

The poster features a large, muscular man in the foreground, his torso and arms visible. He is looking down. In the background, the Alcatraz prison is situated on a rocky island. The title 'GHOSTS OF ALCATRAZ' is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font across the middle. The author's name 'CAROL LYNNE' is at the bottom in a white, serif font. The publisher's name 'Loose Id' is at the very bottom in a small, white, serif font.

# GHOSTS OF ALCATRAZ

CAROL LYNNE

Loose Id

# **GHOSTS OF ALCATRAZ**

**Carol Lynne**

**Loose Id.**<sup>(R)</sup>  
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# **Ghosts of Alcatraz**

## **Carol Lynne**

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## **Preface**

*The year is 2020 and the world is under a threat more dangerous than all the murderers and rapists combined. National treasuries are being depleted, military secrets stolen, and the global banking system is under constant attack. The threat of cybercrime has forced governments around the world to unite, forming the World Police Unit, or WPU. Deciding it best to keep the genius, but criminal, minds in one place, the countries involved reach a decision. Billions of dollars are spent rebuilding the one prison all men are afraid of...Alcatraz.*

## Chapter One

"Hello?" Jensen Black answered the phone.

"Warden, we've found another one."

"Shit. Call WPU. I'll be there in ten." Jensen threw off the covers and glanced at the clock. Three thirty. "Of course." He automatically touched the USMC flag he had attached to the bedroom wall as he headed to the bathroom.

He dressed and left his home. Located only three hundred yards from the newly remodeled prison, his home wasn't luxurious but it had an awesome commute. He crossed the courtyard and showed his credentials to the guards on duty. Stepping into the long corridor, Jensen looked from side to side. If the rooms weren't dark, he knew he'd be able to see the entire cell block in one glance. Made of two-inch-thick acrylic, every wall in the prison itself was see-through.

With Alcatraz now housing the most dangerous economic and cybercriminals in the world, governments refused to take chances. The prisoners were given absolutely no privacy at any time. The cells were transparent, and everything contained within those small ten-by-ten-foot walls of acrylic were the same, beds, toilets, sinks. It was no longer possible to hide even the smallest microchip. Each prisoner was given a single blanket and an inflatable, clear plastic pillow.

As he climbed the stairs to the guard station, Jeff, the guard in charge of the night watch, ran up to him. "Cell Block D this time."

"Prisoner?" Jensen asked, following Jeff at a fast clip. He absentmindedly reached to his front pocket for a cigarette. *Crap*. He pushed the craving down. What the hell had he been thinking trying to quit the nasty habit with all the shit that had been going down?

Jeff looked at the digital display in his hand and began reading the prisoner's stats. "Marvin Grimes, prisoner 1597832. Found guilty of draining more than a billion dollars from Germany's defense funds." Jeff tried to keep up with Jensen. "Sir? I think we should move the prisoners out of the immediate area until a cleaning crew can come in."

Jensen's steps faltered. This was the seventeenth prisoner found dead since Alcatraz had reopened its doors. They'd never before moved prisoners. Something in the guard's tone told Jensen Marvin Grimes's death wasn't like the others. "Why?"

Jeff wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I think you'll know once we get there. I was unable to get a visual on the prisoner."

More confused than ever, Jensen followed the guard down the stairs and took a left. The hallways were lit by underfloor lighting so the guards could do their jobs without disturbing the sleeping prisoners. Jeff unclipped the flashlight from his belt as they neared Grimes's cell.

Jensen took the flashlight from Jeff and pointed it into the acrylic box. No wonder Jeff hadn't made a visual on the body. The outer wall was covered from floor to ceiling in what appeared to be blood.

Swallowing the bile rising in his throat, Jensen stepped toward the cell next door and tried to see through the side wall. He was able to make out a few bits and pieces that he guessed were once the prisoner, but there was nothing that resembled a body. "Did you get an ETA from the WPU?"

"They're choppering in. Should be here any minute."

The World Police Unit had been the united governments' first line of defense. They, above all other law enforcement agencies, had been given global domain to track down and punish cybercriminals.

Jensen handed Jeff back the flashlight and left the area. "Do we have any empty cells?"

"A few."

"Move the prisoners immediately across and to the side of Grimes's cell. We'll curtain off the area if we need to, so the prisoners can't see the carnage." Jensen walked faster. He needed to get into his office before he made a fool of himself by throwing up in front of the guard.

\* \* \* \* \*

After reviewing the security footage once more, Jensen tossed his pen onto the desk and reached for a cinnamon disk. After unwrapping the cellophane he put the pacifier into his mouth. What the hell was going on in his prison? According to the scene he watched over and over again, Grimes had been sound asleep when he suddenly sat straight up and screamed. He appeared frightened, yelling at an unseen object. Moments later Grimes's body jerked several times before turning back to the overhead camera, mounted above the acrylic ceiling. With a smile on his face, Grimes stopped screaming and began tearing his own body apart, opening veins with his bare hands. The first limb to be removed had been his left leg, quickly followed by the right.

Jensen knew it wasn't a matter of Grimes going crazy. No human could do to himself what prisoner 1597832 had done. Not only did the thin man not have the strength, but long after the blood had pumped from his body, Grimes continued to...disassemble himself, laughing maniacally.

The WPU suggested some kind of mind control, but Jensen had his own theories. He'd never been the kind of person to believe in supernatural stuff. Ghosts, possessions, hell, even tarot cards were things he thought were bullshit, but what else would explain

what was happening within the walls of Alcatraz? No way could a man tear himself apart even under mind control. There was definitely something more sinister at play in the prison. He picked up the phone and called Fisher Marx. Fisher was not only his friend, but the man in charge of the WPU.

After several rings, the phone was picked up. "Marx," replied the deep gruff voice.

"Fisher, it's Jensen."

"I just got off the phone with Brandon," Fisher replied, not missing a beat. "He said you'd had another death, this one more gruesome than the others."

"Yeah, he wasn't exaggerating. Listen, I have a theory and I know you're going to think I've gone completely off the deep end, but hear me out."

"Okay."

Jensen began idly scribbling the names of the seventeen dead men on a sheet of paper as he continued to work through his theory. "Have you ever read anything about Alcatraz?"

"The specs. I had to approve the design."

"No. Not the new Alcatraz, the old Alcatraz. This place housed a huge number of cutthroat murderers. A lot of people died here in violent ways." Jensen closed his eyes. He couldn't believe what he was about to suggest to his friend and boss. "What if, when we gutted the prison, we disturbed a few of the lingering spirits?"

"Ghosts? Are you kidding me?"

Jensen sighed. "No. I know it sounds crazy, but so are these deaths. The prisoners are cybercriminals. Most of them were dragged out of their mom's basements, for Christ's sake. They aren't violent offenders. Yet every one of the deaths has been violent. I think we're dealing with something none of us are equipped to deal with."

"Spit it out, Jensen. What are you asking me for?"

"I want to bring in a parapsychologist," Jensen admitted.

"A ghost hunter? You can't be serious."

"I am. I'll stay out of the WPU's investigation, if you let me head my own, using a parapsychologist." Jensen held his breath as the silence stretched.

"Dr. Brian Phipps."

"Excuse me?" Jensen questioned.

"If you really want to pursue this, there's only one man I'd trust, and that's Brian Phipps. I'll give him a call." Fisher cleared his throat. Jensen knew he was about to be issued a warning; it was classic Fisher. "If this gets out, the media will have a field day. As far as everyone else is concerned, Phipps is your longtime lover."

Despite that he was, and had always been, openly gay, the cover shocked him. "What? And I'm just supposed to traipse my lover around the prison?"

Fisher blew out an exasperated breath. "Hell, I don't know. Tell the guards he's an investigator. You don't have to go into specifics about the kinds of things he investigates. All I know is that I'll have a civilian in the prison that needs to be protected. Can you think of a safer place than by your side the entire time? If he's introduced as your lover, the guards won't question why he's staying in your house with you instead of in the dorms with them. He'll need to sleep in your house. I'm not kidding when I say this can't go any further than the three of us. I'd become a laughingstock, and you'd end up unemployed."

"Fine. Call Phipps. If he agrees, give him my number, and I'll work out the details." Jensen hung up and threw his pen across the room. Although being gay no longer carried the stigma it once did, having a lover move in with him would probably stir up the guards. He would definitely have to also give them a plausible reason why his lover was allowed on the island while theirs weren't.

Shit. He hadn't even considered what Dr. Phipps would think of the arrangement. Maybe all the worrying was needless. All Phipps had to do was say no to the ruse and Jensen would once again be up shit creek. Jensen shook his head. He couldn't control

what Phipps agreed with or not. All he could do was come up with a plausible reason for the parapsychologist to be on the island.

Jensen picked up a different pen and resumed his scribbling, trying to come up with another good reason for Phipps to be given access to the entire prison. He could tell the guards Phipps was a security specialist, sent by WPU to live on the premises. If he did that, he wouldn't have to go the whole lover angle, but of course, that wouldn't explain why Phipps was living in the warden's house.

Jensen turned to his computer screen. "Computer. Photo of Dr. Brian Phipps, parapsychologist," he stated. The screen came alive with images of Phipps. "You've been a busy man," Jensen mumbled, reading various newspaper reports involving Phipps.

More than the array of cases the investigator had been involved in, Jensen was impressed by the image of the man himself. He looked similar to half the inmates Alcatraz housed—small, wiry, and smart. Jensen scanned through the photos until he reached a close-up. His cock stirred at the emerald green eyes staring back at him. Damn, he'd always had a thing for green eyes. The fact that Phipps's emerald beauties seemed to sparkle with untapped passion only made Jensen's cock harder. He pictured that small, compact body underneath him. Jensen groaned at the image of the two of them together. Their contrasting sizes would be hot as fuck.

The thought of one of the guards making advances on Phipps didn't set well with Jensen. Not only did he need to worry about the guards, but the damn inmates as well. Maybe pretending to be Phipps's lover wasn't such a bad idea. At least he'd be safe from unwanted advances.

Jensen chuckled. *Who the hell am I kidding? I want Phipps in my bed as much as anyone.* It had been months since he'd been to the mainland to scratch his particular brand of itch. First he needed to find out if Phipps even swung his way. If he did, Jensen had little doubt he could persuade Brian into his bed. Further research proved fruitful. Phipps was one of more than twenty percent of the male population who had

come out of the closet once the world governments had passed their respective Equality for All Acts.

After entering his private restroom, Jensen surveyed himself in the mirror. He had a feeling Brian Phipps would be calling him on the video phone. It was something he'd do in Phipps's place had their positions been reversed.

Jensen combed his dark brown hair, noticing it was quickly becoming more gray than brown. At forty-two a man's hair may show his age, but his body didn't have to. After a twenty-year career in the military, Jensen still kept his body in prime condition. He studied his physique in the mirror. He didn't look like a bodybuilder by any means, but his muscle mass was definitely something he took pride in. He ran a hand over his rock-hard washboard abdomen. Did Phipps get off on muscles the way some of the men Jensen had been with did? Hell, did Phipps even like muscled guys like him, or was the parapsychologist into the more intellectual type of man? He thought about it for a few seconds and smiled. Yeah, just looking at his pictures, Jensen knew he was Phipps's kind of guy.

A beeping from his office caught his attention. With one last look at himself, he strode back to his desk and pressed the video monitor. The gorgeous thirty-three-year-old man appeared on screen. "Hello, Warden Black?"

Jensen grinned. "Call me Jensen, Dr. Phipps."

Phipps smiled, revealing deep dimples in both cheeks that hadn't shown up on the photos. Jensen noticed the seductive fan of Phipps's dark lashes as they swept playfully over his image on the screen. "I'll call you Jensen if you call me Brian."

"Deal." Jensen had a good feeling about this already. He'd been around enough to know when someone was sexually attracted to him, and by the way Brian was already looking at him, Jensen knew Phipps would be in his bed in a matter of hours.

"So, Fisher Marx said you'd come up with some sort of cover for me?"

Jensen hated to be the one to tell Phipps they'd need to pretend they were lovers. Why hadn't his old buddy at least taken care of that much?

"Yeah, but I'm not sure you're going to like it. The main thing is keeping you safe. The only way of assuring I can do that is by keeping you close to me while you're on the island." Jensen paused, trying to gather his thoughts.

"And?" Brian prompted.

"We need to be lovers."

"Excuse me?"

"Well, at least the guards and inmates need to think we're lovers," Jensen quickly added.

"And because we're lovers people won't question why I'm traipsing around the prison at all hours of the day and night?"

Jensen realized he hadn't spelled out the entire cover. He smacked his head with his hand. "No, sorry. We'll tell them I brought you in as a security specialist who happens to work for the WPU. As freaked-out as everyone is over the deaths, I think they'll welcome someone coming in to get to the bottom of the murders. The...uh...lover part is simply to keep you close to me and safe. Besides, I figured you'd want at least a little privacy to do your research."

Jensen watched as Brian began to chew on his lower lip. Jensen's cock hardened under the desk as his eyes zeroed in on the tortured lip. What did that plump little beauty taste like?

"And this is just for show, right?"

"Uh, yeah, sure." Jensen reached down and massaged his erection. *At least in the beginning.*

Brian exhaled and ran a hand through the silkiest-looking black curls Jensen had ever seen. "Okay."

Jensen wanted to pump his arms in the air. Instead he kneaded his cock once more. "I'll call Fisher and have your new credentials waiting for you at the tarmac."

Brian nodded and signed off.

Jensen sat back in his chair, the image of Brian burned into his brain. If nothing else, spending time around the man would be enough to fuel his jerk-off sessions for the next year or so.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jensen met the helicopter as it touched down. He'd already informed his staff of Brian's imminent arrival. They had grumbled until Jensen had informed them Brian wasn't just coming for a visit. When the guards heard the name Colonel Fisher Marx, they shut up immediately. To further provide cover, Fisher had suggested supplying Brian with false security credentials in the name of Brian Lassiter.

He wiped his hands on his slacks, suddenly nervous. What the hell? He was never nervous. Jensen reached for the pack of cigarettes in his pocket only to find it empty. *Shit.* Brian stepped out of the helicopter and Jensen swallowed around the lump in his throat. *But then I've never laid eyes on anyone as gorgeous as the man walking toward me.* He briefly wondered if Brian smoked, and if he did, would he have extra cigarettes on him?

As soon as Brian was clear of the still-rotating blades, Jensen reached for him. He pulled Brian against his six-feet-four-inch frame and kissed him. Brian appeared surprised at first, but quickly got into character, so much so, that when Jensen thrust his tongue deep into Brian's mouth, the other man not only accepted the invasion, but moaned. Jensen could tell by the clean taste of Brian's mouth the man didn't smoke. *Damn.*

Jensen broke the kiss when he felt the need to thrust his cock against Brian. "Sorry about that," he whispered in Brian's ear. "Have to make it look good."

Brian looked up at him with heavy-lidded eyes. "I think you did a damn fine job."

Jensen smiled and wrapped an arm around Brian as he led him toward his house. He looked over his shoulder at one of the guards. "Please see that Mr. Lassiter's luggage and equipment are brought to my house."

"Yes, Warden."

As they entered Jensen's living room, he reluctantly released his hold on Brian's waist. The man felt far too right in his arms. "Did Fisher supply you with your new credentials?"

Brian tapped his back pocket. "Sure did. If anyone bothers to look me up, they should get a long list of cases I've solved." Brian shrugged. "I can't say I'm comfortable with the whole thing, but I understand the need for secrecy."

"Are you hungry or would you prefer to go over the cases before we eat? Although I'll warn you, you may not have much of an appetite by the time we're finished."

Brian shrugged out of his suit jacket and tossed it onto a chair. "Business first," Brian said, rolling up the sleeves on his pale yellow dress shirt.

"Does that mean pleasure later?" Jensen asked with a wink.

Brian shrugged. "I'm not used to mixing business with pleasure, but something tells me this case is unlike anything I've ever been involved in." Brian gifted Jensen with another of those sexy grins. "Besides, I may need another taste of that cinnamon-flavored mouth of yours."

Jensen gestured to his home office located in an alcove of the living room. He'd already had another comfortable chair brought up, as well as a separate desk and computer. "I thought you could work from here. My office in the prison is much bigger, but I was afraid I wouldn't get much work done with you there to distract me."

Brian's eyes narrowed as he sat in the large black leather chair. "I'm very good at my job, Warden. There should be no reason to bug you with questions once I learn the facts of the case."

Jensen took a chance and ran a hand up Brian's thigh. "It's your body that'll distract me, not your questions."

Brian coughed, and spun his chair toward the computer, tucking his legs under the desk and out of reach. "Shall we get started?"

Wanting to scream in frustration, Jensen popped another cinnamon disk in his mouth. He turned his monitor toward Brian and scooted his chair closer to the smaller man. He wasn't used to being thwarted in his overtures. When he saw a man he wanted, he fucked him. It was as simple as that. Brian was quickly proving to be a challenge he hadn't foreseen.

After scanning his retina and fingerprint, Jensen's computer came online. "We'll need to set your security clearance as soon as Duncan comes in."

Jensen opened the crime scene files. "For now, I'll give you a brief rundown of a few of our more memorable murders in the last four months."

"Prisoner 1549803, Hans Huebner. He was our first victim. Found sealed within the acrylic box the prisoners sleep on. Hans suffocated to death. We could find no way the prisoner could've gotten inside. The box was airtight."

Jensen looked at the video on the screen. "The cameras move on tracks above the cells. There's approximately a thirty-second lag time before it reappears above a prisoner's bed. Within that thirty seconds, Huebner went from on top of his bed to inside it."

"So why didn't a guard reach him in time?" Brian asked.

Jensen shook his head. "Unless you know what actually happened, it's hard to tell Huebner's inside the box. The guard stations are on a second floor above the cells. There are four of them, one in each corner of the building, connected by a catwalk. The guard on duty didn't notice it while sitting in front of the security console. We found the prisoner like that the following morning. It wasn't until we watched the footage of the previous night that we saw the move."

Brian said nothing for a few moments, obviously making mental notes. "Okay. Next one?"

Jensen went through several more of the unexplained deaths. There had been one a week after the newly refurbished prison opened its doors. Of the seventeen deaths, eleven had been some form of strangulation/asphyxiation, three spontaneous

combustions, two apparent suicides by banging their heads against the sink, and the self-dismemberment death.

Halfway through the cases, Brian found a pen and began scribbling notes. When Jensen finished, he shut down the horrible images on the screen. "There you have it. If the pattern continues, we should be safe until early next week."

Brian tapped his pen against the paper. "I'm not so sure of that."

Jensen leaned closer, took a peek at Brian's notes. "What makes you think that?"

Brian turned his head and gazed into Jensen's eyes. "Because this last murder's different than the others."

"Dead is dead."

Brian shook his head. "I need to do some serious research. Mind if I use your terminal?"

Jensen felt he'd been rebuffed. He was in charge of the prison, for fuck's sake. Didn't Brian feel he deserved an explanation? "First tell me what you suspect."

"Don't take it personally. I'm used to working alone and that's the way I prefer it. These deaths are not the same. Yes, dead is dead, but the killers are very different."

"Killers?"

Brian tossed his pen onto the desk and scrubbed his hands over his face. "Let's just say you were right to call me in." Brian looked over his shoulder toward the kitchen. "I don't suppose I could get you to make me a sandwich or something?"

With his fears confirmed, Jensen stood and placed a hand on Brian's shoulder. "Yeah. I'll make dinner if you'll fill me in while we eat."

## Chapter Two

Brian ate a bite of spaghetti. He'd refused to look Jensen in the eyes since being summoned to the dinner table. It wasn't that he didn't enjoy looking at the gorgeous man. Brian simply had other things on his mind and didn't want to become distracted by the obvious sexual chemistry between them. From what he'd seen so far, he'd need every ounce of concentration to take on the big bads haunting the prison, and he had plenty to distract him already without adding the sexy warden into the mix.

The deaths thus far were more than disturbing; they were downright frightening. Especially the last one. "Do you have schematics of both the old building and the refurbished one?"

"I'm sure I can find them in the archives. Why?" Jensen asked.

"I want to make an overlay of the two and plot where each of our victims were housed."

They quickly finished dinner and Jensen retreated to the computer as Brian cleaned the kitchen. He knew from what he'd read on The History of Alcatraz Web site that no cell adjoined a perimeter wall, thus making it even more difficult for a prisoner to escape. He wondered if the new and improved Alcatraz had kept that philosophy during its design and construction. Although the outer walls of Alcatraz had been kept

intact, Fisher had told him the inside had basically been gutted. So what was tying the spirits to the prison?

"Got it," Jensen said from the other room.

Brian dried his hands and tossed the towel to the counter. He joined Jensen in the alcove and looked at the terminal screen. "You've got both schematics?"

"Yeah." Jensen flipped from screen to screen.

"Mind trading seats?"

Jensen stood and Brian scooted over. He refused to comment on the brush of Jensen's hand against his ass. There would be plenty of time for play later. Right now he held the lives of over three hundred inmates in his hands.

After about five minutes of manipulation, he overlaid the two images, lining up the outer walls perfectly. The old interior was shown in blue while the new, in red. Fisher had been correct. Very little of the old Alcatraz still stood. "They've made a lot of changes," Brian remarked.

"Yeah," Jensen agreed. "We only have half as many cells. The WPU wanted to keep the inmates inside the one building, so they made room for everything else the prisoners would need to fill out their sentences."

"Okay. Read me the locations of the dead men's cells grouped in the order written on that paper."

As Jensen began working down the list, Brian color-coded the prisoner's location by how he was killed. When he was finished, he sat back and looked at the whole picture. "Doesn't make sense," he mumbled, more to himself than Jensen. He couldn't see a pattern like he'd hoped.

"If I blow this up to poster-size, do you have a printer large enough?" Brian inquired.

"In my office. We often use it for the classrooms here on the premises."

“Classrooms? What could you possibly teach some of the most gifted minds in the world that they don’t already know?”

Jensen smiled. “Auto mechanics, plumbing, heating and refrigeration, just to name a few. They used to be housed in a separate building but now line the perimeters of the prison itself.”

Brian was just about to ask when Jensen continued. “The prisoners with life sentences aren’t eligible for the programs. For those released eventually, it’s our job to see they are trained to make a living outside of the business world. Part of their parole agreement is that they never own, operate, or so much as look at another computer again.”

Brian grinned. “Good luck with that one.”

Jensen shrugged. “It’s someone else’s job to enforce the agreement of parole. My job is to take care of them while they’re here and make sure they’re equipped to reenter the workforce.”

Jensen stood and gestured toward the door. “If we’re going to my office, I might as well show you around Alcatraz.”

Brian rolled down his sleeves and put his suit jacket back on before following Jensen out of the building. They walked hand in hand in order to keep up appearances. Brian didn’t mind the charade a bit. He found comfort in the much larger hand gripping his. Maybe a little break from his normally celibate lifestyle wasn’t such a bad thing? It might be nice to spend a few days in the other man’s arms.

“Over there’s the employee housing dorm,” Jensen supplied, pointing farther down the hill.

They walked the short distance to the prison and Jensen turned to Brian. “Do you have the security clearance card Fisher gave you?”

“Yeah.” Brian released Jensen’s hand and dug the wallet out of his back pocket. He produced the card and handed it to one of the guards.

The guy seemed to stare at him longer than necessary and Jensen cleared his throat. "Mine," he growled at the guard and pulled Brian against his side.

The guy gave a devilish smile and shrugged. "Just looking, Warden. No harm done."

"He's to be given full access to the prison. Marx wants these mysterious deaths stopped, and he's brought Brian in to help with that." Without another word, Jensen led Brian into the prison.

As soon as he stepped inside, Brian's jaw dropped. "Damn." He'd never seen anything like it. The view to the other side of the building was almost dizzying, the way people appeared to be right on top of each other. An idea struck him. "Can you leave lights on at night?"

"We could, I guess. I'm not sure how the prisoners would sleep, though. Seems kind of cruel."

The simple statement reaffirmed Brian's first impression of Jensen. The man was good at his job, but he also seemed to genuinely care about his prisoners. "Sleeping masks?" Brian suggested.

Jensen chuckled. "You know of three hundred and eight sleeping masks I can have delivered in the next couple of hours?"

"No, but I bet you could get them by morning."

"So what about tonight?" Jensen asked.

Brian rubbed the back of his neck. "Your call."

As Jensen looked around the facility, he idly ran his hand up and down Brian's spine. Brian doubted the man even knew he was doing it, but Brian's cock sure did. When he'd gotten hard enough to embarrass himself, he stepped out of Jensen's reach.

"We'll let it go for the night," Jensen finally said.

Brian nodded his agreement and the two of them walked farther down the corridor. He couldn't get over the engineering involved in creating this new Alcatraz.

He knew he'd go crazy living in a fishbowl every moment of every day. For each cell block, there appeared to be a large social room with acrylic tables, chairs and a lone big-screen television. The nature show on the screen stood out in stark contrast to the boring color palette of gray and black the prison was comprised of. "That's what it is."

"Huh?" Jensen asked, once again resting his hand on the small of Brian's back.

"There's no color. I wondered why everything seemed so depressing. It just dawned on me that other than the gray blankets, guard uniforms, and televisions, there are no colors anywhere. Is there a purpose for that?"

Jensen unlocked his office, which had floor to ceiling blinds, and walked inside. "I guess I never really thought about it. The walls and furnishings are obviously security related. The blankets are what the WPU provided as well as the gray jumpsuits."

Jensen tossed his keys onto the desk and accessed his terminal. He appeared deep in thought as the system scanned his retina. "Why didn't I notice that? I walk around this prison every day, so why didn't I notice the lack of color? I take pride in treating the inmates with a certain amount of respect, but evidently that didn't include their living conditions."

Brian didn't like seeing Jensen beat himself up over the lack of stimulus in the prisoners' environment. Despite not wanting to get emotionally involved with Jensen, the need to comfort the big man was strong. Brian approached the desk and placed a soft kiss on Jensen's lips. "Because you were too busy trying to keep the prison safe, but now that you realize it, maybe you can rectify it."

Jensen nodded. "What would you suggest?" Jensen asked, pulling Brian against him.

The hard press of Jensen's body against his was too tempting to resist. He told himself that it was possible to have sex with the man but still maintain an emotional distance. As he talked, Brian couldn't resist running his hands over the sculpted chest he felt under Jensen's dress shirt. "The best way to add color would be new blankets and uniforms. Maybe a different color for each block or something. You could always

tell the WPU it was for security reasons. It's much easier to tell if a prisoner is in an area he's not supposed to be if he's wearing a specific color."

Jensen sat in his chair and pulled Brian into his lap. "I appreciate the suggestions, and I'll definitely act on as many of them as I can get Marx to sign off on."

Jensen kissed Brian's neck, licked at his earlobe. "Now have we finally talked enough about business to get to some pleasure?"

The warden began unbuttoning Brian's shirt. God help him, he wanted to forget about the deaths for the next hour, but his conscience wouldn't let him. He stilled Jensen's hands as they began plucking and squeezing his nipples. "Not here. Let's get what we came in here for and finish the tour." Feeling bold, Brian ran a hand over the erection trapped within Jensen's pants. "It's not that I haven't thought about it since the moment I saw you on the computer screen, but I need to at least try and keep my mind on the job. Gruesome deaths kinda take away from my desire for sex, but later, I promise."

Jensen moved his hand from Brian's chest to his cock. He ground the heel of his palm against Brian's erection, applying just enough pressure to have Brian close to begging for release. Jensen knew it too. He chuckled and gave Brian a kiss. "Definitely later."

Brian stood and looked at the computer screen. "Can you print that in color?"

"Yep." Jensen scooted his chair to the desk. He tapped a few places on the screen and a giant printer in the corner came to life.

Brian carefully rolled the blueprint and wrapped a rubber band around it. "Ready to finish the tour?"

Groaning, Jensen stood and adjusted his cock. "Guess so. The faster we get it over with, the quicker I can have my way with you."

Brian had just stepped into the hall when the hair on the back of his neck stood on end. He whirled around, looking in all directions. "Shit. I need to run back to your place and get something."

Jensen must've seen the distress in his expression. He reached out and ran his hands up Brian's arms. "You okay?"

"Yeah, but I felt something. Why don't you stay here in your office, and I'll be right back." Brian turned and ran down the hall. He pushed the door open and waved at the guard who'd leered at him earlier. "Forgot something."

He raced to Jensen's and found his big black trunk right inside the door. Kneeling beside the old leather trunk that had once belonged to his grandfather back when he'd done this for a living, Brian pulled out the plastic case among the tools of the trade. Since then, scientists had agreed that none of the tools worked. Brian kept them and carried them to each job out of respect for his relative. Unlike his grandfather, the only instrument Brian carried with him was a voice-activated recorder. After retrieving his pride and joy from the plastic case, he shut the trunk.

Before leaving the house, he put the small receiver in his ear and brushed his black hair down to cover the device. He started to cross the courtyard. The recorder shrieked in his ear just as he was struck on the forehead. Brian's head snapped back as he fell to the ground. He heard running feet seconds before two guards knelt beside him.

Stunned, Brian sat up and looked around. He spotted a small piece of concrete three feet away. He covered the bleeding wound on his head and pointed to the object. "Can you hand me that?"

One of the guards retrieved the rock, handling it gently. "Is this what hit you?"

Brian took the piece of concrete. There was blood on one of the protruding bits. "Looks like it." Brian gazed at the location the rock had to have come from. "Is that lighthouse still in use?"

The guards both looked in the direction Brian gestured. "No. They deemed it unsafe. They had the choice of rebuilding it to bring it up to code, but they decided it was cost prohibitive, so they cemented it shut."

Brian held out his hand. "Here, help me up." The guard who'd ogled him earlier was the first to grab his hand.

"By the way, my name's Tony." Tony gestured to the other guy standing next to him. "This is Lenny."

"Nice to meet you." Brian pulled his hand away from Tony and started toward the prison. "Do you have a doctor on the premises?"

"Yeah," Lenny answered.

Brian made it to Jensen's office and knocked on the door. When the door opened, Brian fell into the strong arms of the warden.

"What happened?"

"Something hurled a rock at me." Brian lowered his hand to look at the blood. He could tell the bleeding was slowing, which hopefully would save him from requiring stitches. "I need a towel and a doctor in that order." He let Jensen lead him to the leather sofa. Brian stretched out while Jensen retrieved the washcloth.

"Here." Jensen moved Brian's hand and replaced it with the cloth.

"Does it need stitches?"

"I don't think so, but let me call the doc," Jensen said.

While waiting for the warden to make the call, Brian dug the rock out of his pocket. He remembered back to grade school, when kids would throw rocks at him because he was a little different. His mom always told him it was their way of getting attention. Was that what was happening again?

Jensen hung up the phone and then sat on the sofa next to Brian's hip. "What's that?"

Brian opened his eyes and held up the rock. "This is what hit me. I think it was thrown from the lighthouse outside the door."

"Not possible. That's been cemented shut," Jensen informed him.

"Yeah. That's what Tony and Lenny told me. I believe it was one of our resident spirits trying to get my attention."

"What're you saying?" Jensen asked, looking worried.

"Either they don't want me here, or they don't want me to leave. My job is to figure out which and why."

Jensen's brows shot to his hairline. "You think a ghost threw that?"

"I more than think. I'm almost positive. I felt something when I stepped out of your office earlier. That's why I wanted my voice-activated recorder. It's the only tool I've found useful in these situations."

"What're you going to do with it?"

"Well, as soon as the doctor takes care of this cut, I'm going to walk every inch of this place."

"Not alone, you're not," Jensen barked, crossing his arms over his chest.

Brian grinned. As tough as Jensen tried to be, Brian could see the underlying fear. "Strength doesn't work on a spirit, Jensen."

Jensen shook his head. "I'm still not letting you traipse around unescorted."

Brian rolled his eyes. Thank God he liked Jensen or he might be offended at the macho attitude.

\* \* \* \* \*

"So how does this work, exactly?" Jensen asked, as they slowly made their way down the corridor.

Brian stopped and looked up at Jensen. "I'm not really sure. I've just always been able to feel them. If I open myself completely to their presence I can sometimes communicate with them, but that's a pretty dangerous thing to do, so I only do it in extreme circumstances."

"So like you're psychic or something?" Jensen suddenly wondered whether Brian could read his mind.

"Well, in a way, I guess, but I think everyone has the ability; it's whether or not you know how to tap into that portion of your brain. I was lucky. My granddad, Ben, did this for a living as well. He taught me everything he knew."

"So you can't read my mind?" Jensen asked just to make sure.

Brian grinned. "I don't need to read your mind. I can read your body."

Within seconds, Jensen's cock went from half-hard to completely pile-driving hard. He groaned his frustration. They were in the middle of an acrylic maze and he wanted nothing more than to slam Brian against a wall and fuck him senseless. He looked at his watch. "Lights out in twenty minutes."

Brian nodded his understanding. "Let's continue our tour until then. We'll have all night to *discuss* your body language."

Jensen led Brian into one of the teaching areas. It was bordered on two sides by the outer prison wall. "This is the HVAC, plumbing and electric training room."

Brian walked over and placed his hand on the concrete wall. Jensen watched as the smaller man slowly walked the perimeter of the two old walls, never releasing contact. At one point, Brian pulled his hand back as if it had been burned.

"You okay?" Jensen stepped to Brian's side and looked at his hand. Seeing the reddened flesh, Jensen grabbed Brian's wrist. "The wall did that?"

Brian shook his head. "Not the wall. I need to look at the schematics I left in your office."

"Can we call it a night then?" He didn't like the idea of Brian continually putting himself in harm's way. Twice he'd been hurt and as far as Jensen was concerned, that was two times too many.

Jensen wrapped an arm around Brian as they returned to his office. He wasn't sure where this protective streak came from. It was out of character to say the least. He'd always been a rather selfish lover and he knew it. That, above all else, was the reason he'd never allowed himself to get embroiled in a relationship.

It wasn't hard to become self-absorbed when you'd grown up taking care of yourself. His mom hadn't been a bad woman, just incredibly busy. She had been forced to work two jobs to pay the bills, leaving Jensen to take care of himself at the age of six. He'd not been allowed out of the house except for school. The neighborhood he'd grown up in was more dangerous than the prison he now presided over.

Jensen had learned early to watch his back and take care of number one. That training followed him through twenty years of military duty and into his new job as warden. What was so different about Brian that he brought out Jensen's softer side this early in their acquaintance? Most of the men Jensen had been with in the past had been soldiers. Maybe it had something to do with Brian's overall size. At five-six, and weighing maybe one hundred and thirty-five pounds, Brian definitely didn't have a soldier's physique, but Jensen could tell by the way he carried himself that the smaller man was in shape. Above everything, Jensen knew Brian had the heart of a lion; he had to in order to do his job.

They were almost to Jensen's office when Brian suddenly lurched forward, landing on his hands and knees. "What the fuck?" Jensen said, scooping the small man from the floor and into his arms.

"Let's get the schematics and get out of here for the night," Brian said, wiggling out of Jensen's hold.

Jensen unlocked his office door and quickly grabbed the roll of paper from his desk. He hurried Brian out the door and to his apartment. Once inside, he led Brian to the sofa. "Were you pushed or something?"

"Yeah. I just need to figure out why." Brian took the schematic from Jensen and started rolling it out on the coffee table.

"I think it's pretty obvious why they pushed you. Evidently they know what you are and don't want you in the building."

Brian shook his head. "I'm not so sure. I think they're merely trying to get and keep my attention. Believe me, if they really wanted me gone, they'd do something more serious than throw rocks, burn my hand, and push me to the floor."

Jensen studied Brian's profile, zeroing in on the bruise he could see underneath the butterfly bandage the doc had applied. "I don't think you should go back in. It's not worth the risk."

Brian shook his head. "That's not really an option at this point. They know I'm here. If I don't go back now, they'll do something even more deadly inside those walls to force me back inside."

Jensen couldn't stand it another minute. He pulled Brian into his arms and kissed him. As he tasted Brian's mouth, he vowed to protect the smaller man at all costs. "Come to bed with me?"

## Chapter Three

Brian glanced at the schematics on the table. He knew he needed to figure out what the spirits were trying to say, but it had been so long since a pair of strong arms had held him. He wouldn't be able to think clearly anyhow. He finally nodded and let Jensen lead him to the bedroom.

"Have you had your HIV shots?" Jensen asked on the way.

"Yes. My card's in my wallet if you need to see it."

"No, I trust you." Jensen closed the bedroom door and turned back to Brian. "May I?" he asked, hands poised at Brian's top shirt button.

"Only if we do each other," Brian returned. Jensen's grin was the only permission Brian needed. He slowly worked each button out of its hole, revealing the sculpted chest he'd seen earlier. Damn, how much exercising did this man do? Jensen's body was absolutely perfect. Brian loved the short patch of dark hair leading down to a thin treasure-trail that disappeared under the waist of Jensen's dress slacks.

He pushed the shirt from Jensen's shoulders, immediately attaching his lips to the tawny-colored nipple in front of him. As he sucked and licked the pebbled nub, Jensen removed Brian's shirt and started on his pants.

"You're so damn sexy," Jensen breathed in his ear as he slid Brian's zipper down.

Brian realized he was getting behind and quickly moved to rectify the situation. His hands fumbled with the fastener on Jensen's slacks as he continued to manipulate the nipple in his mouth. Some thought his obsession with nipples was strange. They always assumed if you were a breast man, you had to like women. Not so. To Brian, the size of the actual breast meant very little. He was more obsessed with the nipple, and Jensen had two of the most delightful ones he'd ever had the pleasure of sucking.

Jensen's hand surrounded Brian's cock and gave it several firm strokes. Brian released the nub between his lips and groaned. "That feels amazing."

He slid Jensen's zipper down, allowing the pants to fall to the ground. Brian ran his hands over the front of Jensen's underwear, relishing the feel of the prominent package still hidden within. Sinking to his knees, Brian slowly peeled the barrier down Jensen's muscled thighs.

The moan that escaped Brian was in homage to the beautiful cock bobbing in front of his face. It had been a long time since he'd tasted an uncut man. The dark red tip, dripping with precum, peeked through the foreskin and dared Brian to take a sip.

With eyes fastened on Jensen, Brian grasped the long, thick shaft and peeled the foreskin back, exposing more of the tasty-looking head. He offered no teasing licks, instead opting to engulf the entire head into his mouth.

Jensen's hands threaded through Brian's hair, holding tight. "Yessss," Jensen hissed.

Brian used his tongue to explore the heavily veined cock. He'd never been good at deep throating a cock the size of Jensen's, so he didn't bother trying, preferring to take his time on the head and the sensitive area just underneath.

One rather large vein caught his attention. Brian couldn't resist scraping his bottom teeth gently over the bulging skin. He grinned when he was rewarded with another groan from the bigger man. This was definitely hotter than anything he'd experienced in the last decade.

Fucking was nice and definitely had its advantages, but Brian had always preferred the foreplay that came before the rutting. He loved to work his partner up to a fever pitch, watch a man's eyes glaze over. That was power, and Brian relished it.

Brian felt Jensen's thighs tremble as he tried to hold himself back. No, that wouldn't do at all. He sucked the dick as deep as he could and hummed a few bars of his favorite country song.

Jensen cried out as Brian felt the first volley of cum hit the back of his throat. He pulled off and directed the next shot to land on his closed lips before taking the head back inside to milk the remainder of the seed from Jensen's cock.

He loved the grunts Jensen unselfconsciously filled the room with. Brian knew he could get very used to giving Jensen pleasure. He didn't argue when Jensen reached down and lifted Brian into those heavily muscled arms. "That was...amazing," Jensen panted, licking cum from Brian's lips and chin.

Brian gave Jensen just enough of a shove to topple him onto the bed. He crawled on top of the bigger man and kissed him once again. Sliding his own erection against the hard six-pack of Jensen's abdomen, Brian moaned. "Touch me," he whispered.

He felt Jensen's hands smooth their way down his back before landing on his ass. Brian's tempo picked up as Jensen's fingers slid down the crack of his ass to tap against his sensitive hole. When Jensen applied more pressure and pushed the tip of his finger inside, Brian felt his balls draw up tight. "Fuck!" he yelled, moving to press his cock against Jensen's hip bone.

Three more thrusts and Brian jerked with his all-encompassing release, shooting burst after burst of seed between them. He collapsed, completely sated. "That was...wow."

Jensen chuckled and wrapped his arms around Brian. "I should've known you'd be a little hellcat in bed."

Brian lifted his head and looked into Jensen's gorgeous eyes. "Oh, you haven't seen anything yet. That was just a little something to take the edge off. Prepare yourself for round two."

\* \* \* \* \*

Brian watched Jensen sleep for several hours as he replayed the activities of his day over in his mind. Was it only twenty hours ago that he'd received the call from Fisher Marx? Brian shook his head. This had to be one of the longest days of his life.

He reached out and ran a fingertip around Jensen's nipple. He grinned as the small disk hardened. It had been obvious from their first kiss that Jensen was his kind of man, but Brian wondered how far he could allow himself to go. His job was too dangerous to fall in love. His granddad had repeatedly drummed that into his head.

Loving and living the kind of life he led didn't go hand in hand. Dealing with ghosts was a very dangerous profession. His granddad's philosophy even extended to his relationship with Brian. Although the older man cared for Brian, he rarely showed affection. He used to tell Brian it would hurt less when he was gone. Brian often wondered whether it was because of the pain his granddad felt at his wife's death.

Maybe he should concentrate on the case at hand instead of worrying about falling for a man who tasted like cinnamon candy. Brian gingerly lifted the covers and climbed out of bed. He picked his clothes up from the floor and carried them into the living room.

Dressed, Brian sat on the sofa and tried to concentrate on the schematic he'd printed earlier. With a cup of highlighters at hand, he plotted the murders, using different colors to denote the cause of death, the same way he had on the computer.

When he finished, Brian capped the pen and stared at the paper. "Pattern. What's the pattern?" he mumbled to himself.

Although the earlier deaths appeared to be in a rather crude line, the horrific dismemberment of Grimes didn't fit in with the rest at all. Brian glanced around the

room. When he spotted what he was looking for, he rose and grabbed the magazine from the bar between the kitchen and living room. He settled back on the couch and spread out the magazine with the top edge placed on the first set of murders.

*Yes!* He'd been correct. The murders did form a line. He looked at the spaces in between the highlighted boxes that denoted prison cells. "Shit." Brian hastily rolled the schematic and practically ran to the bedroom.

"Jensen," he called, touching his new lover's hair. "I need to go next door."

Jensen mumbled something and rolled over. Knowing there was nothing his fierce protector could do anyway, Brian decided to let him sleep. He picked up his wallet on the way out.

After getting through security, Brian entered the prison. He climbed the stairs and stopped at the C Block guard station first. He rolled out the schematic and pointed toward several cubes. "Are these cells marked by number on the outside?" he asked the two guards.

"Where's Warden Black?" one of the men asked.

"Sleeping." He knew he needed to tell the guards something, but wasn't sure how much to divulge. "Look, I was brought in to help solve the mystery surrounding the recent deaths. You can either answer my question, or I can make a call to Fisher Marx."

There were a few seconds of grumbling as the men checked the monitors in front of them. "Yeah, they're marked."

Brian looked at the name tag on the man's uniform. "Okay, Joe, I'm going to need a flashlight, and then I'm going to walk the halls checking on these cells." Brian quickly made a list of the cell numbers. "Why don't the two of you concentrate on watching them over your monitors and from the catwalks?"

With the schematic tucked under his arm, Brian took off down the stairs. The hallways were lit well enough to see, so he saved his flashlight's batteries. After rounding a corner, Brian sank to his knees as a feeling that could only be described as

evil passed through him. He retched violently, throwing up the contents of his stomach. What the hell?

Rarely was a spirit powerful enough to actually enter and exit a person. The movies made it seem commonplace, but the reality was much different. Most people didn't survive a possession. Brian's granddad was proof of that. He still didn't know exactly what kind of spirit had killed his granddad, but whatever it was had done so from the inside out. Brian shivered and wiped his mouth on his sleeve before cradling his spinning head. Was he being warned or played with?

After struggling to his feet, Brian made his way to the nearest restroom and splashed water on his face. He cupped his hand and managed to get enough liquid to rinse his mouth out. Brian grabbed a few paper towels to dry his hands as he studied his reflection in the mirror.

Suddenly, one of the toilets behind him flushed, sending a spray of blood into the air. Brian shielded his face as the overspray covered most of the small restroom. By the time the toilet died down he, along with the room, was covered in blood. Fearing he would throw up again, Brian scrambled to clean his face and hands with another wad of towels.

He ran out of the restroom and straight to the security station. "What the hell happened to you?" the guard cried, running around the desk.

Brian swallowed around the bile creeping up his throat. "The bathroom. Blood." He shook his head, trying to clear it. It dawned on him the guard was alone. "Where's Joe?"

The guard pointed down the corridor. "Rounds. We do them every hour."

"I need you to call him and the warden. Get them both back here. I think we may have another death on our hands."

\* \* \* \* \*

Five minutes after getting the call, Jensen rushed through the doors. He didn't know what the hell had happened, but the guard on duty sounded shaken and mentioned something about the new guy being covered in blood.

The thought of that happening to anyone was enough to get Jensen's heart pounding, but the possibility that something had happened to Brian had set his nerves on fire.

The first thing he noticed upon entering the building was the lights. The fact that they were on was definitely not a good sign. He sprinted to the guard station and came to a stop. There, sitting in a chair, was Brian with his shirt off. His hair, areas of his neck and face, along with his pants and shoes, were covered in blood.

Jensen sank to his knees and cupped Brian's face. "Where are you hurt?"

Brian shook his head. "I'm not, but I think someone is. We need your help to find him."

"Wait, back up. How do you know someone's hurt?"

"I just do. I was in the bathroom and this happened," Brian said, gesturing to his clothing. "It shot up out of the toilet."

Jensen tried to wrap his mind around what Brian told him. He looked at Lance. "Where's Joe?" he asked, knowing Joe and Lance always had duty together.

Lance shrugged. "I tried to get him on his radio but so far nothing."

"Call the other stations. I want one guard from each to look for Joe."

As Lance called the other guards, Jensen returned his attention to Brian. "Why don't you go to my place and grab a shower? We'll take care of things here."

Brian shook his head. "It wasn't a coincidence that the toilet erupted in the restroom I happened to be in. They're sending me messages. I just have to figure out what the hell they're trying to tell me."

Reluctantly agreeing, Jensen stood and pulled Brian into his arms. "Let's at least get you cleaned up. We can use my private restroom."

"Okay, but only if we hurry."

Taking Brian by the hand, Jensen quickly led him to his office. Once in the bathroom, he found a washcloth and began cleaning the dried blood from his lover's face and neck. He had to distance himself a tad as he did so. The thought of actual human blood splattered all over the man he'd held in his arms earlier crept him the fuck out.

"I don't understand any of this," he mumbled, unwrapping another candy.

"That's okay," Brian said. "I'm not sure I do either and I've done this kind of work almost my entire life. I've only run into tales of this kind of occurrence once before and it didn't end well for the parapsychologist." Brian watched Jensen toss the paper into the trash can. "What's with you and the candy?"

"Trying to quit smoking," Jensen grumbled. "Let's go."

Jensen hadn't missed the way Brian's voice changed when he spoke of the parapsychologist, but decided to wait and discuss later when he could wrap his lover safely in his arms. He followed Brian back to the guards' station. The rest of the available men assembled and talked among themselves.

"Okay, Joe was making rounds. I want teams of two going over every square inch of this place until we find him." The men paired off and Jensen grabbed Brian's hand. "You're with me."

"Uh, sorry, guys, but if you run across a pile of vomit down the hall and to your left, it's mine, not Joe's," Brian admitted, eyes downcast.

Jensen noticed a few screwed-up faces at the image, but the guards dispersed without further comment.

"You were sick?" Jensen asked, leading Brian down the opposite hallway.

"Yeah." Brian shook his head. "It was the oddest thing. I was walking along the corridor and suddenly...shit, I don't even know how to describe it. It was like evil passed through me. It dropped me to my knees and I threw up."

"Why were you walking the halls this late at night anyway?"

As Brian filled Jensen in, he felt his hands sweat. "There's a pattern?"

"Kind of. Well, at least what I think is one. I'll show you the schematic later, but the murders look to be in a fairly straight line, all except the last. That one doesn't fit anything. Not the pattern, nor the cause of death."

The prisoners were pressed against the cell walls, peering out. Jensen tried to ignore their calls for answers, because he simply didn't have any at the moment. The men in his keep were becoming more and more agitated. Jensen knew he was going to have to do something before he had a riot on his hands.

He watched as one of the prisoners pounded his fist against the acrylic wall of his cell. "Calm down!" he yelled at the nerdy-looking man.

The man narrowed his eyes and punched the wall harder, leaving smears of blood on the otherwise spotless wall. "What the hell is going on around here, Brian? These men aren't violent offenders, but you'd never know that by the way they've been acting lately."

Brian walked up to the clear wall and seemed to stare directly into the man's eyes. "Who are you?" Brian asked the prisoner.

The prisoner laughed. The same maniacal laugh Jensen had heard on Grimes's tape. "Shit. Is he possessed?"

Brian's head tilted to the side as he continued to stare into the prisoner's eyes. If Jensen hadn't seen it, he wouldn't have believed it, but the prisoner seemed to have Brian under some kind of spell.

"Brian!" Jensen screamed, yanking Brian away from the wall. He cupped Brian's face in his hands and kissed him. "Come on, baby, come back to me." Behind him, the prisoner began that laugh again and Brian finally blinked. "Brian?" Jensen gently said his lover's name again. "Are you with me?"

After a slight shake to his head, Brian nodded. "I need to do some research."

Just then, the radio clipped to Jensen's belt came to life. "Warden, we found what's left of Joe in the lunchroom."

Taking a deep breath, Jensen picked up the radio. "I'll be right there."

He put his hands on Brian's shoulders and squeezed. "I need to go. Would you like to go to my office to do some of your research?"

Brian shook his head. "I'll stay with you for the time being."

Jensen wanted nothing more than to kiss his lover but too many eyes were on them. He turned to look at the prisoner, realizing the cell had gone quiet. The inmate was sitting on his bed staring at his hand as if he didn't know how he'd managed to cut it. "I'll have the doctor check it out as soon as I can," he told the bewildered man.

The guy looked from his hand back up to Jensen and nodded dazedly. Keeping Brian close to his side, he walked to the lunchroom. "So, how many of these situations have you worked on?"

Brian tried to chuckle but it came out as an unnatural bark. "Well, I've worked a couple hundred jobs, but nothing like this. If I survive, this will become the jewel in my crown."

The words chilled Jensen. "You'll survive. Don't doubt that for a moment. I won't let you out of my sight until we figure out what the hell is going on around here."

"What've we got?" Jensen asked the group of guards standing right inside the room.

"We don't know," Lance said. "I mean, we know he's dead, but..."

"Okay, I'll take care of it." Jensen walked to the area the guard indicated. He found Joe in the corner of the room. At least he assumed it was Joe. "What the hell happened to him?" he asked Brian.

When Brian didn't answer, Jensen faced him. Brian had gone completely white, his eyes unfocused yet staring in the direction of the body.

"Brian? You okay?"

Brian licked his lips and cleared his throat. "If you test the blood on my clothes it'll match what once ran through this man's veins."

"How do you know that?" Jensen asked. "Have you seen a corpse like this before?"

Brian nodded. "My granddad's. The medical examiner couldn't figure out where his bodily fluids had gone. He didn't have a wound on him. Like Joe here, his body had simply shriveled."

Jensen knew Brian had had enough. He led him away from the body. "Call WPU and get them out here to deal with Joe's body. Tell them I want a full autopsy, and I want two of you standing guard until they get here."

"Ready to go to my office?" Jensen asked Brian.

Brian shook his head. "I need to look at a few things in my granddad's trunk."

"Okay." Jensen led Brian toward the exit. "It'll be okay." He tried to soothe, kissing Brian's temple.

"No," Brian mumbled. "It'll never be okay again."

## Chapter Four

"You need to get back over there," Brian said, as Jensen washed his back.

"I'm not leaving you here." Jensen spun Brian around and wrapped his arms around him.

Relishing his lover's embrace, Brian rested his head on Jensen's chest as the warm water continued to rain over them. He didn't know why Jensen's arms felt so right after such a short amount of time, but he was sure it had something to do with their circumstances. "I'm safe here. Ghosts aren't known to haunt new buildings."

Jensen placed a kiss on the top of Brian's head. "The building may be new, but it was raised over the foundation of the first warden's home."

Brian closed his eyes and opened himself to his environment. "I don't feel anything besides you." He ran his hands down and rested them on Jensen's ass. "And you feel quite nice."

"I still wouldn't feel right about leaving you," Jensen said, reaching behind him to turn off the water.

"I'll be fine. I have some research I'd like to do, and you really should be there when the WPU shows up." *And I need to get my head back into the job before someone else winds up dead.*

Brian took the towel Jensen offered him and patted him dry. Truth be told, he'd prefer to read his grandfather's journal in seclusion. It was a chapter of his life he'd never come to terms with. Why he felt guilty over his mentor's death was obvious. He'd been a young man of twenty when it had happened. His grandfather had called to ask for his assistance, and Brian had begged off because he'd had a hot date with someone whose name he no longer remembered.

"Brian?"

Brian glanced up, realizing he'd been lost in the past. "Sorry." He decided to just be honest with Jensen. "I need to go through my grandfather's journal. I've never read it for personal reasons, but with tonight's death, I think it may hold a few clues as to what is going on." He sighed and tossed the towel in the clothes hamper. "I think I need to do it alone."

Jensen's eyes narrowed. "You're sure? You're not just saying that to keep me from getting fired, are you?"

Brian shook his head. "No." He covered the distance between them and pulled Jensen's head down for a kiss. "I'll be here when you get home."

\* \* \* \* \*

After saying good-bye to Jensen, Brian opened the worn black trunk. He looked at all the antiquated tools of his grandfather's trade, burrowed underneath them, and came out with the cracked leather binder.

Taking the journal to the sofa, Brian curled up in the corner and threw a blanket over his lap. He stared at the book in his hands for several moments before opening it. Brian couldn't depress the smile that blossomed at the old man's scrawl on the page. "You should've been a doctor, Gramps."

The journal was filled with cases his grandfather had worked. As Brian continued to read, he became more and more engrossed in his mentor's storytelling, making his own notes and flagging pages with small scraps of paper.

Brian was so involved in his research, the kiss on his neck sent him off the couch and into a defensive stance. "Shit. You scared me," he panted, his hand going to his chest.

"I'm sorry," Jensen apologized. "I thought you'd heard me come in." Jensen walked around the sofa and sat beside Brian. "You okay?"

Brian nodded. "I think I found what we've been looking for."

Jensen scooted closer and wrapped an arm around Brian. Although it was a simple gesture, it warmed Brian immensely. He knew in his heart he was becoming far too accustomed to the man beside him, but it just felt so damn right. "According to my grandfather, he'd heard from another parapsychologist there was a nasty ghost killing patients at a century-old asylum. He took it upon himself to do some pretty extensive research about the place, and what he came up with was a type of ghost I've actually never heard of."

"How is that possible? You're one of the country's best parapsychologists."

Brian actually felt a blush rising up his neck at the compliment. "Thanks." He shook off the warm feeling to get back to business. "Probably the reason I haven't come across one of these particular bad guys is because it seems to be ghost lore. Few hunters have ever actually engaged one, let alone tried to banish it back to hell."

"Back to hell? You mean it's not the kind of spirit that usually haunts old houses and stuff?"

"Right." He flipped to one of the marked pages in the journal. "According to Gramps, there are several types of spirits, or what we call ghosts. Those that don't really know they're dead, and are therefore harmless, and those that seek retribution for their death. For the most part, I think we're dealing with the retribution kind of ghosts inside the prison. Then there are the truly evil spirits, called *Mundjis*. The *Mundjis* are ghosts that have basically escaped from hell. They actually feed on the evil of the second type of ghosts. That's why the *Mundji* we're dealing with is so powerful. He's feeding off the ghosts of Alcatraz."

Jensen sucked in a breath as he read the passage Brian's grandfather had written. "So your grandfather came face-to-face with one of these...Mundjis?"

Brian took the journal and closed it, then laid it on the coffee table. "I'm pretty sure he not only faced it but was killed by it." He felt his eyes burn as tears threatened. Knowing what he did, he couldn't believe he'd been selfish enough to blow his grandfather off in his time of need.

"Hey," Jensen soothed, wiping the tears that had managed to escape from Brian's eyes. "What's wrong?"

Brian squeezed his eyes shut. The last thing he wanted was to pour his shame out on the table for Jensen to scrutinize, but the man deserved to know the truth. Brian still wasn't sure where their obvious attraction to each other would take them, but he'd have to tell Jensen eventually.

"I should've been with him the night he went up against the Mundji. Instead I let some closeted college jock fuck me."

Jensen didn't say anything right away, but Brian could've sworn he heard a deep growl reverberate in his chest. The thought of Jensen getting jealous over some nameless guy warmed him.

Brian turned and straddled Jensen's lap. "You know what I need?"

Jensen grinned and thrust up against Brian's ass. "I'm hoping it's the same thing I need."

Brian chuckled. Despite the blood and death surrounding them, Jensen didn't let anything sidetrack him from what he wanted. Then again, maybe Jensen had the right idea. Brian knew ghosts weren't going to stop wreaking havoc anytime soon. Even if he managed to survive this job, there would always be another. Maybe taking a few minutes to appreciate life and love was just what he needed. Brian stilled. *Love?* Did he really think he was capable of it?

"Hey, where'd you go?" Jensen teased.

Brian blinked several times. "Nowhere. I'm right here." He ground his ass against Jensen's erection. *Fill me*. He'd never been with anyone who had the power to chase away the shadows. Despite his granddad's warnings, Brian wondered if Jensen would be the man he'd dreamed of his entire adult life.

Jensen pushed down the comfortable sweats Brian had put on after his shower. "Need you," Jensen whispered, taking a playful nip of Brian's earlobe.

Brian lifted his body enough for Jensen to get his sweats down and off, leaving his bare ass to rest against the heavy cotton of Jensen's pants. He sucked on the fingers Jensen presented, providing enough spit to ease his lover's passage.

"We could stop while I find some lube," Jensen offered.

Brian shook his head. He couldn't take the chance of the moment ending. He'd gladly suffer the bite of pain to feel every inch of the wonderful man in front of him. Brian released Jensen's fingers and held his breath as the sloppy wet digits found their way to his hole. "Yes," he groaned, when Jensen's middle finger breached the outer ring of muscles.

Brian braced his feet on the sofa cushions and fucked himself as Jensen added another finger. The stretch was unbelievable, but Brian needed more; he needed Jensen's cock. He needed to truly feel something with his heart and soul, even if it was just once before he died. He spat into his hand.

"Need it," he begged. Brian used the saliva in his hand to grease Jensen's erection, before moving it toward his ass. "Please." Jeez, since when had he begged someone to fuck him?

Answering Brian's pleas, Jensen removed his fingers and replaced them with the tip of his cock. "You're not quite stretched. It'll burn, ya know?"

"Don't care," Brian told him. He lowered his head to Jensen's shoulder. "Please don't make me ask again." *Please make me feel like I mean something to you*. How long had it been since he'd felt truly connected to someone? *Never*.

"I won't," Jensen assured him. "Take me whenever you're ready."

Jensen held his cock by the base, allowing Brian to slowly impale himself on the long, thick shaft. Jensen had been correct. It did burn, but not enough to make him stop. He welcomed the invasion, and continued down Jensen's cock until he was fully seated. With his eyes closed, Jensen showed no outward emotion. His lover's face was a mask of self-control. Brian grinned and leaned in for a scorching kiss, taking the time to nip and suck on Jensen's lower lip.

True to his word, Jensen didn't move. He ran his hands down Brian's back to cup the cheeks of his ass, waiting.

The second the burn gave way to pleasure, Jensen's eyes opened and Brian whispered, "Fuck me."

Those two little words unleashed Jensen's passion. He rolled to the side, putting Brian under him on the couch. With a devilish grin, Jensen withdrew his cock and surged back inside.

*Oh, shit!* Brian's skin broke out in gooseflesh as Jensen set a steady rhythm. He maneuvered his legs to drape over Jensen's shoulders, allowing the bigger man to plunge deeper. The new position put Brian's prostate in a direct line with the thick shaft filling him.

Letting himself drift to a place of peace, Brian relished the feeling of calm mixed with pleasure so intense he thought he might never recover. He began to spin a future with Jensen in his mind. It was the everyday aspects of normalcy that Brian longed for. He wanted simple things like coming home to Jensen after a long day, maybe planting a garden in the spring with the man at his side or arguing over who left the cap off the toothpaste. He wanted Jensen in his bed every night. Brian longed to share a domestic existence with the man he was starting to fall in love with. He wondered whether his feelings for Jensen were real. Maybe they had something to do with the stress he was under? Never having been in love, Brian knew he could continue to question his own heart or take a leap of faith and admit his feelings to himself. But yeah, he thought he

actually might be in love with Jensen Black. Although he hoped Jensen didn't return his feelings. Brian knew that road could only lead to heartache for the warden.

"Gonna come," Jensen grunted, snapping Brian out of his daydream.

Brian reached between his legs and wrapped his hand around his cock. He knew he could come on a moment's notice, he was already that far gone. "Fill me," he moaned.

Jensen's entire body jerked, his eyes going wide as he drove deep one last time. Brian allowed himself to share the climax, shooting his seed between them. He released his cock and pulled Jensen into his arms, slipping his legs from the strong shoulders to wrap around his lover's waist.

Brian rimmed Jensen's lips with his tongue before delving inside. He wanted to tell Jensen that he was falling in love and thinking of a future with him but said nothing. If something happened and the Mundji killed him, Brian didn't want Jensen to mourn him more than Brian knew he already would.

Jensen broke the kiss and gazed down into Brian's eyes, the emotion clearly written in his lover's expression. Brian sucked in a breath. *Please don't say it, not now.* The ringing phone startled them both.

Jensen pulled out of Brian's body. "Excuse me," he apologized, as he reached for the phone.

Brian released the breath he'd been holding and stood. He gestured to the bathroom and made his escape. Turning on the shower, he didn't bother waiting for the water to heat before climbing inside. Maybe he should tell Jensen how he felt and try to convince the man he was falling deeply in love with to leave Alcatraz? Brian shook his head. No way would Jensen leave the prison without dealing with the current situation. Furthermore, Brian knew, despite his desire for normalcy, he couldn't walk away either.

The shower door slid open and Jensen stepped inside. "That was one of the guards on duty. He said the prisoners are demanding transfers."

"I don't blame them," Brian said, wrapping himself around Jensen. "Actually, I was going to suggest you do just that."

Jensen peppered several kisses to the bruise on Brian's forehead. "I'm not sure that Fisher Marx will allow it. The WPU is under scrutiny twenty-four seven from the international community. If we move the prisoners, the press'll get wind of it and wanna know why. It'll jeopardize everything. Billions of dollars have been spent on this facility. I doubt Fisher would so easily allow its name to tarnish."

"Try," Brian pleaded. "You've got over three hundred men who are sitting ducks for the ghosts. Can you live with another death knowing you could've prevented it?"

Jensen tilted Brian's chin up and placed a soft kiss on his lips. "I agree with you. I'm just saying I doubt the WPU will go for it, but I'll try, okay?"

"That's all I can ask," Brian agreed. He reached around Jensen and picked up the bottle of shower gel. After squirting a good dollop into his hand, he washed his lover's chest. After rinsing the soap from Jensen's skin, Brian indulged in his favorite body part. He attached his lips to Jensen's nipple and suckled greedily. The hardening cock pressed against his lower stomach was testament that he wasn't the only one enjoying the nipple play.

The phone once again rang, barely audible above the pounding warm water. Brian started to pull his lips from Jensen's pebbled nub, but Jensen's hand to the back of his head kept him in place. "I'll call them back in a minute. Don't stop."

Brian grinned around the nipple trapped between his teeth. He reached blindly for the bottle of gel and redirected the shower spray without removing his mouth from Jensen's chest.

The cool gel on his stomach made him shiver, but the skin of Jensen's cock rubbing itself against the soap warmed him. Oh yeah, he could easily get off with just this. Brian pressed his renewed erection against his lover's muscled thigh.

"I love you," Jensen whispered, his soapy hands finding their way to Brian's hole.

Brian squeezed his eyes shut. And I love you, he wanted to say. Instead he released the now-bruised hard nub. "Please don't."

Instead of pulling away like Brian had expected, Jensen lifted him off the tiled floor. "Wrap your legs around my waist."

Brian did as instructed, glorying in the feel of Jensen's cock plunging into his ass. He thought their talk was over, but once fully impaled, Jensen spoke softly against Brian's lips. "Tell me why I shouldn't be head over heels for you?"

Brian swallowed around the lump in his throat. "If something happens to me..."

Jensen cut Brian's words off with a deep, tongue-tangling kiss. The kiss continued as Jensen continued to fuck him slow but hard. "I won't let anything happen to you," Jensen growled after releasing Brian's lips.

Brian sighed. He wished Jensen could do just that, but he knew reality didn't live up to dreams. "You won't be able to stop it."

"Then I hope it takes me as well, because I can't imagine a single day without you."

Brian stilled. How could this wonderful man possibly love him enough to willingly die for him? In that moment, Brian felt ashamed. What had he done to convince Jensen he was a better man than what he actually was?

Before he could respond, someone pounded on the door. "Warden!"

Jensen pulled out of Brian's ass and eased him to the ground. "What?" Jensen yelled, rinsing the soap off them both.

"We need you!" the voice on the other side of the door shouted.

"I'll be right there. Give me two minutes." Jensen turned off the shower and handed Brian a towel. They dried quickly and Jensen opened the door.

Brian was relieved the guard had already left the living quarters. "How'd he get in here anyway?" Brian asked, pulling on his sweats. He found a T-shirt in his duffel and pushed his feet into a pair of sneakers.

"That was Phil. He's my chief of security, so he has a key in case of emergencies."

Brian went to the front door and waited for Jensen to join him. "Good thing we weren't still on the sofa."

Jensen grinned and opened the door. "Good thing for Phil. I'd have had to kick his ass." Jensen tugged on Brian's hand. "Let's go."

## Chapter Five

The noise inside the prison was deafening. Jensen's jaws clenched as he took in the scene around him. "What the hell is going on?" he asked.

Brian looked up at him. "I think it's a combination of things. The inmates are scared shitless. Some of them may be under a spirit's influence, and unless I'm mistaken, I'd say we have at least one more death on our hands." Brian pointed through the acrylic cubicles to one stained with crimson.

"Shit!" Jensen pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and punched in Fisher's number.

"Marx," the deep voice of his friend answered.

"Listen to this," Jensen said and held the phone in the air. After several seconds, he put it back to his ear. "We need to get the inmates out of here. I'm going to have them moved to the exercise yard for now, but you need to get them the hell off this rock!"

Fisher's breath was heavy in Jensen's ear as the head of the WPU hopefully came to terms with what they were up against. "Move 'em to the yard, but I can't promise anything."

Pissed with Fisher's noncommittal response, Jensen growled, "Let me take care of them, and I'll give you a call back." He shut his phone without waiting for a reply and turned to Phil. "Get all the outside lights on and start releasing these men to the exercise yard. Put live ammo in your guns and fire only one warning shot if things escalate. I'm not going to move these men to safety only to have them kill each other or try to escape."

Phil nodded and gazed around at the irate inmates. "We'll take the calmer ones out first. Maybe that'll clue in the others that their behavior will not be tolerated."

"Do what you need to do." Jensen watched Phil walk toward the security console and get on the phone to the other sectors of the prison. He grasped Brian's hand. "What'll we do about the ones who can't be calmed?"

Brian rubbed the back of his neck. "Get everyone else out first. When you're ready for the remaining inmates, give me a signal. I'll try and draw the ghosts to me while you whisk the prisoners out to the yard. Make sure they're as far away from the building as you can get them. Hopefully they'll be so busy with me they won't have time for schoolyard pranks like throwing stones."

Jensen's heart stuttered in his chest. "No. Think of something else." There was absolutely no way he'd let Brian draw all those spirits to him. He'd seen what just one of them could do to a man. The images of the dead inmates flashed before his eyes. "Definitely not."

Brian wrapped his arms around Jensen. "The amount of danger I'll be in will depend on how fast you and the guards move the prisoners. Once they're cleared, we all get the hell out." Brian pulled Jensen down for a kiss. The sweep of his lover's tongue only reminded him of what was at stake.

"I'll stay with you," Jensen offered.

Brian shook his head. "The biggest thing you can do to help me is get the men out. The ghosts can't enter me like they did the inmates. Yes, the ghosts can hurt me, but they can't do to me what they did to the others."

Jensen's eyes narrowed. This was the first he'd heard of this important detail. "Why can't they possess you?"

Brian grinned. "Something my granddad taught me. I drink about a quart of holy water every day."

"Seriously? And what, you just call up a local priest and have it delivered?" Jensen hated being flip, but Brian's explanation sounded odd.

Brian's head tilted to the side. "You must be Catholic."

Jensen sobered and shook his head. "No, why?"

Brian rolled his eyes. "The Catholics usually think they have the market cornered on all things holy. When in reality, anyone can make holy water. It's simply blessing the water in front of you. People all over the world bless their food before they eat, yet they think only a Catholic priest can bless a container of water." Brian shook his head. "Never made sense to me."

Jensen had never heard that particular belief but the more he thought about it, the more sense it made. "Okay. So you're saying your insides are holy because you drink this water, and therefore, the spirits can't possess you? So why don't we just have the inmates drink holy water, and why haven't you mentioned this tidbit before now?"

Jensen didn't miss the slight shifting of Brian's eyes to the side as he answered. "Didn't think it was important before now. Besides, you have to believe in the power of the holy water for it to work. We don't have time to bless the water and make every prisoner a believer. Just do me a favor and let me know when you're ready to move the rest of the prisoners."

Brian tried to pull away, but Jensen wrapped his arms even tighter around him. "You're not lying to me about this, are you?"

"No." Brian kissed Jensen, caressing his cheek as he kept the kiss going for several seconds. When he pulled back, he gazed into Jensen's eyes. "Thank you."

"For what?" Jensen probed.

"Making me feel whole for the first time in my life." Brian's eyelids flickered like he was surprised he said it.

Jensen watched his lover walk down the corridor, unease settling inside him. Why did that sound like a good-bye? Looking around, he decided to do what Brian had asked and get the inmates outside as quickly as possible. He'd deal with his love for Brian after they did their job.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Jensen and his men began removing the inmates, Brian sat against the far wall. He concentrated on his breathing, lulling himself into a pseudotrance.

He knew he'd been lucky to get away from Jensen earlier. It was obvious his lover didn't quite believe what Brian had told him regarding the holy water. Truth was, Brian didn't really know if the water would keep the spirits at bay or not. He'd been honest about drinking it daily, but it was more out of habit than anything. His granddad was a man of strict routines and had drummed the importance of the daily dose into Brian's regime.

Brian silently prayed the chaos surrounding him would distract the big bad. He was fairly certain he could draw the second tier spirits away from the inmates, but he wasn't equipped to take on the Mundji.

He'd completely centered himself by the time he heard Jensen calling his name. With a deep cleansing breath, Brian stood and walked toward the back of the building, beckoning the ghosts to follow. As he opened himself further, he sensed the first stirrings of the spirits nearing. He felt like the Pied Piper as the ghosts swarmed toward him, licking at his heels. Brian prayed the ghosts would maintain their interest without resorting to violence until he was out of Jensen's eyesight.

The first slash to the back of his leg threatened to drop him, but Brian bit the inside of his cheek and kept going. Searing pain drew down his back as unseen claws raked the flesh from his bones. *Please hurry, my love.*

It wasn't simply the wounds that were painful. The constant barrage of spirits attempting to enter him were like battering rams against his soul. Brian stumbled to the floor and rolled into a protective ball. He knew he couldn't outrun the vengeful ghosts, so it was time to try to reason with them. As wounds continued to open on his skin, Brian opened his mind. *If you kill me I won't be able to help you. I promise, I will find your graves and put you to rest.*

He'd barely had time to put the thought out before his world went dark.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the last of the inmates neared the door, Jensen turned to Phil. "Get everyone out. I have to find Brian."

Phil nodded and Jensen took off in the direction he'd last seen his lover. "Brian!" he shouted, sprinting the length of the long corridor. He rounded the corner and entered the woodshop area. "Brian!" he screamed, spotting the man he loved lying in a pool of blood. Brian's skin was flayed open, his clothes almost nonexistent as they lay on the floor in torn bits of fabric.

Jensen's military training kicked in. Without slowing, he scooped Brian into his arms and ran. *Why the fuck did I let him do that?* He pushed open the door and a cool breeze slapped him in the face. "Call for a helicopter," he shouted to the guards.

He ran to the gate and the guards let him through. Jensen didn't stop running until he made it to the cement landing pad. He lowered himself to the ground, still refusing to relinquish his hold on the man he loved.

"They're coming," he soothed, brushing Brian's unruly black hair away from his face. There were too many wounds to stem the flow of blood. He didn't know where to start, so he concentrated on talking, hoping like hell Brian could hear him.

"Come on, baby, show me those pretty eyes I fell in love with." He gently laid Brian on the ground and curled himself around the bleeding body. The shallow breaths Brian took gave him hope. The man was definitely a fighter. He'd seen men in the same

physical condition as Brian simply give up, too tired to continue fighting for their own lives. How many young men had he watched die over the years? It was the reason he'd pulled himself off active duty.

Jensen heard the chopper in the distance. "Hear that? Help is on the way. Just hold on." He continued to talk to Brian as he watched the blood seep from his virtually lifeless body. "They'll fix you right up. They have to."

As the helicopter neared, Jensen found himself pouring out his heart and soul. "I thought I'd die never knowing what it felt like to fall in love. In a matter of days you've given me more than anyone ever has. You may not say it, but when you look into my eyes, I can see that you love me. Don't give up on me, baby. You just can't." Jensen's voice was thick with emotion as he tried to hold himself together.

The wind buffeted against them as the helicopter poised to land. Jensen leaned over Brian, shielding his lover from the flying bits of debris as the chopper touched down. He didn't move until a hand tugged on his shoulder.

"Let us in," a guy in a white uniform demanded.

Jensen scooted back far enough to let the medics have access to Brian, but refused to leave his lover's side. He stroked Brian's cheek as he watched one of the guys start an IV.

"I'm going with you," he informed them, when they transferred Brian to a backboard.

"There's not enough room!" the man shouted over the sound of the chopper blades as they fired up.

The instant Brian was loaded into the chopper and Jensen's physical connection to the man he loved was severed, his heart plummeted. Tears stung his eyes as they freely slid down his face. Before the helicopter lifted off, Jensen was dialing Fisher.

"Marx."

"Get me the hell off this rock and to whatever hospital they're taking Brian to!" he shouted.

"You need to wait until the inmates are evacuated. I've got several military transport copters headed your way."

"No," Jensen spat. "The man I love is dying, and I'll be damned if I'll babysit a bunch of computer geeks."

"Among those *computer geeks* you'll find twenty-three that tried to financially bring down your own country, six who tried to arm US-held nuclear weapons, and an entire host of other international cyberthieves. You owe it to your country to make sure the transfer goes smoothly."

"I've done my time. I fought for the bureaucrats in Washington for twenty goddamn years. You want my resignation? You got it! Just get me the fuck out of here and to the hospital, or I'll call one of the local news stations. I'm sure I could get a transport from one of their helicopters."

"And face the wrath of the WPU legal department? I don't think so. You and I both know how nasty they can get when someone breaks their contract," Fisher said, his voice as cold as Jensen had ever heard.

Where had his friend gone? Jensen summoned all the patience he had left. "Please, Fisher. I'm begging you. The inmates are scared shitless. They're not going to give anyone trouble during transport out of here."

He was met by silence for several long, agonizing moments. "I'll send a boat. Be down at the dock in fifteen minutes."

"Thank you." Jensen started to hang up but Fisher wasn't finished.

"If something goes wrong, it's your head."

"If Brian dies, you can have it." Jensen closed the phone and stuffed it into his pocket.

He ran to his apartment. If he had fifteen minutes, he was going to use them to his advantage. He quickly changed out of the blood-soaked clothes and grabbed Brian's duffel. On his way out the door, he spotted the journal Brian had been reading. Jensen looked down at the book for several seconds before scooping it up and shoving it into Brian's bag. He glanced around the room, wondering if he'd ever be returning to his home. Although he'd only lived on Alcatraz a short while, it was more of a home than he'd known since he was a young kid, but being with Brian was more important. If that meant he'd never again step foot on Alcatraz, then so be it. He grabbed a bag for himself and left without bothering to lock the door.

He had just enough time to talk to Phil before he met the boat. He ran to the gate and tossed the bag to the ground. "Get me Phil," he told Lance.

"You coming in?" Lance asked.

"No. They're sending a boat to take me to the hospital. I just need to talk to Phil first."

Lance spoke into the radio clipped to his shoulder. "He'll be right over."

Jensen paced back and forth as he waited for his chief of security. "What's up?" Phil asked, coming to a stop on the other side of the fence from Jensen.

"WPU is sending military transports for the inmates. Once they're loaded, I want you guys to take off as well. Don't worry about going back to the dorms to get your stuff. Just get the hell off this rock, understand?"

Phil nodded. "What about you?"

"I'm headed for the hospital as soon as the boat gets here." He gazed deep into Phil's eyes. The tall, thick guard had been the closest thing he'd had to a friend on Alcatraz. "I hope you understand, but I've gotta go."

Phil nodded again. Phil was a man of few words, and Jensen was shocked by his friend's next statement. "If you need me for anything, you call me. You're the finest boss I've had, and I'll stand by you no matter what you're up against."

Jensen wished he could reach through the fence and shake his hand, but unless he wanted to be lit up like a Christmas tree it wasn't going to happen. "Thank you. That means a lot to me."

He picked up the duffel and waved back to Phil as he headed down the rocky slope to the dock. As he stood looking across the water toward San Francisco, he shoved all thoughts of Alcatraz from his mind. Brian was the one who needed his strength now, not his job, not the inmates.

If his lover made it through, Jensen planned on taking him far away from California. He'd spend the rest of his life making sure Brian never had to endure that kind of torture again. As the first of the military transports landed, Jensen didn't even bother glancing over his shoulder. What he cared about was in front of him, not behind him.

## Chapter Six

By the time Jensen made it to the hospital an hour had gone by since he'd last laid eyes on Brian. Evidently, Fisher Marx had already made a few calls because as soon as Jensen told the woman at the emergency room desk his name, he was ushered to the trauma center.

"You can't go in the operating room," the nurse informed him.

"The hell I can't. Didn't Fisher Marx, head of the WPU, call?"

"Yes, but he only said to make sure you and Mr. Phipps were well taken care of."

Jensen pointed in the direction they were heading. "The best thing this hospital can do for both of us is to get me in that goddamned room."

The nurse stopped walking and crossed her arms. "Would you prefer to put him at risk of infection? If you'll please take a seat in the waiting room, we'll call you as soon as he's in recovery. He's under anesthesia anyway. He won't know you're there."

It wasn't like Jensen to give up without a fight, but the last thing he wanted was to put Brian in further danger. He reluctantly agreed and was shown to the waiting room. Ninety minutes and three cups of coffee later, Jensen was led to the recovery room after scrubbing his hands and putting a mask on.

Squatting down, he ran his hand through Brian's hair. "I'm here, baby."

Brian turned his head, tears streaming across the bridge of his nose to land on the sheet below. "Hurts," he gasped.

Jensen's gaze flicked to the doctor writing on a chart at the foot of Brian's bed. "Thank you," he said to the physician.

"He was lucky," the doctors said. "We had to pump almost four pints of blood into him."

Jensen closed his eyes and sent up a quick thank you to the man upstairs. He noticed the doctor kept glancing his way. Jensen knew the WPU had put the fear of God into the hospital staff. No way would anyone at the hospital question Brian's injuries, but the guy had to wonder what kind of animal had made the wounds on his lover's back and legs.

Jensen leaned closer. Despite the mask over his mouth, Jensen gave Brian a kiss on the cheek. "I love you."

Brian's eyes squeezed shut, more tears seeping out under his thick black lashes. When he opened them again, the dark green jewels looked into Jensen's soul. "I love you, too."

Sucking in a breath, Jensen tried to keep from sobbing. His nose burned as well as his eyes as he fought to keep the tears at bay. "No one's ever said those words to me before." What had he ever done in his lifetime to deserve such a gift?

"Then you must've surrounded yourself with idiots," Brian whispered, his voice giving out toward the end.

When Brian's lashes fluttered closed, Jensen looked up at the doctor again. "Will he be okay?"

The doctor lowered the clipboard. "His vitals are evening out. That's a good sign. He'll need to be watched for infection, monitored for pain. As far as long-term, he might need some physical therapy. Some of the muscles were torn. And I'd definitely advise he visit a plastic surgeon. The next few days will be critical though. If we can keep infection from setting in, he has a good chance of a full recovery."

Returning his attention to Brian, Jensen continued to pray. *He loves me. Please don't take him away from me.*

It was another two hours before they finally had Brian settled into a room. Despite the pain meds they were giving him, Brian still whimpered occasionally in his sleep. Jensen sat by Brian's bedside, either holding his hand, or trying to soothe his lover with words.

"Once you get better, I'm gonna take you far away from here. I'm thinking a warm, tropical setting would suit you. Yeah, sandy beaches and palm trees. How does that sound? We can sit beside the ocean and drink those colorful fruity drinks all day. Then in the evening, I'll take you back to our little house and make love to you all night long, tell you over and over again how much I love you. Would you like that?"

Jensen noticed the more he talked, the calmer Brian seemed to be. He settled in his chair, prepared for a full night of dreaming up future plans for the two of them. He just hoped his voice lasted.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following morning, Brian tried to focus on his surroundings. *Why am I on my stomach?* He never slept in that position. He started to roll before he was fully awake. The searing pain stopped him, causing him to cry out.

A chair scraped against the floor and Jensen's handsome face filled his line of vision. "Where am I?" Brian asked, feeling nauseated and confused.

Before answering, Jensen kissed him. Brian tried to kiss his lover back, but Jensen pulled away. "Hey, I wasn't finished. I need my cinnamon fix," Brian admonished.

"They let me finally take the mask off if I promised to be good. Besides, you need to conserve your energy." Jensen chuckled. "We both know that isn't going to happen if we start making out like a couple of teenagers." Jensen ran his fingers through Brian's hair. "You're in the hospital. Do you remember anything about last night?"

Brian searched his mind. Flashes of the attack assailed him. His body flinched as he remembered the god-awful pain he'd endured, the voices screaming in his head to be set free. "I have to go back."

"Like hell you are," Jensen rasped.

Brian tried to shake his head, but the pain lanced up his back again. "I promised them."

"Who? The spirits who tried their best to rip your body to shreds? Fuck 'em."

"You don't understand. I told them if they let me live I'd find their bones and set them free." Brian gazed into Jensen's eyes. "It's the right thing to do."

"What do you mean? You're going to find their bones?" Jensen asked.

"Judging by the number of ghosts that attacked me, I'd say there are around seven or eight skeletons still inside Alcatraz."

"Impossible," Jensen said, shaking his head. "Alcatraz was completely gutted. If there were bones, they would've been found."

Brian thought about the number of spirits who'd attacked him. How did the Mundji fit in? Had it always been in the prison or was it summoned by the spirits themselves to exact retribution? And how did the current inmate deaths figure into the puzzle?

"May I use your cell phone?" Brian asked Jensen.

Jensen shook his head. "You trying to get me killed? There're signs posted on every other wall about using cell phones in here." Jensen put the bedside phone within Brian's reach. "Can I ask?"

Brian grinned. "I thought I'd call an old friend of my granddad's. There has to be someone who knows more about the Mundji and how to vanquish it."

\* \* \* \* \*

After a rough day, Brian was finally asleep for the night. Jensen walked outside the hospital and called Fisher.

"It's about time," Fisher answered.

"Yeah, well, I've had my hands full. Did the inmates get transferred?" Jensen reached into his shirt pocket searching for a much-needed cigarette. *Shit.*

"Yeah. We had to house them in five different prisons, but they're all accounted for. We're keeping them out of the general population until they can be transferred back to Alcatraz."

Jensen shook his head in disgust and started across the street toward a convenience store. "The best thing that could happen to Alcatraz is a bomb blowing the place back to hell where it was conceived."

"You're talking about billions of dollars, Jensen."

"No, Fisher, I'm talking about saving lives."

As Fisher began to tell him the errors in his way of thinking, Jensen reached the store and stepped inside. Covering the phone, he asked the attendant for a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. After lighting up, Jensen inhaled the calming, body-killing smoke. "Brian's determined to go back inside," he confessed, taking another puff.

"Goddammit, Black, are you smoking?"

"Yeah, you gonna fly to California and stop me?"

Fisher sighed. "How's he doing?"

"Cut to hell, but determined to finish the job he was hired to do."

"He sounds like a damn good guy." Fisher cleared his throat. "I'm sorry he got hurt."

Something in Fisher's tone didn't sit right with Jensen. "You'd tell me if you knew something, right?"

"What're you talking about?"

"Brian said there're bodies still inside Alcatraz. That's why the spirits are there."

Fisher's lack of response was all Jensen needed to learn the truth. "Why didn't you tell me? We were friends."

"We still are. I gave you Phipps," Fisher responded.

"Go to hell! You set me up." Jensen tossed his cigarette to the pavement and ground it out with the toe of his shoe. "Brian could've died last night because we weren't given all the facts."

"That's bullshit and you know it. I'm sorry that Brian was hurt, but he knew damn well what he was getting into before last night. What he did, the risks he took, were his decision, not mine. I won't let you paint me with that brush."

"Where're the bodies, Fisher?" Jensen shook out another cigarette and lit up.

"I can't tell you that."

"Why? You've been my best friend for over twenty years. Don't you trust me?" Jensen continued to pace back and forth in front of the hospital. He couldn't think of a future without Fisher as his friend, but the betrayal cut deep.

"I've trusted you with my life on more than one occasion and you know it. But the information you're asking for is above your security clearance. I'm sorry. If I tell you, I'll be court-martialed."

Jensen closed his eyes. It was hard to imagine the one man who'd always been there for him turning his back when he needed Fisher the most. "I'm sorry, too." Jensen pushed the power button on his phone, shutting down any further conversation.

Jensen slid down the wall he rested against, throwing the cigarette into the street. He buried his face in his hands as his body began to shake with the emotions he'd kept at bay for over twenty-four hours. The man he loved was upstairs in a hospital bed pumped full of pain medication so he could sleep, and he'd just found out his best friend had betrayed him.

Getting himself under control wasn't easy, but Jensen was determined to pull himself together. Brian was a man of strong character, and he was determined to help the ghosts that had tried to kill him.

As much as Jensen wanted to put his foot down regarding the matter, he knew it would only drive Brian away. He even thought about lying to Brian by telling him the WPU had forbade anyone access to the island, but he quickly discarded that idea. Lying to the man he loved wasn't something he thought he could do. He was left with little alternative other than accompanying Brian back to Alcatraz. Scared didn't begin to tap the emotions he felt about returning to the nightmare across the bay, but an hour spent away from Brian was even more frightening. *I'll protect you, my love, or die trying.*

\* \* \* \* \*

A nurse taking his vitals woke Brian in the middle of the night. "Sorry," she whispered.

He nodded his head, fully aware the woman was only doing her job. "Can you make a note in my chart that I'm checking myself out in the morning?"

The nurse's eyes rounded. "It's far too soon for that, Mr. Phipps."

"Maybe," Brian allowed. "But I'm leaving regardless. I just thought I'd give you a heads-up."

The nurse finished her tasks and left the room quietly. Brian turned to look at Jensen, sound asleep in the chair by the window. He knew it was the second night Jensen had forgone a bed in order to stay with him. When his lover had come into the room after his nap, Brian could smell the cigarette smoke on Jensen's clothes. That more than anything told him something was bothering Jensen, but his stoic lover refused to talk. All Brian got was that Jensen had spoken to Fisher Marx and his old friend had been little help. Jensen had gone on to tell Brian he would be returning to Alcatraz with him.

Brian sighed, feeling guilty. Why should Jensen risk his life for a promise Brian had made? He studied his lover's face while he slept. Was it possible Jensen was even more gorgeous asleep? "He loves me," Brian whispered to himself.

He remembered saying those words when he'd first opened his eyes in the hospital. Brian hadn't planned on telling Jensen. He thought it would save his lover further heartache should something go wrong, but when he looked into Jensen's eyes, he knew nothing would save Jensen's heart should tragedy happen.

As he watched, Jensen's eyes opened. Brian grinned. "Sorry you're stuck with the chair again."

Jensen scooted closer to the bed. "How're you feeling?"

"A little stiff, but I'm okay," Brian answered, downplaying his pain. "I could use a kiss though."

Jensen obliged. Brian closed his eyes as the kiss went deeper. He knew it was more spiritual than physical; he could tell by the soft tongue that caressed the inside of his mouth. Jensen was demonstrating the depths of his feelings and it was working. Brian felt more cherished than he ever had. He knew in that moment he'd sacrifice anything for his man.

Brian began to doubt his resolve in returning to Alcatraz. Was he being selfish? *Definitely*. But he wanted a future with Jensen. His entire life he'd been trained to take over for his granddad. One of the rules of his chosen profession was *don't form attachments*. Brian had known better, but it'd happened anyway.

A commotion in the hall brought Brian's attention back. He pulled out of the kiss and looked into his lover's eyes. "Why don't you go see what's going on?"

Jensen kissed him once more and stood. "I'll be right back."

As soon as the door opened, the hair on the back of Brian's neck prickled. "Oh fuck." He tugged on the sheet covering him until it slid to the floor. Gritting his teeth as the hundreds of stitches in his back and legs pulled, Brian managed to stand and brace himself against the mattress.

He walked the four steps to the windowsill and picked up the pad of paper he'd written Emmett's number on earlier. He swallowed the rising bile, determined to work his way through the pain. After steadying himself against the bedside table, he picked up the phone.

"Hello?" a sleepy voice finally answered.

"It's Brian."

"I think I have a lead on someone who knows something about the Mundji," Emmett said.

"Great, but that's not why I called. I think at least one of the ghosts has followed me to the hospital. Is that possible?" Brian eyed the closed door nervously. "I mean, I know some spirits do that, but I didn't think I was dealing with a level one."

Emmett sighed. "When your young man called to tell me you'd been hurt, he said something about you promising the ghosts you'd help them."

"Yeah, I did. They would've killed me for sure if I hadn't made the promise."

"You've bound yourself to them." Emmett's voice broke. "I'm sorry."

Brian closed his eyes. "So you're saying if I don't fulfill my promise, they'll hunt me until I'm dead."

"You and everyone you come into contact with. They can be a persistent lot. I wouldn't fuck with 'em. Do what you have to do, but find those bodies."

"Thanks, Emmett." Brian ended the call. He didn't know Fisher Marx's number, so he grabbed Jensen's cell phone. With all the noise going on outside his door, Brian doubted a nurse would be in to yell at him. He scrolled through Jensen's contact list until he came to Marx's number.

"I'm surprised you called. After our last conversation, I doubted I'd ever hear from you again."

Brian didn't know what the hell Marx meant, but obviously the head of the WPU thought he was talking to Jensen. "It's Brian Phipps."

"What's happened to Jensen?" Marx's voice ratcheted up a notch.

"Nothing yet, but it will if you don't help me."

\* \* \* \* \*

The hallway was in chaos when Jensen stepped out of Brian's room. Nurses and doctors were wheeling crash carts in three different directions. "What's going on?" he asked one of the orderlies.

The guy didn't even slow down. Jensen followed the man, hoping for some answers. The room at the end of the hall teemed with activity. Jensen peered around the corner and came face-to-face with one of his biggest nightmares.

He couldn't determine whether the shape on the bed had been a man or woman. The white dry powder covering the form along with a fire extinguisher in the hands of a nurse told him all he needed to know. *Just like Alcatraz*. His heart skipped a beat. He'd left Brian alone.

Jensen turned on his heels and sprinted back to his lover's side, but was sidetracked by another team of hospital personnel as they rushed into the room next to Brian's. One glance and Jensen panicked. He knew damn well what the scene really meant. *No. You can't have him.*

Machines beeped like crazy as a doctor attempted to cut the oxygen tube that had wound its way around the patient's neck. The guy was obviously already dead, his skin a bright shade of purple, his eyes almost popping out of their sockets.

Jensen threw open Brian's door and was surprised to see his lover on the phone. "We've got to get out of here!" he shouted as he moved toward Brian.

Brian hung up and gestured to his bag. "I agree. The longer I'm here, the more people will die. Grab the bag and let's go."

Jensen picked up the duffel and held his hand out to Brian. It was clear by the pallor of Brian's skin he was in a great deal of pain, but what was the alternative? If he

tried to carry Brian, his stitches would only pull more, and staying in the room wasn't an option. "Can you make it?"

Brian bit his lip and nodded. "I don't have much choice."

"Lean on me if you need to. I don't wanna hurt you, so I'll leave it up to you."

They made it out of the hospital relatively easily. The staff were busy putting out fires and trying to save lives. By the time they reached the sidewalk, Brian had already thrown up from the pain. Jensen wished more than anything that he could pick his love up and carry him, but it wasn't possible. "Wait here and I'll try to hail a cab."

"No need. Marx should be pulling up any minute," Brian informed him, holding his stomach.

Jensen felt like he'd been punched in the gut. "What? You called Fisher? He won't help us. He already told me that. Besides, Fisher lives hours away by plane. He won't make it in time to help us."

Brian grimaced, his face screwed up in pain. "You just have to know what to say to the guy."

Before Jensen could question Brian, a big black car screeched to a halt in front of them. The window slid down and Jensen looked at the shiny bald head of the Ving Rhames look-alike inside. "Fisher," he greeted coldly, stunned that his old friend was in town. "What're you doing here?"

"Get in," Fisher's deep voice demanded.

Left with little choice, Jensen opened the back door and helped a near-naked Brian into the car. "Lie down on the seat, baby," Jensen instructed. "If you need to vomit, don't worry about getting Fisher's carpet nasty. It's a rental."

Fisher snorted from the front seat. "You're an ass, Black."

With Brian safely in the car, Jensen threw the bag on the floorboard and climbed into the passenger seat. Fisher sped away from the curb and glanced at his rearview mirror. "I've already rented a boat. It's waiting for us at the Gashouse Cove Marina."

Jensen was still confused. "Why're you doing this?"

Fisher reached between them and pulled out a file. "As of noon today, I'm no longer employed by the WPU."

"They fired you?" Jensen asked, taking the folder.

"I resigned. I left the letter on my desk last night after you called."

Jensen held up the file. "So what's this?"

"The end of my career and possibly the beginning of my incarceration," Fisher responded with a dry chuckle.

Jensen opened the folder and flinched. "Jesus Christ!"

"What?" Brian yelled from the backseat.

After looking at several of the explicit photos, Jensen passed them back to Brian. He tried to read the attached report, but the adrenaline flowing through his body wouldn't allow him to concentrate. "Talk to me, Fisher."

Fisher took a deep breath as he parked the car. "Let's wait until we get to the island." Without further explanation, Fisher opened his door and got out of the car.

Jensen looked over his shoulder at Brian. His lover stared at a black-and-white photo of a dismembered body. Brian met Jensen's gaze. "No wonder the ghosts are out for revenge."

Fisher pounded his fist on the hood of the car, making Jensen jump. "Come on!" Fisher yelled.

Jensen got out of the car and helped Brian before picking up the duffel. His gaze kept returning to the formidable island in front of them. "I sure as hell hope you know what you're doing," he mumbled to Brian.

## Chapter Seven

Stepping into his house, Jensen no longer felt at home. Strange what a difference forty-eight hours and a couple of gruesome attacks could make. He took off Brian's hospital gown and helped him to the couch. Jensen glanced over his shoulder at a bug-eyed Fisher. He narrowed his gaze at his friend, clearly telling him to turn away from the sight of Brian's nude but tortured body. Fisher chuckled and walked into the kitchen.

"I'll get a sheet to cover you," Jensen told Brian.

"So how did you get to San Francisco so fast?" Jensen asked Fisher, as he pulled a pale yellow sheet out of the linen closet. He covered Brian, making sure the sheet tented over the back of the couch to keep from touching his mauled flesh.

Fisher came into the room and took up residence in Jensen's favorite chair. "I flew in during the night. I was asleep in the parking garage down the street from the hospital when Brian called me."

Jensen's gaze flew to Brian. "Why *did* you call him?"

Brian refused to make eye contact. "I knew you'd need him."

"And you will," Fisher butted in.

"Okay, so we're here. Talk." Jensen sat on the arm of the couch and reached down to idly stroke Brian's black curls, wrapping them around his fingers.

Fisher lifted the heavy file from the coffee table and flipped through it. He held up a picture. "This is Martin Williams, guard at Alcatraz from September 1947 to March tenth, 1963. On March tenth of 1962, Martin Williams was trapped in the prison library by nine prisoners. The door was barricaded and the inmates spent the next four hours raping and beating Williams.

"By the time prison officials forced their way inside the library, Williams was barely alive. The prisoners were sent to solitary and charged with rape, kidnapping, and attempted murder. Notice I said attempted murder. Williams somehow managed not only to survive the attack, but return to work seven months later."

"He came back?" Brian questioned.

Jensen could hear the tension in Brian's voice. He lowered his hand from Brian's hair to brush across the prickly whiskers of his lover's jaw.

"Yep. The psychologist in charge of treating Williams after the attack said his patient had come to terms with what had happened. He was actually the one who suggested Williams be sent back to Alcatraz instead of being transferred elsewhere.

"Williams was a career guard, so the officials trusted his psychologist knew what the hell he was doing when he said Williams was ready to come back. After he returned to work, Williams continued performing his duties like a model employee until the one-year anniversary of his attack. The prisoners responsible for that attack were still in solitary. Williams bribed the guards and was handed the keys to the inmates' cells. Already disgusted by what the prisoners had done to one of their own, the guards left Williams alone in D Block."

Fisher placed the picture of Williams on the table and picked up several of the photos Jensen had seen earlier. "One by one, Williams entered the cells of his attackers, cut off their hands, raped them, and then proceeded to torture them—some by fire, some by strangulation, and three believed to be the masterminds behind the initial

attack were found completely dismembered with a fire ax. After he'd killed the last one, Martin Williams put his service revolver into his mouth and blew his brains out."

"Fuck," Jensen mumbled. "I read everything I could get my hands on about this prison. So why did none of this turn up in my research?"

Fisher put the black-and-white pictures back into the folder. "Because government officials didn't want the general public to know. They closed Alcatraz down eleven days later, citing the reason as the building's deterioration."

"Wh-what did they do with the bodies?" Brian asked.

Fisher stood and tossed the file to the table. He put his hands deep into his pockets and walked toward the window. "Martin Williams's body was returned to his wife. The nine inmates were buried here on the island in one of the cellars."

Jensen was dumbfounded. How had the United States government gotten away with it for so long? "Where, exactly?"

"Doesn't matter. They're not there anymore. When plans began for reconstruction, the lighthouse was already deemed unsafe. It was decided to dig the bones up and encapsulate them within the structure."

"That's why the ghosts have suddenly surfaced. You disturbed them," Brian accused.

Jensen could tell by the rigid set to Fisher's shoulders and downturned head, his friend was ashamed of his part in the cover-up. "Why'd you go along with it?" he finally asked.

Fisher sighed and turned to face him. "It was already a fifty-year-old secret. I signed the classified agreement, not realizing it would come back to bite me in the ass, but when inmates started dying..."

"You offered up Brian to appease your own guilt," Jensen finished for his old friend.

"Yeah." Fisher's gaze swung to Brian. "I'm sorry. I had no idea things would get this bad."

Jensen rose from the arm of the couch and paced around the room. "So, the ghosts are the nine prisoners. What about the Mundji?"

"That's an easy one," Brian interjected. "Martin Williams was called back from hell by the spirits of the nine men."

"So how does a human become a Mundji rather than the other kind of ghosts we've been dealing with?"

"Because Williams was actually buried. His soul left this plane but instead of going to heaven, it went to hell, where it belonged. The nine inmates called a spirit directly from hell. That's a Mundji," Brian added.

"Why would they dredge up the ghost of the man who'd killed them in the first place? It just doesn't make sense to me," Jensen wondered aloud.

Brian looked from Fisher back to Jensen. "Because they're recreating the massacre the government tried to cover up."

\* \* \* \* \*

While Fisher took his turn swinging the sledgehammer, Jensen pulled another cigarette out of his pack and lit up.

"I can't believe you started smoking again," Fisher said with disgust.

"Yeah, well, stick around awhile and maybe the reason will hit ya," Jensen spat.

Fisher looked at him for several seconds before going back to work. The lighthouse doorway had been sealed with three layers of concrete blocks, making it difficult for even a man of Fisher's size to break through. Jensen wouldn't admit it to Fisher, but he still felt his old friend had betrayed him.

Jensen took another drag off his cigarette and stared at the house. He hated leaving Brian alone, but his lover had insisted on making his needed phone calls in private. Jensen looked down at the four big buckets of holy water Brian had prepared

earlier. Brian had been emphatic that he be the one to administer the blessed liquid, saying Jensen still didn't believe enough in its power.

Fisher stopped swinging the hammer and took off his shirt. "This last one's a bitch."

Jensen studied his friend. It had been a long time since he'd seen his friend without a shirt on. Despite his age, Fisher Marx was still one hot motherfucker. Marx had everything going for him—looks, job, power. Jensen still couldn't believe Fisher had given up the position he'd worked his entire adult life to attain.

"Why're you really doing this?" Jensen couldn't help asking.

Fisher wiped his face on his shirt and dropped to the ground beside Jensen. "Well, I could say because it's the right thing to do, but that's not the truth."

"So what is the truth?" Jensen prodded.

Fisher looked out over the foggy bay. "Because I love you, you stupid jerk. Nothing, not a job, not the threat of going to prison, nothing, is worth losing that."

Jensen was extremely touched. Years ago he and Fisher had played around a bit, but they decided they made better friends than lovers. Neither of them was interested in forming an attachment. Of course that didn't mean they hadn't counted on each other over the years for more than sex. Jensen put his hand on Fisher's massive shoulder. "I love you, too."

Fisher shrugged, dislodging Jensen's hand from its resting place. "Enough mush. It's your turn."

Smiling, Jensen stood and tossed his cigarette to the ground. "By the way, I'll give these up if we live through this."

"You'd better. I'm not saving your ass to have you die of lung cancer in ten years."

Chuckling, Jensen picked up the sledgehammer and went back to work.

\* \* \* \* \*

With trembling fingers, Brian replaced the receiver on its cradle. The conversation he'd just ended had shaken him to his core. How the hell was he supposed to defeat something as powerful as the Mundji?

He carefully got to his feet and grabbed the sheet of paper at his side. Brian still couldn't figure out why Miss Birdie Cox needed to speak with Jensen. She'd already informed Brian of the ritual needed to send the Mundji back to hell. What else could there be? *Maybe she needs to tell Jensen what to do once the Mundji possesses me? What if I'm not able to finish the ritual on my own?*

Slowly making his way outside, Brian called to Jensen. "Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Jensen stopped midswing and rushed to Brian's side. "What's wrong?"

Brian held out the sheet of paper. "I just finished talking to a woman Emmett put me in touch with. She's the only parapsychologist to ever take on a Mundji and survive."

Jensen's face paled at the statement. "And?"

"And she told me what I needed to do, but she also said it was imperative she spoke to you before we proceed."

Jensen took the paper and looked at the name and number. He glanced over his shoulder at Fisher. "Guess you're up, big guy. I've got a phone call to make." Turning to Brian, Jensen kissed him. "How're you feeling?"

"Sleepy. I know the pills are necessary, but they really knock me on my ass." Brian tried his best to smile for his worried lover.

"Why don't I get you into bed? We've got about another hour of pounding to do on that wall."

Brian held onto Jensen's arm, leaning on his man as they walked back into the apartment and down the hall to the bedroom. "I'll rest for a little while, but I have to get things ready for later."

"You mean the ritual for the bones?"

"No, I mean the supplies needed to take care of the Mundji."

"Dare I ask?"

Brian momentarily buried his face into the pillow. He knew Jensen was going to have a fit, but there truly was no other way. In the end, Brian decided to tell Jensen only the basics. "The Mundji needs to be submerged in a combination of holy water and blood from the person he possesses," he confessed.

"The inmate bodies have all been removed from Alcatraz..." Jensen stopped as he realized what Brian was telling him. "No. Absolutely not."

"We don't have a choice," he tried to reason. "I'll pick a non-life-threatening cut to reopen, but it has to be my blood."

Jensen sat on the side of the bed and leaned down until he was nose to nose with Brian. "You expect me to sit by and let you bleed into a vat of water? Are you crazy?"

"No. I'm a realist." Brian reached up and cupped Jensen's cheek. "I want a forever with you, and this is the only chance I have to get it." He pulled Jensen's head down for a kiss. "Hopefully by this time tomorrow we'll be able to walk away from all of this, together."

Jensen shut him up with a kiss of desperation. Brian was scared, but he'd do his best to soothe Jensen's fears. So when Brian broke the kiss, he grinned. "Go call Birdie, and I'll try to get some beauty sleep."

"I still don't like it," Jensen said, standing.

"I know, but think of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jensen wiped the tears from his eyes and walked outside. "I need to talk to you."

Fisher turned around, smiling. "Glad you're back. I think we've got a big enough hole to climb through."

Jensen waved Fisher off. "Leave it for a minute." He pulled a cigarette out of his nearly depleted pack.

Fisher dropped the sledgehammer and walked over to him. "Is there something wrong with Brian?"

Jensen shook his head. "I just got off the phone with the only person to ever successfully send a Mundji back to hell."

"And?"

Jensen squeezed his eyes shut, the tears falling once again. "In order to save Brian's life I have to betray him." The words still gutted him. It didn't matter that he had no intention of truly betraying his love; the fact that Brian would believe he had was bad enough.

"What're you talking about?"

Jensen stepped back and took a drag from his cigarette. "Birdie told me something that Brian left out of his explanation. The Mundji has to possess Brian before it can be vanquished."

"What about the holy water thing? I thought Brian said he couldn't be possessed."

"Holy water isn't what keeps the Mundji from possessing a person. It's the nature of his heart. A person needs to be filled with hate, which means I have to make sure Brian hates me in order to give this vanquishing thing a chance."

"Does Brian know?"

"Not that part, no. That's why Birdie asked that I call her." Stomping on his cigarette, Jensen glanced at the building. "I'm gonna need you to fuck me."

## Chapter Eight

Brian awoke by a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Brian? Baby? We're ready for you to do your thing," Jensen said, placing kisses on Brian's forehead.

Brian loved opening his eyes to Jensen's gorgeous face. "When this is over, can we both go to bed and stay there for about a week?" he asked.

He noticed an expression on Jensen's face Brian couldn't identify. Moments later Jensen kissed him. "When this is over, we can do anything you want."

"Good to know," Brian answered. *He's probably just worried.* He held out his hand. "Help me up?"

Jensen nodded and eased him to a standing position. He held out a pair of dark green jogging shorts. "As much as I love your bits and pieces, I really don't think they need to dangle freely at a time like this."

Brian grinned and nodded his understanding. The pain that accompanied each movement threatened to send Brian to his knees, but he bit the inside of his cheek and bore it silently for Jensen's sake.

"There's no way you're going to lift those buckets of water," Jensen remarked, after getting the loose shorts settled low on Brian's hips. "Will it screw up anything if I hold them and you maybe sprinkle the shit around with a cup or something?"

Despite the pain, Brian couldn't help but chuckle. "You're the only person I know who'd dare refer to holy water as shit."

Jensen grinned. "Well, you know, I am one of a kind."

Brian tilted his chin up for a kiss. "You certainly are, love." Brian was grateful for the brief moment of normalcy, because what they were about to embark on was as far away from normal as a person could get.

After slipping on a pair of shoes, Jensen helped Brian outside to the old lighthouse. He was glad there was still plenty of daylight. He'd hate to think about going into the bowels of the oversized coffin at night.

He was surprised not to see Fisher. "Where'd Marx go?"

Jensen's face turned pink. "I forgot I was out of salt. Fisher went to find us some."

"In the prison?" Visions of Fisher's body being ripped apart by the already angry ghosts assaulted him.

"No," Jensen said, and kissed Brian's forehead. "He went to the guards' dormitory."

Brian blew out a long breath in relief. "You nearly gave me a heart attack."

Jensen took a step closer until Brian's body was flush against the bigger man's. The kiss Jensen surprised him with was more passionate than any they'd shared in days. Brian actually felt his cock filling in the loose-fitting shorts. He groaned into Jensen's mouth as he sucked on his lover's tongue.

Breaking the kiss for some much-needed air, Brian gazed into Jensen's eyes. "I love you."

"I pray that you always do, no matter what," Jensen whispered against Brian's lips.

There it was again, that look. Brian couldn't help but to think something was going on with Jensen that he didn't know about. "Is everything okay?" he asked.

Jensen stared into Brian's eyes for several seconds. "Ask me that question when all this is behind us."

So, maybe that was it. Maybe Jensen was simply suffering from a case of nerves. "Okay," Brian agreed, dropping the subject. He caught sight of Fisher jogging toward them with two containers. "By the way, the salt isn't holy, so either you or Marx can spread that before I sprinkle the bones with the holy water."

"I'll let Fisher do it while I hold the buckets for you."

"Sounds like a plan. You ready to do this thing?" Brian asked, looking from Jensen to Fisher.

"No," Fisher said. "But let's do it anyway."

Brian waited for Jensen and Fisher to pick up the battery-operated lanterns already set out beside the newly created passageway. As he stood by the opening, he felt a chill race through his body that had nothing to do with the wind blowing off the bay. Movement off to his left caught his attention. Shadows swirled like small dust devils within the depths of the darkened lighthouse. "*I'm trying to help,*" he broadcast. "*Just let me help you.*"

"Brian?"

Brian turned to see Jensen and Fisher standing behind him, supplies in hand. "You okay?" Jensen prodded.

"They're confused," he whispered. "I can't predict what they'll do." Brian looked over Jensen's shoulder at Fisher. "I'll understand if you don't wanna go in there."

Fisher shook his head. "It's my mess. I'll accept the consequences."

Brian nodded. "Let me go in first and calm them down."

"Be careful," Jensen said, then placed a quick kiss to Brian's lips.

Taking a deep calming breath, Brian entered the interior as Jensen held his lantern up through the passageway. It wasn't difficult to see the pile of bones dumped into a

heap against the far, rounded wall. Brian was sickened by the total lack of respect paid to the murdered men. "I'm so sorry they did this to you."

Several of the discarded bones rose and flew toward Brian's head. He reacted quickly, blocking the majority of them with his forearm, feeling his freshly-stitched wounds pull. One, he believed it was an arm bone, clipped him high on the cheek. Brian winced, barely keeping himself from screaming. He could feel the blood slowly trickling from the gash toward his jaw.

Brian glanced over his shoulder to make sure Jensen hadn't seen. Luckily, he seemed to be too far inside the shadowed interior. The last thing he wanted was his lover storming in, upsetting the ghosts even more.

*"Do you want me to help or not? I won't continue if you're going to hurl body parts at me."* The air around him calmed somewhat. *"Thank you. I'm going to call the man I love in to help me finish this. Hurt one hair on his head, and I'll make sure you never get off Alcatraz. Got me?"*

Brian turned and called for Jensen and Fisher to come in. He wasn't sure where his bravado came from, but it seemed to calm the spirits more than his pleading had. As Jensen joined him, Brian pointed to the several bones that had been flung at him earlier. "Can you do me a favor and pick those up? They need to be returned to the pile."

Next he turned his gaze on Fisher. "Before we go any further, I think you owe these men an apology."

Fisher looked freaked-out. "Is that what they're demanding?"

"No, it's what I'm demanding. It doesn't matter what these men did fifty years ago, no one, and I mean no one, deserves to have their bones tossed into a pile and forgotten. It's absolutely despicable."

Fisher had the decency to look completely and utterly ashamed. "I didn't realize what I was signing off on. I'm sorry."

"Don't tell me, tell them." Brian pointed toward the remains.

Fisher did more than Brian ever expected when he walked over and knelt beside the pile and began to whisper. Brian couldn't hear what he said, but he knew it wasn't meant for his ears anyway. He also didn't miss the tears Fisher wiped away as he stood and turned back to them.

"What happened to your face?" Fisher asked, getting his first good look at Brian in the lantern light.

"Just a little misunderstanding. I'm fine." Brian looked at Jensen's worried expression. "Seriously, I'm fine." He gave Jensen a quick reassuring kiss. "Hold that bucket up for me, please. Fisher, can you liberally sprinkle the salt on the pile?"

As Fisher did what Brian had asked, Brian took a large cupful of the holy water. He'd learned long ago it wasn't a matter of praying over the bones, but rather sending them peaceful thoughts, urging them to cross over.

As he splattered cup after cup of water over the pile of bones, Brian talked to the ghosts. "There are people who've been waiting a very long time to see you. Please, leave this place and be with your loved ones. Your anger and the injustices done to you have been duly noted and will never be forgotten. Go in peace. Allow yourself the freedom of true death."

Once finished, Brian closed his eyes and opened himself to his surroundings. The immediate area around him appeared free of the restless ghosts. What disturbed him most was the thunderous evil still emanating from the prison itself. There was no doubt the Mundji was not happy its food source had crossed over.

Brian opened his eyes. "We'll sprinkle the remainder of the salt and holy water, but I think they're gone."

Jensen and Fisher sighed loudly. "How will we know for sure?" Jensen asked.

"We give these men a proper grave," he said, looking at Fisher. "When this is over, I need you to tell your ex-employers that they can either give these men what they deserve, or I'll go to the press. I also want a full pardon for any charges they may devise against the three of us."

Fisher nodded, and placed a strong hand on Brian's shoulder. "I'll tell them. Thank you."

Brian shook his head. "You did the right thing when it came down to it. I can't fault you for how you started the race, only that you had the heart to finish it."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jensen handed the television remote to Fisher. "I'm gonna hit the sack."

"I think I'll watch the news first. It'll be interesting to see what kind of spin the WPU put on the hospital deaths."

Jensen stood and stretched. His back popped as he worked the tension out of his spine. "Thanks for agreeing to stay the night. I just didn't think Brian was up to tackling the Mundji tonight after everything else he's been through today."

"No problem. It's not like I have a home to go back to anyway."

Jensen hadn't really thought of that. He was in the same boat as Fisher. "I guess we'll both be homeless after tomorrow, huh?" Jensen looked around his home. Other than his clothes and personal items, the rest of the furnishings had come with the appointed housing.

"I put a call in to an old buddy of ours from the service. Do you remember Conner Diggs?"

"Hell yeah, I remember Diggs. What's he up to nowadays?"

"He's a mayor, if you can believe it. A little town in southern Missouri."

"I'd have never guessed that in a million years. Diggs always seemed too rebellious to fit into polite society."

Fisher chuckled. "Well, I get the feeling Diggs isn't your typical mayor. Anyway, I asked him if he knew of any job openings in the police department down there."

Jensen almost choked. "Are you shittin' me? You wanna be a cop? You just retired as head of the biggest police force in the world. Why would you want to be a regular cop?"

Fisher shrugged. "Maybe to get the chance to do what I should've been doing all along, protecting people."

The lost expression on his oldest friend's face nearly broke his heart. Jensen sat down and wrapped an arm around Fisher. "Don't sell yourself short. You did a damn fine job of protecting people for the last twenty-three years."

"Yeah? Tell that to the seventeen dead inmates."

"Don't do that to yourself, man. You're gonna have to let it go or it'll eat you up inside." Jensen released Fisher and sat back. "So, a cop, huh?"

"Yeah." Fisher chuckled softly. "I could find out if Diggs could use one more good man on his force."

Laughing, Jensen stood. "I'll let ya know."

He waved good night and headed for bed. Stepping into the dark room, he tried to undress quietly so as not to wake Brian.

"It's about time you came to bed," Brian mumbled.

"Sorry, did I wake you?" Jensen eased onto the bed.

"No. I've been lying here thinking."

Sliding under the covers, Jensen scooted as close to Brian as he dared. "Something bothering you?" he asked, running his fingers through Brian's curls.

Brian didn't say anything but Jensen felt a tremor run through his lover's body. "Hey," he soothed, kissing Brian's cheek. "What's wrong, baby?"

"I-I'm afraid. My granddad was a fantastic parapsychologist. If he couldn't beat the Mundji, what makes me think I can?"

Jensen ran his knuckles over Brian's five o'clock shadow. He hated to see his lover hurting. "Your granddad didn't have me by his side."

Brian buried his face in the pillow. "He didn't have me either." Brian's voice cracked as he confessed. "I should've been there with him. He asked for my help, but I blew him off to go out with some guy. Maybe he would've survived..."

"Shhh," Jensen soothed. "Don't think that way. We can't change the past." Jensen sighed. "I just had this same conversation with Fisher. What's with the two most important people in my life beating themselves up?"

Jensen rested his head on Brian's pillow, snuggling closer to his man. "You know, as much as I love you, I really don't know that much about you. Like where do you live? What kind of childhood did you have? Do you have people in your life you can count on when times are hard? You know, the simple, everyday stuff."

Brian dried his eyes and turned his head to face Jensen. "Well, not much to tell, really. My mom had me when she was a sophomore in high school, so my grandparents adopted me. Mom graduated, moved across the country to Virginia with some guy. I talk to her maybe once a year, if that. Grandma passed away when I was eleven, and that's when I started hanging out with Granddad."

No wonder Brian felt so guilty about his grandfather's death. It had just been the two of them for a long time. Jensen ran his fingers through Brian's hair. "So are you gonna tell me where you call home, or do I need to Google you?"

Brian chuckled. "Shall I give you the exact address, or will you be accompanying me back to Fort Collins, Colorado?"

"Fort Collins, huh?"

"Yep, I live in the same house where I was born and raised." Brian transferred his head to Jensen's shoulder. "So, you interested in moving to Fort Collins?"

Jensen curled his arm around Brian's head and played with his lover's earlobe. "It gets awfully cold there."

Brian ran his hand down Jensen's chest to grasp his burgeoning erection. "I've got blankets."

Jensen knew he should discourage Brian's advances. The last thing Brian needed was a rough-and-tumble with his wounds just starting to heal, but damn, did it feel good. He spread his legs and sighed. "Stop if it starts to hurt."

Brian scooted down a little farther and circled Jensen's areola with his tongue. "I can honestly say I doubt I'm up for fucking, but this I can definitely do." Brian latched on to Jensen's nipple.

"Feels so good," Jensen moaned. He repositioned enough to squeeze his arm between Brian's stomach and the mattress. Thank God his arms were long enough to reach his lover's cock.

When Jensen's hand encircled Brian's shaft, his lover automatically thrust into the hold. A hiss of pain escaped Brian at the movement. "Stay still. Let me do this for you," Jensen told Brian.

Although not nearly as thick as his own, Brian's cock was longer. It always seemed to work that way. It was the small guys who always got to carry around the biggest packages. "You gonna fuck me with this someday?" he asked.

Brian groaned and released Jensen's nipple. "Seriously? You'd let me make love to you?"

Jensen chuckled. "Don't let my size fool ya. I enjoy a cock in my ass on occasion, and this," Jensen said, squeezing Brian's cock, "would be a real pleasure."

Brian started jacking Jensen faster. Jensen's statement had obviously turned the smaller man on. He'd have to remember to talk dirty to Brian more often. Jensen heard a slight hitch in Brian's breathing as he continued to fondle his cock and balls. "You like that?" Jensen asked, picking up speed.

Brian answered by pushing his thumb against the slit on the crown of Jensen's cock. "Oh, I take that as a yes," Jensen panted, lifting his hips off the bed to fuck Brian's hand at an alarming speed. "You'd better catch up, or I'll be coming alone."

Jensen lifted his other hand and licked his fingers before easing them into Brian's ass. Brian gasped and stiffened when Jensen ran a finger over his lover's prostate. "Yeah, that's it, baby, give it to me."

The first string of heat to cover Jensen's fist tipped him over the edge. "Fuck!" he yelled as his balls emptied, completely covering Brian's hand in the thick white seed.

Pulling his fingers out of Brian's ass, Jensen kissed his lover. "I'll get a washcloth."

"Not yet," Brian mumbled. "I like the smell of our combined scents."

Jensen nodded and began licking Brian's cum from his fingers. He could definitely become addicted to Brian's taste. Jensen tried to imagine waking with Brian every morning. "You sure you don't mind me tagging along when you go home?"

Brian grinned without opening his eyes. "That depends. How do you feel about working in a bookstore a couple days a week?"

"Huh?" Jensen leaned up on one elbow and looked down at Brian.

Brian opened his eyes. "I own a bookstore. I'm always needing help."

That surprised Jensen. "I thought you did this ghost thing full-time."

Brian laughed. "There aren't that many ghosts around. Besides, except for travel expenses, I usually don't charge for my services."

"Well, I hope to hell you're charging the WPU."

"Yeah. I'd like to see their faces when they get my bill."

Jensen lay back down and teased Brian's lower lip with his teeth and tongue. "I never considered a career working in a bookstore. Are the benefits good?"

"Mmm-hmm," Brian hummed. "I hear the shop owner gives good head in the back room if you're lucky enough to get on his good side."

"Well, fuck! You're gonna have to fire the rest of your employees. I don't care if I have to work seven days a week."

Brian started laughing again. "I don't think you need to worry about Mrs. Halloran. She's sixty-three and the grandmother of eight."

"Yeah, I'll size her up once I meet her. If I see her looking at your basket, she's out of there," Jensen joked.

Brian chuckled around a yawn. Knowing they'd both need their strength, Jensen gave Brian one last kiss for the night. "Get some sleep."

"Mmm-hmm." Brian's breathing evened out and within a matter of moments he was sound asleep, blowing little puffs of air into Jensen's face.

Jensen tried to close his eyes and relax, but knowing what he'd be forced to do in a few hours kept sleep at bay. He was still awake when the sun rose the following morning.

## Chapter Nine

Jensen placed the bowl of scrambled eggs on the table and sat down. "So, let's go through this once more. Fisher and I'll carry one of the inmate bunks into the library." He stopped talking and glanced at Brian. "You sure the library? Those beds are heavy as fuck."

Brian shrugged and put a forkful of eggs in his mouth. "Doesn't have to be, I guess. Just figured it was kind of symbolic, ya know, since he was attacked there and all." Brian's face flushed. "Hey, I've never done this before, don't forget."

Jensen reached across the table and put his hand over Brian's. "I know. So, you think it would work in a regular cell?"

Brian chewed his food, deep in thought. "Actually, I'm embarrassed to say, it might be a better plan." Brian looked from Fisher back to Jensen. "Once I get in there you could lock me in."

"No." Jensen shook his head. "Abso-fucking-lutely not."

Brian turned his hand over and threaded his fingers through Jensen's. "Once the Mundji is inside of me, I could very well kill you. Please don't put me through that. I'd never forgive —"

"I'll make sure," Fisher said, butting in.

Jensen looked at his old friend. "You'd help lock him in a cell?"

"If it'll keep you safe? I sure as hell would," Fisher stated with a nod.

Jensen threw up his hands in frustration and took his uneaten breakfast to the sink. "Forget I mentioned the cell. I'll get the damned bed to the library one way or another."

Brian shook his head. "No. I think since you mentioned it, the cell is a much better idea."

"Dammit, Brian! Why do you insist on making this more dangerous than it already is?"

Brian looked at him with understanding eyes. "If something goes wrong, nothing you could do would save me anyway. Please. At least let me protect you."

Jensen wondered if Brian would feel the need to protect him once he found him naked in the arms of Fisher. He knew in his heart what Birdie Cox had told him to do was wrong, but his head told him it was the best way to save Brian's life. The more hate in Brian's heart, even if it was directed at Jensen, the faster they could vanquish that evil son of a bitch Mundji back to hell. Yeah, his lover may hate his guts after all was said and done, but at least Brian would be alive. The more he thought about it, the queasier his stomach felt. "I'm gonna get the tools to cut the top off the bed." He stopped at the table and looked at Fisher, the man he'd be betraying Brian with. "You comin'?"

"In a minute. I'd like to finish my breakfast if you don't mind," Fisher answered, moments before shoveling another bite into his mouth.

"Suit yourself. I'm gonna grab the water hose and saw from the groundskeeper's shed. I'll meet you out front in ten minutes."

Brian watched Jensen until he disappeared out the front door. "He's mad," Brian mumbled, pushing his plate away.

"He's worried. There's a difference," Fisher replied.

"That makes two of us."

"No. That makes three of us." Fisher sighed, and scooped the last of the eggs onto his plate. "You're lucky, ya know?"

Lucky? That wasn't a word he'd have connected to himself at that moment. "Yeah, why?"

"Because Jensen loves you." Fisher studied his plate. "As far as I know, Jensen's never loved anyone."

Brian ran a hand through his hair. He knew that tone of voice, and the realization was like a blow to the stomach. "You love him," Brian finally said.

"Yeah. We had a thing for awhile, feelings were definitely there on my part, but they've never been reciprocated. Despite everything that's happened between the two of us, I still love the jackass." Fisher stood and picked up his plate. "You finished?" Fisher asked, gesturing to Brian's plate.

"Yes. Thank you." Brian watched as Fisher took the dishes to the sink. He was still stunned by Fisher's confession. If Jensen could've had a man like that, why in the world would he want a scrawny parapsychologist?

The biggest shock was the fact the two men had obviously had an affair. He wondered why Jensen hadn't mentioned it. "Does Jensen know you love him?" he had to ask.

Fisher dried his hands on a towel and tossed it onto the counter. "Yeah. I told him again yesterday, as a matter of fact."

Brian swallowed, trying to force down the bile that rose up his esophagus. Before he could form a reply Fisher turned. "I'd better head over. He'll be pissed if he has to wait on me. You want us to call you once we get the top cut off the bed and get it filled with water?"

"Yeah," he finally answered. His mind was a million miles away. He heard the door open and close and buried his face in his hands. What if Fisher tried to take Jensen

from him? The more he thought about it, the more depressed he became. Shit, maybe going off with Fisher would be the best thing for Jensen. At least his lover wouldn't be under threat of ghosts and creatures pulled up from the bowels of hell.

What if Brian died during the vanquishing? How long would it take for Jensen to forget him and move on? Would Jensen seek comfort in Fisher's arms?

After spending a good thirty minutes worrying, he called Mrs. Halloran and checked on the store.

It was over an hour later when he hung up, still shaking his head at the sweet old woman. Mrs. Halloran's endless parade of stories had definitely lightened his mood. He hadn't realized how long they'd talked until he glanced at the clock. "Shit." He picked up the phone again and called Jensen's cell.

When the call went to Jensen's voice mail, a feeling of dread crept into Brian's heart. He quickly dug out the paper with Fisher's number and tried that, with no luck. *Shit.* After the conversation with Fisher earlier, he wondered if he could trust Marx to be alone with Jensen. Was he just being incredibly jealous or was there really something to worry about? He'd never been in love before. How was he supposed to know what men in love did or didn't do with ex-lovers? Had Jensen and Fisher gone off to have a quick fuck before things got crazy? Brian cursed his battered body. He'd be more than happy to give Jensen sexual relief if that's what he needed. He thought about the previous night. It was obvious Jensen had wanted more than a quick hand job. Fuck! Why hadn't he just sucked up the pain and let Jensen make love to him? He didn't need to worry about the Mundji killing any real chance he had at a relationship with Jensen. Brian seemed to be doing a fine job of that all by himself.

Thoughts of the Mundji swung his worries in a completely different direction. *What if something's happened to them? Shit!* While he'd been sitting there feeling sorry for himself, what if the Mundji had decided to exact its own brand of playtime on the man he loved?

Brian sprang from his chair and nearly doubled over in pain from pulling sutures. "Motherfucker," he ground out between clenched teeth, and steadied himself on the edge of the table. Once the nausea passed, Brian carefully turned, picked up a large knife from the counter, and walked slowly out the front door.

He'd never forgive himself if the Mundji had attacked Jensen and Fisher. He shrugged off the negativism. If they hadn't answered it wasn't because of misplaced feelings; it was because they *couldn't* answer. Brian had no doubt that whatever had happened to one had happened to both. Otherwise he would've heard something.

The outside prison door was propped open with a large rock. Brian sighed in relief. He hadn't even thought about how he would get in. Thankfully Jensen had done the thinking for him.

He made his way down the hall, looking through the various cells. Why hadn't he asked which section of the prison Jensen and Fisher would be working in? When he didn't immediately spot them, he slowly made his way up the stairs to the guards' catwalk. "Jensen!" he called, looking down on the individual cells. He started to panic when his lover didn't answer.

With no visual on the two men, Brian went to the security console. Images flipped from room to room every couple of seconds. Brian held his breath, waiting for some sign of Jensen and Fisher's location. When the camera switched to a view of the library, Brian's heart stopped.

*No. Oh God, no.* With tears in his eyes, he made his way down the stairs to the library. Standing outside the room, he took a deep breath. Brian threw the door open and stared at the nightmare in front of him.

Jensen was naked, sitting on the edge of a library table with his legs wrapped around Fisher. The two men had been locked in a passionate kiss when he'd walked in, but quickly sprang apart. "Brian!" Jensen shouted. He jumped off the table and began picking his clothes up from the floor. "Brian, I can explain."

An equally nude Fisher chuckled. "Give it up, Jensen. He's never gonna believe my dick happened to find its way into your ass."

Brian covered his mouth and left the room. He stumbled down the corridor until he came to the cell Jensen and Fisher had been working on, before...

He lost the battle and vomited, spewing his breakfast into the clear acrylic toilet. He clenched his eyes shut as he heard bare running feet slap their way down the hall. He hated himself for believing the fairy tale he'd spun around his relationship with Jensen. *You're a fool, Brian Phipps.*

"Brian!" Jensen yelled, coming into the cell.

"Get out!" Brian screamed. He picked up the knife that had fallen beside the toilet and looked at the blade as it glinted in the overhead lights.

"Put the knife down," Jensen begged, his voice breaking.

Brian looked into Jensen's betraying eyes. "Get out and let me finish this." Brian crawled toward the single acrylic bed that Jensen and Fisher had separated from its top and filled with water.

Still gripping the knife, Brian raised his hands over the tub of water and slowed his breathing. Once he was centered, he began his prayer. "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen." He said the prayer several times before turning the knife on himself.

"Brian!" Jensen lunged forward, trying to get the knife out of Brian's hand.

Brian's heated gaze flashed to Fisher. "You wanted him? You get him the hell out of here and let me do what I need to do."

Fisher rushed into the room and wrapped his muscular arms around Jensen's waist. "Let the man do what we're here for." Fisher grunted as he tried to muscle Jensen out of the cell.

"No!" Jensen screamed. "Not like this. I can't let him do this not knowing the —"

An *ooof* sounded as Fisher punched Jensen in the stomach.

Brian returned his attention to the task at hand. Instead of reopening one of the wounds on his back, Brian made a long slit across his forearm and plunged the bleeding cut into the blessed water. As he watched the water slowly turn pink, all he could think about was seeing Fisher and Jensen, their bodies nude and locked together in a passionate kiss.

He cursed as he felt the sob rising in his throat. "Dammit!" he screamed, tears dripping freely into the bloody water.

Brian's attention swung to the commotion in the corridor. Fisher Marx stood in front of the cell door as Jensen attempted to get around him. Brian's gaze was riveted to the muscles on display as the two strong men continued to grapple. The vision the two muscular men made was stunning, so incredible in fact, it almost pulled Brian's attention away from the vanquishing. He gripped the knife tighter, imagining the men in the throes of passion instead of wrestling outside the door.

He shook his head, coming back to the present. "Keep him out!" Brian shouted again. He was grateful that even as big as Jensen was, he was still no match for Fisher.

"I can't do this!" Jensen yelled. "Brian what you saw...it wasn't..."

Brian jumped as Fisher tackled Jensen and covered his mouth with both hands. "Shut the fuck up," Fisher growled, more menacing than Brian had ever heard him.

Brian realized something was seriously wrong. Given the tense situation, fighting may be natural, but there was definitely nothing natural about the way the two men were going at it. Brian looked around, opening himself. He could feel the Mundji's presence. *It's close.*

Bracing himself on the side of the acrylic bed, Brian stood and walked toward the cell wall. His eyes narrowed as he watched Fisher. Jensen's elbow shot out and clipped Fisher in the jaw. Fisher's head snapped back and Jensen used the advantage to shove the bigger man from his chest.

Left to their own devices, Brian had no doubt the men would kill each other. Brian opened the cell door. The air in the corridor snapped with electricity as the two men on the floor continued to wrestle for dominance. "Uh...guys?"

Jensen managed to straddle Fisher's chest. Brian was shocked when his lover wrapped his hands around Fisher's neck, pushing against his friend's windpipe. "Guys!" Brian shouted.

"I fucking hate this!" Jensen growled. Jensen looked over his shoulder. "I didn't want to do it, Birdie said..."

Brian was thrust forward onto the floor as the Mundji rushed to possess Jensen. "No!" Brian screamed, lunging toward the man he loved. Although his already-weakened body was no match for a man of Jensen's size, Brian threw himself in an attempt to knock the bigger man off balance. "Take me," he cried.

The momentary shift of Jensen's body was all Fisher needed to buck up and shove Jensen off of him. He scrambled backward and jumped into a crouched fighting stance. "What the hell's happening?"

"It's in him," Brian explained, trying to push Jensen into the cell. He could tell by Jensen's sluggish movements he was fighting the possession with everything he had. If they had a chance of getting his lover out of this alive, it was now. "Help me!"

Fisher wrapped his arms around Jensen's waist and helped Brian push him toward the cell. They were at the threshold when Jensen reached out and braced his hands against the cell walls, blocking any further attempt to shove him in the small cubicle.

Brian could tell the second the Mundji completely took over. Jensen looked over his shoulder and laughed, his breath so rank, nausea assailed Brian.

"Fuck," Fisher spat, trying to breathe through his mouth as Brian gagged and heaved where he stood.

Laughing maniacally, Jensen spun around and knocked Fisher and Brian to the floor. Brian stared wide-eyed as Jensen looked down at him. "I'm hungry," Jensen

growled, rubbing his stomach. "You look like a nice little snack." Jensen opened his mouth and a long, inhuman tongue slithered out to lick not only his lips, but his entire face, before flicking through the air toward Brian.

Brian scrambled backward, the forked tip of the Mundji's tongue going for his throat. Is this what happened to his granddad? Had the Mundji sucked him dry with that nasty pronged tongue?

Brian heard the electrical saw spur to life beside him. He didn't dare take his eyes off Jensen, but he hoped to hell Fisher hurried. "Don't kill him," Brian reminded Fisher. "Jensen's still in there somewhere."

The saw screamed in Brian's ear as Fisher charged toward the four-foot-long tongue. A split second before the spinning blade connected, Jensen turned his head and waved his hand, sending Fisher flying through the air.

Brian watched in horror as Fisher's body connected with one of the acrylic walls. The force was so strong, the thick plastic cracked on impact. "No!" Brian screamed, as Fisher's lifeless body slid to the floor, leaving a trail of blood in its wake.

Knowing he was on his own to save the man he loved, Brian lurched forward, scrambling through Jensen's legs and into the cell. Lunging for the discarded knife, Brian was suddenly pulled backward. Knife in his grip, Brian rolled over just as twin points of pain dug into his sutured calf.

Swinging the knife wildly, Brian managed to cut off the tip of the Mundji's unholy tongue. The Mundji's loud shriek had Brian involuntarily dropping the knife and covering his ears.

*Get him in the water.* Brian lowered his hand and picked the weapon up once more. He dived toward the bed filled with water and faced the Mundji. "You can't touch me in here, you evil sonofabitch!"

He took a deep breath, and prepared for the attack he knew was coming. Before his eyes, the Mundji's tongue regenerated, forming two more deadly prongs. The evil laugh emanating from Jensen sent shivers through Brian's weak and bleeding body.

The regeneration was something Brian hadn't counted on. He knew the Mundji could play cat and mouse with him all day. He quickly tried to devise another avenue of attack. If his plan had any hope of working, he'd need both hands. Brian dropped the knife to the bottom of the makeshift bathtub and summoned all the strength he had left.

When the Mundji's tongue was within reach, Brian stretched out and wrapped his hands around the slithering, slimy appendage above the prongs. He jerked back toward himself with everything he had and was rewarded when Jensen's body was thrown off balance, tumbling into the pool on top of him.

The bloody holy water had no effect on the Mundji except to make it furious. *Because I'm no longer his last victim, it has to be Jensen's blood.* Jensen's hands wrapped around Brian's neck and pushed him under the water, the creature's deadly tongue latching onto Brian's neck.

Brian felt the life force slowly being drained from his body and searched the bottom of the tub for the dropped weapon. He felt the slick surface of the blade and grabbed it, slicing his own hand in the process. His lungs began to burn with the lack of oxygen as he struggled with the knife. By the time Brian worked the handle into his grip, he barely had the strength to lift it. Plunging the blade into the thigh of the man he loved was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do. Brian prayed he hadn't hit a major artery.

As blood began flowing from the open wound, the Mundji's tongue pulled from Brian's neck. He knew he had no more than ten seconds of air left in his lungs. Sending up a quick prayer, Brian squeezed Jensen's punctured thigh, sending more of his precious blood into the water.

He suddenly felt soothing warmth invade him as he continued to struggle in the bloody water. Without knowing how, he felt like Jensen was becoming a part of him. Brian welcomed the warmth with open arms. If this was the last thing he'd ever share with the man he loved, he wanted to embrace it. The episode with Fisher earlier still

hurt, but in the grip of death, Brian didn't want to go to his grave with anything but love in his heart.

Jensen's body lurched, thrashing wildly, bringing Brian back to the battle at hand. Given the opportunity, he pushed the heavy body off his chest and resurfaced, gulping for much-needed oxygen. After reversing positions, Brian submerged Jensen's body as he continued to draw air into his long-deprived lungs. "Come on. Come on," he prayed, as he counted silently.

With one last desperate attempt at survival, the Mundji plunged the forgotten knife in Brian's side. Brian screamed in pain and brought his elbow down on Jensen's face as the water turned an even darker shade of crimson.

Jensen's body jerked once more before going limp. Brian waited ten more seconds before lifting his lover's head out of the water. "Live, dammit," he cried as his own breathing became more labored.

Brian knew it was imperative to get them both out of the altered acrylic bed before he passed out. He didn't know where he found the strength, but he eventually pushed Jensen's upper body over the edge. Brian climbed over the edge and landed on the floor, his hand automatically going to his side. He knew the knife had punctured his lung, but saving Jensen was the most important thing to him at that moment. Once his lover was pulled to the cold floor, Brian looked toward the doorway.

Crossing the distance needed to reach Fisher's cell phone seemed unattainable. Each movement proved laborious, as his now-opened wounds continued to bleed, covering him in a crimson suit of agony. Brian concentrated on putting one arm in front of the other as he dragged himself across the floor, leaving a vibrant red trail in his wake.

He had no idea how long it took him to reach Fisher's limp and bleeding body, but Brian managed to unclip the phone from the man's belt. He turned it on and looked at the display screen. He knew if he called the WPU they were as good as dead, so he managed to punch in 9-1-1.

"Nine-one-one operator. What is the nature of your emergency?" the welcomed voice said.

Brian was panting and wheezing. It took three tries before he could whisper. "Three critically wounded at Alcatraz." Brian wheezed again. "In the prison. We're the only ones here." He passed out before the operator could reply.

## Chapter Ten

An argument woke Brian. He opened his eyes and stared at the acoustic tiled ceiling, trying to get his bearings.

"It's not your fault!" Fisher hissed.

"The hell it's not. I should never have done what that crazy bitch told me to do. Now I may never get the chance to tell him the truth."

Confused by Jensen's words, Brian tried to talk. It was then that he realized he had a tube down his throat. He grunted to get his lover's attention.

"Brian?" Jensen's face appeared, looming over him. "Oh my God." Jensen looked to his left. "Get a doctor," he ordered.

Brian heard footsteps running out of the room. Jensen turned his attention back to Brian. "Oh, baby, I thought I'd lost you forever," Jensen said, peppering Brian's face with kisses.

Brian tried to shake his head no, but passed out before he completed the action.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jensen's throat hurt like hell after almost three weeks spent reading anything and everything to the man he loved. The doctors tried to assure him Brian's coma was

necessary for his body's recovery, but Jensen refused to believe it. He longed to once again see those deep green eyes he'd fallen in love with. It had been nearly a week since Brian had woken briefly. In all, Jensen had spent nineteen and a half days praying his lover would recover.

It turned out that Jensen had been the lucky one among the three. The wound on his thigh had been relatively easy for the doctors to sew. He'd been released two days later and had spent the next four days alternating between Brian and Fisher's bedsides.

Fisher had suffered a severe concussion, requiring a drainage tube to keep the fluid from building up in his skull. Once he was assured Fisher would make a full recovery, Jensen had attached himself to Brian's side and could rarely be convinced to leave, even to smoke.

Something he hadn't mentioned to either the doctors or Fisher was the feeling that part of him was missing. Jensen didn't know if he could even explain it to them if he tried. He'd chalked it up to his remorse over what had happened to Brian, but something at the back of his mind told him it was more than that.

"How is he?" Fisher's deep voice interrupted Jensen's thoughts.

"The same," he answered. The guilt he felt over the episode in the library still ate at him. How could he have let Brian think he'd had sex with Fisher? Just remembering the hurt in Brian's eyes when he'd walked into the library brought tears to Jensen's eyes. He didn't know if he'd ever get a chance to make things right and it was eating him alive.

"Hey," Fisher said, coming to stand behind Jensen. A strong hand squeezed his shoulder as Fisher showed his quiet support.

"I've tried every day to explain to him why we had to deceive him, but he's still given no sign he's heard me." Jensen lifted Brian's hand and kissed it. He looked over his shoulder at his friend. "Where've you been?"

"On the phone trying to get both our butts out of the sling."

"Did you tell them what Brian said about going to the press?" Jensen asked.

"Yeah. The WPU's finally agreed to bury the bones from the lighthouse and drop the charges against me."

"So what's the problem?" As far as Jensen knew, that was everything they'd asked for in exchange for their silence.

"I'm trying to get our pensions. I've become somewhat accustomed to a certain kind of lifestyle, one I can't maintain on a cop's salary." Fisher chuckled.

"Greedy bastard," Jensen teased.

"Yep."

A twitch from one of Brian's fingers had Jensen rising to his feet. "Brian?" He bent over his lover. "Do it again, baby. Come on. Open those pretty eyes for me."

He watched as Brian's lashes fluttered against his cheeks for several seconds before going dormant again. "Fuck!" Jensen cursed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Brian opened his eyes and smiled. Fisher was sound asleep in the chair next to his bed, snoring up a storm. "Hey," he rasped, trying to get the big man to wake up. His voice barely audible, Brian knew he'd never be heard over Fisher's snore. He blindly reached for the call button on the rail of his bed.

A nurse's voice sounded over the speaker. "Yes?"

"Water." Brian wasn't sure if the nurse heard him or not, but several seconds later a young woman came bustling into the room.

"Well, Sleeping Beauty is finally awake." She grinned, spooning two ice chips into Brian's mouth.

Brian let the ice melt on his tongue. He knew for a fact he'd never tasted anything so sweet. When the last of the water had trickled its way down his parched throat, he opened for more, feeling like a baby bird.

"One more." The nurse responded to his gesture.

Brian gestured toward the still sleeping Fisher with a question in his eyes. The nurse grinned. "The other one is out in the lobby asleep on the sofa. They've been taking turns for the past several weeks."

Brian swallowed the water. "How long?"

The nurse adjusted the blankets around Brian with a sympathetic expression. "You were brought in almost four weeks ago."

*Four weeks?* "Jensen?"

"He's fine. I'll go wake him for you. You'll have to be quiet though. It's way after visiting hours, but none of us have had the heart to run your two men out of here."

The nurse's words sank in and Brian shook his head. "Only one man. Jensen."

She grinned and patted his hand. "If you say so."

Confused, Brian watched her walk out. He wondered what had happened since he'd been out. The scene in the library flashed through his mind. Were Fisher and Jensen a couple? Had he lost his man forever?

Jensen came into the room. "Oh God, I'm so happy to see you awake." Jensen placed a soft kiss on Brian's lips.

Brian looked into Jensen's tear-filled eyes. He wanted to ask so many questions but his voice wouldn't cooperate.

Jensen must've seen the confusion in Brian's expression. "You're gonna be okay, baby." Jensen smoothed Brian's curls away from his forehead. "You need to get some more rest, but I need to tell you something first."

Brian braced himself for Jensen's blow-off.

"I need you to know I didn't have sex with Fisher. It was a setup, one that I've kicked myself for ever since. Birdie Cox told us in order for you to be successful in vanquishing the Mundji, you needed hate in your heart. She said it was up to me to do whatever was necessary to make you hate me." Jensen stopped talking and dried his eyes on his shirtsleeve.

"I had no idea how bad it would really be. If I'd known, I never would've agreed to any of it. Birdie made it sound like your life depended on it. She said that if we didn't take care of the Mundji it would continue to follow you forever. I knew you didn't want that. I was just trying to do the right thing." Jensen leaned down, brushed a kiss across Brian's forehead.

"Did you hear me, babe? We set it up, all of it. Fisher telling you he still loved me. You finding us naked. All of it. I guess what I hadn't counted on was hating myself more for doing it than you did. That's why that thing came after me. It followed the biggest source of hatred."

*They hadn't fucked?* A blanket of peace seemed to cover Brian at that moment. His eyes drifted shut, secure in the fact he'd live to love Jensen forever.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Wakey, wakey," Jensen cooed, kissing Brian.

Brian opened his mouth, sucking Jensen's tongue inside. The kisses they'd shared in the last several days had been the best of their relationship, and Brian couldn't seem to get enough.

Jensen chuckled and pulled back. Brian opened his eyes to the gorgeous face of his lover. "They're letting you out," Jensen declared. "The doctor even said he thought it would be okay for us to fly to Colorado at the end of the week."

Going back home felt like a dream, but he still continued to have nightmares about Alcatraz. "You really think we got them all?" He didn't have to explain further; Jensen knew exactly what he was asking. Since waking up from the coma, the two of them seemed to read each other's minds quite effectively. He had an idea of why, but the two of them had yet to talk about it.

"Seems so. They've already moved the inmates back into the prison. I spoke with Phil earlier in the week. The WPU made him acting warden."

"Does it seem weird to you? I mean after all these years you're suddenly without a job?" Brian knew Jensen's work ethic wouldn't handle unemployment well.

"What? I thought you already offered me a job. What about the nice bookstore owner who enjoys blowing his favored employees in the back room? It's the only reason I agreed to such a drastic pay cut."

Brian couldn't keep from laughing. "And if you're an exceptional employee, I may offer several bonuses throughout the day."

"Now you're just teasing me." Jensen chuckled before swiping his tongue over Brian's lips.

Brian shook his head. "Employee relations are my number one priority from now on."

## Epilogue

*Ten months later*

Mrs. Halloran picked up her purse and slung it over her shoulder. "I'll be back in one hour, not a moment longer." She eyed Jensen and Brian with a warning.

"Yes, ma'am," Jensen replied, tipping his head. They'd been caught three days earlier, his dick buried to the hilt in Brian's ass, when Mrs. Halloran returned from lunch early.

As soon as the older woman shut the front door, Brian locked it and put the "Out to Lunch" sign up. Turning back to Jensen, Brian leaned against the door. "I never thought she'd leave."

Jensen started unbuttoning his shirt as he turned and strolled toward the back of the shop. "Thank God for slow afternoons," he said, letting his shirt fall to the stockroom floor.

He heard Brian close the door, seconds before his lover's shirt flew through the air. "Ooh, someone's in a hurry."

"You've been teasing me all day," Brian said, running his hands up Jensen's chest.

Before he had a chance to get his jeans off, Brian had already attached his lips to Jensen's nipple. Jensen moaned. He wasn't sure which he loved more, the feel of the

smaller man's tongue and teeth playing with his nipple, or how horny Brian became while doing it.

Jensen insinuated his hands between their bodies and pushed down his jeans and underwear before going to work on Brian's clothes. As soon as he had Brian's pants pushed down, Jensen wiggled his hips, painting his lover's belly with his precum. "Feel that? You're killing me, babe," Jensen groaned.

He slowly walked backward until the backs of his knees came into contact with the old couch they'd brought in. At first Mrs. Halloran hadn't understood why they needed a couch in the stockroom when they already had several strewn through the store, but after catching them in the act, she hadn't mentioned it again.

Jensen sat down and pulled a blissfully naked Brian into his lap. It had been ten months since they'd set up house together, and Jensen was grateful for every single day. For the first time in his life, he was living instead of simply existing. "It's your turn to choose. Top or bottom?" Jensen asked, sliding his fingers down the crack of Brian's ass.

"I think you've already made the choice." Brian chuckled, reaching for the lube hidden under the sofa cushion.

Jensen grinned. He loved getting his way, especially when his way was deep into Brian's hot hole. He held out his hand and Brian dribbled a good amount of slick onto it. "Are you complaining?" he asked. Jensen rimmed Brian's hole for a few seconds before delving inside.

"Are you nuts?" Brian lifted off Jensen's lap and rode the two fingers easing their way in his ass.

Jensen's other hand smoothed down Brian's back, feeling the mapwork of scars. Some might find it odd, but Jensen touched the scars on a daily basis. They served to remind him how lucky he was that they'd both survived the ghosts of Alcatraz.

"I'm ready," Brian moaned.

Pushing the disturbing thoughts of their ordeal aside for the moment, Jensen used the extra lube on his hand to grease his cock. He grabbed the back of Brian's head and pulled his lover in for a deep kiss as he buried himself balls-deep in the place he called home.

Their fucking was brutal, as it so often was. Jensen blamed it on the never-ending passion the two had for each other, but Brian blamed it on something else entirely. According to his love, when they'd bathed in the tub of holy water, their blood had combined, creating a bond that would never be sated, never be broken.

As Brian continued to ride him, Jensen began to think his lover might be right. Their love transcended anything he'd ever known. Jensen sensed Brian's mood before his love even entered the room. Several months ago, Brian had cut himself chopping vegetables, and Jensen had known immediately he needed to get home.

Jensen leaned forward, rolling them both to the cold tile floor. "Deeper," he grunted, slipping Brian's legs over his shoulders. He held Brian's ass off the ground as his hips pistoned at lightning speed, burying himself to the hilt with every thrust.

He looked down into the green depths of Brian's eyes. "I love you."

Jacking his cock, Brian gave Jensen a heavy-lidded stare. "I know. I feel it." Brian's body jerked under Jensen's as a long string of pearls shot their way from the head of Brian's cock.

Jensen felt the heat splatter onto his chest, and answered the call by filling Brian's body with his seed. His body bucked as the climax continued to rack his body.

After being milked dry, Jensen collapsed to the side of his lover. They lay wrapped around each other for several blissful moments before Jensen's phone started to buzz.

"Dammit," he mumbled, looking across the floor at his jeans. He rolled over and stretched out his arm, managing to snag the leg of his pants. He pulled the jeans toward him and dug the phone out of his pocket.

"Black," he answered, snuggling back up to Brian.

"It's too early in the day for you to be that tired, unless you've been fucking." Fisher laughed.

Jensen was too sated and happy to rise to Fisher's bait. "What do you want?"

"Just to ask your opinion on something."

"Okay, shoot." He felt Brian's lips working their way down his neck to his nipples.

"Well, I was at this county law enforcement picnic thing last night, and I overheard something that's been bugging me ever since."

Jensen couldn't keep a bark of laughter from erupting. "Somehow I just can't picture you playing nice at a picnic."

"Shut the hell up, this isn't about me trying to fit in with the locals, it's about a kid who's being hurt," Fisher growled, his normally deep voice dropping even lower.

That got Jensen's attention immediately. Brian must've felt the tension creep into Jensen's body, because his lover released his nipple and sat up. "What's going on?" Brian asked.

Jensen covered the mouthpiece. "I don't know yet. Hold on."

"What's happening to the kid?" Jensen asked Fisher.

"Well, the guys were making jokes about how this weird kid had a long history of making false police reports about his dad hurting him. The kid even went to the emergency room a couple of times saying he'd been raped."

"Have they questioned the father?" Jensen asked.

"Well, see, that's the strange part; the kid's dad's been dead for over six years."

The hair on the back of Jensen's neck stood up. "You think it could be a ghost?"

"That's why I'm calling. I thought I'd get your and Brian's take on it. I haven't met the kid yet, but according to the guys, he's only twenty-two. He's been on his own since his mom ran off a year after his dad died, claiming the boy was too violent to live with."

Jensen gripped the phone tighter. He hated the thought of getting involved with another pissed-off ghost. "I'll put Brian on the phone." He started to give the phone to his lover, but stopped and put it back to his ear. "Fisher?"

"Yeah."

"No matter what happens, be careful. I almost lost you once —"

"I will," Fisher said, cutting him off. "I just can't sit back and do nothing. From the sounds of it, the boy's pretty much become a hermit. He's too damn young to give up on life like that."

Jensen smiled. Fisher's heart always was as big as his body. "Okay. Here's Brian." Jensen handed the phone off and got to his feet. He hated the thought of Fisher taking on something like they'd dealt with in California alone, but he also couldn't take the chance of putting Brian into harm's way again.

"Okay, call us if you need us," Brian said and snapped the phone shut.

"Well?" Jensen asked, handing Brian his clothes.

Brian shimmied into his underwear and pants before he spoke. "Sounds like another level two, since it's actually hurting the boy."

"Fisher isn't gonna try and take it on, is he?"

"Hmmm, good question. I told him to try and get the kid away from the house. If he's lucky, the spirit will be tied to the dwelling, not the boy."

"And if it's not?"

"Then I told him to call us," Brian said in a matter-of-fact tone.

Jensen swung Brian into his arms and kissed him. "I thought we agreed no more ghost chasing."

Brian ran his fingers through the short patch of hair on Jensen's chest. "We did. I'm not chasing though, I'm helping a friend. There's a difference."

Jensen groaned and nipped Brian's shoulder. He knew his lover was right, but that didn't mean he had to like it. "Life with you is never going to be boring, is it?"

Brian pulled Jensen's head down for another passionate kiss. "Not if I can help it."

 THE END 

## **Carol Lynne**

An avid reader for years, Carol Lynne decided one day to write her own brand of erotic romance. Carol juggles her time between being a full-time mother and a full-time writer. These days, you can usually find Carol nestled in her favorite chair writing steamy love scenes with a huge mug of coffee at her side.