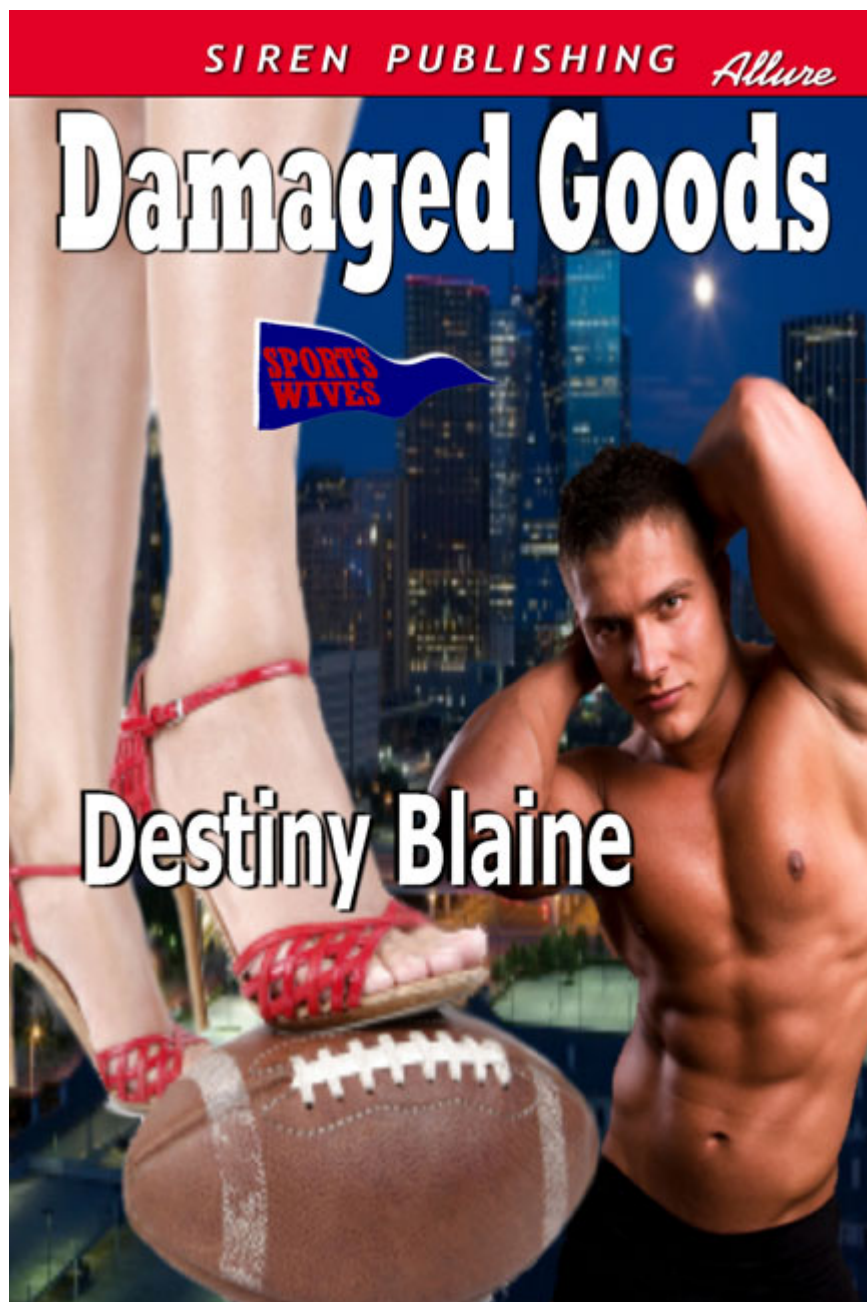


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Damaged Goods

SPORTS
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DAMAGED GOODS

Sports Wives Four

Destiny Blaine

EROTIC ROMANCE



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IMPRINT: Erotic Romance

DAMAGED GOODS

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For J.R.

You provided inspiration for more stories than you'll ever know and
you will always have my gratitude.

DAMAGED GOODS

Sports Wives Four

DESTINY BLAINE

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“I always liked winners because the winners I know often find celebrating essential right after a victory. I enjoy the benefits found in their private parties...” Suzy Illiani

Prologue

I'm damn good at some things. I believe everyone has a purpose in life, and mine is generally found on my back. Thing is, I'm tired of trying to figure out how I landed there, who stripped me last, and where I spent the night.

I've always lived in the moment, and I'll be damned if I haven't had some delicious moments. Lately, I just don't remember all of them, and for some reason my lack of a good memory is starting to take its toll.

Divorced three years and still trying to forget Mark-whatshisname of the Professional Football Confederacy, I fed the tabloids with enough insight into my marriage and quickly became an overnight diva. Members of the press soon discovered, along with everyone else, my husband left me for my best friend, Cassie Teller, who in turn quickly added him to her hunk collection over at the Teller compound.

After the news broke, and with a little help from yours truly, I became an interesting topic for talk show hosts and gossip columnists. Every wife affiliated with the PFC had my name on their lips at least once. I guess some of them worried I'd move on to one of their husbands.

Cassie, of course, walked away from the whole ordeal without a scratch. Yes, she's one of a kind, a woman who not only has her cake and eats it, too, but also sticks her fingers in another woman's icing. Not that Mark was all sugar and whipped cream, but he served a purpose.

Thanks to alimony and a good attorney, he still pays for the short time we spent together. His generosity allows for the luxury of scouting for another husband. Best of all, since I have a lavish lifestyle to uphold, I travel on his plastic and in the same PFC circles I refuse to leave.

My name is Suzy Illiani. Sports reporters have labeled me a scorned wife, dumped lover, and my personal favorite—football groupie.

What can I say? I get around, and when I do, I make sure everyone knows where I've been.

Chapter One

I don't look for trouble. I really don't. But when I'm feeling a little frisky, I'll be darned if I can't find plenty of it. Apparently, I must belong in the center of one giant mess.

My right hand was wrapped around a cold object. If memory served correctly, it was probably a glass—a tall one that contained a drop or two of the last martini I tried to drink right before I went to sleep.

I was at the Hilton in Knoxville, Tennessee. It's the only thing I remembered other than who screwed me last, and that's easy. For the first time in a long time, I have a regular fuck buddy. He's mighty fine at getting the job done right, but he's not a keeper, not in the truest sense of the term.

Swallowing back the taste of cigarettes and booze, I finally opened one eye. Sure enough, just as suspected, I had a thin white sheet over my bought-and-paid-for boobs, and a glass tumbler in hand, a tall one with a splash of liquor still left in the bottom.

One thing about it, I can pass out like a pro. I've had a lot of practice.

A key was placed in the door, and I heard the soft click-click of the electronic lock. *Shit!* I had forgotten all about our early flight. I took a deep breath and held it for good reason. All hell was about to break loose.

"Suzy, damn it! What are *yous* still doing in bed?" Frankie McCloskey still talked like he lived in the Bronx.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Frankie spent a great deal of time in New York as well as Ireland, where his parents returned around the

time I hooked up with the rookie quarterback. Frankie was set to take Corby Teller's position with the Dallas Rascals. Only Corby didn't step down and Oakland offered Frankie a position he couldn't refuse, or at least that's what his agent told him.

I took a deep breath and with great exaggerated reluctance, I said, "I've reached a decision, Frankie."

"Yous can tell me all about it on the plane. We board in one hour."

After my divorce, goodbyes came easy, and even though Frankie was a good lay, there were a few things he had that I didn't want, and Oakland topped the list. Unable to secure more zeros in his contract, the three million dollar salary difference between what he should've grabbed in Dallas and what he actually signed for in Oakland failed to impress.

Trying to sit without my head wobbling off my shoulders, I said, "I've decided this is the end of the road for us."

Frankie stared back at me in complete disbelief. Glancing at the glass I finally slid onto the nightstand, he said, "What? Come on Suzy, don't fuck around. We don't have time this morning."

Fucking around sounded pretty good after I saw the true signs of disappointment settling in his eyes, but I had to stand tough, forget about how well he used his nine-inch cock and focus on my goals, where I wanted to go in life. Clearly, I didn't want to step onto a plane and head to Oakland when my heart still felt a lingering attachment to Dallas.

"This is about Mark, isn't it?"

Obviously. Everything always circled back to Mark. "No, it's not about him."

"Then what is it?"

Money. Mark. Oakland. Mark.

Frankie sat on the edge of the bed. "I thought we were okay. Me and yous, Suzy, we were going places."

Sadly, poor Frankie deserved this kind of treatment for thinking in the first place. The only place we ever headed was the only place I ever enjoyed him—bed.

“Look, Frankie,” I said, reaching for my martini glass. Might as well sip the last of what I didn’t drink the night before. “I like you, kid, I really do.” I paused for a moment. The kid-bit may have been too much. He was, after all, in his mid-twenties, and I had yet to slip over the hill. “It’s not going to work,” I firmly added.

Frankie looked lost. He scratched the side of his head and ran his fingers through his curly black hair. “You’re back to the age thing, aren’t you?”

Actually, I liked the age thing. In fact, I reached a decision then and there. The next boy toy I took to my bed needed to be around the ripe old age of twenty-one. Sure did limit options, though, and I quickly ran through the reliable old memory bank trying to think of any young rookies who might fit the bill.

“So there’s a little age difference,” Frankie continued. “Biology says we’re just perfect. I’m a firm believer in science.”

What a joke. Frankie probably didn’t pass science, and I had my doubts of whether or not he could even spell biology. “Since you brought it up, Frankie, I am, too. Which brings up another excellent point. A woman approaching her forties would be more suited for a young man in his prime, conceivably someone around twenty or twenty-one.”

Frankie looked pissed. “Hell, Suzy, why not just strip an eighteen-year-old straight out of his graduation gown?”

I’d thought about it several times.

Frankie paced. “So you aren’t going with me to Oakland?”

“No.”

He swallowed hard right before his face went completely pale. “Suzy, what am I going to do? I...I...”

That’s when it hit me. Frankie was a big lug on the outside but stood nearly seven feet tall, full of insecurities. After his parents

returned to their home in Ireland, he was left all alone. The one exception—me—planned to leave him in Tennessee. I could've at least escorted him to California.

No, I really didn't owe him anything. We indulged in our brief time together, enjoyed a few laughs, but nothing substantial. The fling was over, finished, done.

"I'm not going to Oakland," I stated flatly once again.

Hell, a man had to grow up sometime.

* * * *

Frankie called me every day for nearly a week. I had to hand it to him. He worked the media like a pro and, of course, I advised him when I could. He must've called every tabloid he could think of or hired a publicist to do the job for him. Our break-up became front page news within forty-eight hours of waving goodbye.

The headlines graced newspaper entertainment and sports sections with bold letters announcing the split. *Suzy Illiani and Frankie McCloskey Call It Quits* and *Notorious PFC Groupie Is Single Again*. Then there were those captions revolving around speculation. *Suzy Illiani is looking for love again, and the PFC Wives want her banned from the Dallas Rascals Stadium Luxury Suites*. The more scandalous the header, the more I enjoyed the articles.

The PFC wives could lock down their husbands for all I cared. One man had my attention, and only one sexy player would soon have my body, too. And I knew where to find him.

Marco Giovanni, the young gun headed for the great state of Texas, secured major coverage on every sports show in the country. I was halfway back to the Lone Star State by the time I thought of a great plan to persuade the object of my manipulation. The poor thing wouldn't know what hit him.

While sitting in Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, I opened my flip-phone and dialed *Sports and Entertainment Gossip*.

With their number on speed dial, special occasions and mere ideas ready for activation never went unnoticed. In fact, my planned mischief often found a helping hand.

“Sandy Cramer, please,” I said, tapping my long nails on the armrest while trying to avoid the kid seated right next to me. He had a snotty nose, and his mother left him there, apparently under the impression I’d mother the child in her absence while she ran to the restroom.

Sandy answered the phone in record time. I handed the kid a tissue and strolled away from the waiting crowd at the airline’s gate.

“Sandy? Suzy.” The two of us had been on a first name basis for some time.

I listened as she babbled apologies and how devastated she’d been when she learned of my recent breakup with Frankie. Then, she went in for the kill. “What do you have for me?”

Lowering my voice, I looked around to make sure no one stood close enough to listen. “Have you heard about the rookie Dallas may move into Corby Teller’s spot next year?”

She released a loud whistle and then said, “What about him?”

“What do you know about him?” I asked, pumping.

“Outside of the fact that he was the number one draft pick this year?”

“Yes,” I said, leading. “Outside of sports in general, what else do you have?”

“Nothing,” she replied, sounding disappointed. “The guy is clean all the way around. He played for a high school in Kansas and could’ve gotten a full ride to any one of several major universities. Graduated with honors, loved by everyone, hometown hero of sorts and, oh, he’s definitely *not* your type, Suzy.”

“Oh, really?”

Excitedly, she asked, “What are you trying to tell me?”

“Who, me?” I teased. “Now, you know me better than to beat around the bush, Sandy.”

“We’re talking Marco Giovanni here, right?” Sandy clarified.

“None other.”

“You and Marco?”

“Do I have to spell everything out for you?”

Sandy lowered her voice. “How long?”

“Long enough to know why some of his ex-girlfriends call him The Italian Stallion.”

“Get out! Are you serious?”

“Absolutely.”

“So you and Frankie broke up because of the—wait a second—you split because of Marco Giovanni, The Italian Stallion?”

I smiled and checked out my recently manicured nails. *That’s right, Sandy. Jot down those notes.* I gave her a little time. “Do you have the correct spelling of his name?”

“Yes,” she snapped.

“Now, Sandy,” I began, walking toward the crowd when I saw one of the pilots stroll across the waiting area and head for the gate. “Keep this under wraps for another forty-eight hours. I’ll let you have an even better scoop when I get back to Dallas. They’re boarding my plane now so we’ll talk again soon.”

“I don’t know how you do it, Suzy.”

“How often I *do it* is more or less the trick, my friend.”

She snickered. “Well, I have to hand it to you. Based on what I’ve heard and the interviews I’ve watched on television, this Marco guy looks and sounds like a dream.”

Yes, with the nickname I gave him and the man waiting to emerge behind the boy the world still saw him as, Marco Giovanni was every woman’s dream. And a very wet one I planned to enjoy.

Chapter Two

Two days later, I bounced down my front stairs knowing full well who pounded on the door. Members of the press started their field day bright and early. They knew precisely where to find the kind of explicit information guaranteed to sell their papers. Before reaching the foyer, the phone rang. Snatching the cordless in passing, I heard a raving lunatic on the other end.

“This has the earmarks of one of your stunts, Suzy!”

“Well, hello, Mark,” I said flippantly. “How’s the family? How are Steve and Corby? Fucking the hell out of that slut wife you all share, I presume? What did they do, kick you out of bed and tell you to go home to your ex?” I decided to take another few digs. “How are the kids? Did you ever tell me which one of you fathered those babies?”

“Suzy,” he slowly began, as if he fought to find some element of control. “Speaking of kids, that’s why I’m calling. Marco Giovanni. I want you to leave him alone.”

“Marco Giovanni?” I played dumb. “Who is he? The name doesn’t ring a bell.”

“The hell it doesn’t,” Mark snapped. “What did you do, Suzy? Find out which one of the rookies on our team stood to make the most money in the coming years?”

Something like that. “No, Mark, believe me. I don’t sit around all day trying to figure out what I can do to get under your skin.”

I didn’t have to think on anything. Ideas materialized without any strenuous effort.

“He’s a kid, Suzy.”

“Then what is *that kid* doing on *your* team?”

“So you do know him!”

“I’ve heard his name. Why don’t you back up and tell me why you really called. Do you have blue balls or something?”

“Give me a fucking break. It’s all over the tabloids today that you and Frankie-whatshisname aren’t practicing bed gymnastics anymore.”

“And what does this have to do with the new kid playing on your jungle gym?”

I really needed to send Sandy a gift certificate to a day spa. I never anticipated Mark’s call prior to reading her piece. Her article must have been a doozie.

“Suzy, you know damn well what you’ve done. Sandy Cramer prints everything you tell her.”

“I don’t know a Sandy Cramer.”

“The hell you don’t,” he said, raging. “I want you to call her and retract your statement. This is an embarrassment. You aren’t seeing Marco Giovanni.”

“Would you like to place a wager on that, Mark?”

“I mean it, Suzy. Corby and I will talk to him if you go anywhere near him. Do you hear me? The kid is top notch, and the last thing he needs is someone like you screwing things up for him.”

I paced the foyer. The media continued to pounce on the front porch. “What’s it worth to you, big boy?”

“What’s it worth to me?” he asked. “Damn you, Suzy. Are you doing this to try and get me back?”

“Don’t flatter yourself, Mark. It’s been three years, and I’m having the time of my life. I wouldn’t take you back if you came with a twelve-inch cock and more stamina than a vibrator with long lasting batteries guaranteed for a thousand charges or more.”

“Do you really expect me to believe you have a thing for Giovanni, a kid you haven’t even met?”

I closed my eyes and tried to imagine first introductions. Thanks to Mark, I probably needed to step up the game, hurry up, and find a reason to meet Marco. Maybe I could have my people call his people and arrange a dinner for this weekend. Opening my eyes, I remembered one crucial point. I didn't have *people*.

* * * *

"Sandy," I drawled later that afternoon. "I'm calling to congratulate you on the marvelous piece you wrote."

"The article covered your life, darling. Of course it's remarkable," she said in a hurry. "What are you doing calling so late? Anything new to report?"

"No," I said. "But I need a favor."

"Name it."

"Have you heard from the Marco Giovanni camp yet?"

"Oh yes, I have numbers for his agent, his PR staff, his mother—if you can believe that—and, uh, actually, Marco called himself."

"Have you returned any of those calls?"

"No, not yet."

I smiled. At times, life was so sweet. I didn't have to worry about getting any sugar, the cubes simply bounced my way. "Why don't you give me his agent's number and the number Marco gave you?" I paused and then said, "And while you're at it, let me have his mother's number, too."

A few minutes later, I clutched the pastel stationary with three very important numbers scribbled across it. I dialed Danny Reuning. My stomach in knots, I couldn't remember the last time I felt so alive. Danny Reuning was Corby Teller's agent. He worked a few deals for Mark early in his career, but we never met face to face.

The phone rang and rang and rang. I shifted my weight from one foot to the next.

"This is Mr. Reuning."

Something about someone calling themselves Mister truly irked me. I took a deep breath, and the impatient sucker said, "Hello? Is anyone there?"

"Hello, Danny Reuning?"

"Yes, this is Danny Reuning."

I sighed, acting the part of disgruntled media diva. "This is," I cleared my throat and acted as pained as I could possibly convey over the phone, "this is...Suzy Illiani."

"What can I do for you, *Miss Illiani*?"

Shit. Corby must have told him I'd call. "It's not what you can do for me, Mr. Reuning, but what I can do for you."

He chuckled. "You have nothing I want."

"I find that hard to believe," I said, studying my reflection in a nearby mirror.

"Considering my new money maker is now connected with the PFC's number one tramp, I think you've done enough."

"Oh?" I giggled now. "Mr. Reuning, I called to see if you could arrange a meeting with your client."

"The answer is an emphatic no."

I gathered as much, which is why I had Marco Giovanni on my house phone speed dial prior to dialing his agent's number. "Do you mind if I ask why?"

I hit speed dial. It rang twice before I heard Marco. "Hello?"

I hung up on agent smartass and said, "Hello, Marco?"

"Yes, this is Marco."

"This is Suzy Illiani."

"Yes?"

"I'm calling to see if you and I can sit down to a quiet dinner and see what we can do about these current rumors flying around."

"Rumors?" He laughed. "What are you doing, Miss Illiani? Trying to give the journalists covering our stories something more to talk about?"

“You know it, darling,” I purred. The pet name might have been a bit much, but seducing an athlete was my specialty.

“And just why would you want to do something so absurd?”

Such a kid, I reminded myself. “Marco, I’ve been playing this game for a long time. I’m a pro. Ask anyone.”

“Oh, I’ve asked. Don’t ever think I haven’t. When some broad is connected to my name all over the national tabloids and sports reporters want an interview about my relationship with this random gal rather than my position with the Dallas Rascals, I take notice.”

Good, I thought. So I definitely grabbed Marco’s undivided attention. “I tried to talk to that agent of yours, but he, uh...well, you’ve been in this long enough to know that agents often take over every aspect of their players’ lives.”

“Is that right?” he asked. “I make my own decisions, Miss Illiani.”

“Is *that* right?” I fired back. “Then what do you say we give the press something more to write about?”

The brief silence made me a little uncomfortable. I hurriedly tried to think of a plan B and came up short.

Take the offer. Take a chance.

“So you called to invite me over for dinner?”

I had hoped he would turn the tables and ask me out, but okay, a candlelit meal at my place worked too, especially with the press camped in my front yard. Standing taller, like posture mattered, I said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, I did. How does eight o’clock sound?”

“Tonight?”

“Do you have a problem with spontaneity, Marco?”

“That’s funny,” he said. “Evidently you didn’t see the tagline attached to my name, Miss Illiani. A man doesn’t earn that sort of nickname without living on the edge.”

I wanted to laugh out loud. I gave him the name that would stick with him for his entire career. He owed me big time. He could thank me with dinner and pay me back with dessert.

Chapter Three

Marco Giovanni wasn't just sex in shoulder pads or even a wet slide show. Good God, he was five screaming orgasms in the middle of a crowded street.

I watched him retrieve his dinner jacket from a hanger in the back of his SUV. He shrugged his arms into the navy blue blazer and dusted off the sleeves. Handsome to a fault, Marco was everything I imagined and then some. And I had big plans to change Marco Giovanni's life, starting tonight.

Smoothing my hands over my short white dress, I pinched my nipples so they protruded enough to gain his attention and keep it. Yes, the slutty image might as well grab him at the door and hold him by the balls throughout the main course.

I brushed my bangs over to the side and decided the auburn hair color complimented my golden tan. *Boobs*, I reminded once more, pinching my nipples again and making sure my low-cut neckline provided enough cleavage to draw Marco's lingering gaze.

Reaching for the door, I refused to wait for the doorbell announcing his arrival. Numerous microphones were shoved toward Marco's face before he knew what hit him. I should've warned the poor fellow about the media tents pitched in the side yard. My favorite reporters received an earlier delivery of picnic baskets full of fried chicken and all the trimmings. I made sure they stayed very comfortable and well-fed prior to Marco's arrival.

Grabbing his wrist, I yanked him inside and he looked grateful. "I'm Marco," he said soon after the door slammed behind him.

"Suzy," I drawled, extending my hand.

Nervously, he took my wrist and raised the back of my hand to his lips. Brownie points, right off the bat. Then again, he didn't need any.

He glanced upstairs and then to his right. "You have a nice home, Miss Illiani."

"Suzy."

He laughed. "Yes, I know. Although I have to admit, I expected someone older."

Plastic surgery—worked like a charm.

I still acted appalled. "Older?"

"Weren't you married to—"

"Let's not talk marriages and divorces," I interrupted. Soon, I'd sharpen my claws across the man's chest and he would forget to inquire about past mistakes.

"You look younger than I imagined."

"And that's a bad thing?" I asked over my shoulder, working my sway right on into the kitchen.

"No," he said, following on my heels. "It's never a bad thing to look younger than your age."

I felt the sudden stab in my heart. Age and I didn't have a close friendship. I defied numbers at every angle.

Bypassing the kitchen, I headed for the dining room and stopped in front of the massive walnut table. The only purpose the table ever served during my marriage to Mark was the obvious, to entertain guests. I once had other ideas for the elegant furniture. Tonight, maybe the extravagant piece would live up to a few fantasies.

"You went to a lot of trouble," Marco said, pulling out a chair and waiting for me to take a seat.

I glanced at the array of food piled high in exquisite serving dishes and platters, compliments of Royal Prince Fabre's Exclusive Collection. Reaching for a delicate cloth napkin, I said, "After the commotion I've caused, I wanted to make sure you felt like our dinner was worth your effort."

A perfect gentleman, he took his seat and eyed my martini and his. "I don't drink."

"I do," I said, sipping and quite amused.

A twitch in his upper jaw proved he not only didn't like alcohol for his own consumption, but he didn't necessarily want to see someone else indulge, either. What a pity.

He opted for a sip of water and then asked, "So what's this dinner really about?" He tossed his napkin across his lap.

I noticed his expression, and his tone changed considerably the moment he spotted the martini.

Shit, I thought. Of course he didn't drink. The PFC strictly prohibited underage drinking, and I was entertaining a man under the legal age of twenty-one.

Cupping my chin, I said, "Can I shoot straight with you?"

He helped himself to various food choices and then picked up his fork and knife. Cutting the bowtie pasta and chicken, he replied, "Why don't you? I like direct women." He eyed my boobs then. Honestly, he should've looked at the door. At least the dress pushed up plenty for show.

"I wanted to meet you."

"There were subtle ways to arrange an introduction, don't you think?"

I batted my eyelashes. "What do you mean?"

He licked his lips and dabbed the napkin across his mouth. "Oh, come on, Suzy, don't play dumb with me. I'm young, but I'm not inexperienced."

Thank God.

"I'm not following what you're implying," I said, taking a bite of pasta.

He gulped a swig of water and set the large, pink crystal tumbler on the edge of the placemat. "What happened with being direct?"

"I told you, I wanted to meet you and here you are."

“Yes,” he said. “Here I am. Did it ever occur to you that you could’ve invited me over for dinner minus the fanfare and without every gossip columnist in the country awaiting my arrival?”

He took another couple of bites. I watched him eat, trying to decide how much information I should reveal and realizing he probably wouldn’t believe anything close to a full-fledged denial. I may have underestimated Marco Giovanni.

I hoped so. I liked a challenge and loved surprises.

“You surely don’t blame me for tabloid lies and assumptions.”

He pushed away from the table, crossed his thick arms across his chest, and leaned back.

My gaze drifted down his fit body and stopped long enough to eye the package below the belt. Good heavens, I suspected a long time ago—and apparently reached an accurate decision—men in the PFC sported big cocks with their larger-than-life attitudes. It must’ve been a prerequisite for the players.

It took some effort to tear myself away from the image of young football hopefuls standing in line, waiting for the draft picks to begin while medical personnel measured their penises. The smile crept across my lips anyway.

“Something funny?”

“No,” I replied. “Aren’t you hungry?”

“Not really. I could eat, of course. But I’d like some answers first.”

“Where would you like to get them?” I asked, a saucy nip in my reply.

He licked his bottom lip and looked toward the stairs. Oh God, I thought, my heart racing more than ticking. Surely not!

Marco stood. “A lot of the players warned me about you,” he said, walking over to the bay window overlooking my yard. “Everyone seems to have a Suzy story. My agent, the players, the coaches, pretty much everyone—including your ex-husband and Corby Teller, by the way—told me to cancel this dinner.”

“Then why didn’t you?”

He grinned, pointed toward the pool and waved at a photographer. “I’m a competitive player, and I like a challenge. From what I hear, you’re one of those women who can keep a man on his toes.”

“Really?”

“I read the tabloids, too, Suzy.”

“I’m not surprised. Most men with front page stories tend to like those newsworthy magazines,” I said. “But as far as challenges, you must know I haven’t played hard to get, at least not yet.”

He chuckled and reached in his pocket. “No, you haven’t,” he said, retrieving his keys. “But I will.”

“You aren’t leaving so soon, are you?”

“Actually, we’re leaving,” he said, eyeing my breasts once more. “Grab a sweater. I want to show you something.”

* * * *

Marco Giovanni grew up in a neighborhood similar to one not far from the expensive Highland Park, and for some reason, wanted to show me the kind of place where he felt at home. Closer to downtown, Marco pointed out a house on a side street that looked like it may have been around twelve hundred square feet. Something I couldn’t quite imagine since I lived in a ten thousand square foot home all by my lonesome.

Shifting in the leather seat, I said, “I’m not sure why you brought me out here.”

He pulled his SUV onto the gravel driveway and stopped in front of a little cottage, one with a white picket fence and tacky royal blue shutters. Then, he shoved the gearshift upward.

Parked in front of the house, he leaned over the steering wheel and then glanced my way. “This is who I am. I’m not the rookie quarterback with stars in his eyes like everyone thinks. I’m certainly

not the Italian Stallion your tabloid puppets have dubbed me. I'm a simple guy, Suzy, and one who plans to live within modest means."

I swallowed hard. This presented a new obstacle because after being this close to Marco Giovanni, I realized three things. I wanted him. He was young enough for change, and most definitely worth the time I'd spend rehabilitating him.

Grinning, I patted his arm. "You just leave things to me," I said. "You haven't had the chance to get adapted to the PFC lifestyle. I understand."

"No, I don't think you do." His smile widened and he said, "Suzy, let me be honest with you now. I knew who you were long before you pulled this little stunt. A woman doesn't make the Playpen's Top Ten Most Beautiful Women in the World list without men paying attention."

No, I didn't think so, either. I tried to blush but sometimes even I couldn't act the part. Modesty wasn't my strongest attribute.

"Anyway, we share a mutual interest in one another."

"Good," I said, leaning toward him.

He tapped the driver's window. "That's why I brought you here. There's little reason to lead you on if you don't know who I am, where I came from, and what my goals are."

"Right," I said, propping my elbows on the console and cupping my chin.

"So now you know."

"Right again."

Whatever he thought he easily relayed would soon change. Why not play along until date number one passed?

He started the car and put it in reverse. After he backed out of the driveway, he said, "I bought that house, by the way. Once I have the place remodeled, I'll bring you back. I think you'll like what I plan to do here. Either way, it will be home while I play for Dallas."

I gulped. "Wait a minute. Did you say...you bought that small bungalow and plan to live there?"

“It’s close to town, right smack dab in the middle of everything, and I’m a man who appreciates convenience.”

I wondered if that’s why he liked the idea of a potential relationship with me. My reputation suggested availability if nothing else.

“I’m gutting the whole thing and adding some upgrades,” he continued. “But after a few repairs and some fresh paint, I think the house will be perfect, exactly what I want.”

Oh shit, I thought. I had a long way to go from diapers to training wheels. If Marco Giovanni thought he belonged on the wrong side of town, he was sorely mistaken. I needed to introduce him to the finer things in life, and I planned to start with me.

Chapter Four

Sometimes I missed Cassie. Those moments only lasted a few seconds once I remembered who whispered sweet nothings in her ears these days. My husband, my *ex-husband*, now shared the lovely Cassie Teller's bed. What a pal.

Staring out the window of Marco's SUV, I wondered how she would handle a situation like this. I had to give Cassie credit where she earned plenty. She always charmed her men right out of their pants, and I wanted Marco to leave his at my bedroom door. Then I needed him to decide he liked the roof where he spent the night well enough to afford himself one just like it.

I could not fathom spending time in a house hardly big enough for a pet, let alone two people at the same time. We drove through Preston Hollow and he turned right, making a sharp turn through the iron gates of the property. He didn't seem impressed, and yet Mark and Corby paid somewhere around seven million dollars to move me out of their precious Highland Park neighborhood.

There was a woman behind their generosity. Cassie didn't want me anywhere near her fellows and for good reason.

Marco pulled in front of the house, jumped out, opened the passenger door, and held his hand high in an effort to ward off members of the press. "No questions, please."

I flashed the cameras a huge smile and blew a few kisses to reporters I recognized. Oh yes, I knew how to step right into the role of prima donna.

Marco escorted me inside. Like a perfect gentleman, he helped me out of a knit sweater, and his hands rested on my shoulders long

enough for his fingertips to scrape over my collarbone as he removed the soft pastel blue material. “Nice,” he said, but his lips never met skin.

I don’t think I expected to feel his tantalizing mouth against my nape since he already made things pretty clear. *He* represented a significant challenge instead of the other way around.

Walking toward the wet bar in the center of the living room, I glanced back before pouring myself a drink. “Would you like one?” I teased.

“No, thank you,” he said, loosening his tie and shrugging out of his jacket.

At the very least, he planned to stay for a while. I must’ve earned a few more minutes of his precious time, so things moved along at a good pace, all differences considered.

“Are you hungry? You didn’t finish your dinner.”

“Want the truth?” he asked, a hint of mischief flickering in his eyes. “I had a dinner date before I came over tonight.”

“You mean I’m on a date with a man who dishes out sloppy seconds?”

“I’m not giving you first or seconds tonight, Suzy.”

I’d gathered as much. “I see,” I said, pouting. “So someone else has your eye?”

“Wanna know where I went first?”

“Let me guess,” I said, trying to think of someone who shared my reputation for going after the new rookies in town.

“You won’t,” he said. “Never in a million years.”

“Okay, then, tell me.”

“Cassie Teller,” he said, smirking. “A lovely woman.”

My lips parted but I couldn’t think of anything to say. Cassie hit a new low. I quickly closed my mouth. Typical, I decided. She had become so predictable. Only, I didn’t see her making such a bold play for Marco. She already had three men in her bed, and all of them acted possessive to a fault.

“Yeah, she, uh...” he chuckled and shook his head. “She invited me over for dinner so we could have a nice chat while the kids whined and her fellows supported her voiced concerns.”

“Are you serious?”

“She’s an excellent cook.”

“Bullshit. Steve does most of the cooking over there.”

“The guys said she prepared every dish.”

“What’d she serve? Peanut butter and jelly with a side of sliced apples?”

“No, we had sautéed mushrooms drizzled over tender steak tips and—”

“I really don’t care,” I snapped. “You know, I went to a lot of trouble and prepared a nice meal for the two of us and you barely touched yours.”

“Went to a lot of trouble, did you?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I did.”

“Donovan’s Dining Room didn’t deliver to your door?”

Damn her for telling the one man I wanted all of my secrets. I planned to have a serious chat with Cassie Teller, and if Marco left early enough, she might hear from me in the next few minutes.

“I can’t cook,” I finally admitted.

“I know,” he said. “But I can, and if you stick with me, I’ll teach you.”

“What happened to playing the game?”

He leaned over and took my hand. “You wanted to give those reporters outside something to talk about, right?”

“Absolutely.” But I wanted the man much more than the gossip or even the front page spotlight.

He tilted my chin and his lips brushed across mine. “Then close your eyes, little woman, and let me take the lead.”

As quickly as his mouth touched mine, he backed away. I think I remained in pucker-position because he smiled, chuckled, and then

said, "Suzy, you're a beautiful woman, and I fully intend to have you, but when I take you, it'll be on my terms and without an audience."

"So that's the way you roll, is it?"

"Yes," he said, smiling. "Now, first things first," he continued, walking over to my wet bar. "From what I understand, you have a drinking problem."

He opened a very expensive bottle of scotch and dumped it out in the small sink located in the center of the bar. "Think of tonight as a new beginning."

"What the holy hell do you think you're doing?" I asked, marching over to the well-stocked bar and staring at the brown fluid as it swirled down the small drain.

"Careful now, Suzy," he said, pointing toward the windows. "The cameras are rolling, you know."

I gritted my teeth and watched as he dumped the contents of another three bottles. "For the love of—"

"Don't you dare say God," he interrupted. "God didn't have anything to do with your decision to drink yourself into a stupor twenty-four hours a day, and neither did I, but since you seem to have your sights set on me, pretty lady, I plan to reform you."

"Reform me?" I threw my head back and laughed. Hell, I had to giggle about something. The arrogant bastard discarded over one thousand dollars in perfectly good liquor. What next? The wine?

Bending down to the small refrigerator, he said, "Let's see what you have in here."

Two bottles of Cristal Champagne for starters. "Okay, look. You have to stop." Shit, I thought, before I vocally complained. I knew what was at risk. The look on Marco's face told pretty much everything I needed to know.

He rubbed the pad of his thumb over his bottom lip and with a hint of seduction, he said, "What's it going to be Suzy? Is this booze really worth it to you? See, if I'm with a woman, especially an older woman, then I want her sober. I want her to know what she's feeling

when I'm between her legs and she says 'You have to stop' because she's so turned on she can't wait to feel me taking her faster and harder.

"Suzy, what I don't want is a woman who is the joke of every PFC locker room because she's passed out within seconds of picking up yet another football player after spring training."

"You have no right to talk to me in this manner."

He walked away from the bar and stood in front of me. "No, *you* had no right. You should have stopped and thought about all consequences and outcomes before you called up your favorite gossip columnist and came up with a startling way to meet me. You had no right to call up my agent and try to arrange a meeting after you conjured up the biggest public lie in the history of sports. *You* are the one who had no right to drag me into your mess and then expect me to come in and what—take you to bed on the first date and fall for you like that idiot Frankie McCloskey?"

"Get out," I said firmly.

"Now that would be the easy thing to do, wouldn't it? We've been seen together, photographed, and now you want to kick me out and play up the part of poor little Suzy. I don't think so, doll. Not this time."

"I said, get out!" I picked up a bottle of Cristal and quickly looked behind the bar. I'd have to squeeze by this giant before I'd wrap my hand around a glass. He didn't appear too interested in moving.

"What if I don't want to go? What if your little plan paid off and all I can think about now is how I want to run my hands all over your body?" He licked his lips nice and slow. Then he said, "What if I can't wait to take you upstairs and have my way with you?"

I glanced down. *Good Lord, what a bulge.*

"Oh, it's hard all right. I'm a man, Suzy. A man who doesn't want to be toyed with but a man who could just as easily strip you down to nothing and have meaningless sex with you because I can."

"You don't know what the hell you're talking about!"

“I know man after man can go to your bed without a lot of effort. As long as he has a team owner from the PFC signing his paychecks, he’s welcome to stop in and play under your sheets whenever you don’t have another fellow already visiting. Frankly, I gotta tell ya, I’m surprised you don’t invite several of the guys at once, since your buddies over at the Tellers seem to enjoy the gang-bangs.”

The more he talked, the angrier I became. I wasn’t sure how to handle him, and men seldom puzzled me. They were all the same. Marco, however, seemed different.

I missed something in his smooth Southern gentleman demeanor when I watched him on the sports shows and listened to one interview after the next. Something wasn’t right with Marco Giovanni. Behind his chiseled cheeks, perfect jawline, and blissfully dark eyes, a man with a whole lot of personal issues resided. Why sure, that had to be it. Marco was the one with a few loose screws.

“You’re a control freak,” I announced.

“No,” he said. “I’m not a freak, but I can sure get a little freaky with the right woman. I’m not controlling, nor will I be controlled. And I am no woman’s pawn.

“I’m not your ex, and I won’t hop in your bed and let you use me for target practice. I’m the real deal,” he said, grabbing his jacket. “You’re a sexy woman, Suzy, and I’d love nothing more than to fuck some sense into you. But that’s not what you need. You need some stability and maybe even rehab. You need some serious help, and when you’re ready for it, you call me.”

Shaken by his lecture, I didn’t realize he left the room until I heard the disturbing noise of squealing tires right outside my window. Furious, I hurried behind the bar and quickly poured myself a drink.

With trembling hands, I sipped on a glass of bourbon whiskey. I noticed the reporters on the patio, moving closer and closer with their cameras rolling, trying to capture the deserted diva, the sot with her bottles lined up across the bar. The empty containers served as a

reminder. I let a man come in and take away what once belonged to me. My independence, once coveted, seemed barely within my reach.

“Good God, Suzy, get it together,” I said, drawing the shades and closing the curtains. I strolled back to the bar and poured another drink. I raised the tumbler to my lips and then slammed the glass against the marble-top bar. “Damn,” I said aloud, staring at the untouched liquor. “He got to me.”

Chapter Five

Five Weeks Later

Season Opener, Dallas Rascals Stadium

I walked into the stadium feeling like an outsider. Thanks to Mark and a stipulation in our divorce settlement, I retained privileged access to the players' suites. In my mind, I truly belonged there, but for some reason the crowded stadium offered more appeal.

With my reputation, a lot of the PFC wives and girlfriends probably preferred my absence. I wouldn't be missed in the VIP corridor. With every intention of sitting there—if for no other reason but to intimidate Cassie Teller—I simply couldn't bring myself to board the elevator leading to the executive level. I would've felt vindicated if I could've reminded Cassie of a few very important facts. After she warned Marco to stay away from me, I owed her.

I still remembered what it felt like to make love to two of the three men now sharing her bed. I wanted to remind her that as often as Mark held me in his arms, he, too, must've recalled what it felt like to wake up in my bed.

Instead of heading upstairs, I chatted with Tom, one of the older security guards who stood next to the elevator. Right before kick-off, I selected a vacant club seat and took advantage of a no-show.

The team ran onto the field, and I noticed a straggler, a player bringing up the rear when he typically took the lead. Corby hobbled forward on crutches.

I stood with the rest of the crowd and cheered for our Rascals. I considered asking a man with a Dallas Rascals flag if he knew what

happened to our star quarterback, but before opportunity presented itself, the introduction of the starting line-up began.

“Marco Giovanni is making his debut as the starting quarterback due to an injury Corby Teller received during pre-season.” The sports announcer didn’t elaborate or provide details.

Corby stood on the sidelines, shaking hands and slapping backs, waving to fans and occasionally signing an autograph. A player’s player, if Corby had a career-changing injury, he wouldn’t have bothered socializing. Corby was one hundred percent attitude when injuries jeopardized hefty paychecks.

I turned to the right and looked up. I could see the owner’s suite, the picture windows showcasing the upper echelon of the sports world. The women who dressed the part and the men of substance, the fellows who probably had a lot of money riding on this game, moved to the front of the room, anticipating the game start. They looked permanently pressed to the large picture windows.

The Rascals won the coin toss, and after the kick-off, Marco jogged onto the field. He looked like a natural born leader, like he knew every play the Rascals ever ran. After the ball snap, he threw to his wide receiver. Terrell Marone ran twenty yards leaving them with a first down and fifty yards to go, not a bad beginning.

I glanced up again. I should’ve been in that suite with a martini in hand, discussing the new shopping venues, explaining to the other wives and girlfriends where I purchased my latest pantsuit. Instead, I sat among the common folks, the people who didn’t have any clue about nine-hundred dollar Gucci shoes on sale for seven hundred and fifty bucks at Dressing for Success. I glanced down at my high heels and wondered what kind of woman paid such ridiculous prices for uncomfortable footwear.

My wandering mind revisited the little house near Highland Park. I wondered if Marco still anticipated living in the inexpensive neighborhood, especially after leading the Rascals. I thought about the

certain expectations fans held. Didn't he care that his fans expected to see him living in the lap of luxury?

The hum around the stadium grew, then the rumble. "Touchdown! Rascals!"

Immediately, I stood with the rest of the fans supporting our team. Glancing toward the goal post, I saw why the excitement held at an all-time high. Watching with a certain element of pride, though unexplained, I observed the offensive line players lifting Marco high above their heads in a moment of true celebration. The man of the hour, Marco Giovanni—the Italian Stallion—made a name for himself right then and there, running the ball forty-plus yards to secure the first touchdown of the game.

I shook my head and then looked at poor old smiling Tom. He winked and I waved. A few seconds later, he stood beside me. "That young man sure is something special, Suzy."

"That's what I've heard."

"You'd better hold tight to that one."

I watched Marco enjoying his newfound fame on the sidelines, turning up his cup and looking toward the suites. Maybe he thought I waited there beyond the layers of people crowded together, cheering for him every step of the way. Maybe I should've gone upstairs after all. Then, Marco would've known I was there to support him.

No, I thought, what a crazy notion. We had one date and the evening ended in disaster.

He wasn't searching for me. If anything, he had someone else there anticipating his victories, celebrating his first touchdown, his first score in PFC football.

"I'm not seeing him."

Tom shrugged and pointed to the huge screen located above the scoreboard. "Well, at least he sees you."

I was in living color. Damn those boys who scanned the crowd and looked for familiar or interesting faces. I looked away and Tom said, "That's not going to work. If I had to guess, your boy wanted to

know when you arrived. I've sat through a whole series of questions about you, Suzy Q. Someone has a great deal of interest in you."

"Really?" I asked, glancing back at the monitor only to discover I remained in focus. One cameraman insisted on making sure everyone in the stadium knew where I sat.

"Yep," he said. "Seems the old boy is quite interested in you."

"He wants to change me."

"Maybe you need some minor adjustments, a few modifications here and there. I already see a significant one."

I looked down on the field, and Marco pointed at me. It looked like he mouthed the words, *For you*.

My heart raced forward and I waved. God help me, he was a handsome thing.

Quickly, I turned around to ask Tom what he meant by his remark about a noted change, but he was guarding the elevator again, checking VIP tickets and making sure everyone who headed upstairs had a legitimate reason. Tom probably liked the fact that I had a VIP pass but instead chose a seat that clearly didn't belong to me.

At half time, the no-show appeared with his ticket in hand, "Excuse me, I think you're in my spot."

I didn't ask to see his ticket. I just said, "Yes, and I really enjoyed sitting here. Thank you."

I meant it sincerely, but he muttered a few comments. Rather than retaliate like I once might have considered, I went to say farewell to Tom.

"Why don't you stay until after the game?" he asked.

"I don't think so. I'm going home to a big bowl of popcorn and a tall glass of iced tea."

"Want me to tell him you stopped by?"

I laughed. "I think everyone here saw me thanks to the camera crew."

He nodded. A wise man and yet a victim of his own circumstances and choices he made throughout life, Tom had been taking care of the

Rascals for many years. He typically hung out in the locker room whenever he could, and many of the guys were quite fond of him. Considered part of the team, under Tom's supervision, the janitors and cleaning crew took better care of the Dallas Rascals stadium than most folks concerned themselves with their personal homes.

I popped a kiss on his cheek. "So long, friend," I said, patting his arm when I pulled away.

"That sounds like goodbye, Suzy Q."

"You never know, Tom."

"You ought to be upstairs with your friends."

"No, not today," I said. "But if you run into Marco, tell him hello for me?"

"I'll make a point and see him right after the game."

* * * *

Dallas beat Pittsburg twenty-eight to fourteen. Marco's performance gained instant praise all over the news. When I logged on to the Internet later in the evening, everything sports related somehow led to posted topics about Marco Giovanni, the Italian Stallion.

I clicked on a few images and saved them to my desktop. Five weeks ago, I wouldn't have bothered. I was, after all, quite irritated after our little date and even more frustrated when he didn't bother to call in the weeks following the catastrophe.

Just as I scooted away from the computer, the doorbell rang and I looked through the beveled glass design next to the heavy, dark wood panels. I couldn't see who stood there, so I hopped up, fully expecting to greet the press.

Someone surely wanted to know what I thought about Marco's debut. Even though the media now interpreted the whole Suzy-Marco courtship as a sham—a hoax to help my tarnished reputation and cast

a spotlight on his impeccable one—some reporters remained forever interested.

I opened the door without trying to peek through the oblong window a second time. I probably gasped as soon as my brain processed the arrival of one fine-looking guest.

“Aren’t you going to invite me in?”

He grinned so wide, his etched in dimples looked like they might crack. In his right hand, he gripped a single white rose and in his left, take-out from my favorite place, Donovan’s Dining Room.

“Do you always catch your lady friends by surprise?”

“Just the ones who capture and then hold my attention,” he said, walking toward the kitchen.

“You’re an assumptive fellow, Marco,” I said, closing the door and securing the lock.

“I’m an intuitive fellow.”

“How so?”

“I keep up with you.”

“You saw Tom.”

“I saw you,” he said, his eyes dancing with a mixture of lust and adrenaline.

After involvement with countless PFC players, I knew what they were like after a victory. They turned into explosive lovers, hard to contain and incredibly talented behind closed doors. And for some reason, I was terrified of Marco right then, unsure if I could handle whatever he planned to offer.

Retrieving two plates from the cupboard, Marco made himself right at home. He walked over to the fireplace beside the dining room table, grabbed one of the table top box matches from the mantel, struck it against the long box, and watched the flame light the end. Tenting his hand over the spark, he lit three candles in the center of the table and then blew out the match.

“This is a nice surprise.”

“Why didn’t you sit in the owner’s suites?” he quickly inquired, stepping on the bottom lever of the silver-plated trashcan in the kitchen and discarding the match.

“Water?” I asked, filling two glasses. “I don’t keep sodas here anymore.”

Immediately his gaze shifted to the empty bar. The bottles had been stored in the basement, a few choice vintage selections given away a few weeks ago as birthday gifts, and now the only thing left to remind of the bar left behind were the various tumblers and glasses.

“Sounds perfect.”

I handed Marco a full glass after filling it with crushed ice and cold water from the refrigerator. Then, I opened the silverware case and took out our dinnerware. Our fingers brushed together, but I tried not to pause, acting unaffected by a mere touch.

He unpacked the carry-out trays, watching me carefully and seemingly unable to look away. “Bowtie pasta and chicken parmesan, if memory serves me correctly,” he said, unhooking the tie strings attached to each dinner then removing the layered foil spread neatly over the entrée.

“It’s been five weeks,” I finally said when he pulled the ladder-back chair away from the dining table.

“Yes,” he replied softly, staring at my lips. “I wanted to start the season without distractions. The first game is behind me now.”

“You could’ve called.”

“You could’ve pulled another stunt, and I probably would’ve stopped by on request.”

“Don’t do me any favors,” I teased.

He narrowed his gaze and cupped my neck. His thumb caressed the side of my neck until the rub caused a burning sensation. He stared at my lips and then lowered his head like he planned to ravage them right then and there. Instead, he whispered, “I’m starving.”

“Me, too.”

“And I’ll probably want dessert tonight, Suzy,” he said with a certain edge in his voice.

Pulling away from him, I sat down and nervously scooped a hearty helping of pasta onto my plate. He sat across rather than next to me, like he chose to do at our previous meal, and he seemed so relaxed, confident of the moves he planned to make and positively sure of himself.

He took a bite of his dinner. “So Tom tells me you left at halftime.”

“Yes.”

“I never took you for a woman who dodged the spotlight, Suzy.”

“You had the cameramen watching for me.”

“I did.”

“Why?” I asked, placing the fork on the edge of my plate.

“They expected to find you in the suites,” he said, dodging the question.

“You wanted to know I was there.”

“Are you pleased?” he asked, shoving another bowtie between his lips. “I thought you might feel honored.”

Cocky ass, the win he achieved certainly went to his head.

“I’m confused. The first time I met you, I gathered you wanted me to change, and after you discarded more than a thousand dollars worth of my expensive liquor, you left and I didn’t hear another word. Now, here you are, looking at me like I’m sex covered in silk, sharing a meal we could’ve easily enjoyed the first time you paid me a visit. And so here I am confused as all hell.”

He continued to eat.

“There’s something wrong with you,” I said, slapping my hand against the white linen table cloth and watching the water cascade over the rim of both glasses.

“I imagine when men don’t conform to your expectations you generally decide there’s something wrong *with them*, right?”

“What do you want from me?”

“What if I don’t want anything from you?”

“You’re here, aren’t you?”

“That doesn’t matter, Suzy.”

I pushed away from the table and walked over to the stereo. It was too quiet in the dining room. I feared my thoughts would start flipping off my tongue if I didn’t find a few soft tunes to break the silence.

When I turned back around, he stood inches away. He framed my face and dropped a kiss on my forehead. “Even if the cameras hadn’t found you in the crowd, I honestly believe I would have.”

“Do you?”

“On an ordinary woman, this black pantsuit would’ve caused a person to fade into the layers of people, but you stood out like the camera’s lens brought you into 3D focus,” he said softly, picking up one of my curls and watching as if mesmerized when it latched around his finger.

Swiftly, I moved away. “I’ll just...”

“What? Run? Walk away because I want more than a quick roll across your mattress?”

He stalked forward, and I backed up against the dining room table. My hips were parallel to the furniture, and I had nowhere to turn or any way of escaping once he placed his palms flat against the smooth top.

“You’re going to bite off more than you can chew.”

“I don’t think so,” he said. “If anything, Suzy, I’m going to keep coming back for a full course meal.”

“Marco,” I hummed against his lips when his forehead met mine.

“Suzy,” he whispered. “Don’t let me have your body unless you’ll allow me to touch your heart.”

I took a deep breath. I could feel his erection pressed against my thigh. God help me, I wanted to take a chance on this man. I already made so many changes to please him, and why? Because he pointed out the obvious or because he made simple suggestions and I wanted nothing more than to please him since the first day we met?

He nipped at my jaw and chin, working his way across my cheek and up to my ear. "Let me have you, Suzy. Let me have you for longer than one night."

My arms looped around his neck, and I pulled him to me. My lips took his lips as he snaked his arm around my waist and pulled me against his upper chest.

He released a guttural growl when my breasts mashed against him. His fingers dipped into the low neckline of my blouse, unhooking the buttons as he worked from top to bottom and then helped me out of the jacket and shirt at the same time. Unexpectedly, when the material dropped, so did his head. He teased and tweaked my concealed nipple until I whimpered, pleasure ripping through my body, spiraling up and down my spine until every nerve ending burned for a magnetizing touch.

My hands went to his belt. Cupping my neck, he looked into my eyes and with a raspy tone, he asked, "Did I tell you to unhook my belt?"

"No, but you obviously want me to," I said, patting his cock and breathing heavy against his ear, licking his neck and kissing across the exposed upper area of his chest.

He held my wrists. "Suzy, no," he said. "Right now, this is about your pleasure, not mine."

"I'll find my pleasure," I assured him, popping kisses across his face and neck. "Trust me. I always find it."

Firmly, he pulled my arms away from him and held them clasped behind my back, pushing me onto the table and then working with one hand to unfasten my pants. His mouth moved circles around my lace bra, his lips numbing one nipple and then moving to the other.

"Marco," I begged. "Let me touch you."

He pushed the placemats out of the way and returned his attention to me in a flash, stripping pants away from hips and then complimenting my thong.

“Beautiful,” he said, staring at the white lace material covering me and then nipping the little pink bow strategically sewn parallel to a woman’s very favorite intimate button.

He licked through the material and another whimper escaped my lips. “Relax,” he said, locking my ankles behind his back and then unhooking his belt, making a show out of discarding it.

When he unzipped his pants, I trembled. The knowledge of seeing him undressed for the first time drove my lust forward. His hands dropped to my hips, and he drew me up, away from the cold, flat surface of the table.

He reached behind my back and unhooked the bra. Gently, he fingered the straps across my shoulders and then slid them down my arms so deliberately that I held the cups against my breasts.

“Let me see you,” he growled. “I want to see and feel all of you.”

Reluctant for show, I released the material. “Better?” I teased.

“You better believe it,” he whispered, capturing a nipple between his teeth and pulling as his tongue flattened against the nub.

He gazed into my eyes as he licked, the evidence found there showcased the desire of a man fully capable of loving a woman, and something else lingered, too. A controlled lover, a man who may have been twenty years my junior, but possessed the skills and knowledge to bring a woman to her knees.

My legs splayed, and he worked his palm against the sweltering heat forming in my wet pussy. The ball of his hand rotated around and around, circling my mound until I feared coming without penetration, without his fingers or his tongue, or better still, his hard cock.

Snapping my legs closed, I cried out, “No, wait!”

“No waiting,” he said, placing a tender kiss on my thigh. “Not this time.”

He pushed my legs apart, and I did what any woman about to lose all control might do. I leaned back on the table and decided to do precisely as I was told, something quite new to me, but apparently not to Marco Giovanni. Oh no, I had a feeling he wasn’t as green as his

age suggested. He'd worked on a woman once or twice in his life, and God help me, he knew how to treat a girl right.

Chapter Six

I knew the kind of reputation I earned around some of the PFC players. At least ten of them enjoyed a field trip to my bedroom at one point or another. Several of them—thanks to Mark and Corby—knew about my rubber dolls, a collection I kept hidden upstairs after Mark and I started having our share of troubles.

I wondered how kinky Marco liked his women. I wondered if I even measured up as I watched his dark brown eyes turn coal black, hooded under thick lids and long eyelashes.

He pressed his hands to my inner thighs and then moved his fingers forward and back, massaging me until I burned for a more intimate touch. I reached down my body, but he stopped me before I slid my fingers where his should have traveled.

Grinning, he licked those delicious lips again and then snapped the thin band, barely bothering to remove the shreds of evidence of a thong once worn. He searched my eyes, studied my face, caressed my body and then, God help me, he drove his fingers into my pussy with one sleek move so careless, yet so precise and calculated.

Immediately, my body jerked in response to his touch. My hips rolled forward, and my walls vibrated in an effort to close around the manual stimulation, the bones of his knotty fingers driving me insane as he plunged higher and higher into my vagina, his hand working right against my pussy.

“Come for me, Suzy,” he said. “Let me watch you.”

My legs fell open, and I bit down on my forefinger. My body rose and fell. His fingers twirled higher. They swirled in a delicious rotation. I humped against his hand, trying to capture and ride the

orgasm I needed more than air, more than the drink I'd craved since I took my last sip, and for one primary purpose, for one sole reason. For him! For this!

"Ah, Marco," I said, damp with need, the urgency of a thrashing climax riding in closer, taking hold and barring no interference. Still, I resisted. I wanted this moment to last forever. I wanted the buildup, the angst of preparing for an earth-shattering moment so intense I didn't know if I'd ever recover again.

My hands slapped against the table surface. And his fell away from my body all at once.

"Oh, God, no!" I cried, sitting up and reaching down.

He smacked my hand away and grinned. "Only when I tell you, and you didn't take your orgasm when you were told. Next time, you won't resist. Next time, you'll listen. You'll follow my requests."

Breathless, I stared at who I first thought may have been an angel, but now, upon closer inspection, I decided most definitely held a few common similarities with Satan himself. Gasping, I finally managed, "What the hell is your deal?" The building excitement faded away. My head flew back, and I moaned.

"I'm going to show you," he said, tugging his cock completely free of his pants and then his shorts.

Holy shit, I thought. Not only did he plan to show me, he planned to use the biggest fucking *deal* I'd ever seen in my life to drive home a few points.

"You want this?" he asked, rubbing it against my leg.

Oh yeah, I wanted it. Well, I thought I did prior to seeing the length uncurl from his pants.

"So do you?" he asked again, smiling. "Come on, baby. I like a little foreplay, and I love a woman who can tell me what she wants. Talk to me."

"I wanted to come about ninety seconds ago," I gently reminded. I wondered how he liked that for foreplay and enticing verbal lingo.

He kissed my knee, rubbing, caressing, and holding himself where I could feel and see his growing reaction. Moving toward me, he stood between my legs and kissed me again. This time, his lips were soft and tender, kissing me with more passion than I'd ever found in kissing alone.

"That's nice," I said, forgetting, for the time being, about the orgasm he stole away from me. He ran away with it because he could, because he alone gained the power to control the way I responded to him.

Nipping at my lips, his tongue separated the tight line my mouth formed when I thought the kissing stopped. Instead, he thrust his tongue into the whole of my mouth, and he sipped and licked his way right into another delicious, unforgettable moment, the kind of kiss that meant something. The kind of smooch with guaranteed end results. Surely the fucking would come sometime soon.

I whispered into his ear, "You're going to have one crazy woman on your hands in about five or six more minutes if you don't screw me."

I didn't blink an eye and I didn't smile. There was only so much a woman drowning in heat could stand, and I had reached my limit.

"You'll thank me later," he promised, pursuing my breasts again. And then he stopped abruptly. Changing his point of direction, he headed south and dropped down between my legs so fast they barely had time to part.

Pushing my thighs wide, his mouth latched over my clit, and he sipped on the little button, manipulating it with puckered lips before dropping an inch or so and thrusting his tongue high inside my pussy.

"Oh, Marco," I cried out, arching and waiting, bracing for a climatic end. "More," I said, begging, pressing his head down and holding him pinned against my body. I struggled to make sure he didn't move. My pleasure rolled in, sweeping closer and closer, the flood coming, the crashing climax I wanted to find gaining a source of unmatched inspiration.

And then he left me once more.

Oh, shit! I focused on the chandelier hanging high above us. The lights were a blur. What the heck just happened? Oh, God, I was furious.

“Fucking hell, what is wrong with you?” I exclaimed, trying to catch my breath. Oh yes, this time I was mad, raging fury darted through my veins. I eyed him and his long, mean pussy-damaging cock, the one he had yet to prove he knew how to use.

“What’s wrong, Suzy? Haven’t you ever heard of Domination and submission?”

“Domination and submission is for freaks who want to wear collars and have a lead rope hooked to their neck twenty-four seven.”

He laughed and then smacked my bare mound.

I winced after the slap. I’d never felt anything so arousing.

“No, Suzy. Doms don’t necessarily require their submissives to wear collars, and for the record, I’m not a leather-wearing freak, as you’ve suggested.”

“Could’ve fooled me,” I said, sliding off the table and heading for the stairs.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

“I have rubber dolls with long, thick cocks that can get this job done better than you can. Do you honestly think I’m going to have a twenty-something-year-old dominating man tell me what to do and when to get off? You’re out of your fucking mind!” I clenched my fists and started up the stairs.

“Nineteen,” he stated calmly.

“Nineteen, what?” I snapped, stopping on the second step.

“I’m nineteen, not twenty-something.”

“Well, hell,” I said, laughing. “You’re still wet behind the ears then, pup. How could you possibly know about this kinky Domination and submissive stuff when you probably haven’t even lost your virginity yet?”

He shot me a peculiar glare. *Oh dear Lord*, I thought, a true virgin.

“You can’t be,” I whispered. It was all I could do to keep from running right back into his arms.

“I am. And I’m not ashamed of it or the reasons why I’ve remained one.”

“I...”

“Imagine you haven’t been with too many virgins, huh?”

“Well,” I tried to give him some kind of answer resembling the truth while evading it at the same time. I couldn’t think quickly enough to do either.

“Don’t, Suzy,” he said, tugging at his pants.

“No, wait,” I said. Good God, I had to have him now. Okay so maybe the virgin-factor offered a fascinating quality, but there was something else about him, too. No one else had ever controlled me in matters of the body. The more Marco toyed with me, the more I liked the way he manipulated my arousal. In fact, I actually craved a lot more of the same.

“Put your clothes on, Suzy,” he said firmly. “We need to talk.”

No, actually, we needed to fuck. Talking proved pointless until after the act.

“Now,” he said when I failed to comply with his request.

“Why now?” In a few seconds, I returned to pissed at the highest level, and my anger was boiling over and red hot. What kind of man seduced a woman, told her he was a virgin, and then after dangling a carrot—in his case, a mighty long one—told her to back off and get dressed?

He grabbed my pantsuit and tossed it at me. “You and I are going to have a chitchat. Something you should consider prior to bedding your lovers.”

“I don’t want another lover.”

“Oh no?” he asked. “You could’ve fooled me when your little ass was pumping off that table right then. Yeah, I think you need a lover,

Suzy. What a man can do for you, one of your rubber dolls won't be able to manage." His tongue swiped at the right corner of his mouth. "Yeah, after tasting your sweet cream, I'm pretty sure you need a lover, not a damn doll."

He nailed that one for sure, but did I want a controlling Dom? Hell no. Did I want to become a submissive woman, even in role play? Was he the real deal or just a wannabe who occasionally brought out a switch and spanked me when I stepped out of line?

God forbid if he was the real fucking deal. Heaven help me if he wanted more than a few nights of role play. I'd heard about the Domination and submission lifestyle, and what concerned me most was the punishment aspect. Heck, with my track record, I'd have to spend most of my time standing with my nose stuck in a corner or worse, kneeling down at my Dom-de-Dom-Dom's heels, or whatever they called themselves.

"You can see yourself out," I said, never expecting him to leave.

A few minutes later, I heard his SUV door slam. Another moment or two and the rip-roaring sounds of a cranked engine assured me that he had most definitely left the premises.

* * * *

"It's Marco," he said when he called about two hours later. "Did I wake you?"

"No," I snapped, still pissed off that I settled for revisiting my rubber sex doll again. It was degrading to think I had a man within my reach and I couldn't convince him to let go of his damn control and take me to bed. The fact he left without screwing me, when I realized how much he wanted to, infuriated me. I didn't understand a man like Marco Giovanni.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. "I called to say...I'm sorry."

"Well, that's a start. At least it didn't take you five more weeks to tell me."

“Right,” he said. “Well, that’s one of the reasons I picked up the phone tonight. We’re on the road the next two weekends. I won’t have time to come back until we’re in town for a few weeks. I didn’t want you to think...”

“Then come back now,” I blurted out. “Get in your car and drive over. We’ll pick up where we left off, and if you need the submissive woman, then I’ll play the part.”

“Suzy,” he said carefully. “That’s what I need to explain to you. I’m not playing here.”

“What do you mean you’re not playing? Of course, it’s play. Whenever you romp around with the opposite sex, what do you think it is, work? Hell no.”

“What I want you to understand is I’m...” he paused. “I’m looking for a certain kind of woman.”

“You mean a submissive woman?”

“Yes,” he said. “And I plan to shower her with the best of everything.”

I started thinking money, but before he allowed indulgent daydreams or false hope, he said, “I want a woman who will work beside me and support the things I believe in while allowing me to make decisions for her, the kind of choices you’ve been used to making for yourself.”

“Like?”

“Like money matters, as a start. Financial concerns shouldn’t worry you. If we suit, and by that I mean, if we’re able to consummate our relationship and find one another compatible, then I’ll want you to give some thoughtful consideration to our spending more and more time together. You’d have to make yourself available to me—only me—on a permanent basis if we enjoy one another.”

My heart fluttered, and I suddenly longed to see him again. “Marco, what do I have to do to convince you to come back over here?”

“Tell me you’ll submit to my every request and promise you’ll do it without questioning my motives and without whining.”

“I promise!” I was ready to agree to anything he wanted. I had somehow captured the man of the hour, and I couldn’t wait to get my arms around him again.

“I’m on my way.”

“Good,” I replied. Now I really needed a strong drink. I’d have to settle for something stiff instead.

Chapter Seven

By the time Marco arrived, I was as raw as a woman should be after riding a rubber cock. It didn't matter. The doll didn't do the trick anyway, and I realized why. There wasn't a man or doll alive—or not—who turned me on as much as Marco. The newfound realization scared and excited me on a level I wasn't even sure I understood.

I flung the door open and stared into his dark eyes. "Come on," I purred. "Let's go upstairs." I let my silk robe open in the front and walked across the foyer with leggy strides so he could see my calf and thigh, watch the bend of my knee and see how great my legs looked in a pair of spiked high heels.

"Keep the robe," he said. "Lose the shoes."

So much for seducing a man who wanted everything on his own terms. The shoes were kicked to the wayside upon request. I took the first step and looked back, halfway expecting him to stop me.

"Do you have toys upstairs?" he asked, following behind me.

"What's your pleasure?"

At the landing separating the lower steps from the upper stairs, he yanked the robe tie and the material cascaded over my shoulders. He stood at my back and stripped the silk garment away from my body. His lips moved across my skin, his tongue caressing everywhere he could kiss between my shoulder blades and then up and down my spine.

Shivering, I said. "You'll have to carry me if you keep this up."

His thighs bunched, and he swiftly gathered me in his arms, carrying me up the final flight of stairs. His gaze settled on my breasts

and my nipples pointed forward with the noticeable chill in the air, not to mention the lust he stirred.

"I'm at the end of the hall," I whispered.

He wasn't in any particular hurry as he strolled across the carpet. When he reached my bedroom, he nudged the door with his foot and walked right on inside.

"Oh no," I said, eying my bed and the doll I affectionately called Antonio.

Amused, Marco walked over to the bed and dropped me next to my playmate. "You've got to be kidding."

"I can explain," I said, swiping the lube under my pillow.

"I'll bet," he said, studying the doll's torso and the erect penis *Antonio* always kept. "Do you..."

I pursed my lips. I mean come on, what was I supposed to do, deny I had sex with the damn thing when my strawberry lubricant still glistened on his pecker? I thought about it. Hell, I almost tried to claim someone broke into the place and used my favorite toy while I was otherwise engaged with Marco.

He stared at the doll. "You get off on that?"

Literally, yes. "You mean do I have an orgasm when I use my toys?"

"I guess, yes."

Damn straight. If a man couldn't get the job done, I knew where to find Antonio, and he finished wherever his human counterparts left off. Marco really had no one to blame but himself.

Moving my love doll's materials to the wayside, I shoved the doll repair and cleaning kit out of glaring range too.

"Suzy, I guess I'm just at a loss here," he said, picking up the rubber doll lubricant and tossing it next to the box with the "hand pump for playmates" inscription.

"What don't you understand?" I asked, striking a saucy pose while gripping the bedpost. "A woman my age has certain needs, unmanageable desires."

“A woman your age apparently needs a lot of discipline.”

“Is that a threat?”

“A promise,” he said with a guttural moan while undressing. When he whipped the belt in my direction, I didn’t flinch. I was bound and determined to make him think I’d submit at all costs.

I fluffed up the pillows and nervously straightened the bed while he stripped away his pants and boxers, shirt and tie. “Look at me, Suzy.”

After I tossed a decorative pillow toward the end of the bed, my gaze met his. His penis hung forward, and the mushroom head drew my tongue, purely instinctive, of course, and I pressed it against my top lip.

“Do you know what I want?” he asked, eyeing the doll.

I knew what I wanted, and Antonio didn’t make the list. I already had some of his action, and he was a pretty bad lay compared to the real thing. He didn’t move fast enough for my liking.

Marco inched closer to the bed, snaked his thick arm around my hips and gave me a gentle love pat on the bottom. “Do you have any idea what I’d love to see you do?”

“Please don’t say the doll,” I whispered, licking his lips and then pressing my mouth against his.

Opening his mouth to speak and then flashing a devilish smile so wide I ultimately kissed his teeth, he said, “Now Suzy, we agreed you’d do whatever I wanted you to do.”

True, but I never played with Antonio in front of anyone. A few times Mark walked in on me in the middle of a humping session with my sex doll, but overall, Antonio and I enjoyed our share of privacy locked behind my bedroom door.

Marco’s gaze lowered, and his fingers traveled across my back until he held me in a loose embrace. “Get on the bed,” he instructed.

I raised a brow and asked, “Where?” I tried to play dumb, hoping I could kick the sex doll off to the side and he’d somehow lose his value in the process. Out of sight, out of mind.

Chuckling, he said, "I just want you on the bed, on your knees, facing me."

Oh, I could do that without delay.

I climbed on the bed and placed my hands on his shoulders for balance. His cock touched my mound, and a bolt of electricity zipped right through my sex. Aroused, the only thing I wanted to do was reach down, pump his cock through my hand a few times and then aim his pretty pecker for a positioned start.

He moved my hands to his neck and then wrapped his arm around me and said, "I really am a virgin."

The damn electrical current went from zip to zap, and the lust I felt two seconds before his statement turned into a profound need, a hunger so completely unexplainable that I was dying for him to take me.

"Why have you waited?" I asked. It seemed like the appropriate question.

"The why doesn't matter. Someday, I may tell you."

"Then why me?"

"Why not you?"

Well, for starters, I would've thought if he saved himself for marriage or whatever, he'd look for prospects in some sort of white book of virgins rather than find a woman who topped the black list of tramps.

"Why not me," I whispered in agreement without voicing my inept reasoning.

His mouth covered mine, and if I'd ever been kissed before, those kisses didn't matter and certainly never amounted to much. They didn't compare to the way his mouth stole away with the moment, ignited a passionate start to our time together.

With his tongue touching my tongue, his lips pressed against my lips, his breathing changed, increasing to a heavy sigh one minute and then a true reluctance, like he wasn't breathing at all, the very next. I tumbled into a mountain of trouble.

I was falling for this man. Head over heels, no holding back now, flipping the hell out because I already knew what I held in my arms. It wasn't good. Oh no, this thing Marco and I started wasn't an average romance. I was falling hard, tripping really, into a maddening kind of love.

No, I thought as his lips left mine. Oh, no, no, no.

I couldn't think of this thing as love. I had to call it out by a more appropriate name.

"Yes, that's right. This is lust," I whispered, regretting my words almost the instant I spoke them.

His lips quivered. "Are you trying to convince me or yourself?"

I swallowed hard and then clasped my hands tighter around his neck. "What are you doing to me?"

"Me?" he asked, playfully dropping his lips to my nipple and swirling his soft tongue around my areola. "I'm going to make you into an honest, respectable woman. That's what I plan to do because I'm a serious kind of guy, Suzy. A man who goes after what he's destined to have without pausing for fear of moving too fast."

What the hell? I couldn't think now. I could only respond. Only react because a man with his status in the sports world seemed hell bent on making me his woman, maybe even his wife.

Dear God, surely not.

My body braced against his. My hands roamed across his firm shoulders, down his broad chest, and then gripped his muscular arms. He swayed a little and then pressed me against the bed.

"Your control is killing me here," I said, nipping at his jaw as he seemed to indulge in the feeling of my pussy right under the tip of his cock.

"I'm actually...losing the control I planned to keep," he said, rolling off of me and staring at the ceiling.

Realizing if I was his first, he wouldn't last long, I made an easy suggestion. Leaning over him, I asked, "Can I give you a blowjob?"

Eyeing his extraordinary size, I sure hoped he took my offer. This was one time I didn't want more to ultimately mean less.

He glanced at the doll, and I shook my head, touched his penis, and felt him twitch under my hand. "Yeah, I'd like to have my cock in your throat," he said. "But first, I want to see what I should expect."

"What do you mean?" I asked, gaping at the damn sex toy I already used enough for one night.

He reached over and pulled the doll onto the bed again. "Hmm, he feels real, doesn't he?"

"*It* does feel real," I corrected, grabbing a moist towelette from the cleaning kit and wrapping my hand around the toy's cock.

"Show me what I can look forward to, Suzy," he said in a steady tone. "Suck that cock and show me."

Lowering my head to the doll's belly, I licked the tip of the toy, pulling the soft tip into my mouth and then showing off as I rose and fell over the full shaft, tapping the imitation balls at the base. Mumbling, I spread my legs and reached for my pussy, wanting to tempt Marco as much as possible.

With a quick yank, he pulled me to him, and I immediately opened my mouth over his swollen dick and sucked the tender skin right under the swell of the thick mushroom head. Swirling my tongue over the crest and then down his shaft, I didn't suck him all the way to my throat. Instead, I played with him. He moaned as he hardened and his masculine scent tempted my senses.

My pussy throbbed with desire. I longed to know the feel of him swelling inside my walls.

"Oh, sweet lover," he whispered.

Okay, so now he needed to see the seductress. This sweet business was for the birds.

"I was damn jealous of that doll, Suzy."

Licking the head of his cock and sipping the slit oozing with his delicious pre-cum, I said, "I know." And I believed him. After all, he

only allowed a minute and a half of toy play before he demanded my attention.

I sucked him to the roof of my mouth and his hand immediately went to my head. “Not too fast, lover. Take me slow.”

Tasting a slight salty drizzle, the preamble of his full release, I found new motivation. I wanted his cum jetting across my tongue, filling my mouth and coating my throat. His hand tightened around my nape and he said, “Ah yeah, Suzy. Take all of it. Go down on me, baby. That’s good. Real nice.”

Up and down, I bounced over his cock until he was so hard I couldn’t understand why he wasn’t exploding between my jaws. “I won’t come without you, sugar,” he informed, holding my hair off of my neck.

I could feel his eyes on my backside, and when his finger ran down the crack of my ass, I flinched. “You’re going to let me fuck this pretty little ass, aren’t you, Suzy?”

Sure, sure, whatever, I thought, sucking faster, adding more tongue, sipping the tip and gliding over his cock like every inch of him was a present, a gift I hoped he’d never deny me. Slowing the pace, I tapped his balls with my fingers and caught another stout stream of pre-cum, enough of his excitement to let me know he most certainly was good to go. If he’d only release his damn control, I’d have him where I wanted him.

Reaching for his balls again, I pinched the skin under his scrotum and continued to perform the best blowjob of my lifetime. Finally, he bunched my hair and jack-knifed into a seated position. “That’s it, Suzy. Suck it, baby.”

Gripping the side of my neck, he took control by tugging on my hair, moving my head up and down over his long, thick dick. And just when I thought he couldn’t take another slide across my tongue, he pulled me up and straight into his massive arms.

The taste of him drove me wild, and it was obviously scribbled across my face. “What’s wrong, baby?”

“You know what’s wrong.”

Sliding over him, I glided across his stomach. My heat left its evidence as I squirmed closer to his cock and then moved toward his chest once more.

“You feel like hot, wet satin,” he said. “Now I want you to do me a favor.”

“Fuck you?”

“Yeah,” he said, “But first, reach in my pants and find a condom.”

A condom? Was he fucking serious?

“I’m on the pill.”

“That’s great,” he replied. “We’re extra-protected then.”

Grumbling, I slid off the bed and grabbed his pants. When I turned back around, he sat with his knees bent and his feet flat on the floor. God help me, I’d never seen a man any harder, with a cock any larger, waiting with so much lust in his eyes. I also never imagined allowing a nineteen-year-old man into my life, especially at this level.

I stroked his face, the three-day old beard tough against my flesh and making me all the more aware of the man hidden behind those beautiful dark eyes. Lowering my lips to his, I slid the foil packet into his palm.

Bringing it to his lips, he bit the end like he’d been opening condom packages all of his life. He patted his legs and said, “Bend over, Suzy.”

Stifling a moan, I obeyed. Kneeling beside him first, I arched my body over his tightened thighs and braced for pleasure, doubting even a solid strike from him would induce one smidgen of pain.

Raising his arm back, he said, “When I ask you to do something,” he stopped talking and started kneading my skin, rubbing my ass in a circular motion one minute and then pinching flesh the next while adding, “You will not question why.” The first smack popped against my bottom and I whimpered.

“And you will not whine, Suzy,” he said, slapping again.

God help me, the strikes burned. I bit my lip, rejecting the inner voice to defy him, to tell him I didn't want to play his games anymore.

"Suzy, do you understand me?" he asked, whipping me with four or five firm slaps to the rear.

"Ye...esss," I said softly. *Oh, please, please, fuck me!*

"Very good," he said, kissing one of my globes. Then, he reached under me so he could perhaps feel proof of the pleasure his strikes brought. Maybe he was curious to see if I remained committed to his cause.

"Roll over," he said, turning me away from his body so I faced him from a side position. "Turn all the way over on your back."

He spread his legs apart, and his dick found its position in the curve of my waist. "Are you nervous, lover?" he asked, eyeing my breasts.

Very. "No," I said, admitting nothing.

Rubbing my mound with a continual circular motion using the ball of his hand, he said, "I own this pussy, Suzy."

"You own it?" I asked, somewhat intrigued but more amused than anything else.

Narrowing his gaze, he said, "If you can't commit to me now, then don't let me take something I want when you're not willing to give me everything I need."

"I'll give anything you need," I promised, reaching for him.

He clasped my wrist and brought it to his lips. Kissing the inside of my palm, he locked his hand around my fingers and then raised his left arm. Without warning, he issued four sound taps with his three middle fingers striking my mound.

"I—"

"Shh," he said. "Let me soothe you, Suzy."

Caressing my skin, his hand dipped lower. Spreading my pussy lips, he inserted two fingers and twirled them high into my tight, wet

channel. "I want you to know who you are and what you already mean to me."

What I meant to him?

"Instant attraction," he said. "From the time I first saw your pictures in the magazines, I wanted you."

My nipples spiked with his confession. Turned-on one degree hotter, I physically ached for him and seriously considered groveling for sex if he didn't give me what I longed for most.

Holding my legs with one arm securely fastened over them, he moved me to the bed, carefully positioning me so the pillows remained under my head. He pushed my legs apart and towered over me.

"Dear God, you're beautiful," he said, lowering his lips to my belly and kissing my pussy once more. Taking a deep breath, he lifted his head and started forward, his cock hanging in the perfect mounting position.

I shifted and when I did, he set his jaw. As if he wanted to betray the decision I encouraged him to make, he slid down again, like he planned to settle between my legs and sip on my juices. Then, his body language changed and with a sudden move, he hovered over me.

Never taking his eyes off of me, he studied the condom before handing it back to me.

"I'm glad to do the honors," I told him while rolling the rubber over his dick and using both hands to manipulate his pleasure, easing him into the protective coating.

After I leaned back again, he slid into place, holding himself at the base of his cock. "You'll come when I tell you to come."

Maybe I should've let him in on a little secret. After all the foreplay, I was probably going to come within a half a second after his cock pumped inside of me. Rather than argue the point, I reminded myself rather smugly of who here had lost out on quite a few fucks. It wasn't me.

He closed his eyes and moved forward. “Oh, God, yes,” he muttered. His penis locked into place, and then started to strike, his cock thumping hard against my walls for a few seconds before he pushed higher inside and held completely still.

“Let me on top,” I said, squeezing his hips with my thighs.

“Not a chance,” he said, grunting when he thrust inside once more. “Come!”

God help me, I wanted to, and he shouldn’t have to ask twice. His body jerked. He hammered harder and harder, taking his time initially with a few uneven strokes, then losing all restraint when his mouth dropped to my breast. He lapped over a nipple with wet kisses while pounding away for a guaranteed release, one I knew would come early.

Marco needed a quick end, only he fought to postpone it. “Now! Damn it!” he exclaimed. Beads of sweat rolled off his brow and scattered across his forehead.

Shit, he didn’t have to get so testy about things. I held back for him, wanting to see him find his pleasure, but the closer I came to my orgasm, the more I found true joy in watching him take his.

“Marco,” I whispered as the tide found me and the waves of gratification washed over my body with an energy of its own. “Oh shit, Marco!” I tried to wither away quietly, but instead he worked harder to make sure I released a fucking scream. His cock thumped against my vaginal walls, and his jerks still didn’t subside.

“God help me, don’t stop!” I called out, clawing my way to freedom while indulging in the tight screw, the way his cock touched places no other man’s penis found.

“Ah, Suzy, baby, you feel so nice.”

His sexy voice provoked another sensational release, and I bit on my lower lip, allowing the pleasure to find me. He watched with beautiful, yet haunting eyes as my hips worked for more, soliciting each thrust he still had left to give.

One orgasm shook me, and he hammered inside my vagina again until multiple jolts launched even more fulfillment. “Don’t...stop.”

He didn’t. He moved into me with a full claiming, the kind of loving a woman expects from a man who’s never had his first sexual experience.

We came together like two bodies drawn together by force, and the seduction, while beautiful, never compared to the satisfaction found in his very capable body.

I’d been sexed by one man and then another, but I’d never found the kind of contentment I truly needed. Now, I knew why. I had to kiss a lot of players in order to find the man who really wasn’t interested in playing me.

* * * *

A few hours after sunrise, Marco pulled me on top of him and said, “Show me what you can do for a man.”

“Gladly,” I said sleepily, barely coherent, and not thinking about condoms whatsoever.

He pressed a foil package in my hand and pulled the lubricant from under the pillow. He must’ve found it at some point during the night.

I rolled the rubber over his somewhat flaccid cock and grinned as his full growth materialized. “Damn if you don’t get an erection faster than any man around.”

“I wouldn’t go there if I were you, Suzy,” he said, his eyes flashing a hint of jealousy.

“Go where?” I said, placing my hands on his belly.

“Don’t compare me to any man you’ve ever had in your bed. I don’t want to know about your experiences with any of them, and I don’t want comparisons.”

I stroked his belly, teasing the tip of his dick by sliding over him, drifting by the head so fast he couldn’t penetrate me unless he

wrapped his arms around me and held me against his body. "I like morning sex with you," I said, dropping my head back and lowering my body.

"Ah, baby, this is sweet satisfaction," he said, tweaking my nipples with his thumbs.

Seated on top of him, I watched as the sun beamed its first ray of bright morning light across the bedroom. His dark features fully aglow, Marco looked like he belonged in my bed, like he anticipated waking up every morning with me beside him. Smiling as I rode him, he gripped my legs and maneuvered them any way he wanted.

"Ah yes," I said, as he thrust into me with a long, sudden stroke. Easing away from me, he grinned when I said, "Let me come."

And I knew better, of course. "Not until I give you permission," he said. "And I may not grant it for a while." Allowing me to process what I viewed as a delicious threat, he said, "You're like a dream."

Cupping my neck, he pulled me down and kissed my intentions straight away. Withdrawing all the way, his tongue moved in between my lips and he whispered sweet everythings, the kind of sentiments every woman wants to hear in the middle of fucking.

But when his body shifted again, nothing prepared me for his reentry. With only a quick adjustment, he eased forward, only this time his cock parted my cheeks and found its place through a different passage.

"Ah yeah, sweetheart," he whispered.

Everything I'd heard about backdoor guests rang true. Marco tapped my ass with his thick penis, penetrating with caution, yet finding a full purpose. The pleasure washed over me. With only a grunt to warn, Marco thrust harder.

"Beautiful woman," he said. "Ah, Suzy, no one will ever measure up to you," he continued. Pressing his cock higher, he said, "Hold still, sweetheart."

I did what he asked, allowing him to take me, realizing there'd never be another moment like this one, like there'd never be another

time when I could feel so secure in my sexuality. Sex with Marco made me feel wild and sexy. I found more freedom under his control than I ever expected.

“Come!” he said with a sudden jerk, stuffing his fingers inside my pussy while his cock filled my ass. “Now, Suzy.”

I noticed his tense jaw, a difference in his expression. His eyes flashed something more than lust as he watched me find my release.

“Oh, Marco, it hurts so good,” I said, turning my face into the pillow.

“That’s my girl. You come to me, doll.” Then, he shifted our positions, rolling me under his body with his chest at my back. And he continued to fuck my ass with slow, beautiful moves, screwing me nice and tight until I finally begged for rest, yet silently hoped for promises of more.

Chapter Nine

Seven Days Later

There was a time when I would've been on the plane headed to Detroit right behind the team, especially for Monday Night Football. Tonight, I sat alone on the sofa with a large bowl of buttery popcorn wishing like the devil Cassie Teller and I were still friends.

Cassie wasn't all bad, and at one time I considered her a best friend, a true sister of sorts, but then the green-eyed monster came in and destroyed yet another somewhat solid friendship. Naturally, the kinship we had wasn't as strong as I perceived it because she broke up my marriage, or at least she was the final straw breaking the camel's back.

I remember the first time I noticed how Mark seemed to establish a connection with her. Their bond formed almost immediately during our trip to Las Vegas for her wedding to Corby. I couldn't interfere with the chemistry they found. Now, of course, I understood why. She had my husband and I had, *Oh God, help me*, I had Marco!

Snatching the phone, I dialed Cassie's number without a second to spare. There was a time for everything, a season for explaining and overdue apologies to issue. It was now or never.

Their housekeeper answered the phone. "Hello, Tellers."

Maybe Cassie went to the game after all. "Angela, hello. This is Suzy Illiani. May I speak to Cassie?"

"I have it, Angela," Cassie said politely. Then, after their housekeeper hung up, she snapped, "What do you want, Suzy?"

Her reply was precisely what I expected. I knew the real Cassie Teller, the overprotective wife and mother, never mind the possessive lover of three incredibly handsome men.

“Are you watching the game?”

“You called to ask me if I’m watching football?”

True, how stupid to use the game as an icebreaker, so I tried again. “Cassie, no, I didn’t.”

“Then why did you call?”

I started to ask about the kids but decided against kid-mentions. Instead, I said, “In the PFC, marriage is over-rated, romance is king. Lust trumps love and everybody still wants a happy ending.”

“Do what?” she asked and then burst into laughter.

“What I’m trying to say, Cassie, is that I don’t blame you now for stealing my husband.”

“Well, that sure is good to know, Suzy. Considering the fact I didn’t steal him but you more or less tossed him my way when you couldn’t keep your pants up. Ah, and I hear you’re still up to your games, too. Mark once said you’d never change.”

She made a valid point. I started sleeping around on Mark soon after we were married. There were too many lonely nights, and I was young, dumb, and looking for a good time.

For some reason, I forgot about Cassie’s spunk. We hadn’t talked in so long there were some things I’d missed and other things I forgot about simply because they didn’t bring back fond memories.

“Is there anything else you’d like to say to me tonight?”

“No,” I stated flatly. *Other than, Oh my God, Cass! You should see how Marco looks at me, or Wait! Let me tell you what he wanted me to do to Antonio, my go-to rubber dick! Or how about, I just miss my old friend.*

None of which I said.

“Well, so nice of you to call tonight, Suzy. Now, why don’t you go out and have a drink on me. I’ll let the fellows know you called with such a philosophical viewpoint.”

“Okay,” I said. “Goodbye, Cassie.”

“Nighty-night,” she said. “Enjoy that toddy.”

What a bitch, I thought when I slammed the phone down.

I definitely developed the sot-reputation right along with the slutty one, but to patronize me after I clearly tried to sober up, well there just wasn’t any excuse for it.

I stared at my empty bar and thought of all the things I could do with the wet bar area, the space I didn’t need cluttered with liquor bottles anymore. Then I returned to the sports announcers who were spouting off about Corby’s injuries and whether or not he’d remain on injured-status. If so, many fans wanted to know if the team trainers considered him capable of full participation.

Maybe Cassie had a right to harbor those ugly grapes. My man was going to take her man’s position and, yes, I found some pathetic satisfaction in the fact. Even if Corby returned and his hamstring injuries healed, his performances wouldn’t measure up to Marco’s capabilities.

My phone rang right when the Rascals kicked off. “Hello?”

“Suzy, it’s Cassie.”

“Yes?”

“I appreciate your peculiar way of apologizing, and I want you to know that sometimes apologies are accepted even when they’re unspoken. And sometimes, even when someone says they’re sorry or tries, as you did, to apologize, an apology isn’t wanted or expected.”

“Okay, Cassie, I get you. The fact that you don’t want to accept an—”

“What I’m trying to say,” she interrupted, “is that you and I enjoyed a lot of good times together.”

“Yes,” I agreed. “We did.”

“And whenever you’d like to drop by for a cup of coffee, you’d certainly be more than welcome.”

“I would?”

“Yes,” she said. “I think it’s time for us to call a truce, don’t you?”

“Definitely.”

“And by the way, I hear Marco is spending a lot of time there now.”

Shit, I thought. Could I befriend Cassie and risk placing Marco right in front of her like a tempting snack?

“Well?”

“I wouldn’t say a lot,” I said cautiously. “We’ve spent a few hours together.”

“That’s good, Suzy,” she said. “I’m very happy for you. From what I’ve heard, Marco is top notch.”

At least now she didn’t have to worry about Mark whenever he stopped by to hand over my alimony check.

“Anyway, I wanted to call you back. I agree with you. In this business, everyone still wants a happy ending, and those are hard to come by. I hope you get yours, Suzy.”

Dallas had the ball on the five yard line when I returned my focus to the game. “Well,” I said. “Let’s watch our Rascals.”

“Take care and come see us soon,” she said with finality in her voice.

“Night, Cassie.”

I replaced the phone and studied the television screen. I held my breath during a replay, and then the cameras went right back to the live game action.

“Touchdown, Dallas Rascals!” One of the retired football players covering the game seemed as excited as any Rascals fan sitting in the stands. “And it looks like Marco Giovanni took the ball right in for the first score tonight.”

I couldn’t help but smile, dance around the room and wiggle my little tail all over the place. I focused on the television and watched Marco strut his stuff. Good Lord, he was one hell of a man and right then and there another thought crossed my mind, too.

Marco Giovanni was also my man, or at least seemed very interested in claiming me as his woman. I sure as hell didn't object. In fact, I kind of liked the idea.

* * * *

After the game, the doorbell rang around midnight. I peered outside, and a man in a chauffeur's cap handed me an envelope.

He stood on my front porch with his arms crossed in front of him, waiting patiently for me to read the letter. An older fellow, he had white hair and a thin little mustache. His gentle green eyes followed mine as I dropped my gaze in order to read the instructions carefully.

If you're reading this then you know we won. I've left the driver with a key to my place. I hope you'll go there and wait for me. I'm flying home after the game and should be home around two o'clock. If you don't show, I'll know you made other plans and I'll call you tomorrow, but I would like to come home and find you in my bed tonight. I miss you.

"Wait here," I said, rushing up the stairs. Seconds later, I was dragging my suitcase out from under my bed. I tossed in thongs and bikini underwear, lingerie and shorts, pants and blouses and a ton of other clothing items I might need over the next couple of days. I'd show Marco what it meant to miss me. Hell, he might be careful about what he wished for in the future because right now, I planned to haul half my wardrobe over to his house.

Rushing down the hall and into the guest bedroom, also known as Antonio's room since everyone teased me about keeping him there most of the time, I opened the walk-in closet and pulled out all sorts of toys and lubricants.

"Sorry, Antonio. You have to stay here," I said, patting his lifelike form.

Giggling because I spent so much money on a damn doll, I eyed Antonio's cock. Excited, I almost dropped my pants and rode out an

orgasm just for good measure. His vibrating cock did the trick at times like these.

No, I thought. I wanted the real man, the hard thrusts of a living and breathing alpha male who captured my attention and apparently wanted my heart, too.

Loading my arms down with sex toys, I rushed back to my bedroom and unloaded everything in the top of my luggage. Zipping it securely, I rounded the corner and rushed down the stairs with the little wheels on my luggage bouncing up and down across the hardwood floors, scratching the surface as the piece flopped around behind me.

“Will you need assistance?” the chauffeur asked.

I stared at the limousine and studied the driver. Then I looked toward the driveway. I had three cars, all of them parked in my expansive garage with a full tank of gasoline in each. I could drive myself to Marco’s place.

Uh-huh, I thought. I gave up booze, I thumbed my nose up at the football owner’s suites, and now a limo, one of my favorite modes of transportation waited to haul me across town. Maybe this was a test.

Shaking my head and stepping outside, I said, “Don’t be ridiculous.” I stuck the key in the lock and secured the house before facing the driver again.

The old man shrugged. “Suit yourself.”

Shit! I thought.

Now I talked to myself so much I even cut my nose off by not paying attention to what I said and to whom. Dragging the luggage toward the curb, the driver at least held the door open for me and I said, “On second thought, if you will, please place the suitcase in the trunk.”

“Sure thing,” he said, grabbing the handle. “Sit back and relax. Help yourself to the drinks in the ice chest.”

And that’s when I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

Chapter Ten

When I drank, I didn't take a sip or two. At some point during the pouring and chugging, I developed a goal, the one many alcoholics often have. I wanted to get drunk, fucked up, high as all hell and enjoy a long-overdue good old fashioned liquor buzz.

After we passed Highland Park, I was well on my way. By the time we reached the downtown area, and my driver made a stop by the liquor store, I was drunk. When I tripped into Marco's house, I barely knew why I decided to go there in the first place.

Stepping inside the dimly lit cottage, I immediately placed the vodka and apple mixer in the refrigerator. Stocked with fruits, veggies, a lot of bottled water, and three gallons of milk, Marco's fridge didn't offer a lot of space so I rearranged everything. The liquor gained the best placement on the top shelf.

Frantically going through the cupboards, I found a nice crystal glass and mixed up the first drink. Then, I stumbled around Marco's renovated home.

I liked what he'd done with the place but preferred my house ten to one over the closet-sized cottage. Taking another gulp of the martini, I stuck my head into his bedroom. There, I spotted his king-sized bed and a large screen television. But outside of two dressers, the large room appeared empty with solid white walls, untouched by framed prints or football memorabilia.

He needed me to come in and spruce up the place. Good thing I came prepared.

Since I planned to stay a while, I'd help Marco find an interior designer who wouldn't mind showing him how to spend some of his hard earned cash.

Unpacking my clothes and strategically placing my toys and accessory items next to the bed, I fantasized about the immediate future. Eyeing the dildo I retrieved first from my luggage, I considered play time, but the vodka called to me, inspired me to stay on my feet rather than spread my legs and get busy.

Making another pass through the kitchen, I replenished my drink and continued into the living room. On the coffee table, I prowled through an open box and found some baby pictures, team photographs showcasing a much younger Marco, and a scrapbook.

When I opened up the thick book, on the very first page, an adorable couple smiled back at me. The girl had braces and the boy looked like he needed them. Grinning as I flipped through the pages, one after another, a truth unfolded. A sad story Marco never offered to share.

Apparently the girl wearing the train-tracks must've been his high school sweetheart. Her parents wouldn't let them date, or so I gathered from the countless love letters. He settled for seeing her in the stadium stands and taking the rare snapshot with her at school.

Then, tragedy struck.

According to the notes, the young woman was permitted to go to the senior prom with Marco. The news clippings that followed letters of enduring love added to the heart-wrenching tale. The articles stated Marco and his date had been driving toward their local high school when they were struck by a utility vehicle driven by a drunk driver. T-boned, they were hit it at a very high rate of speed. The passenger in Marco's car, his girlfriend, died on impact.

"Oh, my God," I said, turning through the book once more, trying to piece together what happened.

I heard the back door open and close. With too many of the once boxed items scattered around me, I didn't have time to return the book

to its original packaging, so I looked up and waited with Marco's memories spread across my lap.

He didn't look angry when he first spotted me. In fact, for a second, I didn't think he even acknowledge my snooping. Instead, he was more concerned with the apple drink next to the box where he stored his childhood memorabilia.

"I'm...sorry. I had no right."

"No," he said. "You didn't."

I closed the scrapbook and noticed he still stared at my glass. After an uncomfortable silence, Marco walked around the coffee table and kissed me on the cheek.

"Marco, I—"

"Her name was Francine Alberto, and she was from a wealthy Italian family with too much money and too many relatives around to keep a close eye on her. A lot of folks, well you know how rumors are, used to say her father had connections to the mafia." His tone turned bitter. "His connections sure as hell didn't save us when a drunk driver struck my car and claimed her life."

"Marco, you don't have to talk about this," I said, trying to stop the magnetic pull the apple martini possessed. I really needed that drink, just another sip, and I'd face this conversation head-on.

Marco's legs parted, and he dropped his clasped hands between his legs. "You wanted to know why I was a nineteen-year-old virgin, and now you have my legitimate answer."

"I'm sorry," I said.

I could see his pain, and I couldn't imagine the brutality of the young girl's fate, the cruel hand that stopped two lovers from consummating their affection. After reading the news clips and seeing the love letters, it wasn't all that hard to piece together.

"We weren't allowed to see each other until her eighteenth birthday. She turned eighteen the day before the prom. Her mother and father asked to meet me the day before I picked her up. Her father—quite the brute—explained to me how he'd crush my nuts if

anything happened to his little girl, and her mother made sure I believed him.

“So I picked her up, we went out to eat at a nice local restaurant and then headed for the school to take our prom pictures. We were only going to stay for a couple of hours because she had a twelve o’clock curfew and we...” His voice broke and then he continued. “Well, as you can imagine, we had mighty big plans for the evening and a hotel room rented a few blocks from the school.”

Tears came into his eyes, and he swiped them away. “I believed she was the love of my life. I waited four years to hold her, four long years to make her completely mine, and one second she’s sitting beside me laughing and the very next,” he dropped his voice and his head, “and the next minute, she’s gurgling blood and taking the last breath she’d ever take.”

“Oh, Marco,” I said, reaching for him. “I really am sorry.”

He stared at the drink. “Maybe now you can understand why I can’t be with you, Suzy.”

“You what?” I asked, totally caught off guard.

“If you’re choosing to pursue me, then choose me. But don’t you bring alcohol into my home and disrespect me by drinking booze here. I won’t allow it, and you should’ve known better after I went to all this trouble to fly home tonight. I did not want to come home to the smell of whiskey.”

Well, it was actually vodka and sour apple, but I didn’t correct him. “Marco, I did quit drinking.”

“Did you? When? Because right now, the only thing I see is a beautiful woman with red-streaked eyes and a smell so strong you’d go up in flames if I lit a match in here.”

“Marco,” I began. “How was I supposed to know...you’d been through something like this?” I was dry toast, completely wasted.

“You weren’t supposed to know. I would’ve eventually told you when the time was right, but the time isn’t right. We’re still new,

working out quirks. I want to be with you because of you and not because of the strong resemblance you hold to Francine.”

Do what? I must’ve missed something. I quickly opened the scrapbook again and flipped to the back. I studied her senior picture and then the earlier photographs, too.

“I don’t see a resemblance.”

“You look like her,” he said, twirling my hair around his finger. “But that’s not why I care about you.”

“Oh, really,” I said. “Then why did you bring it up?”

“I don’t know,” he said, rubbing his palms across his blue jeans. “Because I’m pissed off that you had to bring alcohol here and fuck up my plans.”

“Marco, I can make this up to you,” I said, wrapping my body around his.

“No, you can’t,” he stated flatly. “But I can certainly teach you a lesson and then you’ll understand. And so help me, you better never try something like this again.”

* * * *

I should’ve paid closer attention to what he had in mind when he implied a punishment was in order. I should’ve adamantly refused when he cuffed my hands behind my back and placed my nude ass in the corner.

“Thank God there aren’t spider webs in your rooms,” I remarked, a twinge of resentment in my voice. I was indeed pissed.

“There may be cobwebs somewhere else by the time I let you leave the corner,” he said, lust thick in his voice.

“Are you staring at my ass?” I asked, turning my cheek.

“Don’t look over here,” he said. “I’ll blindfold you if I have to and place a ball gag between your lips.”

Apparently, Marco had a few toys I didn’t know about.

“You will mind me, Suzy. I have to know I can trust you, and you have to understand there are consequences when I can’t.”

“Here we go with the role play again.”

“Not role play, Suzy. I’m serious here,” he said, flogging me with a leather crop across the hips.

“Ouch!”

“When I said I didn’t want you to drink, I meant you don’t drink alone, with others, in social situations, or at any given time. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I whispered.

“What do you have to say for yourself?” he asked, slapping that damn crop across my bottom until he almost smacked me straight into sobriety.

“I’m sorry?” I hoped the apology worked. Hell, if I could remember what I said to Cassie during my thoughtful moment a few hours earlier, I’d quote him an apology verbatim. It worked with Cassie. I’d try it with him.

“Sorry is what you say to a man when you spit and don’t swallow. It’s not what you say to a lover who makes certain requests and expects you to abide by them out of respect.”

His hand touched my burning bottom, and he stroked the globes with his palms, all the while his fingers propelled over my ass and hips. I was so hot for more—more of him, more of his attention and sensitizing caresses. I wanted his lips on my lips, his tongue gliding across my tongue, and yet he wanted role play, this Dom-sub bit. And I, too, wanted more of this. I needed him to punish me and then soothe the pain away.

Stroking me everywhere now, he leaned over my back and tweaked my nipples, nuzzling my hair while inhaling the berry shampoo.

“You smell so damn good, baby,” he said, reaching lower, his fingers dipping in and out of my vagina. “Tell me you’ll do what I

want you to do,” he whispered, twirling those devastating fingers even higher.

My legs parted. My stance changed.

“Did I tell you to move?” he asked, damn near biting rather than nipping my earlobe.

“No, but I wanted to so you—”

“You wanted to see if you could shift around until my fingers went deeper, stroked with more precision. That’s what you wanted, isn’t it, baby?”

“Something like that.”

“It’s not going to happen, Suzy,” he said. “I want you wet.”

I was drenched.

“I’m going to make you want me.”

Need was more like it.

“You’ll be hungry.”

Starving, famished. Ready to sit down to a hearty meal.

“I’ll drive you crazy for several hours.”

I was at the brink of madness right then.

“I’ll leave you begging.”

I’d crawl at this point.

Spanking my ass with his bare hand, he allowed the crop to fall from his free hand. The leather dangled at my knee, the folded flap-style end ran back and forth across my skin when he moved into me.

“I want you to kneel down and kiss my pecker,” he said. I quickly turned around and he said, “Did I ask you to face me?”

No, he didn’t, but how could I kiss anything with my chin pointed at a damn dark corner? I heard his zipper and then he held on to my shoulder, gripping it tightly while he stepped out of his jeans and tossed them where I could see them. Then he lost the boxers, and finally the shirt.

Stepping to my side, he held himself at the base of his pretty penis and extended the hard length like a true wicked temptation. I licked the slit, savoring his masculine taste.

With a sexual moan, he said, “I said kiss, not lick.”

I licked again.

“Damn it, Suzy,” he said, grabbing me and holding me at arm’s length. “What is wrong with you that you refuse to mind?”

I closed my eyes and when I opened them again, I staggered, the alcohol still pumping its way through my veins and refusing to leave my equilibrium out of the equation.

“Suzy, kiss it, don’t lick.”

I wrapped my hand around his cock and pumped. Up and down, I started a slow hand job, and he didn’t ask me to stop. We stared at one another. I saw his expression change. His eye color lightened as the lust burned brighter and brighter while his self-discipline diminished.

The fact he allowed me the rare indulgence to take the lead empowered me and provoked him. I slammed against his mouth and continued to stroke him as his tongue parted my lips and we kissed like we might never have the opportunity again. He bunched my hair in both hands and held my head as his lips claimed mine, possessed and owned them.

“Make love to me, Marco,” I whispered. “Love me like you’ll never want to love another woman again.”

Gripping my hips and wrapping my legs around his waist, he said, “I already love you like I’ll never love again, Suzy,” he promised, nipping at my lips and carrying me off to bed. “I love you even with the stench of alcohol filling my senses. When I’m around you, I—”

“You lose all control?”

He didn’t answer me and instead gritted his teeth. When his knees touched the mattress, I felt his body shift, and he eased onto the bed, pulling me on top of him as we fell.

“Oh, dear God, Suzy, damn.”

As he landed with his back against the bed, my body opened for him, and his cock parted my folds and landed in perfect fucking position. I sat up, ready for the rise and fall. He held my knees,

spreading them wide and watching as he entered me, shoving my legs together and then pushing them apart.

“You’re beautiful. So fucking sexy,” he whispered, his still eyes glued to the joining of our bodies, glaring at the sex act being performed like an outsider might.

Then, suddenly, his rhythm changed and he fucked me like he feared breaking me. Slowly, ever so gently, he entered. Then he withdrew like a tight cord wrapped around his sex and drew him back only to release him once more so he could return to the warm puddle of heat my body provided.

We made slow and easy love, the hot passion between us incomparable to anything I’d ever experienced in my life. And when he came, I watched his eyes haze over with true lust watered down with tears that wouldn’t spill.

I found my inner peace only in his arms. Shaking for several minutes following the aftermath of one of the most erotic lovemaking experiences of a lifetime, I finally accepted what I knew Marco had gone out of his way to offer.

“I love you,” I whispered as he cradled my body next to his.

“I know,” he said. “And I promise to love you forever and always forever more.”

Epilogue

Ten Weeks Later

“You’re sure you’re all right with this?” Marco asked, helping me away from his SUV before he slammed the door behind us.

“I’m fine, Marco. Really, I’m great.” Kissing him on the cheek, I added, “I didn’t drive all the way to South Padre for fresh seafood.”

“Then let’s introduce you to the family,” he said proudly, pushing the white picket gate back and allowing me to follow him up a small winding path toward his family home. “Now remember, they all like to cut up. They don’t mean anything by it, but they’re just natural smartasses.”

“I’m sure if they’re anything like you, they’re perfect.”

On the front porch an older woman grabbed him immediately and showered his cheeks with kisses.

“Suzy,” he said when she released him. “This is my grandmother, Marlene.”

“Nice to meet you,” I said.

She studied me and then looked back at her grandson. “You said she was old!”

I gasped in horror and looked at Marco for a reaction. “No, Granny, I said she’s sexy!”

They both laughed and his grandmother said, “I don’t recall my grandson talking to me about sex, but he said something about you being—”

“Bad in bed,” a husky voice from behind inspired everyone to turn around all at once.

“Oh, my God,” I said, staring at the hunk walking across the porch with an alluring swagger.

Snickering, Marco said. “Suzy, meet my twin brother, Alanzo.”

Alanzo brought my hand to his lips, and his gaze held mine to a mesmerizing challenge. I looked away first and Marco said, “Exact reaction most women would have, I imagine.”

“Not most women,” I whispered and then addressed Marco, “Just the gals you fail to tell about your twin brother, an exact carbon copy of you!”

Alanzo smirked. “Ah now, I can promise you there are some differences found in twins.”

After the way he looked at me, I could only imagine.

Granny pointed toward the garden. “You’re about to be put to the test, young lady,” she said. “Here comes my daughter and son-in-law.” With a feisty little wave of her hand she walked to the far end of the porch. “By the way, honey, I knew how old you were. But just like you found surprises in Alanzo here, those two walking toward you don’t know about a woman past her child-bearing years.”

I gulped and Alanzo leaned forward, “Don’t worry. My brother wants to save the world’s children, not add his offspring to the population.”

Marco wrapped his arms around my waist, and we stood on the wide porch waiting for his mother and father to reach us. When they stepped onto the plank flooring, his father extended his arm and shook my hand.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Giovanni.”

“We’ve been anxious to meet you, Suzy,” he said.

“We’ve certainly heard a lot about you,” his mother added, snapping a kiss on both of Marco’s cheeks. “Alanzo keeps us informed.”

I shot the twin hunk a glance. “Is that right?”

“You know it, beautiful,” he said. “Mother, this is *Marco’s woman*,” he informed. “Anna Giovanni, meet Suzy Illiani.”

Alanzo looked well pleased with everything he did. How he introduced his brother's woman to his mother, how he gave me the kind of looks that turned a woman's panties to cream, and the way he confidently stood back and plotted his next move.

"You always told me that we shouldn't believe everything we hear or read in the papers," Marco stated dryly and then turned to Alanzo. "And stop flirting with my girl."

Alanzo grabbed Marco around the neck and rubbed his head with a closed fist. "That's exactly what I'm doing. Maybe you should've kept her in Dallas," he added, shooting me a lust-filled stare.

"I've read everything I could find on you, Miss Illiani," Anna Giovanni began. Then turning all the way around on the porch, she looked down at our one piece of luggage. "By the way, where are those rubber sex dolls I read about? I've wanted to see one of those things up close."

Alanzo leaned over me. "She read about those dolls in the same article that quoted one of your former lovers stating you were bad—as in naughty—in bed."

"Alanzo!" Mrs. Giovanni said. "Please try to refrain from coming on to your brother's future wife."

"Wife?" he asked, taking the time to really check me out now. I wondered if I earned a top letter grade after his thorough inspection.

He copped a smile and said pointedly, "Sorry, bro, I don't look at this and see wife material."

From the far end of the porch, Granny said, "Well then, Alanzo, what do you see when you look at your brother's *friend*?"

He rubbed his chin and Marco looked as eager to hear an answer as their parents and grandmother. Alanzo said, "If I believe everything I read, then I'd have to say damaged goods," he stated flatly.

I stood there under scrutiny and apparently in the line of enemy fire. Marco was fit to be tied and he quickly grabbed my hand. "Come on, Suzy. I don't expect you to stand here and take this shit."

Alanzo grabbed his brother by the forearm. “Come on, Marco, you didn’t pay attention. I said, ‘*If* I believe everything I read,’ and I don’t. What I see,” he said, turning his focus back to me, “is a gorgeous woman who is everything my brother needs because it’s been years since I’ve seen him with a smile.”

Alanzo glared at their mother. Mr. Giovanni seemed to urge her forward when he placed his hand on her back.

Granny said, “Don’t mind my daughter, honey. Before she got stuck with that Italian she married,” she nodded in her son-in-law’s direction, “she wanted a younger man, too. She’s just jealous because what she wanted some other woman found in one of her sons.”

“Mother!” she said. “I just met this girl for crying out loud.”

“Girl, hell,” Alanzo said, rubbing a solid hand over the front of his pants, and it didn’t go unnoticed by Marco. The blush of his skin told the tale. The rivalry between brothers existed.

“And you’d better find a way to like her,” the old woman informed her daughter. “Because from where I’m standing, I can see your son,” she eyed Alanzo then, too, “or sons, are quite fond of her.”

“Thank you, Granny. I am,” Marco said, sliding his arm over my shoulder.

“Good damn thing,” his brother said, resting his thick limb over Marco’s arm as well as mine. “Cause as good as she looks, I’d like to keep her around here.”

“I plan to,” Marco snapped.

“Good to know,” Alanzo taunted, holding his tongue to the corner of his mouth. “In fact, I’m damn pleased to know you’re going to stick around, Miss Illiani.”

* * * *

My name is Suzy Illiani. My grandmother used to tell me if you love something set it free, but understand, if you’re under the

impression you can free a man and he will return, you may be disappointed. I wasn't. Marco Giovanni came back with open arms.

I tried to let Marco go soon after I met him, realizing I'd give up a lot in order to gain something I'd never experienced before, a fresh and beautiful love, but scary nonetheless. I gave Marco an opportunity to break the potential ties long before they bound us together. Now, I'll never find the strength to let him go.

Marco and I share an unusual relationship, stronger than lust, more powerful than an unconditional love. It's a true commitment, one of the purest forms of love and like nothing I've ever experienced.

Marco Giovanni is my lifeline, my soul mate, and quite possibly the only reason I didn't self-destruct. I'm in love with one man, a man who trained me to submit by first teaching me how to love.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Destiny Blaine is an award-winning, best selling e-book and trade paperback author. She writes under several pseudonyms in various genres. Destiny lives with her family in East Tennessee.

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