just happened. She couldn't have walked out on him! He couldn't have misread the situation that much, surely? No, he *never* got it wrong this badly. This dinner was supposed to put everything back on the level, sort things out and put them on a better course.

JJ cleared his throat in the silence, bringing Logan back to the present. He stood there like a prize idiot, his key card in his outstretched hand.

"You might want to go after her." JJ advised, sympathy in his eyes. "Believe me, you'll regret it if you don't."

Logan didn't need any more convincing. "Take care of the bill, would you? I'll ring you later!" he called back over his shoulder as he ran for the door.

He burst through it and onto the street. The light rain splattered his face, staining his shirt. He ignored it, scanning

up and down for Rae. Desperation filled him as he jumped a little to try and see over the crowds. It had been empty out here earlier, now everyone and his bloody dog was here ... He paused, spotting a familiar figure. There she was!

"Rae! *Rae!*" he yelled, dodging and weaving through the throng until he caught up with her. "Please honey, wait a minute."

Rae hunched her shoulders in her coat, refusing to look at him as she walked at a fast pace down the street. "Why Logan? What's the point?"

He slid in front of her, halting her in her tracks. She tried to slide to the left and then to the right, but he blocked her both times. Finally she looked up at him, exasperation on her face. "Logan, get out of the way. I need to get to the station."

Her eyes were red, classic signs that she'd been crying, but that was nothing compared to the dull look in her eyes. Logan felt like he'd been punched in the gut. Did her house mean that much to her? He'd done his research on it. She'd only been there a couple of years. Before Rae it had belonged to the old estate, so it couldn't have any sentimental value. Surely?

"Please, I'll get you another ticket." He promised. "Just talk to me."

She sighed, made a show of checking her watch. She shot him a glance from under her hair. "Okay, two minutes then I'm gone. I have packing to do, remember?"

He moved closer, stroking along her cheek with gentle fingers. "You've been crying."

She backed away from his touch. "No shit Sherlock, nothing gets past you does it?"

"Does the house mean that much to you?" Logan couldn't help asking, his curiosity getting the better of him.

"Oh God, even you can't be that dense, surely?" Her bark of laughter was short and bitter. "No Logan, the house does *not* mean that much to me. I finally realised that, thank God."

"Then why have you been crying?"

"None of your damn business," she snapped, and tried to move around him. His hand shot out to stop her.

"Tell me. I won't let you go until you do."

She shook him off, glaring at him. "Piss off Logan!"

"Just tell me why you were crying," he demanded, something in her eyes telling him it was important.

She hissed, shrugging him off again. "Okay, if you must know. I love you. Okay? Happy now? Good, now get out of my way!"

Logan froze, her words hitting him like a freight train.

I love you.

She loved him.

That single truth permeated every cell in his body, easing an ache in his heart he hadn't realised was there. As though he'd been waiting to hear someone say those words, waiting all his life for someone to love him. Love him for himself, not for what he could give them in either money or status. Rae wasn't the sort of woman who was impressed by money or status. He knew that without asking.

He could feel his grin spreading and said the first thing that sprang to mind. "Marry me."

She stopped stock still, her dark eyes on his face.

"Oh my God, you really are into your sick little games, aren't you?" Her lip curled as she shook her head. The corners of her eyes wrinkled suspiciously.

"Piss off Logan, I never want to see you again!" she hissed at him, darting sideways.

Logan made a grab for her as she shot past him through the parked cars at the side of the road, but he was too late. The car came out of nowhere, the screech of brakes carving themselves into his mind before the hideous thud as it hit the woman he'd only just realised he loved.

* * * *

Rae woke slowly, encased in comfortable darkness. She drifted in the warm cocoon. She frowned, something tugging at the edges of her memory. There was a reason she should wake up, but at the moment she didn't really want to. Awareness crept over her by slow degrees, pain flaring all over her body. She sucked in a sharp breath. Okay, *that* was what her subconscious had been trying to tell her.

The screech of brakes and the honk of a car horn came back to her. A hideously painful thud that stole her breath away. Then darkness. A car ... She'd been hit by a car.

A voice intruded on her thoughts, separating itself from the background noise to become clear and sharp. "Yes, I'm her husband ... Logan Fyre. Thank you doctor, I'll stay until she wakes up. No, I'm fine thank you, there's a coffee machine down the hall so I'll make myself comfortable. Thank

you for everything you've done, I'm just relieved she's going to be okay."

Rae opened her eyes as the door closed behind the doctor to find Logan sitting next to her. He smiled as she blinked, looking around the room to orient herself, and wrapped her hand in both of his. His thumb stroked over the back of her knuckles, his eyes warm. An expression she hadn't thought she'd see again on his face.

"You're not." Her voice emerged as a croak. She swallowed to ease the dryness. Everything smelt and tasted antiseptic.

"I'm not what, love? Here, let me get you some water..." He looked around for the water jug, starting to pull away but Rae held on. He'd said he was her husband and she wanted to know why. What sort of game was he playing now?

"You're not my husband," she stated, her expression wary as she looked at him.

He turned back to her, sitting still. His eyes locked with hers, open and honest. "No, I'm not. But I'd very much like to be ... If you'll have me."

His gaze flicked down, his expression drawing in pain as he frowned. His eyes red-rimmed with exhaustion, stubble on his chin and his hair standing on end, he looked like he'd been to hell and back.

"When you ... When the car hit you ... I thought I'd lost you." Naked anguish filled his eyes. "I thought the last thing you believed was that I was still playing games, not that I—" he took a deep breath, pulling her hand to his lips to kiss her knuckles. "Not that I love you."

He loved her! Rae closed her eyes, emotion flooding over her and bringing her close to tears. There was no question of whether she believed him or not. Even Logan couldn't fake the honesty and love written on his face.

"Please Rae, put me out of my misery," he begged. "Say there's a chance for us. That I haven't completely screwed up with my stupid games."

She smiled, her fingers tightening on his. Love and hope uncoiled from the small corner of her heart she'd locked them into, expanding and filling every cell of her body. "We both played games Logan." She reminded him softly, her smile starting to spread over her lips.

He shrugged, "Yeah, but mine—"

"Shhh." She grinned. "I love you, you love me, so come here and kiss your wife, Mr. Fyre."

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About Mina Carter

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Playing with Fyre was one of those stories which evolved out of a phrase—playing with fire—and a single image. The image was a stock image of a model who—to me—looks like Paul Bettany. I'm a very visual person and the look on the model's face just sparked ideas. The main one being, what would make someone pretend to be someone's wife? It would have to be something big, really big, for that. But what if that person *knows*? And plays along?

In my tiny mad little author's brain everything got connected and brewed with coffee. Playing with Fyre is the end result. I really enjoyed writing about Logan and Raelyn and I hope you enjoyed reading their story. If you did, feel free to drop me an email at mina@mina-carter.com or stop by my site to read more of my work!

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