



Island Seduction  
(A sensual romantic novella)

by

Arianna Decole

Originally Published November 2007 with The Wild Rose Press

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Electronic Publication Copyright © 2011

Original Text Copyright © 2007, Arianna DeCole. All rights reserved.

Manufactured in the United States of America

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

# Table of Contents

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1  
Chapter 2  
Chapter 3  
Chapter 4  
Chapter 5  
Chapter 6  
Chapter 7  
Chapter 8  
Chapter 9

# Blurb

*Feel the heat.*

Renee Carlson is a writer and food critic for a local paper on the island of St. Thomas. After swearing off men and embracing the reclusive lifestyle of island life, she prepares for a family of her own in paradise. That is until a handsome stranger arrives on her private island...

Jordan Brentwood is a playboy in every sense of the word. He is his father's son, moving from relationship to relationship while juggling his responsibilities as a doctor. Blond haired and blue eyed, Jordan is used to women throwing themselves at his feet, until he meets a beautiful woman while vacationing. Jordan makes it his mission to learn more about the woman and make her his for the keeping.

Jordan and Renee's romance is rocky from their first meeting, but as they grow closer, truths will be uncovered and the depths of their love will be explored as they face challenges, triumphs and ultimately, life changing revelations.

## Chapter 1

“All right, on my count. One...two...three...”

The group of five doctors lifted the sheet to transfer the young girl onto the second gurney.

Jordan Brentwood slipped his medical tools into his pocket and prepared to leave. It was another grueling day at the hospital and he could use a good break about now.

“Good job, guys.”

“Wait! Don’t leave me!” The girl’s eyes lit up and she nearly jumped out of bed, ignoring her injured leg.

“The doctors will take good care of you, Teresa. I’ll come and check on you later, okay? I promise.”

The little girl named Teresa nodded and settled as he patted her hand. If it was one thing Jordan learned in his training, it was that a simple touch and a bit of empathy worked in this field. He may not have it with his own personal life but he always made sure to give it to his patients.

With a nod, he watched the doctors wheel her toward surgery.

Jordan sighed and started on his way to the next patient. Turning the corner, he felt a little sting of regret that he couldn’t accompany the girl to surgery. He had previously assisted his mentor when he was a resident in the hospital. Now, as he was finishing his residency, he was more than ready for the next step. As he waited for the go ahead from the head doctor, the least he could do was inform Teresa’s family about her status.

Jordan started toward the front lobby when he felt a female hand slide under his coat. He didn’t have to turn around to know who it was.

“Looks like you’ve got a lot on your mind. You walked right past me.”

Jordan turned to face the tall blonde behind him. Sheila’s blue eyes enticed him toward her, despite the hustle and bustle going on around them.

“Usual hospital stuff,” he said. Layers of makeup enhanced the allure of her pretty face. To him, she seemed like a model playing doctor.

“Have you eaten yet?” Sheila asked, leaning toward him.

He smiled and occupied himself with a clipboard he quickly grabbed from the nurse at the front desk. “No, I was just thinking about going that way.”

“Mind if I join you?” Sheila cooed. She took his hand and led them around the corner to an empty room. Thankfully there was no one around when they took their hiding place.

Jordan chuckled. He didn’t have to think twice about their code for meaningless, passionate hot sex against the wall of a desolate hiding place. His mind screamed “no” despite the growing pressure down south.

“Sheila, I-uh...” He cleared his throat as she closed the door and then closed in on him. Her fingers played with the sensitive area on the back of his neck. Her other hand grabbed the clipboard and set it on a nearby cart. Then she slid her hand between his legs and grabbed the growing erection pressing against his pants. “You know I have a lot of work to get in before my trip.”

Hearing this, she moved back. She folded her arms and her blue eyes went from fiery to boredom. Jordan had to bite back the moan caught in the back of his throat when her hand brushed him.

"Yeah, I heard about this trip. You know, I wish you would ask me to go with you. I've always wanted to go to the islands. I know we aren't exclusive or anything, but I'd like to think we're making progress."

"Progress?" Jordan ran his hands through his dark, sandy blond hair. He hoped Sheila would grab a clue and leave him alone. His father warned him about who he spent his time with, especially as a bachelor.

Jordan had a reputation for dating on and off and was known to have never had a serious relationship in all his twenty-nine years of living. And why should he? His father, a playboy himself in his days, encouraged him not to settle down until he was absolutely sure about the woman he would bring into their family. "*Sow your oats,*" he said. "*Try all women out and test the female waters.*" The Brentwoods had a tradition to uphold and eventually marry to produce a "suitable" heir. His father made sure of this.

Jordan sighed and reached for the clipboard. He had never been in love before, and he wasn't even sure if the emotion existed in this day and age. Even if it did, he sure didn't feel it with Sheila.

"Look," Sheila started again, noting his silence. "I know you're notorious for running away when a girl asks you about commitment. But I'd like to think that we're different."

She took the clipboard from his hand. Her red nails scratched the brown board surface, adding to his already rampant irritation.

"I'd like to think *this* was different," Sheila added.

Jordan counted to ten in his head as he ran another hand through his short hair.

"Look, Sheila," he began softly. "This isn't the time or the place to have this conversation."

"Then when?" she said, slapping the board against her leg.

Jordan heard his name over the PA and silently thanked the lord above for the save.

"When I get back from the trip," he finally answered. He turned and left, exiting down the hall before she had a chance to respond. He'd have another woman to replace in no time. With his blonde surfer boy looks and well-built tanned body, he had every woman eyeing him and asking him out every which way he turned. But he was beginning to tire of the offers. Sheila's accusation of him running every time commitment came knocking at his door hit him especially hard that evening.

Was he going soft?

Jordan dismissed the thought as he rounded the corner and returned to the lobby. He had more important things to take care of than his shaky love life at the moment. And that was focusing on saving another young life that would have a brighter future in store for her. He would make sure of it himself.

\*\*\*\*\*

Renee Carlson watched her older sister, Lauren, stretch and yawn as she emerged from the back room patio and stepped onto the terrace.

"You know I never thought I'd see this outside of a dream. Fruit on a table next to fresh coffee and a newspaper. The ocean at my doorstep." Lauren smiled at the breakfast setup in front of her. "Don't you just want to go outside and run naked and barefoot on the sand?"

"Girl, who you talking to you? I did that the first day I moved here." Renee chuckled when she peered up at her sister's wide eyed expression and gaping mouth. "Don't worry. No one saw me. I would've charged admission if I had an audience. Muffin?"

"Uh, yes, please." Lauren stepped onto the balcony and plucked a muffin from the tower of treats. "Didn't know my sister was a freak like that," she mumbled under her breath." She took a bite and breathed in deeply.

A cool breeze brushed across the terrace overlooking the coral beaches leading to the island of St. Thomas.

"Ooh, girl, I could stay here forever," Lauren said.

"I don't think Gary would appreciate that very much," Renee said, leaning back in her chair. "Not to mention Lisa and Angie."

"Maybe not but he did finally realize how much I needed this vacation."

Renee watched her sister leaning on the leaf-molded metal railing. She could imagine her crazy home life with her nieces running around all day. A family was what she always wanted, and despite being told how fortunate she was to be single, Renee felt like something was missing in her life.

"Gary's been hinting that he knows some bachelors at his firm that are ready to settle down," Lauren said with a Cheshire cat-like smile on her face. "I think they may be your type."

"If they are little boys trapped in men's bodies, I don't want them," Renee said. She flipped open her paper and returned to reading the entertainment section.

Lauren sighed and finally turned to face her sister. "Those aren't the only men out there and you know it."

"Yes, they are. Gary's a good guy, don't get me wrong, but you got the last of the good guys on this earth, sis."

Lauren wandered over to the table and plucked another muffin from the batch. "You said the same thing about Daddy until Gary came around."

Renee peeked out from her paper to give her sister her famous evil eye. "That's right, but I wasn't sure then. I'm sure of it now."

Lauren didn't say a word as she slowly dug her long, French manicured nails into the muffin. She kept a steady eye on Renee. The younger sibling felt her sister's eyes on her but ignored the gaze and continued to read. "You can't run away from it, Renee."

The paper crackled in her lap. "Oh, here we go." Renee rolled her eyes.

"I just hate seeing you hide from the world because you're scared to get hurt."

"I'm not hiding."

Lauren's eyes narrowed on her sister. "The minute you sold your first book after graduation, you came here, bought a house and we didn't hear from you for three months. I understand you wanting to be careful, but I don't want you to cut yourself completely off from the world. How are you going to meet someone?"

"Maybe I don't want to meet someone, Lauren." Renee jumped to her feet. Brushing away a curly strand of her thick hair, she thought about all the men she had turned down in her life. All of them wanted to sleep with her, but the minute she wanted someone by

her side, they ran. She got tired of getting her hopes up about new men, only to be disappointed by being tossed aside.

Renee paced the length of the terrace. She hadn't yet trusted a man to make love to her, despite dreaming about what it would be like.

"Life isn't a romance novel, sis," Renee said softly. "Men don't jump off their stallions and promise us the world anymore. Although I may write and read it from time to time, that doesn't mean I have to go look for it."

"That's true." Lauren took a bite of her muffin and slid the paper off the remaining piece. A smile crossed her pretty face. "Pumpkin pecan. Mmmmm."

Renee chuckled. "I had a feeling you'd like that one."

Lauren descended into her chair. She continued munching in between her lecture. "You know I just hate to see you alone."

Renee laughed. "Then I'll get a cat. A dog. A kid."

"A what?" Lauren coughed.

"I've been thinking about having a family on my own. I'm done waiting."

Renee turned away from her sister for fear she might turn to ice from her stare.

"Renee, you are twenty-six years old!"

"And I think I'm ready, sis," she said, finally meeting her gaze. "I took care of Lisa and Angie a lot. I can afford to live comfortably. I have a career. I can take care of myself. Need I go on?"

"Girl..."

Renee listened as Lauren echoed their mother's tone. Goodness knows she *didn't* need another mother.

"Lauren, I've given up finding a guy to settle down with. There just aren't any out there for me. I've always wanted a family of my own. And I think it's time."

"Well," her sister took a moment to take a sip of her coffee before continuing, "if that's what you want."

Renee took in a slow, deep breath. At least she didn't criticize. Maybe the calm sea breeze did have a healthy effect on her normally opinionated sister.

"So," Renee said cheerfully, "what do you want to do for the next few hours before you go back to the big city?"

They both turned to the beach, then looked back at each other as they shared a smile.

"I'll race ya," Renee yelled over her shoulder as she flew out of the villa terrace.



## Chapter 2

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. If you take a look outside your window, you’ll see a wonderful aerial view of St. Thomas. We should be landing in about fifteen minutes, so please buckle your safety belts and hang tight. It’s been a pleasure serving as your captain on this journey. Welcome to the Virgin Islands.”

Jordan felt his muscles ache in places he had forgotten existed. He should have been happy for this ride since it was the longest he’d been able to sit in one place in a long time. On the contrary, he couldn’t help but feel a bit antsy to get on his feet and move around. He sat up and shifted to get the feeling back in his body. A cool air brushed past his bare legs and which sent an awakening shiver throughout his body. He took a peek out of his side window. The clouds parted just enough for him to see the blue waters surrounding green and brown islands below.

At that moment, Jordan felt at home. It had been a while since he last visited this beautiful location; considering everything that was going on with his father’s upcoming wedding, Sheila’s faster-than-usual advances toward him and the overall stuffiness of high East Coast propriety. It wasn’t that he didn’t enjoy his lifestyle, but every once in a while a guy had to get away from it all.

As the plane landed and Jordan prepared to gather his things, he was thankful for the vacation time that officially started. He took note of the sly, flirty gaze from the pretty brunette stewardess nearby. Perhaps this trip wouldn’t be so lonely after all.

\*\*\*\*

Renee rested her arm on the open car window. She focused on the road ahead while she guided her Jeep down the old main street toward the airport.

“Girl, I hope I’m all rested up and ready to go face those crazy kids,” Lauren said. She was busy sifting through one of her bags in her lap. Renee recognized her sister’s nervous fidgeting ritual. They both hated flying and while Renee could do well sitting still and getting into her zone, Lauren always had to be moving to keep herself calm.

Renee offered her sister a warm smile. “Yeah, me too. I don’t want you taking out my nieces before I can visit them again.”

Lauren chuckled and playfully smacked Renee in the arm.

The tall buildings of the airport sat against blue sky, decorated with tiny airplanes. Renee turned into the entrance and was thankful when they immediately found a parking spot.

“What time is the flight again?” Renee asked. They grabbed Lauren’s luggage and headed for the entrance.

“2:45.”

“That’s what I thought. So why are we here at 1:45?”

“Because you drive too dag gone fast, woman!”

Renee stifled a laugh. She thought she would miss the quips and jabs her sister handed her, but it would be nice to have the quiet villa all to herself again.

“Okay, here we go. Flight back to Miami.”

Lauren placed her hand on her hip and raised an eyebrow. “Are you trying to get rid of me?”

“No, of course not,” Renee smiled sweetly. “I just want you to be on time. And I do value my privacy.” She pulled her sister in a tight hug. “Call me once you board and again when you land so I know you’re safe, okay?”

“Will do, *Mom*.” Lauren smiled. “You take care and try not to work too hard.”

Renee nodded then bid her sister farewell. She watched Lauren walk toward the check-in station when someone caught her eye. He had to be in his late twenties. He was handsome, tall and tan, as if he had just stepped out from a vacation brochure. He wore a nice-fitting blue tee over khaki shorts that stopped just above his knees. Looking at the shape of his muscular calves, she guessed he probably worked out. Maybe played some sports. He held three bags with no struggle and walked with confidence as if he was donning an expensive three piece suit instead of casual summer wear.

*Probably because he knows all the women here are staring at him*, Renee thought to herself.

Just then he stopped, set his bags down and looked up...right into her eyes.

Renee’s breath escaped her and she had to force herself to inhale and then exhale.

Never before did a man have such a hold over her at first meeting. Her body tingled, her heart raced and the rest of the world slipped away.

It took her a moment to notice her phone was ringing loudly in her hand. She shook herself awake enough to answer coherently. *Get it together, girl*.

“Yeah?” she answered keeping her eyes on the man.

“Stop looking at that boy and wave back to me already.” Lauren’s impatient tone seeped through the phone.

Renee turned to the check-in station where her sister stood with one hand on her hip and the other holding the phone to her ear.

Smiling sarcastically, she waved. “How did you know I was looking at someone, *Mom*?”

“Girl, please. I know you. You can smell a fine man from here to the neighboring islands.”

“Yeah, but I thought I turned off those senses.” Renee focused her attention once again on the man. “Have to get that checked, pronto.” He was now talking to a suited chauffeur, who was holding a sign reading “Brentwood.”

*Where did she hear that name before?*

“It’s harmless. Look at him. I’m sure he’s hardly interested in my type anyway. He looks like a rich snob with the intelligence of an ice cube. And it looks like his name is Brentwood from the sign his limo driver is holding up. Can you get any snottier than that? Besides, even if he *was* interested, I’m not ready to face a closed-minded family and fights to be accepted as a love interest. No, sir.”

“You psych yourself out way too much these days. Where is my vivacious young sister who always goes for anything she wants?”

“She gave up men and died. Just like her love life.”

“Yeah, right. It’ll serve you right if you end up with that fine man. I’ll laugh right in your face if he ends up apart of that famous Brentwood family. Look, I need to go board this plane. I’ll call you when I land. Bye, sis.”

“Love you.”

Renee shook her head and headed toward the exit. As if that kind of thing would ever happen in her lifetime.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jordan smiled.

“For the ninetieth time, tell my father I’m going to rent a car. I don’t want a limo. Just some peace and freaking quiet.”

Jordan turned and headed for the waiting area. Never in his life had he been so captivated by a woman before. Something inside him suddenly came alert and he couldn’t take his eyes off her. In the few seconds he turned away, she disappeared.

“Where did she go?” he whispered.

He then caught sight of the girl walking toward the front exit. Deep inside he had to fight the urge to run after her and ask for her number.

Jordan frowned to himself. It wasn’t like he was unattractive. Quite the opposite. He usually had to fight the girls off him, but this one acted like he didn’t even exist. As she turned toward the exit, he drank in the sight of her: skin like smooth deep mocha, thick hair that fell in tiny ringlets around her bare shoulders. She wasn’t skinny, rather very curvy in all the right places which complemented her heart-shaped face well. She wore a blue flowery top with a matching skirt that hugged her shapely waist and hips. He wondered if she was from this island and secretly hoped they would meet again.

“Sir.”

Jordan turned to see his chauffeur running up to him with an open cell phone in his outstretched hand.

“Your father wishes to speak with you.”

Jordan took the phone and sighed the minute he heard his father’s deep voice.

“I didn’t send Julio all the way down there for his health, Jordan,” his father’s baritone voice boomed.

“Father, I told you I didn’t want a big show when I got down here. I just want some relaxation.”

“Oh, I see. So you’re running from all that I’ve built and worked hard for in order to give you this good life? You’re just going to throw it all away like it means nothing?”

Jordan rolled his eyes. He edged toward the door watching the girl walking toward a row of cars. He realized then how much he loved watching her. The way her hips and butt swayed from side to side called his name.

“Jordan!”

Jordan straightened up at the sound of his name.

“Yeah.” Half listening to his father’s rant about enjoying the good life, he tried to focus on which car the girl got into. The island wasn’t too big and if he had the license plate, he was sure he could hunt her down later.

Jordan smiled to himself. Had he ever worked this hard to meet a girl before? Ever since their eyes met in that electric moment, she made no effort to sneak another look or even throw a smile his way. It was like she placed a wall between them, daring him to come and get it. Well, if she was daring him, he was determined to climb over that wall and claim her as his.

Jordan smiled. *Oh yeah. Here we go.*

A hunter green, four-door convertible Jeep. Nice. He smiled. It fit her perfectly.

“Well, Father,” he said, finally focusing, “that may be good enough for you, but some of us who work hard need a break from life once in a while.”

“Just make sure you’re here in time for the wedding.”

Jordan quietly scoffed. “Right.” He hung up the phone, then handed it, along with his luggage, back to Julio. “Please take my bags to the villa. Then you can take the rest of the day off. Enjoy the island. Kick back a little on me.”

Jordan patted the man’s shoulder and headed outside to the parking lot. He was up to his ears in wedding plans. His father and mother split when he was eight years old and ever since then he had to stand by his father during many elaborate 2,000-guest weddings. He pretended along with the rest of the world that his father had found the new love of his life. The latest wedding was about a week away and he could use all the relaxation to muster up the courage to play pretend once again.

Then there was the beautiful woman who refused to leave his thoughts.

Jordan looked around for the hunter green Jeep that was now missing from the parking spot. “She couldn’t have disappeared already,” he said to himself.

He stepped out onto the road to get a better look when he heard a screech to his left. Turning, he found himself staring down at the dark grill of the green Jeep stopping just inches from his face. Heart racing, he looked up at the driver. There she was, looking back at him through thick, dark sunglasses with a look of shock on her pretty face.

Jordan wondered if he should say or do something. He should have been mad and screaming. Instead, he wanted to walk up to her, take her in his arms and lay a soft, slow burn kiss on those enticing lips of hers.

As if sensing his craving, she slowly wet her lips. Jordan’s body ached with desire at the subtle movement of her tongue gently caressing each full, sensual lip. He stepped to the side, away from the car. Before he could approach her, she pushed on the gas pedal and sped off onto the road ahead.

Jordan didn’t waste any more time.

He ran over to the nearest cab, hopped inside and told the driver to follow the Jeep. He had to know where she was going. Later on he would finally get to his father’s villa, unpack and rest. For now, he was a man on a mission.

\*\*\*\*

Renee took in slow breaths to calm herself. Her small hands gripped the steering wheel so tight they were turning red under her dusky brown complexion.

She looked up into her rearview mirror and noticed the cab that had been behind her for two streets now. *Was he in that cab?*

Turning the next corner, she kept an eye on the mirror. Sure enough, the cab turned the corner and was still behind her.

Renee shook her head. What’s with this guy?

She turned down a small street where pedestrians wandered along the old stone plantation homes. The cab was still close behind.

“Think, girl,” she said, trying to calm down. “Think.”

A hidden back street to her home popped up in her mind and she immediately checked for a good turnoff. The cab behind her slowed to stay inconspicuous.

“Not working, buddy,” Renee chuckled.

The turnoff came and she veered onto the street. Then she turned once again onto another street, hoping to side step the car.

Looking up in the rearview mirror, the cab was nowhere in sight. She breathed a sigh of relief.

She turned into an off-street and continued alongside the crowded green shrubbery that decorated the islands. Seeing the two-story Spanish villa and gated grassland on the small island just ahead, Renee felt her heart finally slow down from beating a million miles a minute. She secretly hoped to never see the man again. Just as she thought it, a small inkling tugged at her heart. Maybe her mind was thinking it, but deep down in her heart, a curious part of her hoped it wouldn't come true.

## Chapter 3

An hour later, Renee stepped into the ocean. She allowed the water to embrace her up to her waist. She jumped and dove in, reveling in the cool blue around her.

She loved moments like this when she connected with the ocean. Her mind was at ease with the elements and nothing at all bothered her. When she was a little girl, her mother often called her a fish as she marveled at the amount of time she spent in the family pool.

*“My little Olympic swimmer,”* her father used to jokingly call her.

Instead of pursuing the gold, there were so many other things she wanted to do instead of following a career in swimming.

Renee surfaced and took in deep breaths of the clean air.

Just then, the man at the airport popped into her mind. Immediately she turned and swam back to the beach hoping to wash the thoughts away. She wasn't his type. He was just curious about her. Nothing more. He probably had a bleached blonde at home and came here for a fling. That's it.

She comforted herself once she reached the shore and grabbed her towel. All she had to do was stop thinking about the guy she would probably never see again.

\*\*\*\*

It was 4:30 in the afternoon when Renee found herself staring at the beach from her terrace. Her hands hovered over her laptop keys as she tried to decide on the best descriptions for her latest restaurant review. Her dark eyes followed the ripples in the water as it responded to the warm Caribbean wind. Part of her wished she could see some action on the beach. Perhaps some young couple frolicking or kids playing. She sighed. This had to be one of the downsides of owning her own beachfront property.

Then her eye caught movement in the water. A tan, muscled body cut through the water like a trained swimmer. Renee slowly stood. Who was coming onto her property? She grabbed her wraparound skirt and tied it at her waist before turning to race down the stairs. She mentally ran a checklist of all the people who came onto her private property. From what she could recall, no one was scheduled to arrive today.

*Ugh!*

She slipped her painted toes in the sandals sitting near her front door, then headed for the ocean. Her mind raced to figure out who the man was encroaching on her property.

Perhaps she should have taken a mop or some kind of weapon.

Just in case.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan swam through the cool blue water, reveling in the liquid. He allowed his mind to escape and release all the tensions and sounds of the hospital. Then his mind fell

on the beautiful woman he spotted at the airport. She had to be pretty young, twenty-six, twenty-seven or so, and she had a commanding presence that he liked. One he had not seen in the presence of the females at home who chased him inside the hospital and out on the town. This one set him on fire. He wondered if he would grow tired of her and want to move on to the next woman once she was caught. Make no mistake, he'd surely catch her if it took his best moves to get her falling into his arms...and eventually his bed. He didn't like to chase girls but this one ignited the instinct in him.

As he felt his lungs push out the last of his air, he swam up and felt the warm gaze of the sun upon him.

Wiping the salty water from his eyes, he saw a blurred figure coming toward him from the shore. His eyes focused on the figure. She stood tall, with shapely arms folded under full breasts pushed up just enough to entice him. Her skin was a smooth brown from her head down to her bare toes. From where he stood, he could see a full, thick curly mane of cinnamon brown hair framing her heart-shaped face.

Then he realized it.

It was her.

The woman from the airport. And she was even more breathtaking up close.

She wore a red and orange sarong skirt that hugged her shapely hips. The sarong was decorated with yellow flowers along the print. A matching floral bikini top covered her full cleavage, leaving just enough to tease him.

She shielded her gorgeous eyes from the bright sun. Never did she remove her gaze from him as she closed the distance between them.

Jordan didn't know what to say. Here was this beautiful woman coming toward him and he didn't have a charming opening line. Not even a word of wit. He mentally scolded himself and tried to calm his rapidly beating heart. *How about hi, idiot?*

Jordan smiled at the girl and opened his mouth to speak.

"What do you think you're doing here?" she said pointedly.

"It's you..." Jordan breathed.

"This is private property. You have to leave."

He swam toward the small shore, holding her gaze.

\*\*\*\*\*

Renee focused on the man before her as he rose from the water. The droplets of the salty sea water slowly fell from his muscular frame. He ran a hand over his slicked-back hair. Strands of sandy blonde with golden highlights caught the sun, complementing his deep blue eyes. Renee had to remind herself to breathe as his strong frame towered over her. She had to keep herself from reaching out to caress his smooth skin and allow her fingertips to trace each outline of muscle.

There had to be something to the power of thought, she realized in that moment. This was the same man she couldn't stop thinking about.

*He's probably just like all the others,* she told herself.

The thought made her straighten up right away.

"Who are you, and how did you get on my property?"

The Brentwood Boy stood in front of her wearing a blank expression. "Swimming, actually. I thought I would take a drive on this end of the island. I started swimming and I guess I just went too far. See, I'm here on a short vacation—"

"Is there a reason you're evading my questions?" Renee asked.

"No reason at all. I just..."

"Didn't the scuba club warn you about this being private property?"

The man wiped the droplets from his hair and face. "Yeah, they did. My name's Jordan—"

"Look, all I really care about is that you're on my property and I'd like you to leave, please."

She could tell he was a bit taken aback by the firmness in her tone. Through it all, he kept his focus on her...as if he were studying her. Renee shifted uncomfortably. "Why are you looking at me that way?" Her firm tone faltered a bit under his gaze. She found it hard to stand still, even tougher to break the gaze he so firmly held on her.

He straightened up once he realized he was staring. "I...was wondering if you lived here alone."

She opened her mouth. He had some nerve! "I—don't think that's any of your business."

"Right. Strangers and all," Jordan said.

"Look..."

"Don't worry, I'm leaving." He turned around and headed back to the water.

Renee caught a glimpse of his shapely butt as his wet trunks hugged him.

"One more thing."

Her eyes quickly shot up to his face as he turned. She silently prayed he didn't see the upward jerk of her head. The smile on his handsome face said otherwise.

"I want you to have dinner with me tonight. We can get to know each other. Maybe take a walk in the moonlight."

"I'm sorry, Jordan, is it?"

He nodded, still smiling. "Correct."

"Thank you for the nice offer, but I don't think that will be possible."

"Why not?"

"Why what?"

"Why won't you have dinner with me?"

"I..." Renee forced her mind to work quickly.

"You mean you don't have an excuse ready?" he chuckled playfully. "Why, I'm shocked."

"I just don't do this, okay?"

"Don't do this..." The smile disappeared, now replaced by a few curious wrinkles in his brow.

"This...dating thing. I stopped a long while ago."

"Too many broken hearts?"

Renee tried to hide the irritation in her voice. She shrugged it off. "Yes, if you must know."

"Ah," Jordan nodded. "Well...I guess I'll have to show you how wrong you were to make that decision."



Before she could form the words to fire back, Jordan dove into the water and swam away. Her blood should have been boiling. Her blood pressure should have been sky high. She could have even yelled a nice quip back at him, but something deep inside her was curious to see what this Jordan guy was all about.

## Chapter 4

“Hey, Renee, what’s up?” The baritone voice on the other line was lined with a twang of an accent local to the island.

“Henry, do me a favor, will you?”

“What’s that?”

“If you see this Jordan guy again, tell him...” Renee’s mind drew a blank. On the way back to the house she coached herself to say how she didn’t care who Jordan was or where he came from. She repeated it over and over again in her mind. She told herself she’d get the local police to escort him right off her property if he ever came back again. But now the curiosity had grown into something more. “Tell him...to check in with me first before coming across.”

Henry’s deep chuckle echoed on the other end. “Will do, Renee. What’s the matter? Dude coming on to you?”

“No! Well...no. I just want to make sure he knows who owns this property.” She leaned against the wall, trying to keep from remembering those bright blue eyes that surveyed her entire body. She tried to ignore the warmth that circled her belly and spread throughout her body.

With just one glance, he awakened feelings within her that she thought were long dead. She was playing with fire and promised herself no more relationships. So why was she aching to get burned by Jordan Brentwood?

“Henry, I need you to relay a message for me.”

“Sure thing,” he said. “What’s up?”

“Please invite Mr. Brentwood over for dinner for me. And also, let him know that Casa Carlson is no slouch so he’ll have to dress up.”

“Planning on wining and dining tonight, Renee?” Henry said with a knowing lilt of his voice.

Renee smiled. “I just want to see how good Mr. Brentwood’s game really is.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Jordan slipped a dinner jacket over his long sleeved navy blue silk shirt. He planned to spend this week relaxing with no thoughts of work, only planning to play with the various women he brought back to his cottage. But that all changed the moment he saw one particular woman. The scuba guy, Henry, told him her name was Renee Carlson and the only message he received was to check in with her before coming across to her side of the island.

That was before she invited him to dinner. Why she bit his head off before inviting him over was beyond his comprehension, but tonight he planned to find out more about the complex Ms. Carlson.

Jordan locked up the cottage before heading over to the garage where his father’s three cars were parked inside.

No girl had ever gotten under his skin like the beautiful Renee. More than anything he wanted *her* to be begging for *him*, but she was completely resistant to him despite the extra charm he threw at her. This was going to be a challenge indeed.

As Jordan got behind the wheel of the '56 Roadster, he told himself this was only because he needed to get laid. He didn't really have any feelings for this girl...

The engine roared beneath him. As he eased on the break, he wondered how true that statement really was.

\*\*\*\*\*

Renee typed away at the article on her laptop. She stopped momentarily to recall the sweet and spicy taste of the food from the local eatery she wanted to review and post for incoming tourists in the local paper. She smiled as the world around her slipped away. The warm ocean wind blew across her face as she turned to her veranda to watch the soft waves crashing in an array of misty foam down below.

The phone rang inside the house, breaking her concentration. She hesitated to get up, hoping the answering machine would grab it so she could return to her peaceful thoughts. Jordan would be here soon she and wanted to get as much done before all her attention went to him. She also had chicken fillets cooking on the grill and she had to keep an eye out so they won't become strips of charcoal instead.

The answering machine beeped, pulling her from her thoughts. She waited.

"Ms. Renee Carlson, this is Dr. Westmore's office reminding you to make your next appointment."

Renee's hands froze over the laptop keys. She was still trying to work up the nerve to commit to her plan of creating her own family. For something as important as this, she decided that she would make a quick trip to Boston to visit her old family doctor. After all, Dr. Malkia Westmore was very familiar with her medical history. She had had treated Renee for most of her life since childhood before Renee's move to St. Thomas. Several weeks ago, Renee had spoken to her over the phone about her plans, but that was as far as it had gone...until now. Only a plan.

She pushed the seat away and rose to her feet, pacing the veranda. It was a plan she thought out well and wanted to make a reality, but now she was having doubts. The memory of Jordan's gaze made her freeze. The way he smiled sent a volt of electricity through her and her heart quivered. Her legs throbbed at the idea of his hands caressing her bare body. The feel of his naked, toned, sweaty body crushing hers...

"Stop it, girl," she told herself. "He isn't that interested. And if he was, it would only be for one thing and then he'd disappear."

Shaking her head, she scoffed and stormed into the kitchen to finish up dinner preparations. Work was a lost cause now so she might as well occupy her mind until he arrived.

Minutes later, the smooth Bossa Nova sounds of the Gilbertos and Stan Getz poured from the speakers around the house. Renee moved her hips from side to side as she cut up bright, colorful, freshly-picked fruit and scooped the pieces into a bowl. Just as she reached the bridge to "The Girl From Ipanema," the intercom beeped, cutting off the song midway. Licking her fingers, she wiped them off on a nearby towel and pressed the camera button.

A brightly color tinted image popped up, revealing an old model convertible Jaguar. Focusing her eyes, Renee jumped back once Jordan dipped into view. His short blond hair was neatly combed and he wore sunglasses to accent his perfectly pressed white suit.

She had to force herself to breathe.

"Are you going to let me in?" his smooth, purely male voice streamed through the intercom.

Renee imagined what his body would feel like on top of hers as his voice invaded her mind with that very question. The gentle stroke of his hand on her arm and the feel of his thick arousal teasing the opening of her...

"Oh, *in!* Right! Hold on." She turned and leaned against the wall. The hot, sexual charge that shot through her from the thoughts heated her entire body, but her mind reminded her to proceed with caution.

She stepped in front of the camera again. "I suppose you're wondering why I asked you over for dinner."

Jordan shrugged. "The thought occurred to me but I did get your message about alerting you beforehand when I was arriving. I thought I'd send up the white flag in surrender before requesting to coming aboard. So..." Jordan reached in his pocket and produced a stick with a white cloth wrapped around it like a flag. As he waved it over his head, he smiled. "How about it?"

Renee couldn't help chuckling. "Well, I figure it's the least I can do for almost running you over earlier."

Jordan grinned, revealing a set of perfectly polished white teeth. "So you do remember that little incident? I figured I'd try anything short of throwing myself at the mercy of your vehicle to get you to notice me. Impressed?"

"It's a little neurotic to be honest." Renee laughed.

"Ah well, you had to admit it was memorable."

This one was definitely a charmer. Renee knew she had to watch out for him. Still, there was something about his charms that made her want to fall head first. Was he like this with all the ladies he met?

*Ugh. Way to make yourself crazy, Renee.*

Renee shook the thoughts from her mind and told herself to focus on the present. He was here. They would move on from that. "I, um," she cleared her throat, "apologize for not apologizing earlier. It's just that I don't usually take kindly to strangers on my beach."

"And thus all manners are flown out the window."

Renee stood up. "Now wait a minute—"

"Apology accepted," he said, raising his hand. He added with a wink. "I just couldn't resist getting one last jab in. Now may I come onto your property with your permission? I didn't arrive empty-handed and we're losing some of this beautiful sun that could be enjoyed over dinner."

"One sec." Renee punched the button to open the front gate. Jordan climbed into his car and disappeared from the camera's view. Renee took a moment to gather herself.

"Keep your guard up," she said to herself. She had a feeling she would need more than a pep talk to get through the evening.

Moments later, Jordan's car engine turned off out front. Renee rubbed her stomach to calm the butterflies fluttering inside. She braced herself for the knock seconds after the

car door closed. When it came, she briskly walked to the door, taking deep breaths to calm her nerves.

She opened the door but before she could speak, a bright red rose appeared in front of her. Jordan's mouth curved in a smile, revealing a set of small dimples on each of his cheeks. How could she have missed that before?

"For you," he said softly. "And," he presented a vintage bottle of red wine, "for dinner."

Renee smiled as she took the wine and roses. "Thank you, Jordan. Please come in."

She stepped aside to allow him to enter the foyer and leaned down to smell the rose. It was the sweetest smell she had ever experienced in her life.

"I saw that."

She nearly jumped to the ceiling. "What?"

His back was facing her as he admired the décor in her home. "That smile." He turned to her. "You should do it more often. It lights up a room."

Renee slammed the door shut with one hand. "Oh, that's pretty smooth."

"No, no." The smile disappeared as quickly as it came. "Truthfully."

There was something sincere in his eyes. Something alive and ready to break free. Renee was good at reading people and if he was putting on an act, he sure was a fine actor.

She shook her head as she stepped down into the foyer toward the kitchen.

"And there it goes," Jordan said softly.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jordan tried to tell himself to calm down. The scent of Renee's perfume hung in the air as she passed him and he felt his body react with desire for her. Her eyes captivated him in the moment he caught her gaze. He wanted to take her in his arms and kiss her softly before igniting passion from within her. His hands ached to caress her curvaceous frame and hold it tightly against him.

He straightened up and tried to clear his mind. If another minute passed with these thoughts, he'd have to excuse himself to her bathroom to calm the growing problem in his pants.

"You can come in, if you like." Renee's soft voice fluttered from the kitchen and once again he was drawn toward her.

"So, you live here alone?" Jordan asked, leaning against the island counter. He watched her bend down to retrieve a thin vase from under the kitchen sink.

He watched even more closely as she filled the vase with water and set it down in the middle of the counter.

"Yes, I do." She busied herself fiddling with the last preparation of their dinner. It was good to know she was as nervous as he felt. "I've studied Tae Kwan Do, so don't think of trying anything," she said, waving a large kitchen knife toward him. Although no smile covered her luscious full lips, it reached her gleaming eyes that told him she meant business even though she was bantering with him.

He laughed, holding his hands up in surrender. "I don't doubt that. I was just wondering what a—excuse me for being blunt—beautiful woman is doing in a nice big Caribbean villa out here all by her lonesome."

"I used to watch my mother cook and I made sure to record everything she made. I wrote a cookbook using some recipes I put together. I also learned a few Caribbean recipes partial to this island. With her blessing, I'm putting it together as a keepsake from our family to others. Something special to share, you know?" She shrugged. "I also wrote a self-help support book for interracial couples and then a few novels here and there. Finally my writing career took off and, from there, everything just fell into place. I figured, why spend tons of a money on a small apartment in the smoggy city when I can buy a huge villa on an island for about half that."

"And you never looked back since," Jordan said proudly.

"Correct." She slowly licked her fingers as she sized up the fruit and chicken dish sitting before her. Jordan had to hold himself down as he watched her tongue caress each of her fingers one by one. He didn't realize he had been staring or that she had stopped talking until he caught her gaze.

"I'm sorry."

"I have a lot of food here. I hope you brought your appetite?"

Jordan smiled. His appetite for food, yes, but he had to wonder if his appetite for her was stronger.

\*\*\*\*

Renee served grilled chicken fillets topped with a light fruit sauce, homemade mashed potatoes, steamed green beans and a large side of assorted fruit from the island. The day was coming to a close and Renee couldn't wait to see the sun set as they ate out on the veranda on the opposite end of the house.

"There's always a certain time of day when the sun is setting and these colors fly across the sky over the horizon. Oranges, reds, yellows. It's like the sky is literally on fire."

Jordan smiled to himself. "All the times I've been here with my family, never once did we see the sunsets. And I heard so much about them from the tourists." He popped a piece of melon in his mouth. "I don't think we ever did anything on the island. My father was always making deals and trades on the phone. The oldest memory I have of him is holding my hand as a child while we walked through the warm sand. It's a small memory, but it was the only comforting gesture I remember between us." He laughed. "I don't think I ever told anyone that."

Renee leaned back in her cushioned wicker chair. "Are they here with you? Your family, I mean."

"No. Actually, my father is getting ready for his fifth marriage to the wife of the month. I needed a quick vacation away from it all. My job. My family. My life."

"Your...girlfriend?"

Jordan turned to her. A knowing smile crept upon his face.

Renee immediately shrugged and hoped the gesture was nonchalant despite her question. A guy that looked this good *had* to have already landed a gorgeous female back at home. Part of her hoped he did so she could keep her emotional and mental distance from him. The alternative was far too tempting. "I was just wondering," she quickly added.

Jordan shook his head. "No girlfriend. I'm single."

“Ah.”

She took a drink of her tea hoping the cool liquid would sate the fire in her stomach. Then something dawned on her. “Wait a minute. Brentwood...as in ‘the-big-business-Fortune-Magazine-Forbes-Top-100-Richest-Families’ Brentwood?”

Jordan set his glass down and nodded. “That would be us. Yes.”

Renee laughed. So he was indeed *that* Brentwood like she suspected at the airport. And just like her sister Lauren joked about. No wonder this guy exuded such confidence in his walk and demeanor. He didn’t have to say a word to alert the world that he was sure to get whatever he wanted. She was always turned off by guys like that. With Jordan, it was the complete opposite. She didn’t want to be one of those women turned on by money and power. Although Jordan had both of those and more, there was something about him specifically that grabbed at all her buttons. “So that explains a lot.”

Jordan’s eyebrow lifted. “Excuse me?”

“I had a feeling about you from the moment I first saw you at the airport with your chauffeur. Why are you here, Jordan? Looking to get a little island action on the side?”

Jordan felt as if a bucket of ice water was just dumped over his head. “Whoa, hey. I thought we were having a good time here. Why the sudden change, Renee? Just because of my name?” He sat up and set his plate down. Leaning forward, he looked at her with an intense gaze of fire in his blue eyes.

“Look, you invited me. I just wanted to get to know *you* better, Renee. I was attracted to *you*, as if you didn’t notice when I tried to catch you before you dodged me on the road. If this is about my family, you have nothing to worry about. This is me here. Just me and you. It is my business who I date and wish to spend time with. Not theirs. They don’t dictate who I date and they sure don’t dictate who I fall in love with.”

Renee’s eyes widened at his declaration.

Was he saying what she thought he was saying?

Jordan quickly held up his hands. *Whoa, tiger. Where’d that come from?*

“Hypothetically speaking, of course,” he said quickly. He watched her gaze return to the ocean as she wrapped her arms around her body.

“I just want to be careful,” she said softly.

Jordan took a deep breath. He watched her, studying her eyes which appeared to be deep in thought. If her thick wavy hair was away from her face, he could see her silhouette against the warm sunset.

He loved the way her forehead wrinkled in thought. The way she could just lose herself in the moment. He wanted to touch her. Even more so, he wanted to kiss her. Feeling a sign go off inside of him, Jordan slowly reached out to her. He slid his hand against her shoulders and smiled as he noticed Renee close her eyes. Her skin was so soft. He wanted to bury himself in the nape of her neck and remain there forever. But for now, this would have to do.

Slowly Jordan cradled the side of her face in his hand. She fit so perfectly there. He already knew the rest of her would fit nicely with him, too.

Jordan felt that first thrill he loved so much in a kiss. And more. Oh, so much more. The soft, floral and feminine scent of her skin claimed the sensitive nerves of his nose. He moved to allow his mouth to intimately caress her full lips. He took his time with her. Only when he felt her lips open to allow his tongue entrance into her did he slip his hand over her waist to pull her close.

Renee responded by wrapping her arms around his neck as the kiss grew deeper. Their tongues explored one another. They breathed in each other's scent and Jordan felt the blood immediately run from his head as he hardened within his slacks.

A moan escaped Renee's mouth, then Jordan's, before she pushed him away and rose to her feet. Her hand slipped over her mouth as she realized their actions.

"Renee, what is it?"

"I...oh, my..." She held up her hands as she shivered. "You've got to leave."

"What? Why?"

"This wasn't supposed to happen. You need to get out of here, Jordan. I'm serious." Her voice was low yet firm.

Jordan quietly grabbed his jacket from the back of the chair and wrapped it around her shoulders.

"Do you remember what I said back at the shore?"

Renee stood still, her gaze firmly fixed on the water below. All she could do was nod.

"I guess there's still so much to show you then."

He started toward the door. "You know, Renee. Some would frown upon us being together just because of our differences in skin color."

Renee turned to face him. "I—"

He silenced her by raising his hand. "That's *their* problem. Not ours. But I don't see how discriminating against me because I come from money or a high end family can be much different. I want to get to know *you* as a person. I can only hope you offer me the same chance in return."

She didn't speak. *What could she say?* Instead she turned back to watch the seas crashing against the waves. His words about the sky echoed in her mind as the sun warmed the edge of the horizon. *Like fire.*

"If you need me," he said softly, "I'm at the Villa de Rossi near the Hilton in town. There's no gate or anything, so you can just come up and knock. I should be here until Friday."

Renee said nothing as she continued staring at the ocean.

Reluctantly, Jordan turned on his heels and exited the patio. It wasn't until she heard the door close that Renee finally released the tears she'd been fighting.



## Chapter 5

Over the next three days, Jordan tried to clear his head of all thoughts concerning Renee. He did everything from scuba diving to swimming to tennis, but nothing worked. He even tried to check on some of his patients back at the hospital. Still, his mind reverted back to Renee. Beneath her tightened guard, she knew when to relax and take in the beauty of life. Just being in her presence made him a calmer person and he realized there was so much more to his life than sharing a bed with a new woman.

So why was she fighting him so much? He knew deep down she had feelings for him. Her kiss was just as passionate as his and he felt her lean into him, inviting him to taste more of her.

Even now, her kiss still lingered on his lips. He thought about the feel of her, the scent of her perfume that still consumed him. Looking down, he realized his erection had returned with the usual thoughts of her and was raging now more than ever.

Perhaps a cool dip would do him some good. With a smile on his face, Jordan peeled off his shirt and shorts before heading to the back patio.

\*\*\*\*

Renee stared ahead at the ceiling as she went over the reasons why she pushed Jordan away. She didn't want to get hurt? Sure, it was a natural human instinct to protect one's self from potential harm. She was doing this to save herself in the long run? Naturally, because it was better to take care of matters today instead of suffering a heartbreak tomorrow. He was a poor little rich boy who was used to getting everything he wanted? Of course, she could tell in the way he walked and how he held himself.

She could tell...she wasn't sure.

Honestly, the Jordan he presented to her was more down to Earth and sweet than the perception she placed upon him. He opened himself up to her, telling her stories of his childhood and wishes to be close to his family. The strangest thing was, during dinner it felt like she was getting a glimpse of the real Jordan Brentwood. So why did she have to go and push him away? She was protecting herself, sure.

With a sigh, she turned on her side. Then why did she feel so empty? And why was she still in bed at two o'clock in the afternoon?

She threw the covers off and went to the bathroom. Slipping out of her nightgown, images of the kiss came back to her. She loved the warmth of his touch, the feel of his skin against her own. The caress of his tongue.

She turned on the shower and stepped in. Taking a deep breath, she reveled in the heat of the water pattering on her body.

Maybe it wasn't so much the *idea* of what could happen but the fact that he belonged to such a prestigious family. What if he was just using her? Then again, if that were true, he wouldn't have told her where he was staying and that he wanted to see her again. The haunting words made Renee smile. Why not go for it and see what happens? After all, she could step carefully as to not fall too deeply or too quickly. She wouldn't

pay him a quick visit. Three days had already passed and maybe she could apologize and they could start over.

Renee quickly finished showering and dried off. She chose an ensemble of island colors: a cool blue and green tank top over white shorts and her Grecian sandals that wrapped around her calves. She loved the flip flop noises they made over the pavement. They made her feel like a bohemian artist.

She decided to leave her hair in free waves past her shoulders. She spritzed a bit of lavender body spray on and rushed out the door.

Then she remembered Jordan's jacket he left behind the previous night. She rushed out to the patio to grab it and as she folded it over her arms, Jordan's familiar scent invaded her senses. She brought the jacket up to her face and lost herself in the spicy cologne and the raw passionate male scent that only belonged to Jordan alone. She could keep it here and just revel in it whenever she needed a reminder of him. Or she could go see him, return it and have a chance to see him in the process.

Then she would drive herself crazy with the 'what if'. What if things *did* work out between them and she was throwing it away all because of fear? What if they were meant to work things out? What if...

Renee folded the jacket over her arm again and grabbed her keys on the way out to the car.

On the way over, she had to wonder how she could she feel so strongly for a man after meeting him for only a short time. Was there such a thing as love at first sight? Or was it just lust? She didn't know if he felt the same or even if he still wanted to see her after she kicked him out of her house a few nights ago.

The thought made her slow on the gas pedal. Maybe he had already moved on to another woman.

*No negative thoughts now*, she told herself. It was too late to turn back.

Perhaps Jordan came into her life for a reason. After all, it was worth exploring one more potential meeting before she put it all behind her.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan pumped all his energy into each stroke. Despite what he had hoped, the splashing cool water around her did nothing to cool his heated skin. Normally if a woman rejected him, he would move on and tell himself she wasn't worth it. With Renee, there was something about her that enticed him. Although he didn't know her just yet, he felt drawn to her and knew she was hiding something under the surface. She had been hurt before, he could tell by the light that grew dim in the darkness of her eyes. Now she tried so hard to keep her emotions at bay. He wasn't mistaken by her reaction to his kiss. Her curvy body molded to his and the way she freaked out at the kiss...

Man, if it'd gone on longer, who knows what would have happened or how far they would have gone.

The thoughts continued to cloud his mind when he stopped at the opposite end of the pool. He had no idea how many laps he swam but he was sure it must have been some kind of record. His skin was still heated when he leaned against the concrete wall of the pool. He rested his arms on the pavement and stretched back, feeling that familiar tightening between his legs. If he were to calm down, he'd have to get rid of these

thoughts. There was no way he or his body would function otherwise. Reaching down, he felt the hardness of his cock encased in his swim trunks fill his grip. What would it feel like to have Renee's hands around him? Would she caress him with feather light touches? Would she hold onto him tight, alternating between a hard, tight grip and a softer yet firm one?

The walls around the back patios surrounding the pool were thankfully high with no neighbors in sight. It was a good thing, too. Being outside in the fresh open air added to the eroticism and heightened the desire he had at the moment. The pool water sloshed as he shifted into a more comfortable position. He released his grip on his swim trunks and then dipped one hand below the waistband. His long, thick flesh immediately filled his hand and he began to massage it in slow pumping strokes, teasing the head with his thumb. The slosh of cool water around him heightened the pleasure right away.

What would it be like if Renee gave herself over to him? Her lusciously thick thighs would wrap around him, tightening their grip on his waist as they feverishly made love. Her soft cocoa skin would be like satin, he was sure of it, and she would be warm, wet and ready for him.

Jordan moaned softly as his strokes grew tighter with increased speed. The hand that gripped his thick, raging cock wasn't his own, it was Renee's warm body enveloping him and inviting him deep within her. Her soft, heavy breasts would fill his hands like they were made for him. He would happily oblige her pleasure, caressing them, kneading them and gently sucking them until he heard soft cries emitting from her full lips. He would give anything to have her say his name in the strains of passion. Her dark eyes would gleam with a fire that was meant only for him and the pleasure that only he could give her.

*Yes, Renee.*

Jordan felt his pleasure rising and his balls tightened with the promise of release. He didn't want this to end. It felt too good. The daydream was *too* good.

Faster and faster his fist pumped and his hips began to move in succession as if he were pumping himself into her grip. He had driven himself to the edge and then pulled back to build the momentum of his release. His pleasure peaked, higher and higher, until the moment when his body needed the release. He craved it or else he'd explode. One hand pumped feverishly on his cock while the other caressed his large, hardened balls.

In his mind, he saw Renee's beautiful face pained with the torture of her own rising release.

"Yes, baby," he said with a moan. "Come with me. Come..."

Her moan would be like music to his ears, followed by a sweet outcry.

One hand gripped and continued to massage his balls while the other drew the come up his cock and squeezed as he fell over the edge in a freefall.

The sweetest pleasure given to man washed over him and he freely gave himself to it.

"Renee..."

If only she were here right in his lap. He would draw her to him and hold her tightly to bask in the warmth of their bodies.

A distant knock invaded his daydream. Jordan reluctantly pulled himself out of it and listened. Another knock, louder this time, came from the front door.

With a soft curse, he righted himself and swam over to the edge where he climbed out. On the way in the villa, he grabbed a towel and tried to straighten his drenched swim trunks. His erection was still rampant and it would take a few moments until he was finally soft. He didn't need to freak anyone out at the front door with his excitement. Another knock urged him on. He quickly wrung out the shorts he was wearing and then wrapped the towel around his waist before heading in. He hoped there was no sign of his recent solitary activity when he finally opened the door.

There Sheila stood in the doorway. Her thin frame was barely covered in a skimpy blue bikini and she held onto a canvas bag slung over her shoulder. Her long blonde hair fell in wispy strands around her shoulders as she smiled brightly.

"Hi!" she said cheerfully. She stepped inside and looked around as if she owned the place. "I thought you'd be a little lonely so I decided to take some time off and dash on over. Your father told me where you were and I thought you'd want a little company."

Jordan didn't know what to say. He didn't even know where to begin. Instead, he stood there several moments with his mouth open. His *father*? After he specifically told the man that he wanted privacy?

"Sheila..." Jordan massaged the bridge of his nose, trying to calm the headache from gathering in the middle of his forehead. "I came here alone and I would like to stay alone."

"Oh, come on." Sheila's blue eyes darkened. "You know I can keep you company, baby. Just like old times, hmm?"

"Sheila, out." Jordan went to the door and opened it, waiting for Sheila to grab a clue and follow the exit signs right on out of here and back to Boston.

"Jordan," the sweetness in her voice disappeared. "I came all the way over here to see you. Your father's worried and he knows how much we mean to each other."

"No, Sheila! How much I mean to *you*. I already told you I'm not the commitment type and that we were through."

"Oh, Jordan." Sheila eased up to him, slipping an arm around his waist. "You know you and I had something here. I could make you forget all that negativity with one small stroke."

As she spoke, her hand brushed between his legs. Right around the still sensitive top of his half hard cock.

Big mistake. He immediately went hard at her touch and Sheila lit up as if she had just magically created fire. She took his 'enthusiasm' as a sign to explore further.

Gently she kissed his neck and lowered her voice to silk. "I can make you forget everything else while we lounge around here screwing each other's brains out and then we can soak up some sun. Hmm? It'll be like old times."

Her hand stopped massaging him outside and then moved up to dip below his waistband.

Jordan shook himself from the haze of his mind to process what she planned to do. His hand shot out and grabbed her wrist before she could go any further.

"No Sheila," he said through gritted teeth. "I said we're through and I mean it."

Sheila wrenched her arm from his grip. "Fine. I don't need you to draw me a map."

"Well, apparently you do if you're still standing here grabbing at me."

"I didn't hear any complaints five minutes ago."

“Look I don’t want any argument, alright? I said we’re through and I mean it. Now just go...please.”

Sheila’s eyebrows arched and pushed out her thin, pink lips in a pout. He knew he shouldn’t care. He should just send her on her way and shut the door right behind her. Despite that feeling, he knew they had a past. His father knew her family and there would surely be talk between the two. He stifled a laugh. Like he cared what they thought.

“Alright, I’ll go,” Sheila finally said with a pout.

Jordan was short of thanking his lucky stars when Sheila continued.

“On one condition.”

He was afraid to ask. “Which is?”

“If you give me one last kiss. And not a stupid peck or anything. Kiss me like you mean it. Like it used to be.”

“And then you’ll leave?”

She nodded. “To my word.”

“Fine.” Anything to get her out of his hair and on her way off this island.

Jordan shifted his stance and exhaled deeply. He gripped her arms to keep her at a distance from him. Safe and away from his body. Quick and easy, but like he meant it.

He gingerly tipped his head and moved in to kiss her. Once he closed his eyes, he immediately thought of Renee before him. Her soft body dangerously close to him. Her warm lips pressed against his. Gently he enticed them open and slipped his tongue in to caress hers. His arms softened to wrap around her as the kiss deepened.

*Renee...*

Renee turned onto the main road and down the rocky street past a group of small shops. The area was quaint and homely. She could see why Jordan chose the hideaway. Maybe she’d visit this side more often herself.

Excitement settled in her stomach. This was the right thing. She had to throw caution to the wind and let things happen. She didn’t do enough of it in her life and she wondered if she had been too uptight in life all along. Was this the start of something new for her?

Once she spotted the large black Villa de Rossi sign, she parked nearby, grabbed Jordan’s jacket, and then proceeded inside. Renee followed the pathway up to the large villa behind the bush. She turned the corner and stopped in her tracks. She almost turned to duck away when she noticed it was...

“Jordan,” she breathed softly. She didn’t realize she had breathed his name aloud until they broke from the kiss and both sets of eyes turned on her.

“Renee...” He turned to the blonde girl and then back at her. “Renee, let me—”

“Don’t bother.”

Renee’s heart shattered. This was the validation she needed.

She threw the jacket at him and felt a small victory when it landed right in the dirt a few feet away from him. “I thought you’d want your jacket back.” Renee turned to the blonde who was eyeing her with a sneer and a hand on her hips. “You left it at my villa that night you stayed over.”

Another victory sparked in Renee when the woman's mouth fell open. She forced a smile as she pushed down the tears threatening to spill from her eyes. Turning, she started back to her car, ready to try to forget Jordan Brentwood.

Her conscious mind suspected this. No, it *wanted* to believe it. But her subconscious wanted to believe that maybe he was sincere in his actions. That just maybe he was different. She held back the tears that were welling up inside her as she raced back to her car.

When she reached it, she felt like she was going to burst. *Not here. Please not here in front of them.* Renee opened the car door and quickly slipped in. Her shaky hand tried to push the key in the ignition and failed. *Come on, come on.*

*Knock, knock.* Her head immediately shot up toward the driver's window. Jordan watched her with concern and worry coloring his gaze.

Renee wiped her eyes as she finally got the key in the ignition.

"Renee, wait!"

"We don't have anything else to say to each other, Jordan! I can't believe I came down here to surprise you." She laughed. "I was the one surprised, huh?"

"Renee, I—"

"And don't say you can explain. This isn't some lame, cliched soap opera." She nearly threw her hands up. "I can't believe I actually thought you were one of the good guys."

"Renee, just wait a moment."

Jordan reached in and tried to grab her hand but she dodged out of his reach.

"Look, I don't know what you and that girl have going on, and frankly I don't care. Just go back to her, live a happy life and forget me."

"I can't! She's not you!"

Renee's hand froze on the ignition. Out of the corner of her eye she could see his open palms shaking on the car door.

"What did you say?"

Jordan took a moment to slow his breathing. "She is my ex-girlfriend. She came down here today to surprise me. I was sending her on her way but she told me she wouldn't leave until I kissed her. So I did...while I was thinking of you."

He ran a hand through his drenched dark blond hair. "Look, I don't have any feelings for her. For the past few days, I knew I could score with other girls to help me forget you. I could've moved on. I even turned to work at one point, but it didn't help." His blue eyes sparkled as he looked at her. "You were all I could think about."

Renee scoffed. "You expect me to believe some crap story like that?"

Jordan shook his head, defeated. "No. I just hope that you give me another chance and let me prove myself to you. Let me make this right."

Renee leaned back in her car seat, still grasping the steering wheel. She sighed. Her mind was still trying to process everything from the elation at seeing Jordan to the kiss and now to Jordan's reveal.

"I'm sorry you had to see this, Renee." He cursed. "I would take it back. It was stupid of me—"

"Very stupid," Renee mumbled.

"—but I wanted her gone. I want you." He reached in and caressed her cheek.

Renee hated her body's heated response to his warm touch. She missed it. There was no denying it to her mind or her body. "I'm sorry, Jordan. Goodbye."

Before she could stop herself, she stuck the key in, turned it and slammed on the gas. She didn't hesitate or stop as she screeched back onto the main road, leaving Jordan in the distance. In her rearview mirror, she could see him standing there watching her, until her eyes blurred with tears. She thought back to the first time she saw Jordan Brentwood and she cursed him for stepping across the boundary she so carefully wound around her heart.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan yelled a curse into the sky.

Why did he have to acquiesce to get rid of Sheila? Why did she even have to come?

He turned and stormed back to his villa, yanking his jacket from the ground on his way in. He didn't even bother to brush it off. He couldn't even bring himself to care.

Sheila still stood at the door with one hand on her hip and her head cocked to the side.

"Who's that?" she spat out.

Jordan wanted to tell her to leave, but even more so, he wanted to tell her exactly who Renee was to him.

"That," he began, "was my girlfriend."

Simple. To the point. And completely a lie.

Jordan didn't care about any of that at the moment. Sheila could believe whatever she wanted, just as long as she was on her way to the airport and out of his life.

Yeah, the whole country club—and his father especially—would have a fit but he couldn't give two figs about it. It was *his* life and he had to make things right between him and Renee. He had to let her know that he meant business.

"Yeah, you heard right," he said at Sheila's shocked gaze. "That kiss is the last one you'll ever get from me, Sheila. So don't call me, don't write me, don't fax me. If you see me at the hospital, pretend you don't know me unless it's business. If you send me a carrier pigeon with a note, I'm going to shoot it down without blinking twice. In other words, Sheila, we're over."

"B-but you can't dismiss me, Jordan Brentwood!" She stomped her foot for emphasis.

"Oops," he said with a thin smile. "I just did."

With that, he slammed the door close and leaned against it.

Sheila stomped her foot again, this time adding a high pitched, squeaky huff. Her footsteps crunched against the ground before she turned and walked off.

Jordan ran his hands over his face. How was he going to fix this mess?

Shaking his head, he thought about possible solutions as he headed for the bathroom to give his mouth and teeth a good scrub.

## Chapter 6

Renee stared at the half written screen on her laptop. The cheery sun and soft breeze mocked her that morning. She would give anything to just stay in bed all day and sulk with a pint of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream while reading trashy gossip tabloids. Celebs always had more drama in their lives. It would make hers seem tiny in comparison.

Then again, her problems didn't go away at the click of a mouse.

If only they did, though.

Days passed since she caught Jordan's lips locked to his ex.

She still remembered his flimsy explanation: he did it to get her away from him. Right. All men should be so lucky to perform such an oh-so-hard task like that. He looked pretty into it for someone who wanted to get rid of her.

Renee sighed. *Ugh. Get him out of your head*, she tried to tell herself. *He's not worth the trouble or the brain cells.*

It would take a lot of brain power just to complete that task. Jordan Brentwood filled her thoughts and heart ever since she saw him wash up on her beach. She would give anything to erase her memory. Permanently, if possible, straight from her mind.

The phone rang and she was thankful for a little distraction.

*Wait a minute.*

*It could be Jordan.*

No. He didn't have her number...did he?

He could've asked Henry or perhaps got it from the local paper online.

The answering machine clicked then beeped.

"Hello Renee, it's Dr. Westmore—"

Renee quickly picked up. "Hello, I'm here."

"Hey Renee, good to finally hear your voice. I was calling to check up on the status of your procedure."

Procedure. Family planning all on her own. Now the plan she had so vehemently stuck by seemed like a big question mark. Was she really ready for that step? Child planning didn't seem exactly wise while nursing a broken heart. She needed a clear head for such a big decision.

"Renee?"

"Ah, yeah. I'm here. I just...Could I have some more time to think about it?"

"Of course. Take as much time as you need. This is a big step and I want you to be sure. I'll be here for you every step of the way if you need me."

"Thank you, Dr. Westmore."

"I'll speak to you soon. You take care now."

"Bye bye."

Renee hung up the phone and it was then she saw the blinking message on her machine. She punched the play button and waited. Two calls from her sister to see how she was doing. A few from her mother for the same reason. A previous call from the local doctor's office.



And one from Jordan.

“Renee,” he sighed, sounding exasperated. “I know what I did made me the scum of the Earth. In fact, I’m sure in your eyes it made me lower. I just wanted to say I’m sorry. The last thing I wanted to do was hurt you. I still want to get to know you, if you’ll let me.” He exhaled in a laugh. “Man, this is new to me. Begging for forgiveness. But that’s what I’m doing here now.”

He exhaled a breath as a scuffling sound echoed in the background.

“I’m literally down on my knees begging you to...”

End of final message.

“No!”

Renee checked the messages and saw one left. She waited for the beep to announce the next call.

“Now, before I was rudely interrupted,” Jordan continued. “I wanted to ask if you’ll be *my* dinner date for Friday evening. I know asking you back to the scene of the crime is harsh, so I’m asking for neutral ground.

“Please meet me at Toscanos, the restaurant near the Hilton. I’ll reserve a table there for two overlooking the ocean. I’ll be there at 7 o’clock waiting. If not, I’ll be left there alone and deserted like the dog I’m sure you believe me to be. Either way, I hope you forgive me and give me another chance.”

Another beep ended the call and the string of messages.

Renee sat there in silence, listening to the crashing waves outside her door. The ball was in her court, but she wasn’t sure she was ready to trust again.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan sat at the dinner table overlooking the ocean. The sun was setting on the opposite side, but that didn’t stop the rays from hitting the ocean in sparkling crystals of light. Warm colors decorated the sky and he couldn’t help remembering that first date with Renee.

‘Like fire,’ he had said. And it was so true.

He straightened out his gold cufflinks and smoothed over the wrinkles to his newly bought Armani tuxedo. This was going to be a special night for a special lady. That is, if she showed up.

Jordan checked his watch again for the third time that night. 6:45 p.m. He would wait 15 minutes to see if she showed. If not, he’d throw in the towel because he had officially blown his chances with her. He took a sip of his pre-ordered wine and exhaled softly.

If she showed.

*Yeah buddy, it would serve you right if she never showed up. After that display you put on earlier, no one would be surprised.*

During the past few days after Sheila flew home, his father had been calling him, urging him to explain what Sheila was rambling about. The last message said if he was to have his little island fling, to get it out of his system and then get home in time for his father’s wedding.

Screw him. This wasn’t some island fling. This was something deeper. He could feel it in his gut even though he’d only known Renee for a few weeks now. After he hung up

with his father, he promptly called the hospital to let them know of his extended vacation time. They would relay the message to the old man because he was done talking to his father. Tonight would be his and Renee's road back to knowing more about each other.

If she would come.

He checked his watch again to see that 10 minutes had already passed. 5 minutes to go and Jordan was feeling his anticipation waning.

*Renee*, he thought. *Please show up.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Should she show up?

Renee stared at her reflection in the mirror. After she applied a light coat of makeup, she stopped to think about what she was doing. While her mind settled, she took a look at her makeup. She wore a dark evening shadow to bring out her eyes, a soft golden power over her dusky cheeks to make them glow and a thin coat of lipstick to match her lips natural color.

The dress she had picked out that night—if she went—was a spaghetti sleeved form fitting little black dress and a matching lace shawl. Elegant yet sexy. Neutral enough to give off the impression that she was still holding all her cards under the table. She slid a pair of sexy black sling pumps under the dress at the edge of the bed. Those would push the outfit right to the limit.

Her thick curly hair was tied back in a bun, leaving loose tendrils to frame her face.

Now she stood in her black matching lace panties and bra wondering if she was making the right move.

Jordan sounded sincere over the line.

It could all be an act. She entertained the notion a dozen times since his dinner proposal.

On the other hand, a man like him didn't have to keep chasing women. If he wanted his ex or other women, he wouldn't be sitting alone at the restaurant waiting for her.

*If* he was waiting.

She sighed and went to the phone. At the local directory, she asked for the number to Toscanos and then requested to put the call in.

After 3 rings, someone finally picked up.

"Hello, Toscanos."

"Hi," Renee said. "I'm meeting my party there and I was wondering if they showed up yet. Brentwood, party for two?"

"Brentwood, Brentwood..." the man said under his breath. She heard the flap of the paper as he flipped through the reservation book. "Ah, yes. Your party showed up and is seated at the moment. Shall I let him know you will be arriving soon?"

"Ah, no!" Renee said. She closed her eyes before she could catch herself. In a calmer tone, she said. "No messages. Thank you."

She quickly hung up.

So Jordan *was* there waiting for her. The last thing she could do was meet him and see what he had to say. Then she could let go with a clear head and the full knowledge that she had all the facts.

Renee smiled, feeling renewed and sure of herself as she started getting dressed again. *We'll see what the night will bring.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Jordan checked his watch again to notice it was 10 past the hour. She wasn't going to show, he was sure of it. He gave it a go and for once in his life put his heart down on the line.

Deep down, he knew he deserved no less. He signaled the waiter over to ask for the check. He stood, straightening his tie and heading for the bathroom. He could use a splash of cold water on his face, just before he left the restaurant with his tail between his legs.

As she turned, a stunning figure at the entrance caught his eye.

Renee entered with the confidence of woman comfortable in her own skin. She held her head high and surveyed the room in one smooth turn of her head. He couldn't help noticing the close fitting sexy black dress and shawl she clenched with one hand while she held a small black velvet purse in the other. Once she stopped at the front, the maître d' gestured over a waiter to escort her to the table.

Jordan quickly returned to his table, straightened his tie and coached his nerves to settle down. He had no idea what he would say or do when Renee came over, but he would force himself to think of something.

He stood as Renee arrived with the waiter who helped slide her chair out. He didn't take his seat until Renee got comfortable.

Jordan told himself to smile. He tried to study Renee's expression but she was as blank as a slate.

"Thank you for coming, Renee," he said, hoping to break the ice. "I really appreciate it."

She moved her shawl off her smooth dark brown shoulders. He had to clench his fingers together to keep from reaching out to touch them. Smooth as satin.

"I figure I would give you the benefit of the doubt. I may have been expecting too much from you. I know we haven't known each other for longer than a few days, but I wanted to believe that you were who you said you were."

Jordan leaned on the table. "Renee, I am. I haven't been anything or anyone but myself with you. I screwed up back there. I thought I was calming things down when I only messed it up more. Believe me when I say I am and have been far over my ex-girlfriend."

"Where is she now?"

"Hopefully back in Boston because I sent her on her way back as soon as I saw her again. We've been over a long time. I think she finally got the message. I meant it when I said I thought about you the whole time."

Renee exhaled softly. "I thought about you, too."

"Look..." He waved his hand. "Let's just start over right from the beginning okay? Wipe the slate clean and just start right as Renee and Jordan. Hi, I'm Jordan Brentwood."

He extended his hand across the table. Renee looked at it a moment before unfolding her arms and hesitantly shaking his hand.

“Renee Carlson.”

He peered down at her clothes. “Do you know how look beautiful today, Renee Carlson?”

“Don’t change the subject,” she said, trying not to laugh. “I don’t know if I can trust myself around you, Jordan Brentwood.”

“I can say the same thing to you, Renee. I have a feeling there’s something about you that can bring a man to his knees.”

Renee’s cheeks warmed a hint of red against the cinnamon brown shade. He wanted to reach out and slip a finger under her chin. He wanted her eyes on him. He began to reach out when a waiter wandered by to take their order. Just the splash of cool water he *didn’t* need.

They ordered their respective drinks and dishes. Once the waiter, dashed off to get their drinks, Jordan resumed his gaze at Renee who watched the view.

“It’s beautiful here,” she breathed. “I’m glad you picked this place.”

The restaurant was decorated with cheery oak and a tropical design. The sun was dipping below the horizon, splashing the sky and interior restaurant in shades of warm colors.

She turned to him and smiled at his suit. “You look really handsome tonight by the way.”

Jordan straightened his tie with a proud smile. “Why thank you, milady. I figured the time called for it. So, on this auspicious occasion in learning more about each other why don’t you tell me more about Renee? I know how you came up in the world professionally but how about *you* personally?”

Renee folded her hands on the table. “You sure you want to know all that?”

Jordan nodded. “Every word, every embarrassing little detail and every little quirk.”

“That may take all night.”

He smiled and opened his hands. “That’s all we have.”

Jordan watched her beautiful face become animated with the stories of her childhood, her family and the rivalry with her older sister. Her arms flailed back and forth as she recounted how she and her sister placed her stuffed ducks and pigs in the oven because they wanted to cook dinner for the family one evening. Boyfriends, friends and other people came and went but he could tell the sisters had a strong sense of family. Something he always strived for himself but never achieved with his own family.

They chatted through drinks, appetizers and eventually through dinner. Shortly before dessert, Renee froze once she realized Jordan’s gaze never moved from hers. “I’m sorry. I’m just rambling here, aren’t I?”

He smiled. “No, not at all. I’m actually enjoying your stories. It’s refreshing because I think this is the longest I’ve ever heard you speak.”

“Well, you gave me a good topic to run with.”

“And how about boyfriends?”

Renee’s eyes widened. “Boyfriends.” She idly pushed the last of her filet mignon and its toppings on her plate. “Well, I’ve had a few. Nothing really significant. The last guy I dated cheated on me. After that there were men who would wander in and out of my life with the change of a season.” She shrugged. “I figured that’s the way it goes.”

“Not every man leaves, Renee.”

She laughed. "Yeah. I used to think otherwise. Nowadays, I'm not so sure." She met his gaze. "How about you? Do you fit into that 'not every man leaves' description?"

Jordan took a drink of his wine and allowed the warm liquid to trickle down his throat. "I, um...I grew up in a family that didn't quite value monogamy."

"Oh, your father, right."

"Yeah, my dad and his new wife every day, it seems. My mother ran off with a rich Italian business mogul. I'm pretty sure she's still with him but after she and my dad divorced when I was younger, I never heard from her again. I guess I sort of inherited the old man's bad dating habits."

Renee cleared her throat. "Thank you for being honest."

"I want you to know everything about me," Jordan said. "Including the fact that I grew tired of that lifestyle. Remember when you asked me why I was interested in you? Well, this is why, Renee. You have a strong family, you're grounded. You know what you want and you go get it. From the moment I saw you, I saw this amazing confidence in you that I haven't seen in many women. I wanted to be a part of that."

Jordan couldn't believe how much he was spilling. If his college friends could see him, they'd be calling him all kinds of whipped. That would have freaked him out before and made him run for the hills for the nearest steak and beer joint but now...

Now, he looked at Renee and couldn't think of anywhere else he would rather be.

"You ready to head out? How about we take a dessert home, hmm?" he asked when she didn't say anything.

Renee nodded. "Sounds like a plan."

\*\*\*\*\*

The evening sky was clear and sparkling with diamond stars when they stepped out of the restaurant. Jordan rested his hand against the small of Renee's back as he led her to her jeep parked near his Jaguar. She loved the feeling and dared to let herself get comfortable in the gesture. It was hard for her to admit it but tonight was magical. It was as if she entered a parallel dimension where her horrible afternoon was transformed into a fairytale. Like all fairytales, this one was now ending and the strangest thing of all was she didn't want it to end.

"Well, I'm glad tonight turned out the way it did," Jordan said.

Renee pulled her shawl up over her shoulders as a soft wind brushed against her shoulders.

"Cold?"

She drew her attention to her purse and fumbled around for her keys. "Just a little chill. I'll be fine, though."

"Do you want me to drive you home? I want to make sure you get home okay."

She peered up at him with a slight smile on her lips. "You sure that's all you want to do?"

Jordan chuckled, a deep smooth sound. The light of the moon hit him at an angle that accentuated the hard masculine lines of his face. The pale blue rays of moonlight kissed his short blond hair, casting him in an ethereal glow. "Believe me, although I'm interested, I don't want to do anything you're not comfortable with. I believe you alluded

to the fact that you've never been intimate with a man. Although you've had boyfriends?"

"Yes, I've never...there was never anyone I felt comfortable with enough to...give myself completely to in that way. I just want to be sure he not only has my body but my heart and every other part of me. I want to know that he won't take that for granted. I owe myself that much."

Jordan slid his hands on her arms and held her. "You deserve that and so much more, Renee." He brushed a silky black tendril away from her forehead. "Believe me, that man will be the luckiest on Earth when he experiences that closeness with you. I just hope he realizes that when the time comes."

Renee felt the goosebumps trail across her skin. She wasn't sure if it was the wind or Jordan's touch that chilled her. Her heart suddenly started beating twice as fast as she felt the closeness of his body to hers. She imagined what it would be like to have Jordan's touch all over her bare naked skin. Would he be gentle with her? Would he take his time and learn all her sensitive spots? Eager to hit every single one of them to aching detail...

"Jordan..."

"What."

Their voices were low, a quiet exchange that only they could hear and feel.

"I want..."

He gingerly cradled her chin between his thumb and bent fingers. "What is it you want?" he asked softly. In her silence, he coaxed her. "Tell me."

"I want you to kiss me."

Jordan smiled, but it wasn't any smile. This one was predatory, a smooth expression that bordered with the tinge of desire. Slowly he began closing in. His lips moved close to hers then moved, teasing her with the taste of his lips. "How bad do you want me to kiss you?"

He was testing her! Moments before he was saying how she was a woman in control, yet now she felt like she had none. It was all in his hands, in his voice, in his desire that he held before her like a yarn before a playful cat. And, boy, was she craving that yarn. Her body was on fire now to combat the cool night air. She would welcome another kiss of the breeze even though she knew it wouldn't help a lick to calm down her raging need to have him.

"I want you to kiss me very badly."

"Say my name again," his husky, deep voice whispered. "Come on."

She could hear him saying those very words in that very voice as he drove her to the edge. If he was really kissing her like he kissed his ex that afternoon, she was ready to be blown right off her feet.

"Jordan."

The moment she finished saying his name, he moved in to crush his lips against hers. Gently he cradled her face in his hands as if she were the most valuable treasure in the world. He crushed his body against hers and allowed one arm to hold her to him. Renee felt the world slip away. Every one of her senses blared to life as she heard the nearby ocean waves against the sound of crickets and cars on the nearby road. A moan escaped them, she wasn't sure if it was his or hers but she repeated it as the kiss grew deeper. His lips were warm against hers, massaging, coaxing, heightening the pleasure of

his kiss. She felt his hands slip down her arms and wrap around her waist as she slipped her hand behind his neck.

Once they broke away, their heavy breaths fell in sync. Renee couldn't help giggling. She leaned her forehead against his shoulder and felt him hold her there.

"Mmm, I should get home before we, ah, get into trouble," she said against his shoulder.

She felt his hand caress the lines of her jaw. "I like this. Our bodies fit well together."

"Trying to hint something there, Brentwood?" Renee said with an eyebrow lifted.

"When I do...believe me, babe, you'd know it." He winked at her before leaning in to give her another kiss. "You better get on home. Call me when you get in, okay? I want to know you made it safely."

Renee nodded. "I will." She dared to lean in and kiss him. For a moment, she reveled in the daydream that she could kiss him anytime and anyway she liked. She imagined what it would be like for him to be hers. For now, she tucked that thought aside. She didn't want to rush things before knowing what she'd be getting into.

Instead, she redirected her attention to the jingling set of keys from her purse. It took all of her focus not to turn around and fall into his arms for another kiss. She was thankful the moment she climbed behind the wheel. Jordan leaned one arm on the door while the other rested on the side door rail.

"I mean it when I say I want to get close to you, Renee. I only have a few days left for my vacation on the island and I don't want things to end between us. Spend the next few days with me?"

Renee slipped the key in the ignition, ready to bring up an excuse why she couldn't see him tomorrow. Her article deadline was looming over her head? Not for another few weeks. She had to return some calls to her editor? That could wait until she had her next book proposal in hand...another few weeks. The villa needed rearranging? Right, even her sister mused how meticulously organized everything was when she arrived and when she left for the airport. Renee wouldn't even let her leave the spare bedroom without returning it in the condition she entered first saw it in.

A slow exhale helped clear her head. "I would love that," she said.

Jordan flashed another one of his million dollar smiles, lightening up his already handsome face. "Great. I await your call."

"The moment I step in the door."

He chuckled and patted the jeep's hood before closing the door.

Renee started toward her home with one last look at Jordan in the rearview mirror as he watched her with his hands tucked inside his pockets. She wished she could take a picture of him. He was like a debonair James Bond under the moonlight.

A picture in her mind would have to do for now.

An hour later, she parked and stepped inside her villa. She locked up then dialed Jordan's number after remembering it from the caller ID.

"Still in one piece," she said.

“Well, that’s good to know,” Jordan replied over the line amidst a background of shuffling. “I’m just getting in also. About to strip and shower before I turn in for the night.”

“Oh, now that is just mean.” Renee couldn’t help smiling as she slipped out of her shoes.

“Why? Want to come over and help me scrub?” She could sense the smile on his lips. “Or perhaps you want to assist during the drying stage?”

She thought about running a soft towel over Jordan’s bare skin. It’d be a slow process where she’d allow herself to feel every muscle, every part of his skin and watch his blue eyes heat up with her touch. She had to shake herself out of the daydream to keep from falling out right there on the spot.

Clearing her throat, she grabbed her shoes. “Mmm, well. Before we both get into trouble again, I’m going to let you go do that while I get ready for bed myself. I had a lovely time tonight.”

“I did, too. I’m glad you accepted my invitation. Does this mean you forgive me?”

Renee chuckled. “Well, yeah. Since we’re starting over, I’m only grading you from the restart and onward.”

“Well, thank you, Miss Carlson. You are a gracious teacher.”

“I try.”

“You sleep well tonight, okay? Sweet dreams and all that good stuff.”

“Sweet dreams, Jordan. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Can’t wait.”

She clicked the end button to her phone and inhaled softly before exhaling to clear her head. Jordan Brentwood. She shook her head. She wanted to take each day and each moment at a time but she thought about the way his kiss dismantled all her walls in one touch and how it lingered on her lips...

Renee gently touched her lips, still warm with his kiss.

Oh yeah, this guy was going to get her in trouble.

She couldn’t wait to see how deep she’d fall.



## Chapter 7

The next morning, Renee woke up with the sun beaming right through her window. The sound of the ocean waves crashing outside mixed with the salty sea air. The phone rang next to her and she took a moment to stretch before picking it up.

“Hello,” she said lazily.

“Well, hello there stranger.”

Renee giggled. “Oh hey, Lauren. What’s up?”

“What’s up? What’s up is my sister giggling like a teenager and asking ‘what’s up’ as if she hadn’t been hiding out for the past few days. Do you know how worried sick I’ve been?”

“I’m sorry.” Renee leaned on her folded arm. “Things have been crazy. I had this deadline—”

“Uh uh. Don’t even try to play that mess with me, sis, because you’ve always had deadlines since you moved out there. So spill, what’s his name, what’s he look like and how far have you gone with him?”

“Lauren!”

“Don’t Lauren me, lil sis. And don’t make me hop a plane up over there to make you talk. And trust, I can get you to talk. So save me the plane fare and the headache and spill.”

Renee sighed. Always the big sis. She could never keep anything away from Lauren too long. “All right. So I may have been seeing someone. Sort of.”

“Sort of? Someone locally?”

“Well, no. He kind of flew in.”

“The blond hottie from the airport?”

She rolled her eyes. Leave it to Lauren to pick up the minor things. “Yeah, I didn’t know you noticed him.”

“You were staring him down like a hungry cat,” Lauren said. “Of course I noticed him. I practically had to pry your eyes away from him. So...tell me about him.”

Renee sat up. Suddenly she felt hungry. She could sure use the energy while being grilled herself. As she sauntered into the kitchen, replaying the events of the past few days. She made sure to leave out the little hiccups like Jordan kissing his ex on the front door for all the world to see. Lauren was her sister but the girl didn’t need to know *every* detail of her life.

“So Renee’s got a man. Renee’s got a man.”

“Ugh, we are not five, Lauren. And he’s not really my man. He’s just a guy I’m sort of seeing.”

“Oh, come off it, Renee. You’ve been on that ‘men are dogs’ kick too long that when a good one comes along, you’re too hesitant to do anything about it. Just see where this one goes, girl. Who knows, he could be the guy you’ve been waiting for all your life.”

Renee set the coffee filter on and poured her favorite blend, caramel vanilla macchiato. “So you don’t mind then that he’s...”

“What white? Girl, please. No one has to live your life but you. Do what makes you happy no matter who you settle down with. He could be purple and green from the planet Zophar and I’ll still be right there throwing flower petals at your wedding as your maid of honor.”

“Whoa now. A: You just jumped not only years ahead of something that may or may not happen, but you left the solar system and me behind. B: I meant you don’t mind that he’s a Brentwood?”

Lauren laughed. “Well, no. If he’s good to you, sis, and if he makes you happy, that’s all that matters. You may have some opposition from his family. You sure you’re ready for that?”

The thought had crossed her mind and it did again as she leaned her hand on the cold counter. “He said it’s between me and him. His family isn’t involved and he said it didn’t matter what they thought or say.”

“Well, girlfriend. I think you have a winner on your hands. It’s about time, too. I had a feeling there was still someone out there to knock you off your feet.

“Well, I’m cautiously optimistic.” She grinned. “But I have to admit I am excited.”

“I’m happy for you, sis. Hey, I got to go. It’s entirely too quiet here and I have no idea what my little rugrats got themselves into. Big hugs and kisses to you. Let me know what happens okay?”

“Love you and give my love to my little nieces.”

“Will do! Bye!”

The coffee machine gurgled near its finish once Renee hung up. It meant the world to her to have her sister behind her. Maybe she should let loose and just have fun. Jordan seemed like a good dedicated man and she constantly thought about him. The kiss still lingered in her mind and as she thought back to the dream that ended all too soon, she could already feel his touch caress her skin. The feel of his lips on hers as he pressed the weight of his body against her. Her body tingled and she ached to feel the weight of his sex in hers. She imagined he was a big man. Not just the way he carried himself but on a deeper level, she knew. He would fill her completely and still take his time, knowing that he’d be her first.

Wait a minute. Did she want him to be her first?

Renee smiled. It had only been days since they’ve known each other but the things she knew about him and the way she felt was more than she had felt toward any other man. She cared about him a great deal. She liked him...dare she say...loved him?

She scoffed. It was ridiculous. She didn’t know him that well. Sure he occupied her thoughts a lot these days and the anger she felt at seeing him with another woman nearly sent her through the roof, but...

No, it couldn’t be.

Renee laughed it off as she poured herself a cup of coffee and added a dollop of sugar and milk to the mixture. Stirring, she tried to keep her emotions at bay. After hiding behind her work so long and giving up the idea of ever having a meaningful relationship, she finally admitted it to herself.

She, Renee Anita Carlson, wanted and perhaps had already fallen for Jordan Brentwood. Of course, she could be completely nutty and mistaking this for lust, but even as she entertained that idea...she felt it was more.

Now the question was, did Jordan feel the same way toward her?

\*\*\*\*

Jordan whistled all through his morning routine in waking up and getting ready for his run. Now he allowed the warm island sun to beat on his bare torso and back. He stayed around his villa complex but at the rate he was going, he could have jogged all the way to Renee's island and back. He sure could use the swim.

His body energy had been at an all time high since he hung up the phone with Renee last night. He wanted to stay on the phone and maybe have a little nightcap phone action but the last thing he wanted to do was scare her away. Instead, he sated his raging desire in the shower before crashing for the night.

He couldn't believe how perfect last night was all the way down to the kiss in the lot. Just hours before then, he was sure she wouldn't show. He was sure he blew it. But then she surprised him in such a sexy and stunning outfit, wandering in with the confidence that drew him to her like a moth to a flame.

Jordan smiled as he pumped more energy into his legs. He was getting himself all worked up over again imagining her. No woman had ever captivated him before such as her and he sure didn't go running after any woman before. They came to him, it made the chase that much easier.

Perhaps this time he was actually...falling in love.

He laughed it off. Love, who'd have thought Jordan Brentwood would ever say or even think the 'L' word. Still, it fit. He lusted after her, for sure. She had a body that gave men whiplash, lips and a smile that could bring a man to his knees and smarts to know what she wanted and when. Even though she had never taken a man to her bed, he had a feeling she would know exactly what she liked and didn't liked. Perhaps she already knew her body well.

Jordan entertained the thought of Renee's soft, delicate hands caressing her own luscious curves, enticing him. It'd be a feast for his eyes but an even better feast for his own hands.

He turned the corner and spotted his villa up ahead. He'd be home in no time to get ready for tonight. Already he could tell that evening was going to be even more magical than the last.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan arrived at exactly 7 p.m. Renee finished the last of her makeup and took one final look at herself in the mirror. He told her to dress casual but she decided to mix casual with classy in the form of a floral wrap skirt and thin white summer blouse. Brown Grecian sandals topped off the outfit. He didn't tell her exactly where they were going; only that it'd be a surprise.

Renee stepped out to the front curb where Jordan was leaning against his Jaguar car with his hands in his pockets. He wore a loose button down white short sleeved shirt and large comfy dark grey slacks with sandals. A few buttons at the top were open offering a peak at his taut muscled chest. Behind him the sun was dipping down, casting him and his short blond hair in a fiery light against a beautiful canvas. Once Renee closed the door

behind her, he looked up at her and removed his sunglasses. His smile sent swirls of excitement throughout her body as she approached him.

“Hey beautiful.” He rested a hand against her arm as he leaned in to kiss her cheek. “You look stunning.”

He was one to talk. Renee had to take a few deep breaths to clear her head of his handsome sight. Only that made it worse. The deep spice of his woody cologne mixed with his natural male scent, making her want to topple him right then and there.

“So, are you going to tell me what I’m looking stunning for?” she asked to distract her senses.

“Well, me,” he said with a grin. “I hope.” He added a playful wink to his words.

“I mean, where exactly are we going?”

“Ah, well. You will find out soon enough, milady. Just step right here and we’ll be on our way.” He opened the car door and waited until she was completely in before closing it behind her.

Minutes later, he started the car and they were on their way. Renee pulled down the window a bit to let the air in. If she was going to smell his cologne all the way over, she was going to lose her mind.

Jordan stole a glance her way and chuckled. “Relax. I’m not taking you in front of a firing squad. Just a little something I think you’d like.”

It was then she noticed how rigid her back was as she sat up with her legs closed and her hands folded demurely on her lap. As much as she hated to admit it, she was on edge. Part of it was him and the other part was being in the dark as to where he was taking her.

“Just a little hint and I will relax,” she said.

Jordan shook his head. “You can’t do it, can you? You can’t let someone else be in control?” He released the stick and slipped his hand over hers, squeezing it. “Do you trust me?”

She turned to him and watched how relaxed he sat as he handled the steering wheel with one hand. The sleek interior matched his tall, imposing frame. There was no doubt about it. He was built for elegance and the luxurious lifestyle.

As she looked into his deep baby blue eyes that dodged between the road and her, they were clear and completely open to her. Before she could speak, she found herself nodding. “Yes, I trust you.”

He gestured ahead. “Take a look.”

Renee peered ahead through the front window. Amidst the tall pine trees and darkening blue sky was a dance club she had heard of but never visited. The large building lit up with the lights from within. A swirling staircase wrapped around the exterior and she could already hear the booming bass of the music from within.

“What’s this?”

“They opened a few months ago but tonight they’re re-opening. One of the co-owners is a friend of mine and he told me he would personally filet me if I missed the grand re-opening. I was hoping I’d have a special lady to bring along this time.” He squeezed her hand again. “I’m glad my wish came true.”

Renee smiled, feeling her heart flutter with his words. She turned away toward the club as they drew closer. She liked the idea of being Jordan’s special lady.

A deep musical bass welcomed them as they parked in the VIP section near the side entrance. Neo soul and reggae music played from inside while club goers scattered with

drinks around the area. In the back, blue lights reflected in wavy patterns which told her there was a pool party going on with who knows how many people. Splashing and laughing welcomed them when Jordan parked near the valet and gave the waiter his keys to park. He joined Renee, wrapping his arms around her while leading her inside.

The doorman recognized Jordan right away and welcomed the man with a shake of the hand and a guy hug. In a flurry of moments, she was introduced to well known musicians, actors and other elite who had come out to bring in the re-opening of the club with a celebration.

A smooth, classic Neo soul song started. Renee remembered this one. It was about a man discovering the woman of his dreams and showing her just how much she means to him. The low beats mixed with the high, sexy sounds of the singer romancing his hypothetical woman. Jordan nodded, smiling widely.

"Oh yeah. We have to dance to this one," he said over the speakers. He took her hand and led her to a space on the floor.

Immediately her body started moving to the slow and steady beat. Jordan was right there with her, sliding his hips in a rhythmic motion. If he moved like that on the dance floor...

*Ooh yeah.*

Jordan reached down and grabbed her hands in his. He gently placed them around his neck while he rested his hips on hers and moved her ample hips to the beat. They were in sync, moving with sexy motion. Their bodies danced dangerously close together. Jordan held on as if she were the last treasure in the world.

And she belonged only to him.

She couldn't remember the last time she felt this special in a man's arms.

They fell into the music easily. The soft sensual beats pulsed through their ears and through their bodies as the music guided them.

Looking at him and the way he watched her made her feel more than special. Gently she caressed his cheek as she gazed into his eyes. She loved this man. There was no way around it. It didn't make sense after the short time they knew each other but there was a connection between them she couldn't deny. And from the way she watched Jordan, she knew he felt the same way.

"Know something?" Jordan said over the music as he leaned in toward her. He took her hand and gently kissed it. "You're the most beautiful woman here."

Renee giggled. "I'm pretty sure you're the handsomest man."

"You're pretty sure?"

Renee shrugged. "I still have to take a look around the place to make sure."

Jordan laughed. "Someone has jokes tonight, huh?"

"Have to keep you on your toes."

"Baby, you're already doing that."

The song ended way too soon for Renee and Jordan suggested they get some drinks to cool off. After ordering up two cherry cokes, Jordan led Renee out on the balcony to a quiet spot away from the music and nearby company. The day quickly turned to night and an azure blue sky slowly crept upon the island. Renee reveled in the dusk and smiled to herself, hoping the day would never end.

"Here you go." Jordan handed her the tall glass filled with ice cubs and the dark liquid. She thanked him with a kiss.

“What was that for?” Jordan asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Do I really need a reason to kiss you?”

He wrapped an arm around her. “No. I welcome them any and every time.” He bent down to give her a deep kiss that nearly sent her right up on her toes.

Jordan exhaled when the kiss broke. “Good way to open up the night, huh?”

“Oh yeah. I’ll take one of those anytime.”

He chuckled. “I mean the dancing but I agree with you there. What do you think of the place?”

Renee took a sip of her drink as she peered around the area. “Very nice. This place is a definite treasure. What I’m wondering is how a nice country club boy like you knew about a place like this with moves like that?”

“Hey, this white boy can move when he needs to. When my parents and I used to vacation here, my father was always in meetings or...running off with some new mistress while my mother did her own thing. I managed to sneak off and discover things on my own. Ever since then, I come back here and really immersed myself in the island and the culture. I met Jake, the co-owner friend I told you about, a few years ago at a charity banquet. He made me promise to drop by.”

“And I’m glad you did.” A deep voice said nearby.

Jordan turned to face a tall man with smooth dark skin, close cropped cut hair and a suit. His lips pulled back into a wide, sparkling white smile.

Renee nearly dropped her glass as she watched Jordan shake hands and hug the man as they traded pleasantries. DG Money. The man held the top 10 spot on the Billboard charts every time he made a debut.

“Good to see you, man. I was hoping you’d drop by to see the place tonight since I heard you were in town. What do you think?”

Jordan nodded, impressed as he looked around again. “You topped yourself with the remodeling this time. Glad I could be here to help you celebrate. Hey, I brought a special lady friend with me.”

He reached back and wrapped his arm around Renee to pull her close.

“This is Renee Carlson. She’s a famous author and local restaurant critic. Renee, this is Jake Cole. Although you may know him as DG Money.”

The tall man took Renee’s hand and kissed it. “It is a pleasure to meet you, Renee. It’s an honor to have a world famous author and local critic here. I hope you give us a nice and favorable review.”

Renee smiled. “Well, I’m not really world famous but am impressed with your club, Mr...um, Money.”

“Cole is fine. Feel free to take a look around. I should have told you to bring your suits in case you wanted to take a swim.”

Jordan waved. “No, thanks. We’re just here to enjoy the music.”

“Good, good.” Jake peered past them. “Listen, I still have some folks I have to welcome here. It was good seeing you. Drinks and food are on the house for you two. Make sure you tell the bartender. Miss Carlson. It was a pleasure to meet you. I’ll keep an eye out for your review. Jordan, good to see you as always.”

With one final hug, Jake Cole a.k.a DG Money and his entourage moved past them.

“Nice guy,” Jordan said. I should have brought a champagne as a gift to congratulate him but somehow I think he’s got enough here.”

“How many women have you been with?” Renee blurted out.

Jordan nearly dropped his drink. “You sure are skilled at coming up with out-of-the-blue questions.”

“I was just wondering.”

He exhaled heavily. Focusing his eyes on the blue horizon, she watched him think, perhaps running off a number in his mind.

“I like to think it was different before recently. I have been with a great deal of women. I’m not going to lie, Renee. But you have been the only woman on my mind since I saw you. It may be crazy to say, but I care for you a great deal. I’m not one to stop or hesitate because I’m nervous about a bad outcome. Maybe that’s one thing the old man instilled into me that helped. Risk. It helps when I have a patient who may not live to see the next day and a risky surgery may or may not save his life. It helps when I have no idea if a beautiful woman would think I was a crazed stalker or some handsome suitor if I run after her in a crazy car chase.”

Renee felt her heart stammer as he said the words. She wanted to stop there although she knew she had to press on. “And how many times have you made love?”

Jordan looked down at the drink in his hands. He took a sip thoughtful sip, careful to let the liquid swim down his throat. After swallowing it, he looked at her. No pretenses, no ambition. Just naked truth. “None.”

“Well,” Renee took a breath and leaned against the rail. “Maybe we both can be each other’s firsts.”

## Chapter 8

Did he hear correctly? Did Renee just ask him to be her first?

Jordan cleared his throat. "Renee, are you sure about this?"

She nodded. "Yeah. I want you to be the one, Jordan." Before he could open his mouth to speak, she took his glass and set it down on the small ledge next to him. Slowly, she melted into his arms as she leaned up to kiss him. There was something different in this kiss. It was slow, determined and deliberate in exactly what she wanted from him. His hands moved on her arms, caressing the soft skin beneath his fingertips, over her stomach and under her tank top. She was the leader in this kiss, his lips and tongue gently working her mouth to match her passion.

She wanted him.

She wanted him to give in to her as she gave in to him.

And tonight he would bust his butt to make it the most special night of her life.

The drive back to Renee's villa was too long for both Jordan and Renee. He held her all the way as she leaned on his chest, running her fingernails against his skin under the open shirt. He parked out front and locked up his car before embracing Renee again while they walked to the villa.

Renee's heart thumped within her chest as she led Jordan through the front door. A soft, warm evening breeze blew through her home, welcoming them as they crossed the threshold.

She felt the tug of Jordan's hand clasped in her own as he stepped before her. When her mind filled with questions, she followed him to the kitchen. He reached over to the vase to grab the single red rose he brought to her on their first date. He lifted it to his nose and smelled it with a smile.

Renee grinned back, playfully placing her hand on her hip. "What are you doing to my rose?" she said.

"You'll see," he said, leaning in to whisper in her ear.

Jordan led her through the darkened hall and waited until she showed him her bedroom. At the end was a large window lining the opposite side of the room. Renee's bed was perfectly made up with a satin blue and gold comforter and smooth cotton sheets. Right away, Jordan pulled back the sheets and then broke the bud of the rose off the stem. With a wave of his hand, the petals flew through the air and fell in a soft flutter across the bed.

Renee's heart swelled at the gesture. There was so much she wanted to say in this moment but as she looked into Jordan's deep blues when he walked back to her, somehow she knew that he already knew what was in her heart.

Jordan placed his hand on her cheek and looked deep into her eyes.

"Renee, I want you to know I won't ever hurt you again. You have my word on it. I know I screwed up back there. It was not my intention. I'm going to spend the rest of my



days making it up to you anyway I can.” He reached down and grabbed her hands in his. “I’ve been so happy these past few days. It’s like I’m living a dream.”

She chuckled. “Even though I gave you such a hard time?”

He shrugged. “Hey, I deserve it after everything that happened. I’m not going to lie. I’m not usually one for relationships, but the moment I saw you...I knew I didn’t want anyone else.”

Renee felt the sincerity in his voice. She grabbed his face and brought him close. The soft kiss quickly turned passionate as their mouths explored each other. Tongues caressed one another as their hands discovered the intricate surface of each other’s body.

“Are you sure you want this?” His voice was deep and husky.

Renee responded with a nod. “Yeah, I do, Jordan.”

Jordan took his time with Renee. His touches were soft, and each caress held the utmost sensitivity. He made sure not to hurt her and to keep alert to the way her body responded to his touches. His face remained buried in her neck as he took in her scent. His hands slowly caressed her smooth, dark shoulders. Just like he imagined, they were smooth like satin.

Gently he brushed the top off and reached around to unclasp the blue lace and satin bra, which revealed her shapely breasts. His hands were drawn to them and he smiled at how perfectly they fit in his masculine hands. He allowed one hand to gently tease a nipple while the other helped her remove the wrap skirt she wore.

“Lay back, baby,” Jordan said softly.

Renee stepped back and then climbed backward onto the bed, keeping her eyes on Jordan the entire time as she watched him remove his dress shirt. A slight worry crossed her face and Jordan was quick to notice.

“Renee, what’s wrong?” he asked leaning onto the bed, his body hovering over hers.

She shook her head. “Nothing. I just don’t really do this sort of thing, so I don’t have any protection.”

He chuckled deeply. “Not a problem, I have some. But we won’t need it for a while.”

Before she could question him, he moved back onto the bed and gently began kneading her thighs. “Do you trust me?”

Renee nodded. “I trust you, Jordan.”

Slowly he kneeled, keeping her gaze until the very last moment. Then his head descended between her legs.

Renee’s back arched and she immediately threw her head backward at the feel of his lips and tongue between the depths of her enclosure. Jordan gently teased the bud at her center, urging it to grow harder under his touch. He peered upward while he worked his fingers over her sensitive spot. He reveled in the idea that he and only he gave her this type of pleasure. He wanted to send her over the edge. He wanted to mark her as his own but he knew he had to take his time. Deep down, he wanted this to last forever.

He smiled and gently licked his lips when her hips slithered forward and backward, urging him to rub her harder. He wanted to dive into the folds of her body but he had to have patience. Only one part of him should be inside of her, and it wasn’t his fingers. As if on cue, his own sex was nearly bursting and he could feel trying to burst through his slacks that were growing ever so tight with each moment that past. Watching her and the way her body pulsed with pleasure, made him want to share the experience with her. His

hand drew down his body to the hardness in his slacks as if it were a magnet to his fingers. He slowly caressed himself through the pants, remembering how only days ago he was doing the same thing while imagining Renee with him. Now he didn't have to imagine any longer because she was here. And she was giving herself over freely.

Jordan couldn't wait any longer. As he spread her legs wider with his free hand, he dipped down and began sucking gently on her tight bud while cupping her bottom to give him easier access. His other hand was busy, rubbing himself, sending shots of pleasure until he couldn't take it anymore. Then he slowed down the peak and focused on Renee's pleasure as he continued pleasuring her.

Renee couldn't believe what was happening. It was as if her body was one complete bundle of sensitive nerves. Every touch, every caress and breath from Jordan pushed her to the edge of oblivion. The whole island could be on fire and she wouldn't give it a second peek. Just as long as Jordan continued pleasuring her with his mouth. She felt so exposed and so open to him that she partly wanted to hide, but a bigger part of her wanted to give herself over and completely to him.

"Yes, Jordan," she breathed. "Yes."

She peered down at Jordan who continued sucking and caressing her as he looked up at her. "Touch yourself, Renee. Feel how beautiful you are to me."

Her eyes darkened with desire as she gently rubbed her hands over her breasts. Her dark nipples sprouted to taut peaks. She wanted Jordan's hands on her, touching her like he had only moments ago.

"Oh!"

Electric pulses of pleasure shot throughout her body as his tongue caressed her most sensitive area before he wrapped it between his lips, sucking on the tight swollen bud again.

Renee moaned softly as she felt the rise of her climax near. Right when she was ready to give in to it, Jordan moved away, smiling at her as he wiped the hint of her essence from his lips.

"I've never done that before," he whispered.

Renee's head was swirling from the hits of pleasure jolting her body. "Why not?" she breathed.

"I never wanted to before you, Renee."

He stood and she saw the evidence of his desire for her bulging through his slacks. His hand gently moved it up and down, back and forth in a slow pumping motion. Slowly she licked her lips as she watched him. "Shouldn't that be my job?"

Jordan chuckled. "If you want it."

His hands fumbled with his pants and belt buckle before letting them fall to the floor. As he stepped out of them, Renee took a quick note of the loose briefs that barely contained his ever-growing erection. She was right. He was a big man. Her sex pulsed with the anticipation of how he would feel moving inside of her.

She sat back, drinking in the sight of his toned, muscled body. The smile on his face told her he was completely aware and enticed by her heated gaze. Slowly, he dipped his thumbs behind the elastic of his briefs and pulled them over and down his toned legs to reveal his hardened cock, jutting from a mass of dark, curly hair of gold. Renee

absentmindedly licked her lips again at the beautiful man standing before her and wondered why she had tortured herself all this time. She opened her arms, ready to take him into her waiting body.

Jordan felt himself grow harder by the minute as his eyes roamed the length of Renee's body. No woman had ever captivated him like this, nor had they brought him to his knees so willingly. His mouth ached to drink more of her essence and his hardened penis ached to be inside of her.

Jordan reached down into his back pocket to retrieve his wallet and the shiny packet held within. His anxious hands fumbled to pull out the latex treasure when he heard Renee's voice.

"Wait."

His hand froze. He looked up and watched her crawl over to him on the bed, with the moves of a cat closing in on her prey. The dark red rose petals clung to her body and he cursed himself for lacking any artistic skills because the visual would surely be the perfect subject for a classical painting. The thought quickly left his mind the minute she took the latex from his hand and slipped it into her mouth. She leaned in, her head disappearing out of view. Normally, he would be more than welcome to be on the receiving end, but his body went numb. He held her shoulders, stopping her.

"Wait, Renee. Have you ever done this before?"

She shook her head, taking the wrap from her mouth. "No, I—" She bit her lip.

"You don't have to, you know. I did that because I wanted to give you a gift. A gift I've never given to any woman before." He took a deep breath. He couldn't believe he was about to confess such a secret. One that he even denied himself. But there was no other word in the English language to express how he felt towards Renee. "Renee, I've been trying to deny it since I first saw you, but...I now realize how much I'm in love with you. I'm not saying this because of the situation we're in, but...I want you to be by my side now and for the rest of our lives. I can't see myself living without you in my life."

Renee smiled before she fell into his arms. It felt so right to him. The warm breeze lifted the lace curtains on the windows. The stars outside were suspended high in the velvet night sky. And now he was holding the woman he knew he was meant to be with for all of his days.

"I love you, too, Jordan," Renee said, smiling against his neck.

Jordan reached down and brought her face up to his. With his thumbs, he gingerly wiped away the tears staining her eyes and face. "Let me make love to you."

He took the latex from her and gently rolled it up his erection.

Renee moved onto the bed, leaning back to brace herself for him.

Jordan heard the creak of the bed responding to his weight. His deep blue eyes were on fire as he closed in on her.

"Are you ready for me, Renee?"

Renee nodded, a small smile creeping up on her face. "Always."

He reached down between them, all the while holding her gaze. She felt his warm arousal along her inner thighs and then the sensation of his large thick erection plunging into her, filling her insides wall to wall. He moved, slowly at first, until she adjusted to his girth, and then gently eased in.

Renee gasped sharply, feeling her moist center opening wider as he penetrated her.

"Renee..."

“Please don’t stop.”

Jordan struggled to move inside her at first, then he maneuvered his body to continue at a slow rhythmic pace. Renee felt her body convulse at the streaks of pleasure and pain that shot through her.

“Ohh, Renee.”

Her hips lifted to match his as he juttied his hips against hers.

Jordan groaned as she dug her fingernails down his back, feeling her grow moist by the minute. The feeling was indescribable as he moved within her, sealing their bodies together as one.

Jordan bent down to kiss her heaving breasts.

Renee’s body shuddered at the feel of his warm, moist lips upon her cold, hardened nipples as he suckled them, biting down ever so gently. A cry escaped from Renee’s mouth and she let it freely fly into the air. “Oh, Jordan. Yes...”

Her hands slipped into his silky hair to guide his head over her as she caressed his scalp. His hips pumped into her faster and harder as they rode each wave.

“Jordan...” she gasped.

They were connected with the deepest connection a man and a woman could share. Renee’s senses were all on high alert as she enclosed his hips within her thighs and welcomed him into her body over and over again. His arousal pressed and rubbed against her walls once he bucked his hips to ride his own pleasure wave.

Sweat covered Renee’s body as she felt the wave rise up from her feet and throughout her body. She stiffened as he plunged into her one last time. Jordan’s eyes remained open, his back arched and his hips pushed right into her.

“Look at me, Renee,” his voice strained. “Don’t close your eyes, baby.”

She kept her eyes open, feeling him sealed inside her. As she looked deep into his eyes, she felt an experience like no other. A magnetic force pulsed between them, sealing their lives and bodies together forever.

Finally, they relaxed. Renee cradled his head upon her chest and couldn’t help smiling as they both struggled for air.

“Where have you been all my life, Renee Carlson?”

Renee chuckled against his chest. “I could ask you the same thing, Jordan Brentwood.”

Her hands caressed his bare torso, allowing her fingers to explore the taut skin over his chest muscles.

Jordan’s fingers roamed the valleys of her arm as he held her. “Did I hurt you? How do you feel now?”

Renee chuckled at his protection over her. She smacked his chest, finding the sudden tenseness in his body and voice too cute to resist. “I’m fine. No, you didn’t hurt me. I’m just a little sore right now, but other than that I’m doing all right. I wouldn’t change this night for the world, Jordan.”

“Neither would I.” He softly placed a kiss on the top of her forehead and covered her hand with his. “Thank you for giving me such a wonderful gift, Renee. I can’t tell you how it makes me feel. I just know that you’re the one for me.”

Renee reached up and kissed him deeply.

“What would you say if I stayed here with you?” he asked once they broke from the kiss.

“And leave your family and life behind?”

He shrugged.

As he looked away, she noticed the muscles flex beneath his jaw. She tried to hold back from asking about the thoughts swimming around in his head. “My family can live without me. All I had was my residency there. My patients may need me but I don’t mind hopping the ocean for special calls. Maybe I can continue here. I’m sure there are some people in need of doctors.”

Renee jumped onto him, showering his face with kisses. “Jordan, you are an amazing man. And I love you.”

“Well, you’re a fortunate woman, because guess what?”

“What?” she asked, her eyes brightening up.

“I love you, too.” His hand caressed her cheek, bringing her in for a kiss.

Renee giggled. “Does this mean you’re ready for another ride?”

Jordan fell back against the bed. “Woman, let me get some energy first. Guys take a bit to recharge.”

“Oh.” Renee feigned a disappointed look. “Well, why don’t you just lay there and let me do all the work?”

“I thought you said you were sore.”

“Part of me is. Other parts aren’t.”

Renee climbed on top of him in a straddle and gently moved down his body. He was semi-hard by the time she moved down his knees and already growing harder by the time she gripped him in her hands and removed the latex.

“Mmm, you don’t know what you’re starting there, Miss.”

“Oh, believe me,” she said with a smile. “I definitely do.” Renee ran her hands over Jordan, gripping him with one hand while gently rubbing him with the other. It didn’t take long to become fully hard again in her hands. The tip of him moistened with a small teardrop falling from the head. Renee took this as a sign and gently dipped her head to kiss him gently in the most intimate way possible. She felt his hips jut forward slightly, accompanied by the sound of a gasp on his lips. She could feel the veins of his cock against her lips, the warmth of his blood rushing through his organ and the delicious way the softness of his skin felt like velvet over hard steel. He was barely enough for her to contain in her hands as she filled each inch of him with a kiss. Then, when she made her way up to his head again, she finally took him into her mouth and gently suckled him. He tasted unlike anything she imagined. Salty and sweet. Hard and soft. Beautiful. She ran her fingernails against his inner thigh and felt his hand gently fist her hair, guiding her up and down on him.

“Oh, Renee.”

She massaged him with her mouth, loving the way he tasted on her tongue. She could feel the pulses of pleasure skyrocketing through his skin, igniting him towards a climax that would send him out of the solar system.

“Yeah, don’t stop,” he breathed.

Renee loved that she had him right here under her spell. His attention was completely focused on her and the pleasure she gave to him.

“Please don’t stop.”

Harder and harder she suckled and dragged her fingernails down his skin. She felt him throbbing and convulsing moments before he came with a loud moan upon his lips.

Renee urged him to empty all of him into her as she gently pumped the hard organ until he was spent.

Jordan was out of breath by the time she rose. He reached out and pulled her to him, caressing her back and arms as she lay in his embrace.

“You are an amazing, woman, Renee. I can’t believe I’m your first.”

Renee giggled. “What can I say? We just mesh well.”

“How did you know what to do down there?” His blue eyes sparkled as he looked down at her.

Renee ran her fingertips over his chest in soft, smooth strokes. “Intuition. A woman knows how to be in tune with her man and vice versa. No one is born knowing it all. They just let it grow as they grow closer. Just imagine what it’ll be like down the road after we’ve done this hundreds of times.”

Jordan lifted her chin so that she looked at him. “It’ll be just as perfect as the first time.” And then he kissed her, holding her close to him.

It was like a dream Renee didn’t want to see end. Her heart filled with so much love as her body sank into his arms. She allowed her mind to rest on him as she reveled in how right the feeling was at that moment. Nothing else mattered in the world as they held on to each other, allowing sleep to embrace them into the night.

\*\*\*\*

Jordan heard the distant ringing in his head before he opened his eyes. His arm was still holding Renee and he was reluctant to move away from her, to let her go. After the final ring, silence filled the room and he turned over to give in to the peaceful slumber once again.

When the phone rang once again, his body tensed. Whoever it was over the line was dead set on getting him on the phone.

With a soft sigh, he maneuvered his body out from under Renee, careful not to wake her. A soft moan escaped her lips as he laid her down on his side of the bed. He noticed the rose petals were now crushed and curled from the movement of their bodies. The sweet smell of their petals still hung in the air.

Jordan tiptoed over to the phone and retrieved it from beneath the crumble of his clothes.

“Yeah?” His loud whisper came out raspy.

“Jordan, it’s me.” His father’s deep, gruff voice broke through the phone.

“Dad, I’m a little busy now.”

“Yeah, I don’t doubt it, son.” The older man chuckled.

Jordan rolled his eyes. He couldn’t wait to get off the phone.

His father’s chuckle soon turned into a deep, hacking cough. That didn’t sound good at all. “Look, son. You have to come home. It’s an emergency.”

“What is it?”

“I can’t. Not over the phone.”

“Just tell me.” Jordan jumped at the loudness of his own voice. He turned to sneak a peek at Renee, who was still fast asleep even as she shifted peacefully.

“No. You need to come home. I said it’s an emergency. I’m in the hospital. The family is in shambles and that’s all I can say right now. I’ll send the plane for you. Remember to leave everything as you found it.”

The phone clicked, ending the call. Jordan angrily snapped his cell shut. His body was on fire as he began to pace the room. Was he telling the truth? Or was it a lie to get him there? Jordan hated that he even wondered the possibility, but with his father, there was no telling.

He balled his fists up at his side, nearly crushing one hand with the phone in it. Even thousands of miles away, his father found a way to interfere with his life. He wanted to stay where he was. He didn’t have to go running. But the sting he felt at abandoning his flesh and blood was too strong to ignore. After all, his father *could* be in trouble.

Jordan forced himself to step into his clothes. He walked over to the side of the bed and watched Renee sleep. Her torso was bare with only the lower part of her body obstructed by the soft white sheet. The morning light was rising on the horizon, giving the room the warm glow of a day just about to begin. He didn’t want to leave her, but the possible severity of his father’s situation was also strong in his mind.

Gently he shook her, ignoring the doubt creeping up in his mind.

“Renee...” he said, caressing her hair.

“Mmmm. Five more minutes.” Renee shifted positions before falling silent again.

*I’ll be back, my love*, he silently promised.

Jordan found a piece of paper and jotted down a few notes including his home and cell numbers, then finally his address. He kissed the paper and left it on the oak end table in front of the alarm clock.

He turned to Renee and bent down to give her a kiss on her lips before taking his leave.

As Jordan flew home over the Atlantic Ocean later that day, he thought about the previous night, and even more, he thought about Renee. He ran over the events of that morning and how his heart still ached at the idea of leaving his love behind.

Jordan never noticed the soft breeze that flowed through the room that morning before he left Renee’s villa. Nor did he imagine the note he left would be blown away, fluttering off the end table and under the bed...unseen by Renee’s sleepy gaze as she awoke to the new day.

## Chapter 9

Jordan threw down his jacket on a nearby chair and placed his hands on his hips. Fire erupted from his sparkly oceanic eyes and he made no attempt at hiding the anger deep within him.

“Are you serious?!”

Jordan’s father shrugged. His muscled body was strong beneath the dress shirt and pants he wore. Even as a man in his late fifties, he was as handsome and well-toned as if he was Jordan’s age. His once dark brown hair had now turned to silver, offering a distinguished look that garnered him looks from the opposite sex both young and mature. His smooth, deep bedroom voice, coupled with his charm and power, were weapons he knew how to use all too well.

The older man kept his hands in his pockets as he stepped out from behind the large cherry oak desk and walked with his head down in deep thought.

“Yeah, I am. Jillian left me. She found out about Karen yesterday. From the phone and credit card bills, I guess.” He shook his head. “I should have been more discreet.”

“Should have been more...” Jordan scoffed at the words. “You called me all the way down here for that? I came over here searching each hospital wall to wall, thinking you were on your death bed and you’re freaking out because your fiancée found out about your *mistress*?!”

His father shrugged again. “Yeah, sure,” he said nonchalantly.

“Seriously, Dad—”

His father held up his hand. For a moment, his eyes closed in annoyance. “Now look, son. This is a family matter. I needed you here so we can figure out how to get through this. I had to get you here the only way I knew how.”

“By *lying* to me?! No, Dad. *You* need to get through this because I’m done covering up your lies and picking up the pieces of the life you destroyed.”

“Hey, now. You’re still my son and you can’t talk to me like that!”

“Or what?!”

His father puffed out his chest. “I raised you better than that!”

“On the contrary, you raised me to be just like you. *‘Sow your oats, son. Don’t settle down and be tied to one woman because they’ll take you for all you’re worth. Go out and meet different women, son, but don’t get too close because they’re only after one thing. So beat them to the punch first.’*” Jordan shook his head. “You know what? I’m not like you. I can actually fall in love and be willing to commit to one woman. I already have, and because of you I had to leave her without saying goodbye.”

Jordan yanked his jacket off the chair and stormed toward the door.

“Bedded some little chocolate island girl, eh? Way to go.”

Jordan turned around and rushed back to his father. His fist was raised in the air, poised to strike, but he stopped when he laid his eyes upon the older man’s determined expression. The oceanic eyes they shared looked right back at him, daring to strike.



Slowly, Jordan shook his head. "Not even worth the energy." He turned and headed for the door. "Just for your information, I won't have you talk about my future wife like that."

"Future wife?! You bring that black—"

Jordan shot a finger out at his father. "Watch it. I stopped before, but I can't make the same promise if you push me further."

"You marry her and you can forget all about your inheritance."

Jordan's hand froze as his mind raced. It took a moment for him to muster enough strength to turn around and fully face his father. "You're right."

The old man smiled proudly. "There, you see? I knew you would come to your senses."

Jordan shook his head. "You're right. I guess I can forget my inheritance." He nearly ripped the door open as he walked through the threshold, slamming it closed behind him.

Once he was outside, he leaned against the wall. All of his life he had wanted to tell his father what he truly thought of him. All of the duties, following his suggestions, orders and manipulations didn't matter anymore because now he was on his own.

Jordan made his choice, and he felt free because of it. He knew exactly who to thank. He quickly dialed Renee's number, but the answering machine picked up. He left a message and continued trying to call her, but each time she didn't answer he felt more and more dejected. He could only hope she found his note. His heart couldn't take the idea or possibility of the alternative.

\*\*\*\*

Renee stared out at the ocean waves crashing against the shore. Jordan was gone. She had even called the Villa di Rossi to find out if he was there, but no answer. And no one, not even his friends or Jake Cole had seen him before he left. It was as if he vanished off the island.

No, he left. And without a word of goodbye or to tell her where he was going. How could she have been so stupid?

Renee let the hot tears fall from her eyes. She felt dejected, lost. Betrayed. How could she have let herself go so far? Say those things to a man she hadn't known long? When all the while he probably just wanted to get her in bed and then slip away. It hurt. It hurt so bad to realize she was just another notch on his long belt.

With a cry on her lips, Renee ripped the sheets off the bed and tossed them on the ground. She didn't care about the flower petals that littered the floor. They were already curling and growing brown as if they knew their purpose here was a lie.

Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Renee wanted to crawl up in a ball and just disappear. She had known hurt before but never like this. Not ever like this. It was deep hurt that only numbness could heal. But how long would it take to get over Jordan Brentwood?

The sound of her phone ringing made her jump. She couldn't talk to anyone. Somehow she knew it was Lauren on the other end. Instead of going to see who it was, Renee crawled down to the side of her bed, pulled her sheet over her ears and softly wept as the machine beeped.

*2 weeks later*

Renee waited for her doctor to finally meet with her. It was time to finally see her doctor, especially she had been with Jo—a man. She refused to say his name or acknowledge him. Whenever Lauren would call, she would say she didn't want to talk about him. Her sister had told her it wasn't healthy bottling things up but she knew if she mentioned him or talked about how much he hurt her, she would become a weeping mess all over again. At least this would give her a chance to get off the island and onto new surroundings to help her forget...*him*.

Dr. Malkia Westmore entered the room with a bright smile on her bronze heart-shaped face. "Hello, Renee. Good to see you again."

"Good to see you too," Renee said mustering a smile.

"How's your family doing?"

"Very well, thanks for asking. My nieces are growing so fast. They practically sound like women over the phone."

Dr. Westmore chuckled. "I bet. Time is flying these days. Are you going to see Lauren before you head back home?"

Renee nodded. "I'm going to try to, yeah. If I can pry her away from work long enough."

"Well, I won't keep you long," Dr. Westmore said as she looked over the papers in her hand. "You seem to be in good health overall. Your cycles are regular. Keep up that swimming you're doing. I know island living has turned you into a fruit and veggie fanatic, which is great."

Renee smiled. She sensed something was coming from the sudden change in the doctor's voice.

"There is one thing that has me concerned. Now it's small right now but it looks like on your scans that there may be a small cyst in your uterus. It may not be anything but I would like to run some tests to make sure it isn't malignant. Even so, we may have to go in and remove it so it won't spread and attack any other cells in your body."

Renee felt her mouth grow dry. She had to force the words to come out of her mouth. "What caused this?"

Dr. Westmore folded her hands on her lap. "Many things could be the cause, food, water, the atmosphere. It could have affected your body before moving to the island. The thing is, Renee, it's possibly that it could stifle you having children."

There it was. The big drop she was waiting for. Renee felt as if her guts were yanked out of her and she was just a hollow shell left over to die. She couldn't scream. Nor could she cry. She couldn't bring up the muster enough to do either one.

"Is this...permanent?"

"We're going to take care of this before it gets worst. There is a chance that you still may be able to but right now the cyst is making it impossible. I'm so sorry, Renee. You have my word that we will do everything we can."

Renee forced herself to exhale slowly and nodded. "I thought I had everything under control just a few weeks ago. I had a job, food, shelter..." And then a man who she thought was her everything walked into her life and dismantled it all. Now she her future felt dark. Empty. "I'd like to get this done as soon as possible, Dr. Westmore. No matter how risky or scary, I just want this done."

Dr. Westmore nodded. "I'd like for you to stay in town for a while. Maybe you can stay with your sister?"

Renee shook her head. "I'll check into a hotel. I just want to be alone for a while."

"All right. I'll schedule you in right away to start the procedure. Please don't hesitate to call me anytime, okay?"

"Okay," her words were empty and hollow, exactly the way she felt inside. In the depths of her mind, she heard Dr. Westmore say she could get dressed but it hardly mattered. The numbness that came over her threatened to paralyze her. And she felt it cut deeper once the hospital door closed as the doctor left her to dress by herself.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jordan entered his patient's room, Mr. Jeffers, the last one he had to see tonight before he headed out back to St. Thomas. The older man clutched his chest as he tried to breathe with help from the nurse.

"His heart stopped for a moment," the nurse informed him. She shot off the list of symptoms he had had in the past few moments. Jordan quickly tested the older man and ordered the medicine needed for his injection.

"I'm all right," the old man said through quick breaths. "I saw a cute nurse wander by and she made my heart stop."

Jordan smiled. "Well, your recent surgery could have had something to do with it, too," he said, checking the older man's pulse and watching the heart monitor. "Looks like you're coming out of it now, but I would feel a little better if you still took the medicine to calm yourself down a little."

The nurse handed Jordan the syringe, which he injected into the older man. Watching his patient relax, Jordan felt a little calmer.

"Whatsa matter?"

Jordan looked up. "What do you mean?"

"You look like you just lost the love of your life."

Jordan managed a laugh. "You noticed that, huh?"

"Ah, when you become my age nothing surprises you anymore and everything is clear. You know the ins and outs of every emotion and feeling. Yet you still can't figure out the reason and reality behind love."

Jordan put the syringe away and made a few notes on his clipboard. "Yeah, I hear that."

"So, what's her name?"

Jordan's jaw flexed. "Renee."

"This Renee beautiful?"

He smiled. "Yeah. She's beautiful. Caring, loving, ambitious. She's straight-laced, which is the opposite of me. She puts her mind on something and goes after it. I admire that. I admire her."

“Hold on to that girl and that feeling, man. Don’t let her slip away. Whatever you do, don’t let her go because the small moments you share are the ones that will last. Even now, they may be all you have left.”

Jordan pushed the foreboding words out of his mind as he told the older man to call him if he needed anything else. He already tried to hold on to her once and she got away.

Jordan wandered down the hall, ready to finish his run for the evening. He had just about finished up everything with his patients in the hospital. He had tried to call Renee over and over again but she never took his calls. She even unplugged her answering machine, sending all calls to a forwarding number. Even Henry, the man who sent calls to the island refused to even speak with him, citing that Renee was gone.

Where to exactly? He racked his brain over and over to figure it out. Did she resent him for leaving? Surely he got his note for where she could find him if she needed to. Why hadn’t she tried to contact him?

All his answers would come just as soon as she booked a flight back to St. Thomas. Normally, the villa would be off limits as would the driver and anything else that belonged to the Brentwood name. That is if Jordan hadn’t faxed his father a little note mentioning how he knew about all his little infidelities and the information would fetch his ex-wives a pretty penny if they were to go to the courts with his evidence. Blood may be thicker than water but he had done enough bleeding for the both of him while he stood by and watched his father cheat one woman after another. He was sick of it. And now that he was ready to move on, he wouldn’t condone it any longer.

Jordan was ready to take off his jacket and head home when he felt a pair of thin cold fingers wrap around his arm, stopping him in mid-stride. He whirled around, almost dropping the silver clipboard in his hands. “Excuse—”

“Hey!” Sheila’s blue eyes sparkled as she looked at him. “Thanks for telling me when you got back.”

Sheila. Just exactly the person he *did not* want to see right now.

“Jordan.” Sheila’s voice brought him back to Earth. “What’s going on between us?”

“Sheila, there is no us.” He folded the clipboard under his arm. “There never even was an ‘us’.”

“So all those times you screwed me down in the cellar were just to feed your own ego?” she said, placing her hands on her hips. “To add me to the growing list of notches on your belt?”

Jordan hated himself for sleeping with her and for all those other women who meant nothing to him. He’d rewind the clock right back to the beginning if he could take that trip and see Renee all over again. “Look, Sheila. I don’t know what you and my father have going but now that I’ve taken care of him. I’m going to take care of you.” He leaned in close to her and spoke clearly despite his gritted teeth. “You, mean nothing to me. Even more so now that you ran off to tell him about my girlfriend. I love her, Sheila. Nothing, I repeat, nothing in this world is going to make me stop loving her. You can make all the threats, the pouts and the evil gazes until your eyes fall out, but that’s the way I feel. I will not have you encroach upon my personal space with your problems ever again. This is the last you’ll be seeing of me. I hope you have a good life, Sheila.”

Sheila released an exasperated huff as she turned and watched him leave. “You can’t walk away from me Jordan Brentwood! Not after what we have! Jordan! Come back here!”

He reminded himself to call security if she continued to make a raucous. If Sheila was going to act like a spoiled child, she can do so on her own time and not on hospital minutes. There were much more important things at hand that needed to be taken care of.

As he started down the hall, Jordan thought he spotted Dr. Westmore talking to a familiar young woman. *A young woman who resembled Renee.* Looking closer, he realized it *was* Renee. Something came alive inside of him. Maybe she was coming to see him. He took in a deep breath and began walking toward her. Just as she finished talking to the doctor, Renee turned and looked straight into his eyes.

Before he could open his mouth to speak, she quickly walked past him.

“Renee...Renee!” Catching up to her, he slipped his hand into her arm, but it was smacked away. “What is it with you? I’ve been waiting for you to contact me.”

Renee shot him a look of amazement. “Excuse me? You’ve been waiting...”

She scoffed. “Tell me something, Jordan, how can you wait for me to contact you when you disappear the morning after we...I can’t believe you have the gall to even look me in the eye and lie like that.”

“Lie?!” He pulled her over to the side and lowered his voice as he noticed the curious gazes around them. “Renee, my father called me here because he supposedly needed me. He told he was in the hospital, for Pete’s sake. When I got here I found it was only because he needed a fall guy to clear his conscience after his latest soon-to-be-ex found out about yet another one of his infidelities. But I’m not going to be his fall guy anymore. He’s on his own. I didn’t want to wake you because you looked so peaceful.”

Jordan noticed her look softened as she tried hard not to look in his eyes. “The next best thing I could do was leave a note for you. I guess you didn’t see it.”

“No,” she said firmly. “I didn’t.”

He exhaled loudly. “So then, it was a dumb misunderstanding. I’m sorry, Renee. These past few weeks has been agony without you. I tried calling you everyday. I booked a flight to come down and see you. I was going to break down your door if that’s what it took.” He gently stroked the side of her face.

Renee moved away to dodge his touch. Her dark eyes were like cold ice as she stared at him. “You don’t realize how you broke my heart, Jordan,” she said, her voice hollow. “I don’t want to be thrown for a loop like that again. If you left me to rush off in the middle of the night, what makes the next time any different? Huh?”

“I told you, I said he was on his own now.”

Renee slowly shook her head. “I don’t think I can trust you anymore, Jordan. It’s too late.”

She turned to leave but he held onto her. “No, don’t say that.” Why wasn’t she crying? Why wouldn’t she yell at him? Hit him? Something! She just stood there like an empty, lifeless doll just going through the motions.

Renee gathered her strength and pushed his hand away before standing tall. “Listen, Jordan. This past month made me realize how far gone I was, how I lost myself. I don’t want that to happen again.”

“Life isn’t one big plan, Renee. You take each day as it comes and you try your hardest to make relationships work. That’s how they go. You screw up but you spend the rest of your lives making it right because it’s the good times that cancel out all the bad.”

Renee scoffed. “This, coming from a man who’s bedded more women than he can count.”

This silenced him. He cursed himself in his mind for all the times he tried to fill that emptiness with other women. Being with Renee, even through all the tension, felt right. But still, he felt like he was losing her...and soon she would be lost forever if he let her get away.

"Jordan, if you really care about me the way you say you do... if you really want the best for me and my happiness..."

"I do."

She ignored the sincerity in his voice. "Then please don't try to contact me. Don't try to see me, talk to me, or anything. Just forget us and everything that happened on that island, okay? That'll be the best for both of us."

With that, she turned and walked away from him. He wanted to run after her. He wanted to take her in his arms and yell how much he wanted her, to tell her how much they needed each other.

Instead, he rushed over to Dr. Westmore's office and was thankful to see her still inside for the evening.

"Jordan! What—"

He gently closed the door behind him once he stepped inside. "Mal, you have to tell me what Renee was doing here."

Malkia placed her hands on her hips. "What? Jordan, I don't have to remind you about doctor/patient confidentiality. You're a smart boy."

She started toward the door, but he jumped to stop her. His eyes pleaded with her, carrying a sense of urgency. "Please, Mal. She...she could be carrying my child."

"What? That girl is not pregnant, Jordan. Stop playing."

"But she was in here. Family planning."

"And it wasn't that, I can tell you. Now if you'll excuse me, I have other patients to see."

"Mal, please. I'm begging you. I love that girl. If I lose her now, I—" What could he say that could convey just how deeply he felt for Renee? "I may lose the chance to get her back again."

Dr. Westmore slipped her hands in her jacket as she turned to face Jordan. With a sigh, she started toward him, looking him deep in the eyes. He could already tell the seriousness of her next words before she even spoke them. "Then if you care for her, Jordan, be there for her. She really needs someone right now and she shouldn't be alone with what she's going through."

"What is happening? Please, tell me."

She held up her hands as she stepped backward. "I can't say because it is confidential. Only Renee can tell you that. But I will say that if you really love her, now is one of the many times you both will be tested through that."

And with those words, she sidestepped him and quickly left the room. Thoughts raced through Jordan's mind as he tried to figure out the reason for Renee's appearance at the hospital. He had to get to her before it was too late. He had no idea where she was staying or how long she was in town. That meant he had only one shot to get her before she slipped out of his life forever.

With that, he disappeared out of the hospital, ripping off his white coat as he went.

Outside, Jordan sprinted across the parking lot with his eyes alert and his adrenaline on high. He looked around for Renee but there was no sign of her anywhere. He couldn't

have missed her just in those few moments. Just when he was about to curse himself for waiting too long to make his move, he spotted Renee sitting alone at a bench. He started toward her, calling her name. She looked as if she were in deep thought but the moment she saw him, she jumped up and gathered her purse. The way she yanked the straps over her arms was all too telling.

“Renee, please.”

“I don’t want to talk, Jordan.”

“I’m just asking for you to give me another chance.”

“Chances, chances. I remember giving you another chance before, Jordan.”

She started to walk past him when he blocked her view. “I had royally screwed up then. I admit that. But this time I had tried to make it right. I told you what happened and that was not my doing. Not on purpose. Things happen that don’t work out the way we planned, Renee, but we work around that.”

“Oh yeah? And what happens when life is trying to tell you something?”

“Like what?”

“Like you and I being a mistake.”

Nothing could have hurt more than those words she said to him right then and there.

“You don’t mean that.”

Renee stared at him, the coldness of her gaze and shallowness of her words cut even deeper with the fact that she reveled in pushing him away. “I do, Jordan. I regret ever seeing you in that parking lot. I regret meeting with you and even more I regret sharing my body with you.”

She brushed past him and left him alone, standing there outside of the hospital. Pain clutched his heart and he felt a searing rage mixed with anger jolt through him. She didn’t mean that, he tried to tell himself over and over. She *couldn’t* mean that. Then he remembered Malkia’s words. She needed him now more than ever. What happened back at that hospital room?

He turned to face Renee when he spotted a car veering down the opposite lane. It turned the corner and was speeding down, heading right towards Renee.

Jordan bolted into a run as he headed toward her.

“Renee!” he yelled as he flailed his arms, dropping his coat. “RENEE!”

The car screeched to a stop and he could see Renee turn and look over her shoulder. In that moment, they looked in each other’s eyes and he knew the connection was still there. On pure instinct, he dove forward pushing Renee off the center of the road and onto the ground, just missing the car that whizzed by them.

He turned and cushioned her fall as his body smacked against the ground below him, awakening all of his senses. A dull pain shot through his body making him to wince. Despite the aching, he was relieved to still be alive. Renee gingerly moved away from him and leaned over his body, inspecting his face.

“I must be some kind of magnet for cars, huh?” he chuckled.

Renee’s expression quickly changed from worry to anger once she realized he was okay. She smacked his arm hard while pursing her lips together.

“Ow! What was that for?”

“Do you know how much you scared me just then?” Renee yelled.

“Me? I saw that car coming and I couldn’t think of anything else but getting you out of the way. Are you okay?” He gently stood to his feet with her help. Silently she nodded and went into his open arms.

Jordan peered up to see the car veer down the opposite end of the street and out of distance. The few people that were around had come over to see if they were okay but Jordan thanked them, assured them they were okay and then pulled Renee over to the side where they could have some privacy. It was then he realized her body was convulsing with sobs.

“Jordan,” she said, clutching his shirt. “I was so scared...I—”

“Shh, I’m right here, baby.” He softly caressed her back as he bent down to kiss the top of her head and then hold her close. “I’m right here, I’m not going anywhere.”

“I can’t...”

“What? What is it?”

“I can’t have children.”

Jordan froze at the statement. He wasn’t even sure he heard correctly until he focused. Gently he leaned back and nudged Renee’s face to look at him. Even through all the tears and the slightly smudged makeup around her dark features, she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

“Dr. Westmore found a cyst...” She couldn’t finish before she broke down again. “It’s what I’ve always wanted. A family of my own and now...” She wiped her tears with the backs of her palms. “It’s better if we just go our separate ways. I need to get through this alone.”

“You’re right, Renee. You need to get through this...but not alone.” When she tried to turn away from him, he held her to him. “Renee. I told you why I left and I told you I left a note for you to explain. I called you numerous times but you never picked up. Please don’t put up a wall between us now. Not after all we’ve been through. Not after how much we’ve fought through to be together. I’m still waiting for you to answer the most important question that I have ever presented to another person. The question on the note.”

Her scoff crossed into a laugh through the tears. “Oh, now there’s a question on the note.”

“Yeah.”

Renee sniffled. “Jordan, it’s over. You got what you wanted out of me and we both need to return to our collective corners.”

“What about what we said? About what we promised?”

She slowly shook her head. “It was all in the heat of passion. Nothing more.”

With that, Renee turned on her heels and returned back to the car, wiping her eyes all the way.

“Will you at least answer my question?” he called after her.

“I don’t even know what the question was, Jordan.”

Jordan watched helplessly as she stopped at her rental car and reached into her purse to find her keys.

“WILL YOU MARRY ME?!”

Renee froze, still looking down at the keys. He started toward her, willing her to look up at him. Jordan’s heart nearly stopped as he approached her. Finally she turned to face him with damp, red eyes.



“What did you say?”

Jordan walked to her, smiling with a sense of freedom. This was the moment he had been waiting his whole life to live and it was a dream that was finally coming true. “I said...will you marry me?”

“Jordan... you may not have heard me before but I said I couldn’t have children.”

“Did Dr. Westmore said it was forever?”

Renee shifted her weight and licked her lips. “She said there was a procedure—”

“And I’ll be right there with you when you go through it. Because you know what? You’re not getting rid of me that easily, Renee Carlson. If we have to adopt kids from all around the world, we’ll do it. If you have to go through different procedures, we’ll do that. We’ll try anything because I will see to it that you get the family you want. And I’m going to be right there by your side and our kid’s sides, being the doting father spoiling them as much as I can. I said before that I can’t see my life without you by my side, Renee, and I still mean that. I refuse to have us part again. So I’m asking you...will you marry me?”

Renee felt the tears coming back again. She couldn’t believe he was here saying the things he said as he held her. Her skin warmed at his touch and she never realized how much she missed it in that moment. “What happens if things go wrong, if we make a mistake, if we screw up again—”

“Hey,” he said, taking her face in his hands. “Life is like that. We make mistakes and then we move on. I can’t promise you I won’t mess up from time to time. Or that we won’t fight. But I can sure promise you this: I will be the best man I can be with you...because you make me want to be better. I love you, Renee. And nothing will change that. I want to make this work and I want to make a family with you, Renee.”

“Oh, Jordan, I love you so much.” She fell into his arms, wrapping her arms around his body. “I want to make this work, too. I’ll be the best wife I can be.”

Jordan breathed in the scent he had long missed in the past few weeks and even more so in the days he lived after he lost her the first time. “I already know you will, baby.” Tears fell from his eyes as he broke into a laugh. “And yet, you never answered my question.”

“Well, you’re a fortunate man because guess what?”

“What?” he said with a smile.

Renee reached up to him, gently caressing the side of his face. “My answer is yes.”

## Epilogue

Jordan paced the lobby of the hospital with his hands in his pockets. Of all the times he had worked in the hospital, he had never known what it was like on the other end. Of course, he had offered his empathy to the families who went through surgery with their loved ones, but never had he been personally invested like he was now.

A few days after Renee had accepted his proposal, she was checked in to prepare for ovarian surgery. He had been on pins and needles but he tried his hardest not to let her see his nerves. She was nervous and scared enough for the both of them and he wanted to be her rock. Malkia Westmore had been happy to see him by her side and even more so was Lauren, Renee's sister, who had said she heard so much about him.

"Jordan, why don't you take a breather and sit down? The pacing is making me nervous."

He looked up at Lauren now who had her arm stretched around her little girls sitting in the two seats between her and her husband, Gary. He was amazed at the similarities between her and Renee. While Renee wore her hair in natural thick, cinnamon brown curls and had a curvy, voluptuous body that wouldn't quit, Lauren was more lanky, taller and wore her black hair blow-dried straight. Renee's casual wear clashed with Lauren's business attire that matched her husband's expensive sweaters and loose slacks.

Gary stood and patted him on the back. "Maybe we can work out those nerves and get everyone some coffee."

"And some hot cocoa, daddy," Lisa, the oldest of the two said.

"And some hot cocoa," he echoed with a smile.

"Is Grandma and Grandpa still on their way?" Angie, the younger one asked her mother.

Lauren gently caressed her daughter's cheek. "We're working on it, baby."

"They should be here in a few hours," Jordan said. "They may be a bit tired coming off the plane but I'm sure they'd want to see, Renee." Renee's parents had tried to get a flight in but at the last minute it was pretty much near impossible. Jordan had pulled strings to get them a private flight over thanks to his father's jet. The old man had been reluctant to do anything to help him in connection with Renee, but the reminder of Jordan's evidence against his infidelities kept him in line. Jordan was ready to fight fire with fire after all the old man put him through. He wouldn't get off that easily, especially after the harsh words he threw at Renee.

"Is Auntie going to be okay?" Angie asked.

Lauren smiled and pulled her little girl into her lap. "She'll be fine, sweetie. We have only the best helping her." Angie burrowed her head in Lauren's shoulder and peered up at Gary who offered her a thin but reassuring smile.

Jordan's heart swelled at the little family. He had made sure to have the best doctors shipped in from all over the world to help Renee's condition. It didn't matter the cost. Renee's well being was of the utmost importance.

After all he had been through and after lacking it in his own family, Jordan knew this was something he wanted for himself and for Renee. Comfort and support. He was tired of running around with uncertainty in his future and he had meant everything he told his father. This was what it was like to settle down and it was only the tip of the iceberg for what he wanted for Renee. His hand warmed as he remembered the look in her eyes

when they wheeled her down the hall. She was a strong woman but the sparkle in her eyes and the misty dew of tears told him she was scared. He wanted to be in there with her, holding her hand the whole way through. But he knew procedure and knowing his weakness for protecting her, he wouldn't be able to focus on the surgery if he had done it himself.

"The walk will probably do me good," Jordan said.

Gary kissed Lauren on the cheek before he left toward the cafeteria. Thankfully it was pretty sparse of people. Jordan didn't think he could stand a chatting crowd about now. There were a few familiar faces still working in the area. Sheila had transferred to another hospital at his insistence and while he was in town, Jordan continued to see after his own patients before he prepared to bring Renee back home to the St. Thomas villa. Now if they could only get through this...

"Does it ever get any easier?" he asked Gary as they stood in line to order.

Gary's brown eyes darkened a bit as he shook his head. "Never does. You have your ups and down and hardships. Sometimes you wonder how you'll ever get out...but then you see the love of your life and you realize how much it's worth it to fight through it all." He sighed and ran a hand over his dark bald head. "We're going to get through this. It's good Renee has someone like you. She's a strong woman but everyone needs a support system."

"I'm going to be there for her through it all," Jordan said. "I'm not going anywhere."

Gary smiled and gently patted Jordan's shoulder. "Good man."

After they grabbed refreshments and returned back to the waiting room, Jordan spotted Malkia stepping outside of the ICU. She looked around until she spotted them and immediately started toward them. Jordan was sure his heart leaped up into his throat at that moment. He could barely breathe much less say a word as he and Gary rejoined Lauren and the kids.

"How is she?" Lauren asked right away

Malkia didn't hesitate to fill them in. "The surgery went successfully. We removed the cyst and now we just need to see how she heals. Renee is a fighter so I have no doubt she'll be back on her feet in no time. I just want to keep her here for observation and to make sure there aren't any other problems. We're wheeling her into a room now."

"Can we see her?" Jordan asked.

Malkia smiled. "She's a bit weary but you can go in one at a time. Just for a moment so she can sleep."

Lauren placed her hand on Jordan's back, calling his attention to her. "You go ahead Jordan. We'll go after."

Jordan smiled, grateful for the offering. He handed Gary his hot coffee cup before following Malkia to Renee's room. He had been in many hospital rooms before to see his patients but never had he been as scared as he when he walked into Renee's room where she lay on the bed, resting. She looked tired and yet peaceful at the same time. His heart swelled when he saw her and he wanted to rush over to her, scoop her into his arms and hold her to him forever.

When Malkia left them alone, closing the door behind her, Renee slowly awakened and turned to him. Her tired face lit up right away when she saw him and she raised her arms to him. Jordan wasted no time rushing over to her to lean down and give her a hug and kiss.

“Oh, baby, I’ve been worried about you,” he said. He wheeled a chair over so he could sit at her side while cradling her hand in his. “Everybody’s been waiting while you went through surgery. How do you feel?”

“Like Rip Van Winkle twice over,” Renee said softly. “Everybody?”

“Yeah, your sister and her family. Your parents are on their way. I had to send a jet for them because they couldn’t get a flight in time.”

“Oh, Jordan,” Renee moaned. “You didn’t have to do that.”

“I did and it’s done,” he said, caressing her hand. “So don’t worry. Just focus on getting better so we can start making those babies.”

Renee smiled as tears came to her eyes. “Did they get rid of it? Will I be able to have children?”

“Dr. Westmore said you’ll have to heal first but one way or another, we’ll have our family.”

Renee wiped a tear from her eye and started up at the ceiling. “I had this dream last night that I was in this beautiful wedding gown, sleeveless and like satin. I had a lily in my hair and I held a bouquet of white roses.”

Jordan smiled. “I bet you were beautiful.”

She giggled. “Not as handsome as you. You wore these really loose, thin pants and your shirt sleeves were rolled up and your shirt was left open.”

“Open, huh? At a wedding? What ever would your parents think?”

“Hey, this is my dream. I can imagine you naked if I wanted.”

“Oh honey, you don’t have to imagine it. Besides, I don’t think your family would look kindly upon a naked wedding. Now the honeymoon...”

She giggled again and was grateful when he leaned down to kiss her.

Jordan gently caressed her cheek as he peered down at her. “Man, you are one beautiful woman. Hard to believe how much we went through just to get here.”

“And how much we’ll go through in the future. You sure you’re ready for it?”

He didn’t hesitate to answer. “Oh yeah. That and much more. It’ll take a lot to get rid of me, Renee.”

She reached for him and pulled him to her, crushing her lips with his. This was where they belonged, right here in each other’s arms.

“Mmm,” Renee said after the kiss broke. “That’s good. Because I don’t plan to let you go anytime soon, Jordan Brentwood.”

“Promise?”

She grinned. “Promise.”

The End

If you’ve enjoyed this title, please tell your friends and fellow readers about it. Look for more titles by Arianna DeCole and more information on her works coming soon.