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HOW TO TAME A COUGAR

DEE CARNEY

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Dee Carney

EROTIC ROMANCE



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

IMPRINT: Erotic Romance

HOW TO TAME A COUGAR

Copyright © 2009 by Dee Carney

E-book ISBN: 1-60601-390-4

First E-book Publication: April 2009

Cover design by Jinger Heaston

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PUBLISHER

Siren Publishing, Inc.

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DEDICATION

To Kris Eton for the encouragement
To Dorian J and Sabrina J for the inspiration

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Chapter One

Keeping in mind good body mechanics, Shawna positioned her right foot in between the legs of her seated patient. The elderly woman only had to get inside of the car and head home where she could make a full recovery after her stay at the hospital. Shawna steeled her front leg, shifted her weight to her back leg, and mentally gave herself the command. One. Two. *Heave!*

As she pulled the weight of her patient forward and up out of the wheelchair, her lower back screamed its frustration. She was going to pay for this later tonight. Pay big.

Shawna grinned her triumph as the plump woman achieved lift. For a split second she hadn't thought she'd be able to help her patient without assistance. She was glad to see she could. Her victory died a quick death though, and her eyebrows knitted together.

What the hell was running down her leg?

"Oh, I'm so sorry, my dear. My bladder's not like it used to be. I think it might have gotten away from me there. "

Oh, hell no.

Oh. Hell. No.

She knew that diaper had been too big. The assistant had said there weren't any others available. Their patient only had to wear it for a few minutes for the ride home. It would be alright, she'd said.

Shawna kept her face impassive. “That’s okay, sweetheart. Accidents happen. Do you need to be cleaned up before you get into the car?”

Limpid blue eyes peered back at her. “You’re such a dear. I think I’m actually still dry. You go on home. You’ve been such a good nurse to me. Thank you for everything.”

She couldn’t help the smile that creased her face. Shawna lived for moments like this. Even with someone else’s pee soaking through her pant leg, she felt good about her job.

Mrs. McDermott’s son darted around from the driver’s door and assisted his mother into the passenger’s side. Shawna’s smile belied her mental consternation. *Where were you a minute ago when I was getting baptized by your mother?*

He grinned at her, almost as if he heard the bitterness and nodded like a bobble-head. “Thanks for taking such good care of my mother,” he said.

Shawna waved him away as if to say *all in a day’s work*. She shut the door to the car and stepped back.

After he pulled away, she exhaled forcibly. The last patient. She could finally clock out and go home. Maybe she’d pour herself a glass of wine and sink down into a tub full of warm bubbles when she got there. That sounded too heavenly.

“Hey, girl!”

She pulled away from her thoughts and looked in the direction of the person who’d called the salutation. Her lips curved into a broad smile. “Hey, yourself!”

Two hundred-plus pounds of curves and self-confidence sashayed behind a rolling wheelchair. Ashlee, as usual, wore her makeup done to perfection and a hair piece that made her page boy haircut turn into long tresses any horse would envy. Her lips shone from clear lip gloss. Impossibly long eyelashes batted their presence. Ample cleavage peered over the vee in her scrub top. The combination couldn’t have looked better on anyone else.

“Girl, finally. That was my last one. You?”

Shawna nodded. “My last patient too. I think that’s everybody. Mercy Hospital, South building is officially shut down.”

“What’s that on your leg?” Ashlee squinted at the dark stain.

“You don’t even want to know.”

Her nose wrinkled. “And what’s that smell...Oh! That’s nasty!”

“It’s why we get paid the big bucks,” Shawna said, laughing. “Of course, it was an accident. No big deal.”

The corners of Ashlee’s mouth turned down as she peered again at Shawna’s pant leg. Her lips trembled a moment before she startled to chuckle. The chuckle picked up speed and before long, she hooted loudly. “That is just *so* nasty!”

Shawna looked down and shrugged before joining in. It *was* pretty gross. Would only happen to her, too. Her shoulders shook as mirth overtook her, and she wrapped her arms around her waist as she laughed. She wiped at the tears that started to run down her face. Watching Ashlee bend at the waist while she wheezed her amusement didn’t make matters any easier.

“Ladies, care to tell me what’s so funny?”

The familiar and heavily accented voice sent a shiver down Shawna’s spine. Through teary eyes, she gazed on the owner of the rich baritone and sexy Mediterranean lilt.

Damian.

Her laughter trickled to a stop, but a smile remained. She couldn’t help it. His dark chocolate eyes were so intense against his olive skin. Five o’clock shadow made him look a little bit older, but not much. Those lips. Those very kissable lips beckoned to her. Whenever they parted in a smile, her belly did a perfect somersault.

To keep from running her fingers through her hair, she toyed with the hem of her shirt. She mumbled, “It’s nothing. Just letting off a little steam.”

He stepped into her space, sucked the oxygen from the air, to straighten the pendant around her neck. Damian gazed down on her,

the raw heat in his eyes making her legs weak. “That’s one good way to let off steam.”

“It’s one,” she said.

“Let me know if you need another. Anytime.”

After her heart started to beat again, she nodded. How was she supposed to respond to that? Shawna glanced at Ashlee’s open mouthed stare. No help would be coming from there.

“I’ll do that.” Her fingers closed over his to gently pull the pendant away. The spark was instantaneous.

He smiled down on her. “Good. I’ll catch you two around. Bye, Shawna.”

“Bye.”

Damian glided away. She swallowed hard at his retreating back. The way the normally baggy scrub top outlined his broad shoulders and somehow managed to accentuate his slender waist sent a shiver down her spine *every single time* she studied him. Whew!

“Bye, Damian!” Ashlee called next to her. Wide-eyed, she turned to Shawna. In a low voice, she sang, “Ooh, I’m a tell.”

Shawna’s gaze cut to her. “What are you gonna tell?”

“That boy has got it hot for you.”

He did. She’d never admit to it out loud, though. “No, he doesn’t.”

“Girl, please. And you know he loves him some black women.”

“He does?” Now that was news.

“Listen to what I’m telling you. That boy loves him some black women.”

Something to ponder, indeed. Shawna said, “He’s pretty good looking too, huh?”

Ashlee nodded. “Ain’t that the truth.” They started walking toward the main entrance together before she spoke again. “You gonna do something about him?”

“Nah.” She shook her head. “He’s too young. At least five years or so younger than us. Just a baby.”

“Yeah, but them young ones got stamina.”

Shawna stopped moving to stare at her friend. They both smirked at each other before they started to laugh.

* * * *

It felt good to be out of those stinky clothes. Even after she'd donned gloves to peel them off, she could almost see the odor wafting off of her skin. Thankfully, she kept an extra set of clothes in her locker to replace the work scrubs.

The decision to use one of the patient rooms to take a shower before putting on the clean clothes was an easy one. The entire building had been officially and permanently shut down. She was off the clock, and she was not about to drive home with pee, along with its fantastic smell, on her clothes.

As Shawna stood under the hot spray, her thoughts drifted to Damian. They'd flirted discreetly and mercilessly with each other for almost a month now. One day he'd shown up on her unit to take a patient down to Radiology and they'd caught each other's assessing gazes. He'd stopped in the middle of his sentence. She'd pretended to not notice him and kept moving.

But she'd noticed.

How could she not? He was tall, lean and with an athlete's body. Sometimes she could see the dark curls of hair peeking over the top of his shirt. It made her want to run her fingers through it, caress the softness of the hair and contrast it to pebbled nipples.

And how far down did the hair go? Did it snake down his flat abdomen in a vee? Point the way down to a heavy cock?

She shivered under the warm water.

He'd been the stuff her dreams were made of lately. Not just dreams. Fantasies.

His age irked the hell out of her, though. He was so damned young. She'd just celebrated her thirty-fifth birthday. He couldn't be older than twenty eight or so. Yeah, lots of celebrities had a young

stud in their beds, but in the real world, she'd probably be uncomfortable dating someone his age.

But as Ashlee pointed out in her usual blunt way, them young ones had stamina.

Stamina? She snorted. Hell, right now, the possession of a penis made him a winner in her book. This dry spell bordered on ridiculous.

Damian's penis. Hoo, boy. Why did she even go there? She shook her head. Her pussy already hummed with need. Then again, she mentally shrugged, there was no reason to torture herself.

Turning the soap over in her hands, she lathered them well. With deliberate slowness, she rubbed her skin down, running her hands over her neck and over her chest. Her nipples hardened before she'd even touched them. By the time she stroked across them, they ached for more than just her familiar touch. She tweaked each one, arousing them and trying to relieve some of the tension there.

Her mind drifted again to thoughts of Damian. What would it feel like if his hands caressed her now, his olive skin next to the mocha of hers? Maybe his hands would be calloused with hard lines that rubbed over the soft curve of her belly.

Her fingers trailed down.

He'd part her thighs and inhale the scent of her sex. Maybe he'd even dip in for a taste, letting his tongue swirl over her clit. The resultant sensation would send lightning bolts through her body.

Shawna's finger sought and found the hardened nub. She stroked it lightly. With each touch, she increased the pressure, sending shooting sparks of pleasure rippling out in waves.

Her thighs would involuntarily tighten around his head. She'd run her fingers through his hair and pull him closer. Her hips would tilt to him. She'd give him all of herself.

She moaned out loud. It slipped past her lips, breaking the silence. An amazing tingling sensation streaked out from her center and traveled her length until it saturated her limbs. Shawna stroked harder and faster, chasing ultimate release.

Damian. He'd grip her tightly, holding her in place to ride out the pleasure he gave her. He'd suck and nibble. Taste and explore. And she'd shudder around him. Her pussy would tighten.

It throbbed now, pulsing a needy rhythm as she walked the line of orgasm and almost tipped into its embrace.

She called up a stronger image of Damian between her thighs. And finally, finally two more strokes to her sensitive clit propelled her over that edge.

Shawna cried out his name as she shattered into a million brilliant stars. She soared above the heavens, then floated gently back to earth. By the time she caught her breath, her racing pulse began its descent too.

With her body tingling and full of life, she rinsed quickly. All days should end like this. She'd rush to get home before the feeling dissipated entirely. Maybe she'd still run the tub and enjoy some wine anyway.

The inadequate towel covered just her tender bits, but she kept it on as she stepped out of the bathroom to dress. On the bed next to her clothes, the real Damian perched like a hunter about to pounce on its prey.

With a glint in his eyes, he said, "You were going to call me when you needed to let off some steam. I could have made that orgasm much, much better for you."

Chapter Two

Shawna froze. Oh, God. He'd heard. He'd heard all of it. She'd called his name.

Oh. God.

"Wha—What are you doing here?" Her heart pounded so loudly she'd have to strain to hear anything he would say.

The Cheshire cat smile displayed his perfect teeth. "Your friend told me you would be here. I was going to escort you to your car and make certain you got there safely."

His gaze traveled from her naked feet and blazed a path up her dripping wet body. The hunger in his eyes devoured her. He tsked. "If only I were a few minutes earlier."

When Ashlee told him where Shawna would be, he had no intention of being in the room when she'd left the shower. He'd planned on waiting there in comfort until he heard the water cut off. At that point, he'd wait like a gentleman outside of the room until she walked out fully clothed.

To hear her scream his name like that, the passion clearly evident, all conscious thought fled. He'd fantasized before about how she would feel beneath him. How she'd sound. The real thing blew all of his fantasies away.

His cock had instantly hardened when he heard her come. Even now, as she stood hiding behind a towel that barely covered pert nipples, it throbbed under his clothes.

Every time he had ever seen Shawna on the unit, she radiated beauty. Now, she positively glowed. He wished he'd put that color

there. He would make certain the next time she looked this way, he, and not masturbation, would be the cause.

Damian slid off of the bed to cross the room to where she stood. With his finger he followed the path a drop of water left on her skin. She felt hot, as if the cool water should evaporate into a puff of smoke where it touched her. Standing this close, his gaze traced where her curves peeked out from behind the towel. With an internal groan, he pulled his hand away before he lost the ability to do so.

“Why don’t you get dressed?” His throat felt tight. Speaking English to her took all of his waning concentration. “I want to show you something.”

She peered at him through those exotic eyes, her thick lashes and sculpted brows accentuating them. For a brief moment, he thought she’d let embarrassment turn him down. Then he saw something in her eyes that gave him a small measure of hope. A hint of arousal still shone through.

Without waiting for her response, he left to wait outside. The door made a soft click as he shut it behind him.

Her hesitation didn’t surprise him. It wouldn’t be the first time a woman he pursued shied away from dating outside of her race. Thankfully, Shawna teetered in her trepidation. He’d give her as much time as she needed to find her comfort level.

She was such a beautiful woman. Not just that, either. Undoubtedly, she was a nurse with a big heart. And her laugh? It sang to him.

He smiled as the door opened a few minutes later. Shawna walked out in a cut-off shirt. Her bare midriff and the curve of her hips under baggy slacks excited him. Seeing her dressed in something other than her work uniform finally let him observe just how little justice the scrubs did her.

She looked refreshed and smelled like heaven. A little of the flush of embarrassment still remained though. Moist hair at her temples curled into little ringlets. The dip at the base of her neck collected

another drop of moisture. The urge to lick it overwhelmed him. He almost had to physically shake loose the thought.

“Look, Damian—”

He said, “Come with me.”

She hesitated. “I really don’t know you that well. We’re probably alone in a building no one’s expected to be in. I go with you and the next thing you know, I’m playing the victim in some movie of the week.”

The way she narrowed her eyes at him, hands planted on both hips, made him smile again. “You don’t trust me?”

“I don’t know you!”

“You know where I work. You know I want to make mad, passionate love to you.”

She burst out laughing. “Mad, passionate love?”

“The first chance I get.” Her eyes twinkled when she laughed. He would have to make certain she laughed more often. “I also want you to get to know me better. That’s why I want you to come with me. Ready?”

He backed away, crooking his finger at her with each slow step. Shawna’s eyebrow arched and she pursed her lips, but she started walking toward him. “Where’s that accent from?”

“What accent? I have an accent?”

Another eyebrow arch. “You know darn good and well you have an accent.”

“Greece. What else would you like to know?”

She shrugged. “For now, where are we going?”

They stopped outside the visitor’s solarium. He held open the door. “Here.”

Shawna walked through the doorway to the room she’d visited over a dozen times before with her patients. This was the first time she’d been in the room at sunset.

The overhead lights had been left off, but it made no difference. Orange sunlight spilled into the room, casting a golden shadow over

the furniture. The room, once filled with wicker furniture for visitors, now held only a single chair, a bookshelf and a trash can. The lack of objects drew her attention to the windows.

The cityscape filled her vision. Blues, greens and grays decorated the many buildings that surrounded the hospital. The occasional tree peppered the view. From here, she could see what the city planners had once dreamed of. A landscape so beautiful, it could only be described as picture perfect.

"I'm in my last year of school to be an architect. I love coming here for the view." His hushed voice in the quiet room blended into the ambience almost as if he belonged to it.

"This is beautiful, Damian." She pressed her hands against the windows, heedless of any prints that would remain. How could this have been under her nose all these years and she'd never noticed?

"Next to you, Shawna, it might as well be a blank canvas. You make it perfect by standing there."

Oh wow. Her mouth fell open, and she remembered to close it. He really did have it bad for her. She didn't dare turn to look at him. If she did, she would be lost.

His warm hands on her shoulders were her only indication that he'd moved. They squeezed gently, massaging some of the stiffness from her day.

Over the pounding of her heart, outside the thick windows, the sounds of the city played. Car horns honked. The occasional bird sang. A single dog barked.

Inside the room, blood boiled within her veins. The firm pressure of his massage sparked dual flames. The heat cascaded down her arms, over her torso, almost melting her insides.

"You're a perfect example of architecture." His breath caressed her cheek and tickled the top of her ear. "May I explain?"

She nodded. With that accent he could read words straight from the dictionary, line by line, and they'd sound like the most erotic love poem ever imagined.

“Here,” he whispered as a hand moved to stroke her chin, then down her neck, “is God’s eave. Made in perfect alignment. Designed to accentuate. And here—” his touch travelled across her collar bone, “mitered in construct for support. And see over there? The domes?” The buildings a few miles away would be hard to miss. When she nodded, he continued. “They are man’s attempt at replicating this perfection. The cupolas of woman.”

Soothing hands traveled over her stomach to graze the rounded globes of her breasts. He stroked them gently, as if memorizing every inch of her. Her nipples strained in response, only to be ignored.

“What else?” she asked. Catching her breath took some work. “What else can you teach me about architecture?”

His hands slid down her abdomen and stopped at her bellybutton. “Hmm. This bit of decoration might be a frieze.”

“A frieze,” she repeated. Only a few places of her anatomy remained to be compared. She’d get him to ease her tension one way or the other. Her voice grew husky. “What else?”

“Here.” Shawna sucked in her breath as a hand slid inside the waist of her pants. It traced the top line of her panties and came to a rest over her mound. Patient fingers tugged the material out of the way, found a home in her curls. “A gable never to be duplicated in its beauty.”

At some point her head came to rest on his chest. His words vibrated through her body. Nights of imagining the firm muscles beneath his clothing were no comparison to the real thing.

“What are you doing, Damian?” Behind closed eyes, she recognized the coyness of her words. She kept her voice soft and nonthreatening. Suggestive.

His warm lips peppered her neck in feather light caresses. Gently, his mouth slid down to her shoulder then retraced its path. His moist tongue snaked out for a taste along the way.

Between the peppered kisses he said, “We can continue to just look at each other longingly as we pass during the day. Or we can put

all of that tension to good use. Stop me now, and I'll go no further. Encourage me, and we won't turn back."

His finger swirled a path over her mound. The pace of her breathing increased as he teased and tortured her. She ached for his touch to drop lower and find the moisture of her need.

"Damian," she sighed. She parted her legs slightly, and encouraged him to explore.

Instead, Damian pulled his hand out of her pants and turned her to face him. Shawna stared into the richness of his eyes before the dark intensity became overwhelming. He dipped down to capture her mouth in his. The heady sensation, the culmination of fantasy and reality threatened to rend her apart.

He explored her mouth expertly. His strong hands rubbed over her waist and abdomen. When they glided up and searched her breasts, his bold fingers teased her nipples into hardened points. All the while his tongue battled with hers. His raw masculinity devoured her.

She stroked his hard length and tested his desire for her. She swallowed down the groan that slipped past his lips as she held the weight of his cock. By the time he pulled away, she panted and ached. She needed so much more from him.

Damian's gaze raked her from head to toe. He shook his head as if stunned that she stood before him, primed and ready. Under his attention, she felt sexy. Alluring. She'd give him something else to be stunned over.

Shawna pulled her shirt over her head and revealed the white lace bra she wore underneath. He inhaled sharply at the display. She knew what he saw. Spending the extra money on the luxury bra had seemed extravagant at first. The look on his face made every extra penny worth its weight in gold.

She grabbed the sides of her pants and started to tug them down. He stepped forward to capture her hands in his. "Please. Let me," he rasped.

He sank to his knees, taking both pants and panties down with him. Despite the heat of his stare, the warmth of the room, she shivered violently.

Damian's mouth came to rest on her thigh. His tongue slid up its length as he rose. By the time he reached her pussy, Shawna moaned from the anticipation of what he would do next. When at last his mouth closed over her aching nub, her hips rocked from the bolt of electricity arcing through taut nerves.

She ran trembling hands through his hair, pulling him closer. She opened herself to him. Each passing moment urged her to oblivion. The peak of orgasm was so close, just out of reach. Right before she exploded, Damian pulled away and stood.

Through glazed eyes she glared at him. "Bastard," she hissed.

He wiped the moisture from around his mouth with the back of his hand. He blew an air kiss toward her, and then tapped his lips twice with a finger. "Kiss me."

She sulked. "I should slap you."

"That's sexy as hell, too." He stroked himself, and she caught the motion. A new surge of arousal washed over her. He grinned. "I won't leave you hanging, baby. Don't worry."

The smile was infectious. She leaned in close to brush her lips against his. Then she murmured against his mouth, "You're awfully sure of yourself."

"No, I'm just sure about wanting to be with you."

Oh wow. "Damian..."

He didn't give her the opportunity to complete her sentence. His mouth slanted over hers, the subtle tang of herself sneaking through his clean taste. His erection pressed against her belly, and she moaned. Now. She wanted it inside of her now.

As if reading her thoughts, he handed her a foil packet. Absorbed by his touch and taste, she never noticed when he got it or where he got it from.

"Put it on me, Shawna," he said with a husky voice.

She caught only a glimpse of his length as she slid it on. The moment she began to unroll it, he took her mouth in his again. When she was done, he hooked first one thigh and then the other over his arms, raised her into the air, and forced her back to press against the window pane. His hard cock probed, sought her entrance. Before she could assist, he surged upward and found her warmth.

He sank into her as she cried out from the invasion. The walls of her pussy stretched to accommodate him, pulled him in to her waiting moisture. She was hot and slick, beyond ready for him.

Her cries grew louder as he thrust harder and faster. With a violent kiss, he swallowed down her moans. The intense and rapid beating of her heart could not be silenced though. Shawna's blood boiled, singed her insides as it raced through every part of her being.

She grasped his shoulders, pulled on him tightly. This need. Hot and fast. Fiery and furious. She needed him to end it. End it now.

Pressure began to build in her belly. It pulsed and raced through her abdomen and over her limbs. As it reached her fingertips and toes, Shawna thought she would lose herself from the force of it. Just when she thought she could take no more, the waves of pleasure cascaded from her every pore, roaring into the cool air.

Her pussy grasped him, pulled him harder, and Damian met the call. He trembled once and then tensed, his body taut against hers. Through sensitive nerve endings, she felt his cock swell and then spill inside of her. He pushed deeper, filling the latex with his essence. Shawna took all of him.

By the time the waves and shudders slowed to a stop, her body ached. She panted against his neck, too weak to move. He pulled out slowly, eased her legs from his arms and let her slide onto trembling legs. Subtly, he removed the condom and tossed it into the waiting trash can an arm's length away.

"Jesus," she gasped. "If that doesn't let off some steam, I don't know what will."

He part-chuckled, part-panted into her hair. Damian kept his arms wrapped around her waist, keeping her pulled close to him. Her head pressed against his chest, and she could hear his racing heart struggle back down to a normal beat.

Overhead, the lights flickered to life.

“Oh, shit! Sorry!”

They pulled apart to stare at the young man standing in the doorway who had just spoken.

Chapter Three

He made an abrupt about-face and hastened from the room. Shawna scrambled to put on her clothes and almost screamed her frustration. “Christ, Damian! If he tells anybody, we could get into a ton of trouble for this.”

He handed her the discarded shirt before adjusting his pants. He moved leisurely. No panic in his actions whatsoever. “He won’t. I know him. I’ll sort it out.”

“Right.” She noticed the gray top and white pants he’d worn. “He’s a transporter, too. Work together?”

A burst of anger streaked through Damian when he saw her hands trembling. No way he’d let her experience anything but joy while in his presence. He stopped her movements, caught her chin in his hand. He tilted her face up to meet his and pressed a soft kiss against her mouth. “Don’t worry. I *will* sort it out. Okay?”

The tense lines of her face relaxed. She exhaled slowly and then sighed. “Okay...Thank you.”

“Wait here for me. I’ll be right back.”

She nodded. God, she was a beautiful woman. He studied her face one last time before he turned to leave the room.

Matt—was that his name?—held both hands in the air when Damian stormed into the hallway. “Listen, man,” he said. “I had no idea you two were in there.”

Damian shook his head. “We weren’t in there.”

“What? *Oh!* Right. No, you weren’t. The room was empty when I got here.”

Matt looked as young as most of the other transporters. He was probably a high schooler just trying to get some job experience before heading to college. He'd been there himself only a few years ago. Damian smiled without humor at him. "Why are you here? The building's been closed until they demolish it. The last patient left a couple of hours ago."

"I could ask the same of you," Matt said. His eyes widened when Damian scowled. "But, I won't! I'm responding to the code silver. A man in a hospital gown and white robe. Around seventy or so."

He stiffened. What code silver? It should have been announced overhead. Then again, buried deep in Shawna the world could have exploded under nuclear assault and he might not have noticed.

Either way, there would be others in the building soon. He'd escort her to her car and join in the search. "I haven't seen anyone, but I'll join in after I take care of some business."

Matt smirked. The look in his eyes prompted Damian to step in close to him and drop his voice low. "Listen to me very carefully. I'd better never hear her name or what you *didn't* see today ooze out of your mouth. *Ever*. Do we have an understanding?"

The smirk froze on Matt's face, much to Damian's satisfaction. The rounded eyes and raised eyebrows multiplied the effect. The teenager nodded with exaggeration.

Very good.

Shawna paced the room when he returned. He could almost see the relief lift when she saw it was he who returned. "Why was he even here?"

Beautiful, smart and to the point. Not that he'd ever had a doubt. "There's a code silver. I'll walk you to your car and then help them search. It shouldn't be a long search, hopefully."

She shook her head. "No, I want to help too."

She had such big brown eyes. He'd have a hard time ever denying her anything. If he had any smarts, he'd better get used to caving in to her every request. She only had to gaze up at him and bat long lashes

his way to persuade him into doing things her way. He could have groaned out loud. If any of his friends found out about how whipped one woman could make him...

He jerked his head toward the door. "Let's go then."

He should have known that she would want to help with the search. It was rare when a patient with dementia managed to wander away from his or her unit, but the hospital prepared its staff for such an eventuality. Once, a patient had slipped away unnoticed. His body had been found two days later almost five miles away. The hospital staff was determined to make certain it never happened again.

"I wonder why we didn't hear it," she muttered as they walked.

He smiled down at her. "I don't."

Damian caught an elbow in his ribs for the comment. He rubbed at the sore spot. "We needed to do that."

She shirked one shoulder. "I guess, so. Nice, huh?"

"Nice?" Just nice? His world turned upside down, never to be the same again, and she called it *nice*? "I could be wrong, but I don't think it gets much better. At least, it never has for me."

They walked in and out of the empty patient rooms on the floor, not limiting their search at all. They even opened bathroom and closet doors just to be certain.

"I suppose it was better than nice," she admitted. "Very, very nice."

"Then again, you didn't say my name when you came." He'd been waiting for that. He wanted to know the real thing gave her as much ecstasy as she'd given herself in the shower.

She opened the door to a utility room, peered in and shook her head. "Why is it that men have to stake their claim in the bedroom like that? If they're not slapping your ass, they want you to say their name."

The anger that flared in her eyes at that moment sent her appeal up the scale another notch. He glanced in both directions of the hall. It

remained empty as he'd expected, but he had to be sure to do what he wanted to next.

He caught her shoulders in his hands, pushing her against the wall. He crushed his mouth to hers and drank her in. His chest grazed against hers. He felt her nipples respond as if reaching out to him. Damian pulled away just as quickly as he'd taken her, careful not be swept away by the feel of her. The stunned look on her face made the risk of being caught worthwhile.

"There's only one name you need to know, Shawna, because I'm not going anywhere," he said. He would have said more, but a noise down the hall caught his attention. He looked away but not before he saw her eyebrows arch into the air. Maybe that would be enough for her to digest for now.

Taking the lead, he headed toward where he thought the noise came from. He glanced behind him in time to see her chew on her bottom lip. Her eyes were glassy. With her brows drawn together, she appeared deep in thought.

If he'd scared her with his confession, he'd have to fix that later. He had to wonder if it still had to do with race. *That* he couldn't 'fix' though. When she'd yielded to him earlier, he'd assumed she'd gotten past it. Perhaps he'd been too eager to realize that she hadn't. He'd definitely been too eager to care.

"Mrs. Xervos!" He called to the woman who started to walk away from them. The salt-and-pepper haired woman had just walked out of a room they had already explored. She turned at the sound of his voice. When she finally appeared to recognize him, he said, "I didn't know you were on today."

A smile lit up her face. Kind eyes wrinkled at their corners. "Damian! How nice to see you."

"Mrs. Xervos, do you know my friend Shawna?" He reached behind him to clasp her hand.

Shawna slipped out from his grip and reached out to shake the older woman's hand. If he hadn't felt the initial jerk when he'd

reached for her, like she didn't want him to hold her hand in the first place, he might have assumed it was a natural transition. But he'd felt that hesitation.

"Shawna, so nice to meet you. Where do you work?"

She smiled back. "Today was my last day in the South building. I'll be over on Four West in two days."

"Ah. Welcome to my side of the hospital. They needed to shut this place down. Nothing modern here any more."

"Yes," Shawna agreed. "It'll be nice to get into the twenty-first century. But I am going to miss this place."

Mrs. Xervos turned to Damian. "The two of you working the code silver? Good. It's been twenty minutes already. No telling where the poor soul might have gotten to."

He barely followed the conversation. All he could focus on was that slight tug from her, even—*especially*—after they'd been intimate. His gaze trained on the younger woman. Did she think so little of what had transpired? Heaviness settled against his chest.

Shawna frowned when he didn't respond. "Well, we'd better continue looking. It was very nice meeting you, Mrs. Xervos. I'm sure I'll be seeing you more."

Plump hands enveloped hers. "You too, my dear. And Damian, Bobby will be expecting to see you at his twenty-first birthday party. I know I'm not supposed to know about it, but just because I'm his mother don't mean I'm blind." She wagged a finger at him before she walked away.

Damian did not move when the other woman had left. Shawna looked again in rooms they'd already explored. She walked back to where he stood before exploring another area. He followed, but said nothing.

The silence that grew between them made her increasingly uneasy. She waited for him to speak, but something had set him on edge. When he just kept walking beside her, she let out a shaky breath. Maybe she could ease whatever was wrong when he decided

to tell her about it, but she had to get him talking first. “Aren’t you a little old for new drinker parties?”

He blinked at her. She held her breath until he responded and exhaled softly when he did. “I don’t understand.”

“Twenty-first birthday party. You know? The age when you can finally drink legally in the U.S.?”

“A lot of my friends are turning twenty-one this year. I’m one of the older ones.” The words seemed forced. Why didn’t he want to speak to her all of a sudden?

“I bet you got recruited a lot to buy drinks for them,” she joked.

He shrugged. “A year doesn’t make that much difference. We have older friends who could buy for us.”

Shawna stopped and turned to face him. Her limbs weighed her down. Blood that boiled so feverishly earlier turned ice cold.

“Wait a minute.” Her ears rang as if they knew how he would respond. But it couldn’t be. No way. “How old are you Damian?”

He lifted his shoulder in another shrug, as if her question was inconsequential. She had to know though. She needed to hear from him that her suspicions were wrong.

His reply rocked her.

“Twenty-two,” he said.

Chapter Four

Twenty-two? Oh, God. Twenty. Two. A baby. She'd guessed he was twenty-eight. Perhaps a year or two older. Never in her wildest dreams did she think she was wrong in the opposite direction. Twenty-eight had seemed so young. Twenty-two? She couldn't wrap her mind around that age.

"Are you okay?"

Twenty. Two.

"Shawna? Are you okay?"

She could hear the alarm in his voice, but she'd lost the ability to form words.

"Shawna?"

She probably had underwear older than him. Oh, God. Her hand flew to her mouth. She did have at least one shirt that really was older than him!

She closed her eyes and massaged the bridge of her nose, trying to rub away the pounding that snuck up on her head.

"Open your eyes and look at me."

She couldn't. She just couldn't face him. They'd had sex. Not just sex. Nice—no, hell, *mind blowing* sex. She'd done it with a man barely out of puberty.

He shook her shoulders. "Shawna!"

Her eyes flew open, and she stared into his. Behind the chocolate pools, she could see such tenderness. Worry framed the edges, but the tranquility of the deeper emotion outweighed it.

"Damian, how old do you think I am?"

He frowned. His lips parted as if he wanted to say something else, but then thought against it. "I know you're older than I am. Women my age just don't hold the allure you do, but really, I never thought about the actual number."

She visually traced the outline of his lips as he spoke. Even knowing what she did, she wanted to pull him closer and kiss them. She fought off the urge. "Think about it now. How old? Guess."

He raised one shoulder. "I don't know. Twenty-six or so."

She beamed an automatic smile at him, but then shook her head sadly. "No, baby. I'm a lot older than that."

"Does it matter?" he asked.

He didn't ask for her actual age, she had to give him that. He knew there was a difference and that she would be older. So had she, on second thought. Why was it that knowing the actual numbers made her feel so differently about it now?

"I think you should know." This knowledge couldn't belong to her alone. He deserved to know what she knew. "I'm thirty-five. A few more years and I would be old enough to be your mother."

The grin he gave her made her heart thump louder. "Really? Thirty-five? *Damn, girl!* You look *good*."

She had to back away. He was too close. She could smell his subtle cologne. As always, his very presence seemed to pull all the oxygen from the air.

She ran a hand through her hair. "Damian, I was already hesitant about our age difference when I thought you were older. Now that I find out that you're actually younger, I just don't know."

"Is that why earlier—oh Shawna. I don't care. I really don't."

"But *I do*, Damian. I really have to think about this."

He held up a hand. "Wait. Did you hear that?"

She opened her mouth to protest the change in subject, but then cocked her head. She *did* hear it.

He held out his hand and said, "This way. I think it's coming from the end of the hall."

“What do you think it is? Sounds kind of like singing or something.” She wrapped her fingers around his and picked up her pace next to him.

As they searched more rooms, sometimes side by side, other times individually, she mused over a new discovery. Men had such a unique ability to compartmentalize. She could chew over the dilemma of their age differences while working on another task. Damian seemed to have already set it aside, if only temporarily. Then again, he really didn’t seem to care anyway.

She met him in the hall again, and he winked at her as they separated. Damn, he was a good-looking man. A traitorous memory of how he felt when pressed inside of her slipped through the barrier of her mind, and her stomach fluttered.

“C’m on,” he called when she entered the hallway after another fruitless search. “I can’t believe we didn’t look in the stairwell yet.”

When he held open the door, they looked at each other. A soft voice crooned words from a song. When Shawna looked up, a long trail of white material hung over the stair ledge.

Quietly, she said to Damian, “I need you to go get help in case we can’t handle him on our own.” His body language shifted like he was about to protest, so she hurried on. “No offense, but I need someone here who is qualified to help me if he has any medical issues, okay? Please, go.”

He glanced up once and then moved closer. “Be careful,” he whispered before he leaned in to kiss her.

Shawna nodded and watched him retreat through the fire door. She trailed a finger over her lips, but then turned to the task at hand. Why didn’t she know the patient’s name? She would have to call on every memory from her psych courses. Nursing school had been such a long time ago though. Not wasting time, she hurried up the stairs. Their lost patient was about three flights above her. She’d have to hurry before he slipped away. A shudder grabbed her when she thought of him falling over the railing if she was too late.

By the time she reached the top flight, she'd cursed the patient, his mother, all of his relatives and any one who ever knew him. With perspiration starting to drip down her face, she rounded the corner to find him sitting on the top rung. The closer she got to him, the more distinct his words became.

"When I fall in love, it will be forever. Or I'll never fall in love..."

She recognized the words to the old Nat King Cole tune. In fact, he sang it quite nicely. She could picture him as a singer when he was younger. Shawna cleared her throat and sang the remaining lyrics with him.

The man grinned at her and sang louder, changing his pitch in tune with the new duet. He tapped a slippered foot against the concrete to keep time. She sat down two steps below him and sang to the song's conclusion. They smiled at each other, beaming with pride by the end.

"That sounded pretty good, huh? We could start up a band together," she said when they'd finished.

"I used to have a band. We broke up a few years ago."

She narrowed her eyes. "Yeah? When did you disband?"

"Nineteen fifty-three."

Fifty-three?

Shawna reached out to him, placed a hand on a slipper. "Do you know what year it is now, darlin'?"

"Fifty-five."

She kept her face impassive. Maybe if she reoriented him, he'd snap out of whatever had him wandering in the first place.

"What about the current President of the U.S.? Know who that is?"

Sad eyes searched the air for a moment. For a split second, she had hopes that he would say the word she wanted to hear. Instead, a look of dejection crossed his face. He shook his head. "No, I don't recall right now."

“That’s alright. It’s two thousand and nine. And we’ve got a new President. Barack Obama. Remember him?” The blank stare indicated that he, in fact, did not remember him. “Why don’t you come downstairs with me? You can show me your room.”

“My wife would have my tail for having a pretty young lady in my room.” For the first time, she noticed the gold band on his finger.

She smiled at him. “I’ll tell you a secret. I’ve got myself a young boyfriend who wouldn’t like it much either. He’ll be right back so you can meet him. But if you’d like, you and me can just stop for some coffee, instead. How about that?”

He rose quickly, startling her. Shawna drew her hand back and stood in front of him. He said, “Coffee sounds good.”

He started down, moving opposite of where she wanted him to head. It would have been easier if he simply opened the door right next to him. When he reached her step, she hooked an arm through his and they started down together. She’d just have to maneuver him to the next landing and open the door there. When they arrived and she tried to open the door, however, he backed away.

“What’s wrong, darlin’? It’ll be faster if we go through here.”

He tugged stubbornly. “I don’t want to go that way.”

Shawna tightened her grip on him. They were seven flights up. There was no way in hell she was going to walk down all of those stairs. “But what about that cup of coffee?”

“I don’t want any coffee!”

He lashed out, struggling to loosen her grip. Instead of getting free, he stumbled back, leaning over the edge of the railing. Horrified, Shawna grabbed onto his robe and tried to counterbalance the gravity pulling him down.

She screamed as her tentative hold started to slip. The sound of material ripping echoed in the stairwell along with her cries for help. In his confusion, the man did little to stop himself from falling. Instead, with a vice-like grip, he clamped onto her hands.

Shawna could feel herself starting to tip with him. She dug in her heels, tried to find purchase. Most of his weight still remained on the correct side of the railing, but she was losing the battle to keep him there. She screamed again.

The sound of her name in a heavy accent rang like a church bell.

Damian called her again and then suddenly he was there beside her. With one hand on her and one on the patient, he pulled them both toward the stairs. When she was balanced again, she tugged with him. Between them, they managed to pull the patient to safety. He stumbled against Shawna as he landed, but Damian kept her upright.

Damian's chest heaved from exertion. He smiled weakly at her and said, "Some women will do anything to get out of a relationship."

* * * *

"Hey, there." Shawna called as she knocked tentatively on Mr. Anderson's door. She walked into the room where his wife and children were seated. "How are you feeling, Mr. Anderson?"

He'd obtained a few bruises on his side where he'd slammed against the railing, but she knew he was otherwise physically fine. The patient who'd scared the tar out of her blinked without responding at first. Then his face lit up in a smile. "Hey! We were going to get us some coffee!"

She smiled back at him and winked at his wife. "That's right. I wasn't supposed to come to your room, but I'm hoping your wife will forgive me just this one time."

"Who, her? Young lady, we've been married fifty-two years. This here is the love of my life. Now, that boyfriend of yours, I don't know what he'd have to say, though."

"He's not really my boyfriend, Mr. Anderson." No. Not really.

He cocked his head at her. "That young man is sweet on you. A blind man could see that."

She nodded. “Yeah, he’s a little sweet on me, but that’s probably not enough.”

Mrs. Anderson chuckled, a soft, soothing sound and nodded at her husband. “My dear, fifty-two years started off as him being just a little bit sweet on me. If you want it to work, it can.”

Shawna thought of the young man who’d saved her life. She nodded again. “Maybe. I guess you never know.”

When she left the room a few minutes later, Shawna closed the door behind her. She took out her cell phone and pressed two buttons in rapid succession. Speed dial was such a godsend.

“Hey girl, you busy? Can you meet me at Quincy’s? Yeah, I’m still here. It’s been a long evening. I’ll tell you more in ten.”

Chapter Five

The loud clatter of billiard balls striking one another shook Shawna from her memories. Something about that noise in particular rose over the general clamor of the neighborhood bar. Around the corner from the hospital, it was a regular hangout for a lot of the employees who needed a moment for themselves after the bustle of the work day.

The inside of the place rarely saw sunlight, so the mustiness of the room should have been stifling instead of comforting. Popcorn, beer and wood polish mingled together to create a familiar and, surprisingly, not unpleasant smell.

She nursed a mug of something on tap and tried not to think about him, but Damian—his face, their kisses, the way he felt so right—weaved into her mind.

Why couldn't she just let him go? Then it struck her. His scent clung to her clothing. To her. His words echoed in her thoughts.

She shook loose sudden carnal images and glanced at the entrance again. She smiled as Ashlee sauntered toward her.

"You know I was about to watch me some *Project Runway*. What's up?" She slid into the booth across from Shawna and grabbed a menu.

Her gaze followed Ashlee's bright red tank top and the deep vee of cleavage. Cherry-colored eye shadow accented the white eye liner over her top lids. A pair of gold and red entwined earrings dangled from her ears. Oh yeah. A true fashion show aficionado.

"And why are you still at work? I thought you were leaving right behind me," Ashlee said.

Shawna took a sip of the rapidly warming beer then sighed before launching into the details of the past few hours. By the time she finished, Ashlee's order of chicken nachos arrived, and she dipped into the supply more to settle her nerves than for any real sustenance need.

Her friend crunched on a nacho. "So I don't get it. He obviously likes you. *A lot*. You like him. What's the hang up?"

"You don't think he's too young? I mean, thirteen years is like, whoa."

"Girl, please."

Shawna rolled her eyes. She mumbled, "I don't know why I bothered calling you."

"'Cause I live five minutes away. 'Cause I'm your friend. And 'cause I'm cute."

She barked out a laugh. "Sorry. Didn't realize cuteness would be helping me out of this mess."

"Oh girl, cuteness helps *everything*." Ashlee's gaze shifted to something behind Shawna. Her face became serious. "Heads up."

Before she could question the remark, a shot glass of clear liquid slid next to her beer. The man who placed it there stood next to Shawna, smiling down on her as if she were some sort of prize.

Other than perhaps being a little too short for her taste, he was a good looking man. He was dark skinned with a flawless complexion, and his eyes glittered in the dim barroom lighting. Many women probably fell for the charming, easy smile. He wore a simple golf style shirt tucked into pleated trousers and leaned against the table, careful to avoid the wet spots left by their sweating mugs.

"Care to join me in a drink?" he asked.

Shawna replicated the smile she used on her patients when she wasn't in the mood for one. This was *so* the last thing she needed tonight—another man in the wings. She nodded toward her mug. "I've got one, thanks."

“I bought this just for you, though.” He pushed the shot glass closer toward her.

She fired a blank stare at Ashlee. What the hell? He had to see her sitting there with her friend. Her smile became more pronounced, saccharine sweet. “And I’ve still got one that I haven’t finished. Thanks.”

He turned to Ashlee. “How about you, slim? I don’t normally go for thick girls, but...”

Ashlee must have inhaled her drink down the wrong pipe because she began to unceremoniously hack. Her eyes watered as she coughed her way clear of the beer.

The man pursed his lips, grabbed the shot glass and stalked away.

The coughing lapsed into wheezing laughter a minute later. “No, he did *not* just try to give me the drink he bought ‘just for you.’”

Shawna snickered and shook her head. “When mama said men are like buses and another one’ll be along in ten minutes, she wasn’t kidding.”

“Listen, Shawna,” Ashlee leaned forward and became serious. “I can’t believe you are seriously considering giving up Damian just because he’s younger. I mean, look at that guy. He’s at least our age or older. Do you think that’s the kind of move Damian would have made?”

True. “That guy was just an ass.”

“What about your past boyfriends? They’ve been your age and look at what it’s gotten you.”

She grimaced. “A broken heart, a maxed out credit card and baby mama drama.”

“And that’s just for the past couple of guys. You probably don’t even want to go down memory lane to find the skeletons in that closet.” Ashlee paused. “Why not give him a shot? He’s good people.”

“I dunno...”

She truly didn't know what to do. Why on earth had she bothered to find out his age? Things had been so nice when they flirted with each other. Even nicer when he'd taken her to the solarium to show her that they could do so much more than just flirt.

Ultimately, her reluctance boiled down to one thing. If she chose to pursue a relationship with him, she'd have to be comfortable with their age differences and how others might perceive her. Worse, how others would perceive them both. Would he mind being seen as out to get her money? Well, what little she had of it. Would *she* mind being seen as only being with him for the sex?

The sex. It was certainly worth being whispered about.

Maybe she should think about this in another way. If she had known how old he was before they had started flirting and long before they'd made love, was there a chance she would have still pursued him?

Ashlee spoke again and brought her out of her reverie. "Well, I do know. He'd be good for you. Here's another saying for you too. If you keep on doing what you always did, you'll always get what you always got."

Oh, Lord. "I hate it when you read."

Ashlee chuckled. "But you know I'm right."

Her lips twitched as she fought a smile. She *was* right. Why should she punish herself and a really good guy because of such a stupid hang up?

"Fine," she conceded. "I'll find him tomorrow and see if he's still interested."

"He's definitely interested. As a matter of fact, you should probably leave so that he can stop waiting for you outside."

Her eyes widened. "What?"

"I saw him on my way in. I didn't know for sure then, but I thought he was waiting for someone. I guess it's you." Ashlee pulled the remaining nachos toward herself. "Go on. I'm gonna finish dinner."

Shawna didn't fight the smile this time. "Thanks, girl."

She fished in her purse for some cash and tossed it on the table as she left. Her stomach knotted as she walked to the entrance. What if he wasn't waiting for her? What if she went out there and made a fool of herself.

She would kill Ashlee. That's what.

Shawna opened the door and walked outside, glancing in both directions. Her fragile ego shattered when she didn't see him, and her shoulders slumped. Maybe it had been coincidence after all.

"Damian?"

She waited a beat but there was no response and she turned to go back inside. It didn't matter. She would find him tomorrow. It might crush her pride if he turned her down, but she really needed to see if he was still interested in her.

As she reached for the door, a noise a few feet away caught her attention. Damian rounded the corner of the brick building, talking into his cell phone. When he saw her, his eyes caught and held hers. He said a single word in Greek into the phone and then snapped it shut.

"Ashlee told me you were outside," she said softly. "What are you doing here?"

The one-shouldered shrug reminded her of the days when he'd been shy around her, back before they began to flirt.

"After what happened earlier, I just wanted to make certain you got to your car okay." A flicker of anxiety crossed his face. "I'm not stalking you or anything."

She smiled. "I know."

They stood face to face, neither saying anything at first. He looked like he wanted to gather her into his arms. She would have gone in a heartbeat. How could she have almost given him up? Maybe they could slow down and get to know each other a little better. Maybe take the relationship one day at a time.

"Will you walk me to my car?" she asked.

It was his turn to smile. “It would be my pleasure.”

Chapter Six

They walked to her car in silence.

Damian thought of a dozen different ways to open a conversation with Shawna. In each of them, logic flew out of the window. In each of them, he wanted to express to her how much he'd come to like her as a person and wanted to get to know her better. He needed the words that would make her understand how he wanted to turn their budding relationship into something more.

All he could envision was the way she'd looked at him after she'd discovered his age. *Skata*. He'd thought all this time that race stopped her from advancing their relationship, not something as silly as age. Who knew?

Not that it mattered. He couldn't change the difference in their ages, either.

By the time they reached her car, he was no closer to finding a way to get her to open up to him again. The closest opportunity he'd had all day was when they'd been in the solarium, when he'd shared the cityscape with her. Now, in the drab employee parking garage, with the exception of gray columns and rows of cars, there wasn't much to look at.

At least, not in the parking garage itself.

He lifted his head as a glimmer of hope began to shine through. Turning to her, he asked casually, "Would you mind taking me to my motorcycle? Two rows up on the roof?"

He couldn't read the emotion in her eyes, but he saw her nod. He knew already that she'd drive him up there. His confidence grew when she opened the car door, and he climbed in. This *had* to work.

A soft tune played on the radio, and Shawna hummed along with it. He turned to watch her as she drove. The dim light, the background music, this moment...everything about it was perfect. He wanted to remember it always.

"You're just about the only vehicle up here," she said when she'd turned the car toward the lone motorcycle.

"There's a reason I suffer through the speed bumps and driving so many levels. Turn off the engine and I'll show you."

"Damian—"

He cut her off. "It won't take long. I promise."

The wind buffeted their clothes when they got out. He pretended not to notice the way her cutoff shirt lifted high enough for a glimpse of the white lace underneath. She wrestled with her clothes, caught between trying to keep her hair from whipping about her face and flashing her undergarments at him.

He held out his hand to her, and she seemed torn on where to place her hands. Two were not sufficient for all the tasks she needed to undertake at the moment. She reached for him, and he pulled her in close, tucking her body next to his. He tried not to reflect on how right she felt there. "I'll help with the clothes and keep you warm. It gets a little chilly up here, okay?"

Her chin grazed his chest when she nodded. He walked her to the very ledge of the garage, ten stories in the air. With their bodies pressed together, he released her long enough to point.

"Look out there," he said.

Damian heard her sharp intake of breath and felt the way her chest expanded against his.

From where they stood, they had a panoramic view of the city. Earlier, their limited view included only a few buildings. Now, they could see the coast line as well as downtown. Bright lights beamed from office buildings. Matinee signs flashed and shimmered. Sailboats floated over the horizon while ghostly lights traveled at their bows.

On some of the buildings, gargoyles kept watch. A strategically placed display silhouetted a church bell against the dark night sky. Cars hustled and streaked through the streets, creating their own shadows and plays of light.

He brought his head down, murmuring next to her head so that she could hear him. "Out there, Shawna, are so many buildings. Some of them as old as the city. Others of them, well, others weren't here a year ago." He stopped to lift her chin to him because he needed to see her face as he spoke. "But from here, they blend so well. Go together so well. They make a beautiful picture. Like you and me."

He kissed her temple. "Give us a chance, Shawna. We can make it work. I know we can."

She shifted at his side, and pulled her arm away from him. His heart hammered while the weight of disappointment crushed it. When she reached up and tapped her lips twice with her finger, he recognized the symbolic gesture and the weight popped like a bubble.

He brought his head down to hers. Her lips were so soft. They were gentle, teasing and pure heaven. He could lose himself in them forever. When her tongue slipped between them to taste him, his cock hardened in response. He moved his mouth over hers, devouring its softness. He raised his mouth from hers to gaze into her face. The pulsing hollow at the base of her throat called to him and he followed the call.

Shawna offered her neck to him, and pushed her breasts against his chest. Her hands searched under his shirt and traveled over his firm stomach. She slid them up, through the thicket of curls she knew to be there. His nipples pebbled beneath her touch, the sensation almost electric.

She hooked her thumbs in the waist of his pants and tugged them down. Following their motion on one knee, she reveled when the object of her intent sprang to life before her. She gripped his hard length and ran her tongue over him. His slender hips jerked at her touch. His hands entwined in her hair, encouraged with a soft grip.

His musky arousal filled her senses, sending a shiver of delight through her. Shawna laved over him and sucked on the dusky head. With gentle fingers, she delicately massaged him. Over the sounds of cars, she heard his shuddering breaths above her.

Eroticism defined.

When she pulled away, he helped her to her feet and held her tight against his body. "Shawna," he groaned.

She pushed him toward his bike. "Let's ride, baby."

She waited for him to straddle his motorcycle then lie back. His gaze remained focused on her as he slid on a condom. She rocked her hips as she walked toward him. With each step, she worked on removing her clothing. First, she pushed down the baggy pants and panties underneath, and stepped out of them.

Damian lifted up and pulled off his shirt then threw it next to her clothes.

She tugged off her own shirt, unhooked her bra and tossed them both into the growing pile.

He helped her climb onto the motorcycle while keeping it balanced. By the time she straddled him, Shawna's ache for him had grown into a searing need. As she sank down over his length, and sheathed him deep inside, she gasped when bare chest met bare chest.

Damian pushed his hands between their bodies to knead her breasts. She rocked her hips over him as he grazed her nipples with his thumbs. When he leaned forward to hungrily devour her, she threw her head back and moaned.

He rocked with her, starting with a slow push before pulling her onto him again. A tremor deep inside heated her thighs and pussy. The fire became all-consuming, raging through her being. Each place his fingers explored tingled under another type of sensation. His very touch cooled her where she already burned. The opposing sensations threatened to sweep her headlong into pure unadulterated bliss. When he reached between their bodies to flick her clit, she saw stars.

Around them, the wind whipped at her body and massaged her breasts. It touched the moisture where they were joined when he pulled away. The strong gusts worked in sync with Damian, escalating her pleasure. She didn't try to control her cries of delight.

His grip on her thigh and hip tightened. Shawna rolled her hips and reached out to the heavens with him. His hands traveled to her back, steadied her movements and encouraged her.

As her legs trembled, her body began to flood with a familiar tingling. It climbed through and over her. Flowing in waves, it threatened to overtake her. When she thought she would finally drown from the ecstasy of it, could not possibly stand one moment more, Shawna abandoned herself to the sensation and her world exploded. She screamed Damian's name, and he spilled into her, launching another flood of searing flames.

They shuddered together, kissing feverishly through their mutual climax. She needed to touch him. She ran her hands over his chest and through his hair. The moment was so magical and unreal. She had to be sure he was there with her, make sure he was real.

He pulled her body against his, crushing her breasts by his embrace. His hands searched and explored. They moved over her as if he needed to be certain of the reality of the moment too.

By the time she floated down from her high, goosebumps covered her arms and legs. The world around them slowly came into focus. The lights and sounds of the city. The stinging bite of the wind.

The fact that she and her lover were naked on the roof of the employee parking garage.

With her head nestled against his neck, she felt like purring as he stroked her back. She raised her eyes to find him watching her.

"Better?" he said in a low, composed voice.

She wrapped her arms more tightly around his waist.

Much better.

Chapter Seven

Epilogue

Seven months later...

“Here. Have a bite,” she said. Shawna held out a fork topped with a piece of cake laden with icing.

It tumbled to the ground when Damian pulled her roughly onto his lap. “There’s only one thing around here I’m going to bite right now,” he growled.

She’d long since stopped being embarrassed by his insistence on public displays of affection. Besides, it was something their friends had become used to. No one at the graduation party even batted an eye when she fell onto him.

That night on the roof of the parking garage, she threw caution to the wind and gave in to desire. When he called her the next night, they had their first real conversation. And then he called her again the next night and they just talked again. He seemed to sense that she needed more than just sex, and she appreciated it. After another two weeks of lots of laughing and great meals together, she was sick to death of going to bed with only his words and not him.

Then one evening he showed up on her door step with half a dozen roses and a seductive glint in his eye.

She never looked back.

Tonight, keeping his word, he nibbled along her neck. She giggled while the light stubble on his chin inadvertently tickled her and then

shrieked with laughter when his fingers danced down her ribcage. When she could catch her breath, she gently slapped his face.

“Bad boy. We have guests,” she admonished.

His mouth found the pulse along her neck. Warm lips pressed over it, traveled up to her jaw. He mumbled, “Make them go away.”

She stifled a shiver. She couldn’t get enough of the way he continued to want her. His ongoing need for her. Her breath caught every time he looked at her from across the room and made her understand the depth of his emotions with a single glance. Something about the way he tracked her movements, sin glinting in his eyes one moment and love reflecting in them in the next, made her heart hammer.

Curled up next to him, an electric charge hummed between them. It didn’t help that her head swam from a little too much champagne. Or perhaps it was how he kept her wanting him, too.

“When are you going to behave?”

He shrugged. The words were muffled as his lips continued to travel. “Maybe the day after you marry me.”

Butterflies laid claim to her stomach at the statement. She had to hand it to him. He was nothing if not persistent. He’d been asking for two months now. “Maybe,” she said noncommittally.

Damian pulled back, searching her face for a moment before he leaned in close. His breath warmed her skin as he spoke. “If you won’t marry me, then give us a baby. A beautiful little baby. Our baby.”

Her eyes misted at his words. This was the third time he’d asked. Each request caused her pulse to race, made her think long and hard about it. As many times as she tried to convince herself otherwise, it was something she wanted too.

She glanced around the room, wanting a distraction from the thought. But her mind wouldn’t be dissuaded. Shawna sniffled once and dropped her gaze. “In one year,” she whispered.

He grasped her chin in his hand and tilted her face toward his. A slow, hesitant smile crept onto his face. “What did you just say?”

“In one year.” She held a finger out for him to see. “In one year, if you still feel the same way about me, let’s get married. And have a baby.”

His grin was infectious. “Oh, love. I’m not going to change my mind. Not in one year. Not in one hundred years.”

She gasped when she went airborne. He’d wrapped one arm across her back and another under her legs. Over his shoulder, she saw the smug and knowing looks of their friends as Damian headed toward the bedroom.

“Damian! Our guests!”

“To hell with our guests,” he said as he kicked open the door. “I only have three hundred and sixty-five days to get making a baby with you right. And by God, I’m not going to lose out on a single one.”

He laid her down on the bed with ease. Beneath hooded eyes, she watched him start to pull off his shirt. The door closed behind him, and only one thing ran through her mind. She knew it before now, but he seemed hell bent on proving it again. With a sigh, she resigned herself to desire. Because – *oh yeah* – them young ones got stamina.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dee Carney began writing short stories in middle school, but did not attempt completion of a novel until almost ten years later which, despite good intentions, she never finished. Almost ten additional years later, she challenged herself to begin writing again, and her love for storytelling was rekindled. Now, Dee is a best-selling, award-winning author who lives at home in Georgia with her husband, two dogs and a cat. When not writing, Dee is usually curled up on the couch with a good book!

To learn more about all of Dee's books, please visit her on the web at <http://www.deecarney.com>.



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