

Changeling Press

THE AGENCY:
Monkeying
Around
MICHELLE HASKER

Agency 3: Monkeying Around

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Agency 3: Monkeying Around

Michelle Hasker

Posing as lovers shouldn't be too hard. Not for Jessica and Chase. Fooling around during their training mission had landed them in this mess when they couldn't keep their hands off each other. Now they need to redeem themselves by gaining the trust of one of the country's greatest criminals. But with Erik Hardaway's suspicion of Jessica and Chase's relationship, his questions about their reasons for visiting his mansion, and Erik's obvious desire for her, getting out of this situation alive and unscathed will be their biggest challenge ever.

Chapter One

"I can't believe you didn't bring your monkey along." Chase Montgomery leaned back against the leather seat and studied her.

"I've told you enough times that I don't have a monkey." Jessica Ward crossed her arms. "What can I do to prove it to you?"

"Show me the monkey."

"You know, I don't need this right now, Chase. I've got bigger fish to fry and I don't need to deal with your idiocy."

"My idiocy? You're the one holding out on me. We're partners now, honey, and I think along with that tight new bond we have should come trust. I need to know about this monkey. I didn't imagine it and you know it. Where are you hiding her?"

"Her?"

"A male monkey wouldn't kiss me."

"Why not?"

Chase's mouth dropped open in disgust and his eyes widened to the point he looked comical. His expression made her laugh so hard, she cried.

"I did my research. Pygmy chimpanzees are very sexual creatures. It had to be female to kiss me like that."

Jessica slid to the edge of the seat and reached into the small refrigerator, letting her hair fall down to cover her face as she tried to hide more laughter. "I take it your research says there are no gay pygmy chimpanzees?" She giggled again, and decided to tease him to see what kind of reaction she could get from him. "What makes you think

it's a pygmy chimpanzee and not an ordinary chimpanzee? Hell, she might not have even been interested in you."

"She was too ridiculously friendly and sexual to be a chimpanzee. And even though she weighed a ton, she was tiny in size."

Jess choked on her own spit. *Weighed a ton, huh? I didn't hear you complaining when I rode you the other night. Jerk.* Coughing, she grabbed a bottle of water and closed the fridge.

"Her face was too dark for a regular chimpanzee."

After she took a sip of water, she tried again. "And how do you know so much about pygmy chimpanzees?"

"I researched them. Pygmy chimpanzees, or the Bonobo, are found deep in the jungles of the Congo in central Africa. They're not as aggressive as their chimpanzee cousins, and, in fact, are friendlier, enjoying a more peaceful way of life."

"You sound like a book, Chase."

"Why don't you just confess? Where's the monkey? How did and do you hide her?"

"You need to get over this. Besides, just because Bonobos love sex, it doesn't mean the monkey that kissed you was one."

"How do you know so much about this monkey if you don't have one?" Chase leaned close and stared into her eyes.

"I have a brain and a pretty good thought process, if I do say so myself." She tapped her finger against her forehead. "It's a little monkey and it kissed you. Therefore it had to be a female and lusting after you, a human male."

"Exactly. I saw a lot of photographs of them, and they were mostly in various sexual positions."

Jess set the water down and moved closer to Chase. "Does that mean I have to compete with a monkey for your attention, Chase?"

"No." He grinned and slid his hand on her lap. "The idea has some merit, though."

"I agree. What do you say? Wanna act like the Bonobo and fuck?"

Chase winced. "Actually, I hate the idea of going to meet these people smelling like sex, but that would only help prove we are who we claim to be, wouldn't it?"

"I agree." Jess and Chase jumped at the voice coming from one of the speakers.

"Damn it!" Jess cursed in several languages. "Don't trust us to do our job?"

"What's the matter, Jess? I thought you were into exhibitionism." The Boss' chuckle was audible, and made her grind her teeth in frustration.

"You've got a tape of me already, Dick."

"That's The Boss to you. Don't give me any lip, Jess, or I'll leave you and Chase in there alone."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Push me, darling, and you'll see just what I dare."

Chase put his hand on Jessica's knee and motioned with a finger to his lips for her to be silent. "What do you want, Boss?"

"I want you two to act like you did at the training mission. I want you to look like you can't keep your hands off each other, and that you're so in love you can't be anything other than what you pretend to be. Don't blow this mission, and lay off the damn monkey, Chase."

Jess snickered but feigned innocence when Chase glared at her. "I will not lay off the damn monkey. But I will make love to Jess. Anything and everything for the mission." He waggled his eyebrows.

She giggled, but her heart sped up at the heated look in his eyes.

"Even though I do have an agent in there, you two will be on your own. Sydney is one of the best. I trained her personally. Just do what you have to in order to gain Erik's trust. He likes to watch, but then neither of you seem to have a problem with that, so I don't want to hear any excuses. Failure will not be tolerated."

"Gee, that really puts me in the mood to fuck. Thanks, Boss." Jess sighed.

"Don't make Sydney blow her cover to save your asses. I mean it. Make a mistake in the Hardaway Mansion and it might be your last. For your career and your life."

Chase took her hand in his and squeezed. Jess gave him a small smile. It was time to get into character and focus on the mission. The Boss had been right to scold her. Even though this mission sounded like a piece of cake, she shouldn't treat it like a walk in the park. She wanted that promotion so bad she could taste it.

"Any more questions before I turn off this intercom?"

Jess looked at Chase. He shook his head. "Nope, we're good."

"Okay. One last thing. You better not blow this. Get into character now. From the minute you step out of the limo, Erik better believe you two are kinky nymphomaniacs. Or else."

Jess burst into laughter. Chase shook his head, but she could see he found The Boss' words as amusing as she had. They were indeed both kinky and nymphomaniacs. That wouldn't be hard to pull off.

Chase reached for her, but Jess shook her head. "You're right. There are a few things we need to discuss first." Chase opened his mouth but she shook her head again. "Knock it off with the damn monkey. I don't have a pet and even if I did, if I hadn't told you about it by now, I wouldn't be planning on telling you."

"I will not let this go. At our training mission we spotted a monkey climbing down the wall. I tracked it to your room. The next thing I know you're being applauded for solving the mission and your secret assignment. How did you do it if you didn't have the monkey working for you?"

It looked as if the man wasn't going to let the monkey go. If she wanted to keep the situation under control, they needed to finish this mission A.S.A.P. Sex would distract him; it had worked every time so far. And after the mission she would need to stay as far away from him as she could. She couldn't risk her cover and her life for a great lay.

"Maybe it would be better to have sex and then finish this conversation." She gave him her practiced look of seduction, which he fell for immediately. With a purr, Jess leaned close and slid her hand onto his upper thigh. "That way we're decent when we arrive and still have the 'couldn't wait for a room and had to have sex in a limo look'."

Chase reached for her and pulled her into his lap. He buried his face in her hair and sucked in a deep breath. "Mmm. You smell delicious."

"Thanks."

Jess looked up at him. His blue eyes were dark with desire as he lowered his mouth to hers. He kissed her for a mind-numbing minute, and then pulled back.

"What would you do if you'd been assigned this mission with another guy?"

"We were given this job because we were caught fucking on the training mission. Something I think they find as hard to believe as I do." She stroked his cock through his cotton slacks. "Damn you, Chase. None of the other agents have made me want to risk my job."

Her words filled him with joy. He tried to hold back his emotions. Though he thought this might be love, he didn't want to scare her off. Jessica Ward was a fun loving free spirit. If he even looked as if he wanted to get serious he'd scare her off. He knew that for a fact.

If she trusted him with her monkey he'd know they had the beginnings of a relationship, but as long as she kept quiet, he wouldn't allow himself the false hope.

"I should be nervous that a stranger is going to watch us have sex."

"And you aren't?" It didn't surprise him.

"Maybe I like being watched."

"I hadn't noticed." Chase chuckled and hugged her close. He'd prefer not to have everyone ogling her assets, but this was a very important mission. His preferences didn't matter. He and Jess were supposed to use sex to lure Erik Hardaway into their

trap. As long as everything went according to plan, the only one touching Jess would be him.

"Did you read the dossier?" Jess wriggled her bottom against his groin as she spoke. His dick had hardened at the word sex, and he was sure she was enjoying rubbing against his erection.

"Does it matter? The Boss told us to fuck. I think we should listen. After all, he could have fired us after the stunt you pulled at the training mission."

"You can't blame it all on me!" Jess wiggled more, but this time he knew it was from anger.

"I wasn't, but now that you mention it --"

Jess struggled in his lap before turning around and hissing, "You're asking for it, jackass."

A snort escaped. He couldn't help it. The outrage in her face, the humor in their situation and the seriousness of the outcome of this mission might have pushed him beyond reason. Or it was the way she ground her ass against his dick. She wasn't easy to anger, so he doubted she was really upset right now. More than likely it was another one of her acts meant to keep him off guard. Two could play the dominating game.

Chase pressed his mouth against hers and kissed her. She melted against him so quickly he knew he'd been right. Her act crumbled as fast as her faux resistance. Pride filled him at how much she hungered for him. As much as he hungered for her. His dick was ready to burst, and he hadn't even gotten her naked.

When she softened under his kiss, he deepened it and slid his hand up into her hair, massaging the back of her head. Jess twisted until she straddled him. She pressed her body against him, pushing him against the back of the seat as she took control of the kiss. Though he might like to take charge in the bedroom, he wasn't stupid. If she wanted to get a little aggressive, then whoopee for him. They had no problems taking turns with domination, and sometimes, when they did struggle for top position, things could be even better for them.

Chase grabbed her waist and rubbed his thumbs against her. A low moan rumbled through her body. She shivered and leaned even closer. He would never get enough of this woman. He'd never met a woman who embraced sex as enthusiastically as she did. She threw her whole self into the act, something that pleased him and his dick immensely.

With a quick twist, he maneuvered her around so her back was against the seat. He kneeled on the edge, leaning into her as he deepened the kiss. She could take charge later. Right now he had something he wanted to do.

Her tongue tangled with his in erotic foreplay. The only thing he could think about was thrusting his cock into her until she creamed all over him. Eager for just that, he unbuttoned her silk blouse with shaking fingers. As he released each tiny pearl, he leaned in and kissed the new exposed inch of skin.

Jess shivered and moaned, fisting her hands in his hair. He knew she loved to do that because she liked to push his mouth where she wanted him. He chuckled and ignored her tempting breasts as he kissed his way down her stomach.

Once he'd finished with her blouse, he dropped to the floor, grabbed her hips and tugged her to the edge of the seat. He slid his hands up her skirt and bunched it around her waist. The thin scrap of lace she called a thong presented a problem.

Chase maneuvered her thong down her long slim legs, running his hands up and down her legs, not to make her suffer by waiting for his touch, but because he was afraid he'd come in his pants.

"Chase," she moaned and reached for him.

"Just let me look at you for a minute." He stared at her swollen clit and the way her saturated pussy glistened in the lit interior.

"Do you think he's still got the audio turned on?"

"Why? Worried?"

"No. But if he's listening, he's going to think you might not be up for the job after all."

Her giggles made him growl. "I'm more than up for the job, thank you very much. Besides, everyone knows how Richard feels about sex. Not only does he hate to see his workers getting it on with each other, but he's not had sex with anyone in a few years."

"I heard the rumors that he's gay, but I don't believe them. And if you don't eat me out in the next five seconds I am going to make you regret starting this." Jess glared at him, fire sparking in her green eyes.

Her words fueled his desire even more. "I was trying to compose myself so I didn't come in my pants. I didn't want to leave you unsatisfied."

"Darling," Jess said in a husky voice as she spread herself open to his view. "You don't ever disappoint me."

He licked his lips and stared at all her pink flesh. "I'd better not start now, then." He skimmed his hands up her thighs, spreading her legs wider as he moved toward his goal.

"That's it, sweet cheeks." Jess slid her ass to the very edge of the seat, offering herself to him.

Chase leaned forward and pressed his mouth against her swollen pussy. Jessica moaned at the first touch of his lips against her aching mound. She'd been afraid he was going to change his mind. Nothing worked better on a man than a challenge. And Chase lived for the challenge.

His lips moved against her folds in a sweet kiss before he kicked the heat up a notch and licked at her. She jerked as he thrust his tongue into her, and fell back against the seat.

"Chase!" Jess grabbed onto the cushion and arched into his intimate kiss. He swirled his tongue around her clit and then sucked on it as he slid two fingers deep inside her. Her muscles clenched around his fingers as he slowly pumped them in and out.

She stared down at him. His blue eyes were closed as he used his talented mouth on her. His thick black hair was tousled from her grabbing at it. Not that he ever allowed her to guide him where she wanted him, but she had to try.

He shrugged off his suit jacket, loosened his tie and tugged it free before tossing it aside. As much as she wanted to take charge, unbutton his shirt, and run her hands over his hard chest, she didn't. Instead, she gripped tight to the seat and tilted her pelvis.

Wicked blue eyes stared at her face for a few seconds before Chase ducked his head again. He rubbed his thumbs over her slick folds, smearing her juices and massaging her sensitive flesh. Even though they hadn't been lovers for very long, Chase already knew how to make her body hum. He could get her engine going from zero to sixty with one glance. When he put his mouth on her, forget it.

Giving herself over to the pleasure, Jess focused on his lips and tongue. He gave her an intimate kiss that had her mewling in seconds. His dark chuckle vibrated her mons, and sent a rush of pleasure through her so fast she gasped.

It wasn't sex with Chase. It was a whole body experience. He made love to both her mind and physical form. A myriad of sensations danced over her skin. Tingles spread through her, but not as fast as the heat. She struggled out of her shirt and cupped her breasts.

Chase slid two fingers into her once more, but this time he didn't thrust them in and out of her. Instead, he waggled them inside her, rubbing over her sweet spot again and again.

"Gah!" Jess shouted incoherent words, and didn't care. She pushed lower in the seat, forcing her pussy against his hands and mouth. Abandoning her breasts before she'd even started to play with them, Jess lifted her arms behind her head and grabbed onto the top of the seat, gaining better leverage to grind against him.

Moans vibrated through her again when Chase nuzzled her, murmuring appreciation. Hell, she didn't care if it was appreciation or not. Pleasure spiraled round and round, traveling up from her toes to her head until it felt like her hair stood on end.

“Yes! God! Please!” Jess bit her lips to keep back the animalistic sounds she felt slipping to the surface as her inner monkey warred with her human body. While she’d never had sex in monkey form, and wasn’t about to start now, her inner monkey never hesitated to try and sneak free. The last thing she needed was to start shrieking like a monkey.

Chase crooked his fingers and rubbed them against her G-spot while he sucked hard on her clit. The sensation his fingertips created set her off fast and hard. Her scream was so loud she knew the driver had to hear it, soundproofing or not. She didn’t care.

Jess ground against Chase as she soaked his fingers and mouth with her cream. Her orgasm went on and on until she grew lightheaded and had to struggle to catch her breath.

When Chase slipped his fingers free, Jess slid off the seat and shoved Chase down on his ass, pressing him back against the mini-fridge. Shoving his hands out of her way, Jess went straight for the button and zipper on his pants. It was fortunate that they opened easily because she had been prepared to rip them if she’d had to wait any longer for his cock.

As soon as his slacks gaped open, Jess slipped her hand inside and pulled his erection free. She rose over him and then sank down on him, straddling him as she pushed down until she’d taken all of him deep inside.

Jess grabbed Chase and kissed him, trying to express the hunger she felt for him. Her body rocked on him. She undulated, rubbing her exposed breasts against his shirt, the sensitive peaks of her nipples almost causing her pain as she scraped one against a button.

The sound that came out of her throat was barely human, but she no longer cared. All she wanted was Chase’s hard, thick cock buried so deep in her that he filled her completely.

Chase grabbed onto her waist and guided her when her movements became ragged and jerky. Jess leaned back, eyes closed, as she clenched tight on his cock. When

his thumb brushed over her clit, she jerked, digging her nails into his shoulders. Warm, wet lips surrounded her nipple. Teeth grazed the hard nub before Chase sucked on her sensitive bud so hard she shook.

“Chase... yes... God, yes...” Jess shivered.

“Come for me, Jess. Come all over my cock. Soak me with your juices. Cover my dick with your delicious cream. Fuck me, baby.”

Jess cried out as his words inflamed her need even more. She pressed down on his cock, grinding against him harder and slower, matching the rhythm of his thumb on her clit.

Her orgasm was so intense, she wasn't sure what she cried out when she shattered around him. All she knew was that when she could catch her breath again, she looked up into his eyes and saw more emotion in them than she could handle. Before he could say the three words she dreaded, Jess rose, releasing his dick inch by slow inch until she was left feeling empty.

Ignoring the lonely ache, Jess hardened her heart and scooped up her shirt. She buttoned it as fast as she could, but with her trembling fingers it wasn't fast enough.

Chase grabbed her hands and waited for her to look at him. “We need to talk.”

“Yes. We're almost at the mansion and we've got to go over everything again.”

“No, Jess. We need to talk about what you said.”

Her heart skipped a beat, and her breath caught in her throat. What had she said? She'd been so focused on the sweet orgasm that she barely remembered even crying out, and honestly didn't know what she'd said.

Finally, she wheezed out a breath. “I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. It was great sex, though.” She tried to pull away from him.

“I'm not going to let you pretend you didn't say anything.”

“Pretending? You're going to hold words screamed out at the peak of ecstasy against me?”

“Against you?” Chase ran a hand through his hair. “Damn it, Jess. You can drive a man to madness. You know that, don't you?”

"That would be a short ride for you, Chase." He growled and reached for her, but she moved to the side and grabbed a handful of tissues. "Excuse me while I clean up."

Chase's eye blazed with anger as he snatched the tissues out of her hand. "Since I'm the one who made the mess, please allow me to clean up."

Jess sighed and tried to ignore what had to be double entendres on his part. She spread her legs for him as he wiped their cum off her thighs and sensitive pussy. A whimper escaped when he slid the tissue over her mons. He tucked the tissues in the trash can and grabbed his tie instead of torturing her.

Shit. Just what they needed. To arrive at the Hardaway Mansion ready to throttle each other. Loving newlyweds was not what they looked like. And she'd thought this would be a piece of cake?

"Jess?"

She braced herself. "What?"

"Down, girl. I just wanted to tell you we're here."

"What?" She peered out the tinted window. "Shit, that was fast."

"Are you ready?"

She swallowed past a lump in her throat and nodded. Panic had set in, but she wouldn't let him see it.

Chapter Two

"Welcome to my home." Erik bent in a gallant bow and kissed the back of her hand.

Jess nearly sighed in relief when he straightened and turned to greet Chase. If she hadn't found the bottle of hand sanitizer in her purse, her hand would have reeked of sex. As it was, her thighs were sticking together. Not from their mixed cum, but from the floral scented cleaner.

When Erik turned to his butler and their chauffeur, Jess took the time to study him. He was taller than Chase by at least two inches, making him about 6'6". His white suit was impeccably tailored. Her feminine side sighed at his tight ass. Erik turned around and her gaze was on his crotch. A nice crotch. She bit her lip to keep back the nervous giggle his erection brought on. Of course the man was aroused. His body could tell she'd just had sex even if he didn't realize it. His knowing smile revealed he did know, and she blushed.

Chase wrapped his arm around Jess and tugged her up against him. Erik's features barely flickered, but she'd seen his disgust before he'd smoothly concealed it with a friendly grin and wink.

"Perhaps you two would like to rest for a bit before meeting the rest of my guests?"

"That would be lovely." Jess smiled at him. "I'd kill for a shower." Chase elbowed her. She gasped and turned to him with a look she hoped he read as deadly, because that was how she felt right now. "What?" she demanded in a harsh whisper.

"Hello?"

"He knows we just got it on in the limo. He's not as dense as you are." She smirked and turned back to Erik.

Chase leaned close and hissed, "I'm not dense. I'm trying to be polite."

"Get a grip, Chase. He's a gentleman. I'm sure he's had sex in a limo before. It was a long drive here after all. I'm sure he knows we weren't playing *Go Fish*."

"Who says we weren't fishing?" He yanked her up against him and ground his erection against her.

Jess gasped when she realized what was really bothering the dolt head. "You're jealous he kissed my hand."

"I am not jealous."

"Are too." She smirked and walked her fingers up his chest.

"Jess!" he hissed at her again.

"What?"

"Can't you wait until we get to the room? We just had sex and you already want more. Insatiable wench."

"What's your problem, Chase?"

"Maybe I'm not interested in fucking you in the foyer in front of our host."

"You've never minded anyone watching before."

"Maybe I'm not as into exhibitionism as you are!" His whispers escalated in volume.

"Well you didn't seem to mind when we made that tape. In fact you did an awful lot of acting for it."

Jess pushed her fists against his chest.

"Excuse me." Erik spoke in a low voice filled with humor. "I have had sex in a limo before. Several times at that. Though you both amuse me greatly, I have a few things to take care of. Please allow me to escort you to your room so you can freshen up before dinner."

"Thank you." Jess smiled at him and dodged another elbow from Chase. She hooked her arm through the one Erik offered her, and tried not to think about how like

Prince Charming he looked. His blond hair, blue eyes and suntanned skin combined with his great body made him mouthwatering to look at. That he was a bad guy should keep her from jumping into bed with him. Unless the need arose. She snuck a peek at Chase. If she chose to ignore the little voice in her head that said Chase was the best thing she'd ever had, and she'd be a fool to risk losing him, then so be it. There was no room in her life for love.

Chase kept glaring at her, and she wondered if he was jealous she was touching Erik, or pissed she wasn't maintaining the newlyweds-in-love scenario. His grumpy ass attitude had already been more than obvious to Erik. She'd appear a cowering ninny if she bowed to Chase's irritating on-again off-again moods.

Instead of worrying about Chase, she looked around the entranceway. The large open foyer was decorated in white and gold. Huge chandeliers hung low, and large paintings filled the walls. Enormous urns filled with plants were scattered along the hallway. Open doorways led to darkened rooms, but she concentrated on the large staircase before her. It was also white with an ornate gold rug running down the center of the stairs. They reached a landing and turned to the left before Erik led her up the rest of the stairs.

White. Everything was painted white. Jess turned and studied Erik's suit again. Except for the splash of gold that was his tie, the man was dressed in all white. Quirky. He reminded her of a villain she'd once seen on television. Not only had he dressed all in white, but everything he'd owned was white. He'd even dressed his women in white.

Erik reminded her of that bad guy, and it kind of creeped her out. He probably never got his hands dirty, so it would be tough to actually pin anything on him. He was one who told others what to do, while he himself followed someone else's orders. She wasn't stupid. It was obvious, even in her horny state, that he was no mastermind. The man enjoyed playtime too much to be the driving force behind the cartel. What a shame Kim had killed El Mundo before they could make him talk.

Pillow talk would probably get him to loosen his tongue. Jess ignored the little voice again. The one that said she'd seduced Chase to get information. Now she was going to do the same to their enemy?

Man, have I got issues.

They stopped halfway down the hallway. Erik used an ornate skeleton key to open the door and then handed it to Jess. "I have a master key, but I want my guests to be able to keep other guests out of their rooms if they choose."

"Thank you." Jess pulled her arm free and pocketed the key. She glanced around the room, not surprised it was predominantly white.

"You have a suite. This is the sitting room. The bedroom is the far door on the left, and the bathroom is in there as well."

"You sure do know how to make a woman feel pampered."

"We don't need to play games." Erik smiled and leaned down so their eyes were level. "You knew what you were getting into when you accepted my invitation to come here. You and your husband were recommended to me by a close friend."

"And you know we're newlyweds. No one said I had to share my wife." Chase wrapped his arms around her and tugged her against him.

Erik grinned as he straightened and looked into Chase's eyes. "You're right. I was warned you were possessive. You'll know when you're ready to participate with the rest of us. Both of you... or individually." He winked at Jess.

"You're an incorrigible flirt." She gasped when she realized she'd said that out loud. "I'm sorry. I --"

"No. It's okay." Erik captured her hand in his and squeezed it. "I am. An incredibly aroused flirt." He looked at Chase again. "You are one lucky man."

"I know." Chase practically growled at Erik.

Part of Jess wanted to laugh, but the other part wanted to smack him for risking the mission with his irrational jealousy.

"If you'll both excuse me, I want to jump in the shower. It was a long *ride*. I might take a nap too." She waggled her eyebrows at Chase. "Who knew sitting in a car for ten hours could make one so tired?"

"There are robes in the bathroom you may use until your luggage is brought up. Please, make yourself at home. *Mi casa es su casa*."

Jess gave him a girlish giggle and then spun around. She plastered herself against Chase and gave him a quick, hard kiss. Enough to stir his cock, but not enough to make him push her away because Erik was still there. Either that or he was finally getting into spy mode.

With an extra sway in her hips, Jess walked toward the bedroom as she unbuttoned her blouse. It didn't look like she'd have any trouble seducing Erik if she had to. The only thing that might put a kink in this mission was Chase and his sudden possessiveness. Too much was at stake for his amateurish crap.

When she reached the doorway, she turned to Chase and grinned. She rolled her shoulders and let her blouse slide down her arms and drop on the floor behind her. She winked and continued into the bedroom with her hands on her skirt. Out of sight of the guys, she quickly looked for the bathroom and then hurried into it. Chances were good that Erik videotaped everything that went on in this house, but Sydney had said he never recorded the bathrooms. As twisted as Erik was, he still gave his guests a level of privacy Jess hadn't expected him to. After meeting him, she could understand why so many women fell for him.

Chase stared at Jess' blouse. *What in the blue blazes is that woman thinking?*

"Looks like you've got your hands full."

At Erik's laugh, Chase turned and stared at their host. "I can handle her."

Erik laughed louder. "I am sure you can, Chase. At first I thought you two might be posing as lovers to gain entrance to my party. Now that I've seen the way you two are with each other, I can say that this is going to be a highly entertaining party. When

you two aren't butting heads for control of the relationship, I bet you can't keep your hands off each other."

"I will tame her." Chase looked back to the open door. Even as he said it, though, he wondered if he wanted to tame her. He decided he didn't need to. He just needed to give her stability and love, and she'd come around soon enough. She'd already admitted she loved him. Now to get her to say it again and not be in a position to blame it on the moment.

"A woman like her is never satisfied with just one man."

"I satisfy her plenty," Chase snapped, looking back at the doorway.

"A friendly warning, Chase." Erik hesitated until Chase met his gaze. "You'll wanna keep an eye on your lovely bride. Not all my guests will respect the ring on her finger."

"Yourself included."

Erik winked at him and walked toward the door. "If the lady strays, I won't stop the others from doing what they will."

Chase growled but fisted his hands at his sides so he didn't hit the ass.

"One last question." Erik smiled and looked back. "Are you bi?"

He sputtered.

"Guess not. What a shame. You're a very pretty man, Chase." Erik walked out and shut the door.

Chase stood there for a minute before he could get over his shock enough to move. And move he did. He almost ran for the bathroom.

He stepped over Jessica's skirt and thong, and walked into the bathroom. Jess was in the shower, singing. "Doncha wish your girlfriend was a freak like me?"

He stripped off his clothes and opened the shower door. "I dunno." He put his hands on her hips and tugged her up against him. Her ass fit perfectly against his cock. Maybe he'd take her that way tonight.

"Dunno what?" Her question ended on a moan when he slid one hand around her and cupped her breast.

"My girlfriend is pretty freaky. I'm not sure you can show me anything she hasn't."

Jess giggled and ground her ass against him. "You're awfully *cocky*."

"I'll give you cocky." He reached around her for the bath gel. He squirted some onto his hands and then rubbed them together. "And maybe I'll give it to you right here between your breasts." He cupped her breasts and massaged them with his soapy hands.

Jess moaned and arched, leaning against him. The movement thrust her breasts up and into his hands. He leaned down and nibbled on the skin below her ear. She wound her arms back behind him, and twined them around his head and neck.

"Aren't we supposed to do this in the bedroom or living room? The rooms that are --" She broke off when he bit her ear hard.

"Do you trust an agent we've never met?" He soothed the bite with his tongue. "I don't. Look what happened to John. He was undercover for so long he forgot what side he was on."

"John is a psychopath."

"Apparently he's a sexy psychopath. The ladies picked him for Stud of the Month."

"How did you know that?" Jess tilted her head and tried to look at him.

"I know things. I also know you were voted MFA by the guys."

"MFA?"

"Most Fuckable Agent."

Jess laughed as she pulled away from him. She punched his chest and shook her head. "You guys are terrible. But I love it."

"I knew you would. I was trying to keep it a secret so it wouldn't go to your head."

"Then why did you tell me?"

"Cause I was hoping it would mean I get laid."

"After the way you were acting earlier?" She stared at him with wide eyes.

"What?"

She leaned up and whispered in his ear, "Chase, we're supposed to be nymphos that can't get enough of each other or sex. We're supposed to be into all kinds of kinky shit. And as soon as we step inside here you went all boring and controlling. We're lucky Erik didn't tell us to get our shit and go."

"Why?" His hands tightened on her waist.

"Because how am I supposed to get close to him to find out more information about the cartel when you keep growling at him?"

"I don't think getting close to him is going to be a problem."

"Why's that?" She turned, shivered, and adjusted the water temperature.

"He hit on me after you left to shower."

Jess giggled. When she grabbed her sides and doubled over, he fought the urge to spank her until her ass was a dark red.

"It's not that funny!"

"It is if you're me." She slapped her thigh and straightened. She sputtered when she got a face full of water.

While she recovered, Chase turned off the water and climbed out of the shower. He grabbed a towel and briskly rubbed the soft cotton on her until her skin glowed a rosy color. By the time he wrapped the towel around his waist her breasts heaved with each breath she took, and her nipples were hard as diamond points. Just the way he liked them.

"I'll never get enough of you." He scooped her up in his arms and carried her back into the bedroom. A quick glance around the room revealed that Erik spared no expense in his guest quarters, nor did he skimp on the bed. Enormous and dominating, the four-poster took up a large section of the room. It sat in center stage like an imposing figure, reminding him why they were here. As if he could forget.

Jess snuggled against him. She kissed his neck, sending all his blood rushing to his cock. He struggled against the desire to take her. They needed to find out where the

cameras were, the bugs, and they needed to scope out the place, meet the other guests, and get started trying to find out ways to learn who Erik worked for.

"Chase." She rubbed her breasts against his chest.

The minx was determined to make love to him here in front of God knew how many people. Job or not, he didn't want Erik lusting after Jess. *Fuck.*

Chase pressed her down onto the bed, and leaned over her, trying to cover most of her body with his. She pushed against his shoulders with her palms, but he held fast.

"What are you doing?" Her eyes lit up as soon as she realized what he was doing. "Stop. We'll discuss this later. If you don't fuck me now, I'm getting up and walking out that door to find someone more willing."

"You're not going anywhere, and you aren't fucking anyone but me. End of discussion, Jess."

"Unless you put your dick to work, I'm not fucking you either."

"That's it." Chase growled deep in his throat, and smiled in pleasure as Jess shivered. Her green eyes darkened as she stared up at him. She licked her lips and gave him that come hither look she used to get him to do what she wanted.

Instead of giving in to her unspoken demand, he rose on his knees and rolled her onto her stomach. He slid his palm over her ass, caressing her once, then twice, before he raised his hand and brought it down on her flesh with a loud slap. She froze, and then pressed back, thrusting her ass toward him.

He gave her what she wanted -- what she needed. When she met his smacks with moans and the thrusting of her hips, he slipped his free hand between her legs and rubbed his palm against her wet pussy. She enjoyed his punishments more than he'd imagined. It was more proof she was meant to be his. He wished he knew a way to make her see things his way.

Once her ass was a dark pink, Chase slid both hands over her, soothing the fire he'd created. One of the perks of this assignment was that they couldn't use condoms. It wouldn't fit with the newlywed image they were supposed to maintain. They'd both been tested, and she'd had some secret operation to keep her from getting pregnant in

case of capture and rape. While it wasn't a guarantee, he didn't care if she got pregnant with his child. It would be just another reason for her to see they were meant to be together.

Jess was very wet from the spanking. As he rubbed his cock against her opening, he slid in with ease. Her tight muscles gripped him, wringing moans from each of them. He wouldn't last long, but he didn't think she cared at this point.

"Hard and fast, Chase. Please," she whimpered when he'd seated himself fully inside her.

"I give the orders here, but it just so happens to be what I want as well."

Chase took her hard and fast, not only because he loved to hear her scream in pleasure, but because he needed to show everyone she was his. There would be no touching of her while they were here. Absolutely no one touched his Jess.

When Jess screamed, her pussy clamped tight on him. He roared as he came, buried deep inside her. There were definite advantages to no condoms. He grinned when Jess cried out again, her muscles spasming around his cock with another orgasm.

Chapter Three

Jess tried not to yell at Chase when his grip on her arm tightened to an almost painful point. Compared to the other women at the mansion, she was dressed conservatively. Her dress was black silk. It dipped low in the front, even lower in the back, and fell to her knees. Even though there were two slits in the sides that parted when she walked, all her goodies were covered. Several other women couldn't claim the same.

Chase had been acting as if she'd come down here half naked, even after seeing how the others dressed. She wanted to hit him. He was a strong alpha, so why was he letting his emotions and jealousy get the better of him? She'd made him no promises. No declarations of love. As long as he didn't act like a possessive, domineering caveman, they could still salvage the mission.

"Jessica and Chase. I hope you've both settled in well." Erik greeted them with a warm smile. He gestured to the trio of tables in the center of the room. All were covered in white linen and decorated with white and gold flowers and plate settings. "Please have a seat at any table. Dinner will be served soon."

"Thank you." Jess ignored Chase's growl and smiled at Erik. "You have a lovely house."

"I'd be delighted to give you a tour after dinner if you wish."

"That would be lovely." Jess wanted to scream with joy at how easy this was. "I look forward to it."

Erik bowed and turned to greet another couple as they entered the room. She smiled up at Chase even as she grumbled under her breath, "Behave!"

"You're the one whose actions are questionable."

"I swear I will kick your ass once we get home."

He grinned and grabbed her hips, tugging her close. "I like the sound of that."

"What?" She frowned.

"Home."

"Please don't start on that now. Not here in front of everyone."

"Why not? You can't argue with me here." His grin turned wicked. "In fact, I might be able to get you to agree to several things before we leave. Yes, this might just work to my advantage after all."

Jess reached down and pinched his arm. "You're an ass."

"Yeah, but I'm your ass, baby."

"Yeah, but will you give me your ass?"

Chase froze, his facial expression comical as his emotions warred between astonishment, shock and disbelief.

"I'm kidding. Strap-ons do nothing for me."

"Somehow that statement doesn't reassure me."

Jess snickered and stared up into his blue eyes. Life with Chase was never dull. What would she do when he gave up and moved on?

Erik moved to a table and took a seat. Jess wasn't sure if it would be better to sit at Erik's table and listen to his conversations with the other guests, or to sit at another table and ask questions about him and this place.

Before Jess could make a decision, a tall, striking woman walked up to her and Chase. She had dark skin and shocking white hair cut in a style so it stood out from her head in spikes.

"Hi, I'm Sydney."

Sydney. The Boss' inside spy. Jess smiled and held out her hand. "Hi. I'm Jess and this is my husband Chase."

Chase shook Sydney's hand after Jess.

"Please join me at Erik's table. Tonight you two are the guests of honor."

"We are?" Chase's arm tightened around Jess.

"I want you at our table." Sydney leaned close and whispered, "Don't look so nervous. It's not like we're going to eat you alive."

"I know someone who wants to," Chase muttered as he looked at Erik.

Sydney laughed and patted his shoulder. "I take it he wasted no time in letting you know he was interested in Jess?"

"It would be better if it *was* me he was interested in." Jess snickered.

"Well, we don't want to keep Erik waiting. Please join us." Sydney led them over to the table, and took the seat on Erik's right side. Jess took the seat on Erik's left so Chase wouldn't have to sit next to the man who so obviously creeped him out. The thought made her snicker, and earned her an elbow in the ribs from Chase.

Once they were seated, a horde of waiters descended on them. There was no time during dinner for the question and answer session Jess had hoped for. Instead they listened to the romantic way Erik described meeting Sydney and their ensuing partnership. Jess wondered if it included nocturnal hours of the bedroom sort. If so, she couldn't fault the woman. She was willing to do anything for the mission, so why wouldn't Sydney?

* * *

Jess dropped down on the bed in frustration. The tour had been fruitless. She was no closer to finding a secret warehouse than she'd been when they'd started. It was time to change to Bonobo form. Chase had nailed that on the head. He was her biggest obstacle right now. Maybe it would have been better to come here alone like Sydney had.

"I know you're frustrated." Chase stood at the foot of the bed and frowned.

"I want to go for a walk."

"Okay. Let me grab our jackets --"

"Alone, Chase."

His frown deepened as he stared at her. His eyes narrowed in confusion and anger. "You don't go anywhere here alone."

"Because you don't trust me?"

"It's the other people I don't trust. I saw the way other men were looking at you." Chase put his hands on her ankles.

"You knew what would happen when we came here."

"What *might* happen. I never actually committed to sharing you."

Jess sighed and shook her head. "You think I didn't notice any of the women licking their lips as they looked at you?"

"You're wrong."

"Nope. They could tell you weren't interested, and it makes you a challenge. Women love challenges, Chase. You've put a big target on your back."

"No. You're wrong."

"Look. I need a walk. I want to walk without you breathing down my damn neck. I promise I'm not meeting up with one of the men we met tonight for some illicit sex."

"What about a woman?"

Jess rolled her eyes. "I'd just invite her here for a ménage if that was the case. Don't think I didn't notice your little fantasy yet."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

"I'm talking about your porn collection."

"I don't have one!" His eyes lit up in challenge as he crawled up her body until he knelt over her. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Do you really think you have any secrets from me, Chase?"

"I'd like to think I have one or two."

Jess grinned and hooked her arms and legs around him. She rolled, pinning him on his back. He went too eagerly, but she didn't care. "You have none."

Chase snorted as he raised his hands and stroked her upper arms and shoulders. "It's good to keep a secret or two. All those girly magazines you read say so."

"You aren't supposed to read those!" Jess laughed and tried to pull free only to find herself flat on her back, and breathless. She stared up at Chase as she struggled to catch her breath. Perhaps some sex would soothe him. While he slept she could explore.

"I wanted to try to get inside your head. Besides, I thought there might be some tips in there for us guys. Things you like and ways to make you cream your panties with one word or a thought."

"You already know those." Jess giggled.

"Hmmm." Chase tugged her dress up her legs and ran his hands over her thighs. "Maybe we should conduct a little experiment. One where I say things and see how wet they make you."

Jessica laughed. "Do you expect me to ask for a rain check?"

"No." He slid his hand up her thigh, and gasped when he reached her bare pussy. "There's something missing here, Jess."

"I know." She bit her lip to keep from giggling again. Chase reduced her to a brainless bimbo, but she didn't want him to know it. He'd use any weakness he found to persuade her to his way of thinking.

"We went down there to dinner with you wearing nothing to cover your delectable pussy?" He cupped her with his palm and leaned down to her face.

"Yes."

"What am I gonna do with you?"

"Eat me?" She grinned.

"I think I should spank you."

"There's always that." Chase was always creative with sex, and boy did she appreciate it. Her last spanking had been more reward than threat. Not that she'd tell him that.

"I think I know a better way to punish you for your behavior."

"What's that?"

"Not knowing is half the fun."

Jess moaned as he slid underneath her. She knew exactly what he had in mind. When he rubbed his lips against her clit, she prayed she could convince him to give her release and not just the torment he had to have planned.

Over and over again, Chase dragged his tongue over her clit, teasing her with his soft, slow touches. Touches that were barely there, yet built her up into a sensual frenzy in no time. Sex with Chase was always like that. He played her body like no other. She chased away the warm fuzzy feeling building near her heart.

"No room. No time. Can't."

"What?"

Jess didn't realize she'd spoken out loud until Chase stopped licking at her. "Nothing."

"No room? No time? Can't?"

"I was rambling, Chase. You've driven all rational thought from my head. Now please fuck me."

He shook his head. "I don't think so. Not yet. You're a very bad girl not wearing panties in public. What if someone had gotten a look up your dress?"

"What's the matter, Chase? It's not like I'd have let them touch."

"Woman, you really push me to the edge, don't you?"

"I like you there." Jess purred, arched her back, and pushed her ass toward him.

A knock on the door brought an end to their sex play. Jess sighed and rolled onto her back. "Want to invite whoever it is to join us?"

"I'm not ready to play their games yet."

"We shouldn't have come here then." Jess tried to remember to stay in her role, but it was hard not to smack him over the head.

"I did it for you. It sounded like fun."

"Until we got here and one person showed a remote interest in me."

"Remote? Erik had you mentally undressed before he even said hi. After meeting some of his other guests, I'm pretty sure if any of them had known what was under -- or

rather *not* under -- your dress, they'd have had their hand up there faster than you could say hello."

Jess snorted and rolled onto her stomach. "Go see who's at the door. Maybe you'll get lucky and find a half naked woman."

Chase stared at Jess's back before he spun on his heel and walked through the living room to open the door.

Sydney caught him off guard with her knowing smirk. "Erik would like to have a little talk with you."

Chase crossed his arms and leaned against the door. Jess had said his possessiveness would hurt this mission. It looked like she was right. Damn it. He'd just play it cool. There was no reason for Erik to think he was here to bust the man for drugs. Not unless Sydney had turned traitor and flipped. "What about?"

"He thinks you might get more in the spirit of things if you could see how the other couples play. He understands why you wish to keep Jess to yourself, and wants to reassure you that you'd call the shots where she is concerned." Sydney looked past him and smiled. "I just want to steal Chase for a minute."

He turned and looked at Jess. She leaned against the doorjamb to the bedroom, mimicking his stance. "That's cool. I 'm going to take a nice relaxing bath and unwind from the long trip down here."

"I won't keep him too long."

"I'm sure you won't." Jess blew him a kiss, turned, and walked away from the door.

"Okay." Chase pulled the door shut and straightened his tie. "Where are you taking me, exactly?"

"To the boss himself. He likes you and Jess. I think he wants to take you under his wing."

"Hmm." Chase followed her down the hall and was surprised when she stopped midway down. "I didn't realize we were so close to Erik."

"It's because you were recommended by a friend of his. He treats friends and family even better than his guests."

"But still. He doesn't know us."

"He knows you better than you think."

He really didn't want to even try to interpret that. Instead, he hissed under his breath. "I wish someone had warned me he was bisexual."

Laughter was the only response.

As he followed Sydney through the door and into a white living room, he wondered if it had been smart to leave Jess alone. She inevitably ended up in trouble when left to her own devices.

Erik rose from his seat on a large white sofa. "Thank you, Sydney, and thank you for joining me, Chase."

"I'm flattered you invited me into your personal domain." Chase tried to look inconspicuous as he glanced around the room. It was a mirror of the living room in his suite.

"I don't make this offer to many, Chase, but I really like your wife."

Chills ran up his back as Chase stiffened. "And you want me to share her with you?"

Erik's gaze slowly moved down and then back up his body. "Perhaps I'd like her to share you with me."

Sydney moved to stand next to Erik, and Chase hoped she would distract him from this talk. He had no interest in men and he had no desire to have sex with Erik to try and find out where the goods were hidden.

"Maybe I could watch while Jess and Sydney make love to you?"

Chase did a double take.

"Don't like that either?"

"Not really."

"Somehow I missed hearing you were homophobic."

"I didn't think I was." Chase shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other. "Does it matter?"

"It does if it inhibits you." Erik walked toward a door on the far wall. "Come with me."

Chase prayed it wasn't Erik's bedroom as he followed the man, Sydney right behind him. He stepped into another large room, this one filled with monitors and a bunch of electronic equipment. Erik walked over to an office chair and sat down. He gestured to a chair next to him and then to the monitor. "Come sit and watch. You'll see some of what happens here at the mansion."

Chapter Four

Clinging to the side of the building in the blinding rain was something she hadn't counted on. Jessica wondered if she should have tried investigating in human form first. She gritted her teeth and shook off as much of the water as she could before she slipped into an unlocked window.

Hopefully she'd get lucky and find incriminating evidence immediately. But if it was likely to be so easy, why hadn't Sydney found it by now? Even if she'd been careful not to blow her cover, she'd had ample time to prove Erik was dealing drugs. Unless she'd fallen in love with the man and didn't want to prove he was guilty. Things like that had happened before.

Jess debated shifting to human form because she hated being a wet monkey, but decided against it in case Erik monitored his own rooms as well.

She looked around the room and realized she was in Erik's personal bedroom. The colors were white, the same as everywhere else in the house, but the sex toys lining the walls were not like anything she'd seen before. Well, some were, but they appeared to all have been adjusted and personalized, probably to fit his quirks.

Tamping down her curiosity was hard, but she wanted to finish this mission and get back home as fast as she could. Chase was driving her insane, and she wouldn't be able to hold him off much longer.

Careful not to make too much noise, Jess crept to the doorway and peeked out. She saw Sydney, Chase and Erik studying a wall of monitors. The sounds of women moaning filtered through the room. She could imagine what was on the screen. Instead of studying it, though, she ducked back into the bedroom and looked around for

another door. The only other door that wasn't a closet, led to a large bathroom with a hot tub that appeared large enough for orgies.

"Why do I smell wet dog, Sydney?"

"I'm sure it's something in the vents, Erik. The rain probably lowered the temperature enough for the heat to kick on."

"You know how much I hate the smell of wet dog."

"I'll check on it right away."

Jess froze. That meant Chase would be alone with Erik. The office would be unattended. Halfway to the window she realized they were referring to her. Her wet fur was the scent offending Erik. Sydney was going to search for a wet dog that didn't exist.

She slipped through the window and climbed down the wall, cursing the slippery handholds the entire way. At least the mansion was made of bricks that gave her something to hold on to.

By the time she reached the ground level and found the window leading to Erik's office, the cold rain had completely soaked her, and she was shivering. Jess worked some magic on the window and slipped inside carefully. When they'd breezed through this room on the tour of the house, it hadn't appeared to be any more secure than the other rooms, but one could never be too sure.

The computer was on, and idle. She hit the spacebar and waited for the monitor to wake from hibernation. It took only a few minutes for Jess to realize there was nothing more than porn on the computer. Porn and information on the guests. There was not one thing that incriminated him with drugs, and that was what she was here for.

With a curse, she rifled through the desk drawers. A sound in the hallway had her scampering back to the window quickly. She was glad she did, because the door opened as she slipped back through the window.

"I dunno what it was, or how the boss saw anything moving in this pitch black room, but he said to check out the room, and that's what we're going to do."

Jess snorted and scaled the wall, looking for her bathroom. This whole night had been a fucking waste.

* * *

Chase closed the bathroom door and inhaled the sweet scent of lavender. He looked across the room and studied Jess as she reclined in the tub. She was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Her red hair fanned around her face, her pale skin glowing in the dim light. Her gorgeous green eyes were closed, but he knew when she opened them and pinned her gaze on him his cock would harden even more than it had already. Her eyes were more expressive than she realized.

Instead of crossing the room, stripping off his clothes and joining her in the tub, Chase leaned against the door and folded his arms across his chest. "Enjoying your bath, Jess?"

"Yes." She opened one eye and grinned at him.

Chase walked over to the tub and slid his hand into the water. It was so hot steam rose off the fragrant water. If she'd been soaking in this tub since he left with Sydney, he was a monkey's uncle.

"I was in Erik's private rooms tonight, but you already know that, don't you?" He knew he was right when she stiffened. Her eyes closed and she sank deeper into the bubbly water.

"I assumed that would be the case when Sydney said he wanted to talk to you. Did he convince you that we should have an orgy with him and Sydney and the other guests?"

"Erik showed me his video surveillance room." He fisted his hands to keep from reaching for her and shaking her until she told him the truth.

"See anything good?" she asked in a husky voice. She opened her eyes and met his gaze.

"We saw a monkey scamper through Erik's window and rummage through his desk."

"A monkey?" Jess's voice was tight, and she cleared her throat. "Are you sure?"

"Where's the damn monkey, Jess?"

"I told you I don't have a pet monkey."

"You're lying. I'm tired of the damn lies." He fisted his hands at his sides.

Jess sneezed. "I'm not lying. I don't have a pet monkey."

"Well then, how the hell did one slip into Erik's office? I assume *you* would have enough sense to realize the office would be covered with cameras. Even in the dark it was easy to pick out the unmistakable hairy shape of a wet monkey pawing through his desk." Satisfaction raced through him when she flinched. "Seems wet monkey smells a lot like wet dog. And this bathroom, although you sprayed a lot of that perfume, still smells like wet animal."

The fear in her face made him pause, but he needed to know about the monkey. She had to stop lying and hiding things from him.

"Damn it, Jess. Talk to me. We're partners here. At least respect me as your lover and tell me the truth. How are we to work together if you keep huge secrets from me? We're screwed if he sees a video of a monkey climbing into this bathroom. Did you think about that?" Judging by the way her face paled, he had his answer. "Still insisting on remaining silent?"

"Richard told you to lay off the damn monkey. I don't have a pet monkey. Look around and see if you can find one. I dare you!" Her speech was ruined by another sneeze.

"This bath is way too hot for you to have been soaking in it since I left." Chase pushed his hand through the soapy water. "Tell me the truth for once, Jess. I need to know what's going on."

"I don't have a monkey. I've been in this tub --" She ended her lies with a squeak when he grabbed her hand and raised it out of the water.

"Your hands aren't wrinkled or pruned like they should be after sitting in a bath for an hour." He reached down and captured one of her feet. He pulled it out of the water and examined her delicate toes. "Neither are these."

Her mouth opened and closed a few times before she yanked her foot free and slid under the water. Anger raced through him. Not only did she lie, but when confronted, she tried to hide from him? He'd been a total fool where she was concerned. Why had he thought he could overcome whatever fears kept her from admitting she loved him? How stupid could he be? She wasn't afraid. She was using him. She liked sex with him and admitted it freely. Why had he let himself believe she loved him too?

He grabbed her shoulders and pulled her above the water. "We'll finish this mission together as we were assigned. You pull any more stupid stunts and I won't save your ass." He released her and stormed out of the bathroom.

Jess moaned and fought tears as the door to the suite slammed shut behind Chase. He was going to ruin the mission with his tantrums. She couldn't tell him she was a shapeshifting monkey. The last man she'd told had sold her to the highest bidder -- a lab full of scientists intent on dissecting her and finding out what made her tick.

Even if she wanted to trust Chase, she couldn't. She knew better. The mission came first. She needed to try getting to the bottom of this as a human. And fast.

She dressed before slipping out into the hallway. With no idea where Chase went or what he was up to, she decided to head to the foyer and poke around the first floor. Perhaps the kitchen. Most servants liked to talk, and she could use a warm cup of tea with honey to try and stave off the cold she was sure she was getting.

On the way to the kitchen Jess spotted one of the men she knew assisted Erik. He was sneaking through the hall and acting suspicious. Every few feet he would glance around, and pick up his pace. Intrigued, she stayed close to the wall and hid behind the large decorations Erik favored as she followed this strange man.

Thoughts of where Chase was and what he was up to vanished when the man opened a secret panel in the wall. He disappeared inside. Jess dashed up to the spot and collided with Chase. "Are you following me?"

"How? I left the room first."

Jess studied the wall, looking for a trigger. Chase reached out and pushed on a white swirl on the wallpaper. The panel slid open. "How did you do that?" she growled.

"Monkey see, monkey do." Chase gave her an angry look and stalked past her into the room.

She followed him, gasping when the panel slid shut behind her, plunging them into darkness. Chase grabbed onto her hand and guided her forward, toward a light at the end of the room.

When they reached the door, Chase twisted the knob and opened it a crack. Someone grabbed her from behind and covered her mouth before she could scream. She struggled, but before she could put her training to use, a needle pierced her skin. A burning warmth spread from the puncture throughout her body so quickly she couldn't warn Chase. When she crumpled to the ground Chase spun around, eyes wide as he looked at her and up at her captor. Everything went dark as two men grabbed Chase and dragged him toward her.

* * *

Every muscle protested when Jess rolled on her side. She opened her eyes and frowned. She blinked rapidly to try and clear her foggy vision. Her mouth felt like dry cotton, and her stomach protested when she tried to sit up.

She gagged as she sat up and looked around the tiny room. Chase lay on a cot across from her. She crept over to him slowly so she didn't throw up, and tried to wake him. When he remained unmoving, she crawled back onto her cot and looked around their cramped prison.

Though there was no window, there was a vent high up on one wall. Why someone heated a secret room, she didn't know, but she was grateful for it.

As she removed her clothes, Jess wondered if she was going to be able to get Chase and get out of here unscathed. It had been damned careless of both of them to get caught like that.

She wrapped her clothes in a ball next to Chase. No way could she carry them with her. After her clothing was secure, she shifted into Bonobo form and leapt her way to the vent. She hung there with one hand and used the other to unscrew the vent. Slipping inside, she climbed her way through the ducts, hoping she'd be able to find her way back.

It wasn't long before she found the opening into Sydney's rooms. Damn. She was sleeping. Jess banged on the vent until Sydney sat up in her bed and looked around with a yawn. Finally realizing what was going on, Sydney jumped out of bed and rushed to the vent.

As soon as she could, Jess crawled out of the vent and dropped to the floor, shifting back to human form while she did.

"I should have known."

Jess winced at Sydney's sharp tone. "I'm sorry. If I wasn't so weak I wouldn't have revealed myself to you. I need your help to get Chase."

"What happened?"

"We were following someone into a secret passage when we were jumped from behind. I don't even know who attacked us or what they used to knock us out." Jess quickly pulled on borrowed clothes as she explained the situation to Sydney.

"You know you've gone and blown my cover wide open with this damn stunt." Sydney stalked over to the closet and pulled out a gun. She checked the clip and the safety, then set it on the nightstand while she dressed. "I have no way to explain this to Erik."

"You should be more worried about Richard than Erik."

"Richard can go fuck himself." Sydney slipped her gun into a shoulder holster and tugged on a leather jacket. "Let's go."

Jess led Sydney to the servant hallway and showed her the swirl that activated the secret panel.

"I can't believe I never saw anyone sneak in here."

"You were spying on Erik, not his employees."

"I really don't think Erik is involved." Sydney looked at Jess. "He's a pervert, and kinky, but he's no drug dealer. I'd have caught him by now."

"Unless you didn't want to catch him."

Sydney shook her head and pulled out her gun. She gestured for Jess to stay behind her as she opened the door on the other side of the room. This time both places were blissfully empty, and the women snuck into a long, dark hallway.

"This is definitely not Erik's style. I wonder if he's even aware of this section of the mansion."

"Either way we need to free Chase. There's no telling what they'll do to him."

"You two have put everything in jeopardy. I hope whatever you learned was worth it."

Jess blushed, grateful for the darkness. She hadn't learned anything. Except that there were several people in this together, and they might or might not be working for Erik.

It didn't take long to find Chase. He was sure to be behind the only door that had a guard. A guard busy on the phone who wouldn't notice two women creeping down the hall until it was too late.

"What are we going to do about this couple? We don't want Erik to find out what we're doing down here. He'd shut us down faster than a blink of an eye."

Jess looked at Sydney. Neither spoke as they listened to the guard's half of the conversation.

"I don't like having prisoners. This is too risky. I don't wanna kill them either but I don't know that we can just let them go." There was a long pause while he listened. "True, no one knows this is all your handiwork. They'd blame Erik and we could set up shop somewhere else." Another pause, this one longer. "I don't want to kill anyone, though." There was yet another pause, and Jess held her breath through this one. "Yes, boss."

The sound of the phone closing spurred her into action. Sydney reached the man first and had him unconscious on the floor before he knew what hit him. She tossed Jess a key ring and turned to scan the hall, gun drawn.

By the time she opened the door and stepped inside, Sydney had muttered curses under her breath at their stupidity. "All my hard work down the drain."

"Sydney."

The woman shook her head. "I've worked too hard to get here, and now I'll have to explain to Erik why I saw a goddamn monkey change to a woman in my room in front of my cameras."

Deciding this would be better off pursued later, Jess opened the door and peeked inside. Chase sat at the foot of his cot, staring at the door. When he recognized Jess, he tossed her boots at her. She quickly pulled them on and laced up her boots.

"How did you get through that vent?" Chase stared at the vent, then at her.

"Not now, Chase."

"When?" he growled and followed her through the door. He did a double take when he saw Sydney and then glared at Jess. "God, Jess. I get knocked out for five minutes and you blow the entire case in the same time span."

"It was longer than five minutes, and I'm sorry I decided to save you instead of finding out who is really dealing the drugs."

"What do you mean? It's Erik."

"It's not." Sydney gestured to the entrance to the main part of the building. "And we don't have time for this."

Sydney led them through the building and back to her room in under five minutes. They didn't run into another soul, and for that, Jessica counted her blessings -- until they stepped into Sydney's living room and spotted Erik sitting on the couch. The look he turned on them made her stomach churn. Chase grabbed her hand. Jess tried to tug free but failed.

"I'm disappointed in you, Sydney. What's going on here, and what the hell did I see happen in your bedroom?" His eyes homed in on Jess.

Oh yeah. She'd fucked up big time.

"Some of your servants are selling drugs. Jess and Chase came here to find out who."

Jess noticed that Sydney didn't accuse Erik of the deed, nor did she say they originally thought he was the mastermind.

"You're saying that people are dealing drugs out of my house?"

Jess nodded and looked at Chase.

"You two aren't married?" His eyes narrowed as he looked where Chase still held her hand.

Jess managed to free her hand. "No, we're not. I trust you will keep my secret in exchange for me finding out who's using you and your home to sell drugs?"

"I trust you can pack your bags in five minutes and leave. You've abused my home and my trust, and I find I don't want to see either you or Chase again."

"But --" Jess broke off as she looked at Sydney's frozen face, and Chase's angry one.

"I will deal with Sydney's betrayal, but you two must leave. Now."

"If you let me explain --"

"I don't think so," Erik interrupted. "You lied to me. You used me and my party to gain entrance to my house. You used my friends." He turned to Sydney.

"It's not Sydney's fault."

Erik spun back to look at her. Jess froze at the anger in his eyes. "You would defend Sydney, but not the man who loves you?"

"I..." Jess blinked and looked at the harsh expression on Chase's face. "Chase can take care of himself."

"Trust me, darling, so can I." Sydney's eyes flashed as she glared at Jess.

Jess threw her hands in the air, turned, and walked back to her suite. Chase didn't follow immediately, and she refused to care.

By the time he joined her, she had her clothing packed and had called the driver to come pick them up. Richard was not going to be happy.

Chapter Five

"Chase, would you please leave us alone?"

Chase nodded at Richard, but gave her a cold, angry glare before he stalked out. She knew what it cost Chase not to slam the door. Not to throw her on The Boss' desk and ravish her until she admitted she loved him. But she wouldn't, and he knew it. Deep inside he knew she was company through and through. There wasn't room for love in her life.

"You're just like me."

Jess stared across the mahogany desk in disbelief. She couldn't think of a better compliment than that. "Thank you, sir."

"Don't thank me. It's not a compliment."

"Yes, it is." Jess smiled and leaned forward. "Does this mean I get the promotion?"

"I'm afraid not."

Her heart stilled in her chest. "I don't understand. I know we didn't technically succeed, but it wasn't my fault."

"Who was the senior officer?"

"I was."

"And you still say it wasn't your fault?"

"Okay, look, Boss. I tried really hard. It was a difficult case from the word go. You sent us there as husband and wife. We pulled that off better than you could have hoped."

"You had to flee the mansion, and you exposed Sydney."

"Trust me, that woman can more than handle herself. It would take a woman with nerves of iron and a cast iron stomach to stay in that place willingly. Sydney can handle all that Erik gives her, and then some. I think the woman actually enjoys being his hostess. With all that entails."

"Shut your mouth!" The Boss slammed his fist on the desk.

Jess leaned back in her chair, stunned.

"You. You. You." He slammed his fist on the desk again. "Everything always revolves around you. Do you really think you're the best choice for this position?"

Jess nodded meekly. This side of The Boss was one he'd never turned on her before. She didn't like it.

"You aren't a team player. If you were we wouldn't be in this mess. I wouldn't need to go in and clean this mess up. I wouldn't have to resort to going undercover and risk losing everything I've worked so hard to build up." Richard spun around in his chair and stared silently out the window. He rose in a quick motion and stalked over to the bulletproof glass. "I've worked hard and dedicated my life to this company."

Remaining silent was one of the hardest things she'd ever done, but she did it. She grabbed onto the sides of her chair when he spun back around. Emotion clouded his eyes. Emotions she couldn't -- didn't -- want to interpret.

"Do you know everything I've given up for this job?"

Jess didn't know how to answer, or even if she should.

"Answer me!" His fist slammed down on the desk again.

"No, sir. I can imagine, though." Jess' fingers hurt from gripping the armrests so tightly.

"You want to be a team leader, then you need to learn how to play with the team. Do you think they will respect someone who puts themselves on a pedestal above everyone else? Do you think they will be willing to take orders from someone they can't stand? It's not easy being top dog, Jess, and you don't have what it takes."

"What does it take?" Jess jumped to her feet. She wanted this position. She'd done everything she could to earn it, including deny Chase.

"More than you have."

Rage flowed through her. "I've given everything I have to this company."

"You've given more than needed, Agent Ward. You're officially on leave. I don't want to see you back here until two weeks have passed. Maybe by then you will realize exactly what your selfish, ignorant actions have caused."

"No!" Jess fisted her hands at her sides in an attempt not to grab Richard and beat the tar out of him. "This job is my life. It's all I have. I won't allow you to take it from me."

"Don't you get it? There is *more* to life than this job. Don't you care about your fellow agents? They are human beings and deserving of your time and affection. Do you think any of them have any respect for you right now?"

"I've done nothing worse than you!"

"You haven't learned from your mistakes. It's not too late for you, even if it is for me."

"Talk to me. Make me understand!" Jessica held her breath while she waited for him to answer. She prayed he would answer.

"You would deny Chase and yourself because you think that is what's expected of you? You put the mission above yourself every time, Jess. I thought you were finally getting somewhere on that training mission when you let down your guard enough to fuck Chase. I was wrong, wasn't I? Tell me, Jess. Why did you fuck Chase on the training assignment?"

"Not that it's any of your business, but I thought you sent him to trick me into failing. I seduced him to find out what he was doing there and why."

Richard shook his head and turned back to look out the window. "I'm just not sure there is any hope for you, Jessica. Some of the men love you, some of the women too, but the one thing they all agree on is that you're a risk."

"Why?"

"You don't give of yourself. You hold back from everyone. This fiasco with Chase was the final nail in your coffin."

"Stop speaking in paraphrases and riddles."

"You want me to blunt, Jess?" He stared at her until she nodded. "Then by all means allow me to be blunt. You are self-centered and put yourself before anyone including the mission. You were so hell-bent on proving to Chase you didn't love him, that you lost control. You were the true reason this whole thing failed. *You* cost us this, not Chase. You, in your thickheaded righteousness, didn't understand what was in front of your face. You could have had it all, Jess. The promotion, the criminal, and Chase. But you have no idea how to balance it all, do you? Balance is the key to it all. It's something you sadly lack. Sure, life is more than fun and games. I know you buckle down and give your all to each mission, but you do not give your all for each man and woman on the team. You can't or aren't willing to open yourself up to others."

"I have friends!" Jess took a step back when Richard advanced toward her. Her heart pounded in her chest as his words replayed over and over in her head.

"Lovers too. But is there anyone around right now, Jess? Do you see anyone jumping to your defense? Anyone crying out about how unfair I am to you? Do you?" Richard lowered his voice. "Even your lover has abandoned you. Do you know why?"

"No," Jess sobbed. Her voice broke, and she stared at Richard in horror as tears slipped down her cheeks. Her lungs constricted painfully, and her heart clenched tight. "I don't know why you are saying all these mean, untrue things."

"If they're so untrue, why are you crying right now?"

It was the gentle tone that sent her from simply crying to collapsing in the chair as sobs wracked her body.

"The truth hurts, Jess. Love hurts, but without it we've got nothing. If you don't love yourself you can't love anyone else. Chase would have lain down and died for you if you'd asked. And how did you repay his devotion? You threw him to the wolves."

"I did not," she gasped out. Even as she spoke the words, she knew they were untrue. Richard was right. She'd denied and betrayed Chase. Chase and The Agency. She wasn't fit to work here.

Richard knelt at her feet and cupped her hands in his. "You're on leave, Jess. I'm giving you two weeks to get yourself and your life in order. If when you report back in, you can prove you understand what I've told you, and I'm happy with your improvement, I might allow you to return to duty for a trial period. If you still don't understand what I've tried to tell you, don't bother returning."

He rose and walked over to the door. He opened it and called for Chase. Jess buried her face in her hands. This should make Chase happy. He hated her so much right now that she didn't doubt he was going to be happy to hear she'd been fired, and he was being absolved of any guilt or wrong doing on this mission.

She tried to stop crying, but couldn't. Richard had cut her open and left her exposed in more ways than one. Jess turned her back to the door. She didn't want Chase to see her this way. Her emotions were too sore and raw to handle any of his shenanigans.

"Chase, please come here."

"Yes, Boss?"

"I want you to take Jess home."

"I'm sure she'd prefer a different agent to escort her."

"And I'm sure I gave you an order, Montgomery."

"Yes, sir."

Jess was sure she could feel the burn of his gaze on her back. Unless it was her imagination. After all, he had no reason to want to be near her, let alone look at her. She rose and grabbed her purse while keeping her head averted. She walked to the door and braced herself for the harsh words she was sure Chase had for her. Hands on her shoulder stopped her forward momentum. She looked up into The Boss' sympathetic gaze.

"You can trust Chase. I do." He released her and looked at Chase. "Take her home and stay with her until she calms down."

"I'll be fine. It's not like I'm going to kill myself because of this stupid job." Jess held her head up high and walked out of the room. She stared straight ahead, ignoring everyone she passed on her way to the front door.

It wasn't until she reached her car that she faltered. Chase was there to catch her. He held her up against his body while he fumbled in her purse for her keys and unlocked the car. After he'd tucked her into the passenger seat and buckled her in, he walked around and climbed in behind the steering wheel.

The ride to her house was full of tense silence, but for once she was grateful for Chase's emotions. His anger kept him from talking to her, and even worse, giving her sympathy. That she didn't need. She'd been just fine before he'd come along, and she would survive just fine without him or The Agency. Even if she didn't want to.

Chase escorted her into her house and up to her bedroom. Silently, he undressed her and tucked her into bed. Jess knew her behavior had to confuse him, but she couldn't muster the strength to ask him to leave. She wanted to sleep for an eternity. Maybe when she woke she'd still have a job.

* * *

Jess woke slowly, the memories of her meeting with The Boss filling her head. She'd tossed and turned, nightmares keeping her from sleep as much as the knowledge that Chase was in her house did. She'd fallen asleep listening for him to leave.

Maybe a shower would chase away the remnants of her last nightmare. Unfortunately, as she showered, Jess thought about Richard's accusations. She wondered how she'd advanced as far up in rank as she had with his low opinion of her and her skills.

As she dressed, her thoughts returned to Chase. He'd been nothing but trouble for her. More proof that her mother was right when she'd said Jess was nuts to join first the military, and then The Agency. Somehow, she knew her mother wouldn't be happy to be proven correct, though.

Chase was sitting in the chair next to her bed when she walked back into her bedroom. She stiffened her heart and her expression, and hoped he couldn't tell she'd

been crying again. "You can leave, Chase. Richard only asked you to bring me home. He didn't say you had to stay."

"Yes, he did, Jess. Don't flatter yourself that I'm here because I want to be."

"Then leave. I don't need you here babysitting me. I'm not suicidal."

"The Boss said --"

"Richard can kiss my ass."

"You shouldn't talk about The Boss that way!"

Jess sniffed and shrugged. "He's not my boss. Not anymore." Jess climbed back in the bed and buried herself under the blankets. If she had to hide from Chase she would. She wasn't strong enough to deal with him. She'd lost everything she'd dedicated her life to, and she had no idea how to go about fixing it. If that was even possible.

"Jess!" Chase tugged the blankets off her.

"Leave me alone," she growled and pulled them back over her head.

"No."

"The Boss won't know. Besides, what is the worst that can happen? I spend the next week sleeping? I'm tired. Very tired."

"I'm not going to sit here and watch you give up on life."

"I'm not giving up on life!" Jess glared at him as they began a tug-of-war on the blankets.

"You are too. At least on this section of your life. I know how much you loved being an agent. I know you were thrilled to think you would get a promotion."

"You know nothing about me."

"You're right." Chase sighed. He sounded so sad that she couldn't stop the pang of guilt from spreading through her heart. "The woman I thought you were doesn't exist. You cleverly disguise your true self through several different forms. Disappointing as it was, you certainly taught me a valuable lesson."

"What was that?"

"Not to give up. You never give up. I don't know what Richard said or did to make you act this way, but it's not you. It's not the Jessica Ward I know."

"You don't know me. Nothing about me."

"I know this job was your life, and now that it's gone you have nothing and no one."

"It doesn't take a genius to figure that out, Sherlock."

"Can you tell me one thing, Jess?"

"Just one?"

Chase sighed. The bed dipped when he sat on it. He held the blanket away from her face. "Why was this job so important to you?"

"That's actually classified. I can't tell you that information."

"You no longer work for The Agency, yet you will still remain loyal to your oaths and pledges?"

"Once an agent, always an agent, Chase. And I keep my promises. Besides, I owe Richard too much to ever spill any secrets, and he knows it."

"Why so secretive, Jess?"

"It's the job, Chase. You know this."

Chase growled and clenched his fingers in the blanket. "Then can you at least tell me why you led me on such a merry chase when you knew you could never love me? Were you using me?"

"You know our lifestyle prevents us from making permanent commitments."

"What about Kim and John? They're about as permanent as you can get."

"They're both into that BDSM lifestyle, though. Their Master/slave relationship fits them both. Well, actually it shocks me. Kim could kick my ass any day. I have no idea why she'd want to submit to a man. Although, with his looks --" She didn't finish the sentence because Chase pinched her thigh. "Hey!"

"Seriously, Jess. Did I mean anything to you?"

Jessica looked down at the comforter and picked at it. "I care about you, Chase. That's why it hurt to have to push you away. I thought you knew nothing serious would come of this."

"There's more to life than fun and games."

She looked up quickly. "Did you listen to Richard yell at me?"

"No. Why?"

"Nothing." She shook her head and looked back down at the comforter. "It's not you. It's me."

"Damn it, Jess!" Chase grabbed her chin and forced her to look at him. "Don't give me stupid lines. Tell me the truth. Why did you lead me on?"

"I didn't mean to. I didn't realize you were so serious about me."

"And all my declarations of love?" His hold on her chin tightened.

Jess sighed. "We were about to go on a mission. It didn't seem the time to tell you that I was never going to get married. We needed to work together as a team, which we couldn't do if you were mad at me for not loving you back."

"A team? You call what you did working as a team? You might as well have been on that mission alone, Jess."

She threw her hands up in the air and scooted back on the bed. "Why are you here? To gloat that I got fired?"

"Because I still love you, damn it!"

Jess winced and looked away, but not before seeing the hurt in his eyes. There was no place in her life for love. No place at all. Her life was not the sort she could subject a husband or children to. What if her kids had her genes? Did she want to raise a bunch of monkey children? "I don't want kids."

"Did I ever say I did?" Chase stood up as he yelled at her. "Do you think I would want children that would be in jeopardy because their father used to do dangerous work for the government?"

"We hadn't discussed it. How was I supposed to know your feelings on the matter?"

"You wouldn't know because you never asked me. It never even occurred to you to find out how I felt about that, did it? Because you never thought beyond yourself, did you, Jess?"

"My life is more complicated than yours. I have problems you can't begin to imagine. Ones you wouldn't understand."

"Why don't you try me?"

"Stop doing this. You and I wouldn't work out."

"Why not? You can't use your job as an excuse anymore. Now you're grasping at straws. Why did The Boss tell you to trust me?"

Jess wriggled on the bed. She'd been avoiding that particular comment for hours now. Trust. There was only one person she trusted, and that was Richard. And even he didn't have her full trust. She'd suspected him of trying to sabotage her attempts to advance by sending Chase to distract and tempt her. Perhaps that had been his goal all along. But he was the only one who'd been there for her even when her mother couldn't be. Richard understood her better than anyone else. He had given up love for his job. He had no room to talk.

"Jess?"

"I don't want to talk about this right now."

"You never will. Tell me about your monkey. At least confide in me now. The mission is over. You don't need to keep the monkey a secret anymore. Where do you hide her? I know I saw her at Erik's. How you got her there boggles my mind, but I saw her."

"I'm tired of this. Tired of your damn questions and lack of trust."

"Trust? I'm supposed to trust you when you can't trust me?" Chase headed for the door. "I'm sick of this, Jess, and I'm sick of you."

His hand was on the door knob by the time she could react. She jumped out of the bed. "Fine. You want to know about my monkey?"

Chase turned and looked at her. He kept his hand on the knob. "I'm not playing games anymore."

"I'm not either. You want to know where I'm hiding my monkey? Fine. I'll show you!" Jess ripped at her clothes, tearing them in her haste to remove them.

"Jess?"

She ignored him and focused on the shift. With the ease of years and experience, she went from human form to Bonobo in under a minute. And she only went slow so he would see the change.

The shock in his expression wasn't enough for her. She scrambled across the floor and climbed up his unmoving body. She planted a big kiss on his lips, then went to hop down. His twisted and closed his arms around her before she could get away. He held her tight in his unforgiving arms.

Jess shifted back to human and wriggled free when her shift forced him to loosen his grip. "Are you happy now?" She angrily brushed at the stupid tears she couldn't stop. "I'm a freak. Want to call the local scientists and see if they can run a few experiments on me? Maybe dissect me for science?"

"I'm shocked, but I'm not stupid, nor am I whoever hurt you in the past."

"You're human, Chase. As such you can't understand."

"Richard is human too."

Jessica bit her tongue until she tasted blood. She'd die before she confirmed or denied Richard's bear shifting ability. "Richard saved me from the operating table." She turned and walked back over to the bed. She sat down and shivered. "I was young. I was in the army and had no cares other than trying to be all that I could be."

"What happened?" Chase walked over and sat on the bed next to her.

"Let's just say that my secret got out. Before they could kill me to discover how my shifting abilities work, Richard convinced them to let him train me so he could use my special skills to help the government."

"I can definitely see how you've been an asset."

"If it weren't for Richard, I'd have been dead a long time ago."

"So you've devoted your life to his agency?"

Jess nodded. "It's the least I could do. And I thought I'd finally proven myself to him. I thought finally I'd earned my keep. Besides, I wanted to stop taking so many missions. I'm getting older, Chase, as much as I don't like it. I wanted to start helping to train the new recruits. It gets harder to shift as you get older. Or at least more painful. While it doesn't bother me yet, I know it will. My mother has already decided to choose one form over the other."

"One form?"

Jess looked up at him. "My mom's chosen to give up living as a human so she can live a carefree life in the local zoo." Jess sighed. "I'd have preferred her to go to the jungle or something but she insists the zoo will give her a healthier, well-balanced life. And she's also not interested in having to be self sufficient."

"And your father?"

"He was dissected for science before I was old enough to understand what we were and what I could do."

"I'm so sorry."

"It's something I came to terms with long ago. We all make mistakes. I was lucky to survive mine with my life and body still intact. My father just wasn't as lucky."

"And you don't want children because you're afraid they won't be as lucky as you."

"That's just part of it. Do you have any idea how hard it is to raise pygmy chimpanzees?"

Chase chuckled. "If they get into half the trouble you do, I can imagine."

Jess shivered again and walked to the closet. She pulled on her robe and tied it tight.

"That explains a lot, but it doesn't tell me where it leaves us."

"Us?"

"I don't care that you're a monkey and don't want kids. I don't care that you no longer have a job at The Agency."

"All those things are what I am, Chase."

"No. I know what you are." He walked over to her and wrapped his arms around her. "You're the woman I love." He kissed her before she could protest.

Jess melted into his embrace even as she realized it would make it even harder to resist him now. He knew her secrets and didn't care. But could she trust him as much as Richard said she could? Did she have a choice now that she'd blurted out her secret? Maybe she'd hoped her secret would drive Chase away. Either way, it was too late for regrets.

It wasn't his feelings she doubted. It was her ability to function as an agent when she had to rely on him to keep her secret. What if he was captured and tortured into revealing top secret information? *You were trained the same way he was. If the company trusts you and trusts him, why can't you trust him? Richard knows what he's doing. He's been doing it for so long he has to know.*

"Give me a chance, Jess. Please." Chase peppered kisses across her lips and cheeks. "I promise you won't regret it. I'll prove I love you and that you can trust me."

"It's not your love I doubt, Chase."

"That's a start."

"The Agency is -- was -- my life."

"Your new life will be with me." Chase kissed her again. "We'll find a way to convince Richard to keep you on the payroll."

"I don't understand you, Chase."

"What don't you understand, love?"

"How can you be with me after all I've done to you? I fucked up the mission and our lives, lost my job, and put yours in jeopardy. And you can stand here, hold me, and tell me that you love me."

"I do."

Jess burst into tears and wrapped her arms around him. Chase kissed her as he lowered her onto the bed.

"So now you want to make love?" She blinked back tears and tried to frown at him.

"It's the only time you don't argue with me," he growled, and kissed her again.

She sighed and tightened her hold. Part of her was scared that she wanted to trust him. That she *did* trust him. And the other part of her wanted to be held in his arms forever.

"I know you're confused right now, but sometimes it takes losing everything you have to make you see what no one can take from you."

Jess tilted her head and stared at him, curious what experience made him learn that. "I've never tried to get to know you beyond the sex."

"Just think about it. I bet you can name my likes and dislikes, my favorite movie or television show. You probably know what foods I love and hate better than my own mother."

"I don't like mushy stuff, Chase."

"I'll try not to be mushy around you." Chase stared into her eyes and caressed her cheek. She leaned into the caress and sighed. "Be careful, hon, or I might think you're getting mushy."

Jess giggled and slid her hands down to his hips. She rocked against him. "I can think of something to drive away all the mushiness."

"Oh yeah?" His eyebrows rose and his eyes darkened.

He quickly removed her robe, but as he took off his clothes, her heart caught in her throat. "I don't have a job now."

"That's okay. I love you, Jess. You. Not the agent."

Her eyes started to tear so she focused on his strong, broad chest. She slid her fingers over his hot, smooth skin. "I don't want kids. Can't have them anyway. Not anymore."

"That's fine. As long as I have you I'll be happy."

"You're a pushover, not an alpha."

He blinked. "You wanted an alpha male?" He crawled onto the bed and knelt over her. "You better make up your mind, woman. Beta, alpha, alpha, beta. You're going to give me a complex."

"Stop talking and start with the making love." Jess reached for him.

Chase pressed her into the mattress as he sprawled on top of her. Though she wriggled under him, he held her firmly in place. "You want alpha, I'll give you alpha." He grabbed her hands and raised them over her head. He pinned them against her pillow and kissed her until she was breathless.

"Now that's what I'm talking about."

Chase chuckled and nuzzled her neck until his laughter subsided. "Sometimes I can't decide if I want to fuck you or beat you."

"How about a little of both?"

"I wanted to give you sweet, tender loving."

Her heart melted at the gentle look in his eyes. She didn't doubt his love. Couldn't doubt it. It scared the hell out of her, but maybe she could overcome the odds that her parents couldn't. If her mom chose to stay in Bonobo form, why couldn't she choose to remain human?

"I wanted to seduce you."

"You have, Chase. You've got me thoroughly captured. Now what will you do with me?" She locked her fingers together and pushed them higher up the pillow. The action thrust her breasts against his chest.

"Love you." He lowered his head and plundered her mouth with a kiss that not only stole her breath, but made her toes curl. When she fisted her hands in his hair, he nibbled his way to her ear. "I'm gonna make love to you so good you won't be able to walk for a week."

"Oh, please!" God, how she wanted that. Chase slid his palm over her mons, dipping two fingers far enough into her to tease her before he withdrew them and traced lazy circles around her clit. "Faster." Her breaths came fast and heavy. She needed more than this.

"No." He moved his hand away from her clit and stroked her mons again. "I'm gonna pet your pretty kitty and then I'm gonna fuck you within an inch of your life."

Jess gasped and jerked against his hand.

"I'm gonna slide my cock deep in your wet pussy and thrust into you hard and fast."

"Mmm." She closed her eyes and ground against his hand. His words were making her even wetter than she'd been before. He knew how to pleasure her better than she did.

"I'm gonna lick you all over, and suck on your plump little clit until you scream my name."

"Ohh." Jess braced her feet on the bed and rubbed against his hand frantically.

Before she could beg him to put his words into actions, he lowered his head and replaced his hand with his mouth. He drew lazy circles around her clit with his tongue. When she tried to move so his tongue would brush over her swollen nub, he looked up at her again. "Or maybe I'll save that for next time. I want you too much to wait any longer." In a quick movement he darted forward and sucked hard on her clit. Jess let out a keening cry as her orgasm raced through her.

His fingers slid into her and immediately settled into a steady rhythm that made her rock her hips in need. Over and over he thrust his fingers deep into her, brushing against her sweet spot each time he pulled them back out.

"Please!" She turned her head from side to side as need and urgency warred with her desire to let him torture her. Even though she loved it when he fucked her with his mouth and fingers, she wanted more. She needed him to fill her to bursting and come with her. She wanted to feel his arms and body tense around her, and hear him cry out her name when he came, balls-deep inside her.

"I love it when you beg." He brushed his lips over her clit.

Jess trembled, her fingers shaking as she grabbed his shoulders. "Fuck me, Chase. Please, fuck me!"

"No. I think I'll make love to you this time." He repositioned himself and rubbed the head of his cock against her damp pussy. Her stomach clenched in need when he repeated the action several times without penetrating her.

"Please!"

Chase captured her mouth. She whimpered, enjoying yet hating the sexual torment. When he finally slid into her, she broke the kiss and arched in pleasure. The slow, steady glide of his cock filling her sent shivers up her spine. She rubbed her hands over his arms, damp with the fine sheen of sweat he'd worked up.

With slow movements, he pushed into her until he could go no farther. He took his time pulling out, and then sliding back in. Even though she urged him to take her harder and faster, he ignored her pleas and continued his agonizingly slow pace.

After a few minutes his pace quickened as did his breath, and she knew he was not going to hold out much longer. Neither of them were the sweet, gentle loving type, and she didn't care.

Hoping to push him over the edge, Jess raked her nails down his back and crooned his name. He let out a guttural sound and rammed into her so hard her teeth banged together. She held on tight, digging her nails into him while she tightened around him.

"Jesus, Jess." He grunted and then gave in to her desires, and his. He plunged into her hard and fast, and withdrew slowly, only to ram into her harder and faster with each new thrust.

"Yes! Yes. Yesssss." She wrapped her legs around him, her legs and spine tingling with sensation. Her stomach tightened with each new movement.

"Jess."

She looked into Chase's gorgeous blue eyes. She'd never realized how intimate staring into someone's eyes could be. The raw emotion in his was her undoing. Her chest tightened until she couldn't breathe, and then she was flying over the edge into an abyss of no return.

Instead of retreating behind playful banter like she always did, Jessica held Chase tight and buried her face against his neck. "I love you." Though she barely whispered the words, she could tell he heard by the tightening of his hands on her.

Jess squeezed him back, choked by emotions she didn't understand and couldn't deny any longer. She did love him. She'd loved him for a long time now. Reckless, fun

loving Chase Montgomery -- the only man who'd been able to capture and hold her interest for longer than two weeks.

"Thank you," he whispered in between pressing kisses on her neck and face.

"For what?"

He cupped her face and stared into her eyes. She was stunned at the tears that slowly ran down his cheeks. "I love you, Jess. I also love sex with you, but it didn't mean anything. Until now anyway. As much as I love you, it would never be enough if you didn't love me too. Sex is great, but love is so much better."

Jess swallowed past a tight throat. "Have I hurt you that much?"

"By refusing to let me in?"

Jess nodded.

"Yes. But I know it wasn't intentional." Chase rolled onto his side and pulled her close.

Jess cuddled up against him and felt safe for the first time in her life. Maybe she could have more than just The Agency. Richard had saved her, but hadn't she done everything she could to repay him? Perhaps she didn't owe him anymore. He certainly didn't think so if he could let her go so easily.

A huge sigh of relief startled her, and made Chase chuckle. "What was that sigh for?"

"I think maybe I'm glad I'm done with The Agency."

"Really?" He pulled back and looked at her closely. Too closely.

"Yeah. I don't know what I'll do with my life now, but it's a good feeling to know I don't owe anyone anything."

"I think that was all in your head, Jess. I don't think Richard expected as much from you as you seemed to think you had to give." His eyes twinkled. "I, on the other hand, expect a lot from you, missy. I think we'll start with sex when and where I want it."

Jess laughed and slapped his arm. "You're a brat."

"A horny brat." He pinned her beneath him. Her breath whooshed at the loving look in his eyes. "I want you again."

"Good, because I want you too." She grabbed his head and pulled him down for a kiss.

Epilogue

Richard tapped his fingers on the desk. Even though he'd brought Jess back in as a trainer, he still had the problem of capturing the head of the drug cartel. At least he'd been right to push Chase toward her after that botched mission. If nothing else could set that woman straight, he knew love would.

Love.

Now here he was, getting ready to meet with Sydney, face to face for the first time in five years. The heartbreak she'd caused him had been almost enough to break him. But it hadn't. He was strong, and he could handle this assignment. If things went well he was going to retire anyway.

It was unfortunate Erik had proven innocent. Even being on the scene as she had, Sydney still wasn't sure who the actual culprit was. He shouldn't have left something this important to her. The fact she was his best agent had overruled his personal feelings. Perhaps he should have stuck with his gut instincts, pulled her from the Hardaway Mansion, and made her clean up the mess in South America.

A knock on the door interrupted his morose thoughts. "Yes?"

"It's John."

"Come in." Richard cleared his desk and leaned back in his chair to look up at John as he walked in.

Gone was the long hair and scruffy beard. John was dressed to the nines in black slacks and a white shirt with a psychotic tie. It was obviously Kim's handiwork. Richard grinned. Kim was the best thing to happen to John. He was sure she was the only thing

that had kept John from turning away from The Agency. He'd almost switched sides, and he'd been borderline for the last few months he'd been in the jungle.

"You wanted to see me?" John walked in and dropped into a black leather chair. Richard frowned. "I'm sorry." John stiffened his spine. "You wanted to see me, Boss?"

"Yes. I'm going to be flying to North Carolina to clean up the mess Jess made."

"But you don't go on assignments anymore. Why don't you let me handle this?"

Richard shook his head. "I won't tolerate anymore screw ups with this. I want it finished and I want it finished now."

"I understand, but you're too important to risk."

Richard kept going as if John hadn't said a word. He was sure it irritated John something fierce. "I'm leaving you in charge."

John leaned forward in surprise. "Are you kidding me?"

"No. And if you fuck up, it'll be your head on a platter."

"I think you want my head there anyway."

"What?" Richard waited while John looked toward the closed door.

"The whole thing with Kim. I know you don't approve. Look, if there was anything between the two of you, it was over a long time ago."

Richard laughed until he couldn't breathe. "That's a good one. Kim and I weren't lovers, John. I saved her life twice and she seems to think that means she owes me."

"Is it true you shapeshift into a bear?" John put his hands on the desk. "If there's anything giving you an edge over another agent, I'd like to know. We can't afford to lose you."

"You don't need to worry about me, John. Not unless you piss me off." Richard rose. "We'll meet again tomorrow to discuss this more. If you'll excuse me, I have another appointment to prepare for."

John nodded and rose even though Richard could tell he was full of questions. If John handled this right, he'd be in charge of The Agency before the end of the year.

Richard leaned back in the chair as John walked out and closed the door behind him. He wasn't eager to see Sydney again, but he couldn't wait to retire. There was a

nice tropical beach calling his name. He spun his chair to the side and reached for a dart. He threw it across the room until it landed on the map he had hanging on the far wall. Yep, that would be as good a place as any to start over.

Michelle Hasker

Michelle loves vampires and things that go bump in the night, so it's no wonder her creations are truly paranormal. While most people only dream of finding love, Michelle's characters find it, but in the most unexpected places. She loves to talk to readers. You can find her at www.michellehasker.com or on her chat group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/michellesedge/>.