



DIANA DERICCI

WATCHING  
*Her Every Move*

— PURPLE SWORD PUBLICATIONS —

## DIANA DERICCI

This publication is protected under the US Copyright Law and all other applicable international, federal, state and local laws, and all rights are reserved, including resale rights: you are not allowed to give or sell this publication to anyone else. If you received this publication from anyone other than PurpleSword.com, or Purple Sword Publications, LLC's authorized third party resellers, you have received a pirated copy. Please contact us at our website at [www.PurpleSword.com](http://www.PurpleSword.com) and notify us of the situation. Piracy robs authors and publishers of potential royalties.

This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters, and events are fictitious in every regard. Any similarities to actual events and persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features are assumed to be the property of their respective owners, and are used only for reference. There is no implied endorsement if any of these terms are used.

### WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

Copyright © 2009 DIANA DERICCI. All rights reserved worldwide.

ISBN 978-1-936165-17-9

Cover Art Designed By Anastasia Rabiya

Photograph of Couple Copyright © Mark Stout, Fotolia

Edited By Traci Markou

Published by Purple Sword Publications, LLC

[www.PurpleSword.com](http://www.PurpleSword.com)

Except for review purposes, the reproduction of this book in whole or part, electronically or mechanically, constitutes a copyright violation.

WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

Watching Her Every Move

Diana DeRicci

DIANA DERICCI

*Dedicated to my writing buddies on Royal Blush Authors.*

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

### CHAPTER ONE

Stacee palmed her receipt from the girl at the register, and with a final smile, strode out of the gold-gilded boutique doors into the calm spring sunshine. Swinging her black and white striped purchase bags in obvious victory, she paused on the broad sidewalk, waiting for her best friend Kay to catch up. Six sweaters and two outfits, all designer labels, were a hell of an after-season find. The better dressed she was, the better the impression made on her buyers. She didn't play in the small leagues anymore. She had to look the part. Dressing for business made sense.

"I know that smile," Kay said with a matching grin, joining her. She'd made some great finds too, carrying several plastic and paper bags, her little purse on her shoulder by a thin black spaghetti strap. She pulled it off and dropped it in the bag of the last store she'd been to, so she'd always know where it was. Kind of an odd habit, but Stacee knew she'd done it since Junior High.

"I scored. Was there any doubt?" Stacee arched a fine eyebrow questioningly. The sunshine felt wonderful beating down on them, winter beginning to feel like a much forgotten song—lovely to hear, not missed until it's heard drifted out from a radio that can't be found.

Kay laughed in triumph, holding her own bags up to show off the names of the stores. "None."

She had barely said those words when the unexpected wall of a man slammed into Stacee, smacking her into the pavement with a startled cry. Her head cracked painfully against pavement, the impact sounding like a gun had been fired right next to her ear. Stars exploded. She couldn't breathe! She felt like a gasping fish, trying to suck in air. Weight bore down on her as someone scrabbled against her, flattening her chest to the sidewalk making finding air next to impossible. Sharp pain flared outward from the side of her head when the first shallow breath filled her screaming lungs. Her world faded to gray then blacked out.

\* \* \* \*

Jonas leapt at the man as his prey tried to scramble over the poor woman he'd crashed into.

"Freeze," he snarled, shackling the man's collar in a relentless grip. He yanked at the young man, almost a boy really, practically jerking him to his feet in his rush of anger, forgetting to watch his strength for a brief moment. Jonas would have caught him. No one could outrun him. The poor woman had just made it a shorter chase. The young man lurched off of the woman he'd collided with, flailing and clawing to wrench himself free.

"Stacee." The woman who had blocked any other avenue of his guy's getaway dropped to her knees, shopping bags scattered in colorful disarray around the pair. Staring at her unmoving friend in numb shock, her features paled. Jonas couldn't spare either more than a glance. His attention was on the guy in his fist, but it bothered him that she still lay prone on the ground.

The youth twisted and fought against the steel of Jonas's grip but there was no way in Hell he'd let him get away now. Not after months of surveillance and tracking. Too much was at stake in this investigation. "Where is the packet?" Yanking uncooperative hands behind his back, Jonas snapped handcuffs on his capture. Deep draughts filled his lungs after his three block chase.

"I don't have anything!" he shouted.

Jonas shook him and the youth's light black jacket shimmied and swayed with the force behind Jonas's tugs. He bucked his shoulders trying to dislodge Jonas. It didn't work. He shoved him against glass, pressing him into the storefront with no remorse. Jonas was oblivious to the gathering crowd gawking and murmuring amongst themselves. His attention was on one person only. He searched the young man's pockets and along his waistband for anything. He scowled when he came up empty on all counts.

"Where is it?" Jonas demanded, leaning in close to make sure his growl of anger wasn't missed. Or misunderstood. Stupidly, the young man showed no fear at the threat right behind him.

All Jonas got in answer was a smug, arrogant smirk over a shoulder.

"That isn't going to work on the judge," he warned quietly, leaning in to make sure the point wasn't lost on his quarry. Sirens wailed. The street cops were arriving along with his department. There was no mistaking the two different types of vehicles. People began to crush in wanting to see more. *Damn 'bloody wreck' gawkers!* Of course, no one had stopped to help the poor woman out cold on the pavement. He had moments when he just hated the human race.

"Step back!" Jonas shouted over the crowd. "Police business." Most ignored him, stopping like statues rather than dispersing. They were smart enough to create an invisible line and not cross it. Good to know his snarl still worked. No sense in escalating the free drama into a full blown riot.

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

“Stacee,” the other woman whimpered, brushing away a tangle of auburn red hair from her friend’s face. Only about two minutes had passed since she’d been hit, but she still wasn’t moving.

He couldn’t let go of the blonde guy in his grip, but spared the unconscious woman a quick studying look. Shoulder length hair spilled across her back, where he did a quick inventory down to a tapered waist and a very nice rear, showcased by designer’s intuition in form-fitting jeans. “Is she breathing?”

Her friend snapped up at his question, her eyes full of worry, then nodded from her side on the ground.

“Make way!” an authoritative voice shouted, splitting the crowd. Several uniformed police officers, and a few who weren’t, poured into the little drama central unfolding on the sidewalk.

Jonas shoved the young man toward one of the plains-clothes guys with a nod. The officers in blue began crowd control. Jonas knelt by the injured woman.

“What’s her name?” He lifted his face fleetingly to make eye contact, but dropped his gaze again to pay attention to the lady as he checked for her pulse.

“Stacee. With two e’s,” she replied in a shaken voice. The two women must have been good friends for her to explain that to him.

Jonas looked over his shoulder. “Thompson. Call me an ambulance.” The man did so without hesitation.

The woman chose that moment to try to move beneath his touch. She moaned, shaken and fighting to get her bearings. “Easy,” he cautioned. “Don’t move yet. The EMTs will take you to the hospital.”

“No.” She groaned, trying to turn over. His hand stayed her with gentle pressure, proving she wasn’t ready to move yet. A sudden shudder rocked her frame, worrying him. What if something more had happened to the poor woman than being knocked out cold when she’d been hit?

“Miss, you’ve been hurt.”

“She hates hospitals,” her friend explained to him. Worry shadowed her gaze.

“She doesn’t have much of a choice,” Jonas stated. His hand settled on the woman’s back only to hold her still. “She was knocked unconscious. She needs an x-ray at the least.”

A near silent moan of dismay reached his ears from beneath his fingertips, carrying up his arm. She shuddered once more then slackened. It only took a few minutes for the ambulance to arrive and a gurney to carry her away.

Jonas studied the crowd as it began to disperse, searching for what, he didn’t know, but

hoped he'd see it. He didn't after several minutes of searching, and his brow furrowed. He knew he felt it. Someone was watching the activity on the street and sidewalk. There were too many scents in the air to try to find just one, and even if he did, he wouldn't recognize it in the morass of city life. The larger problem was: where was the packet? Those memory chips had to be found! He cursed silently under his breath. The young man hadn't had the package on him. Had he lost it? Had he ditched it somewhere on the run after the handoff? Where? The chase had been short and swift. It wasn't as though there were a lot of places he could have just tossed the brown envelope on the street.

He spun when the slam of a door pulled him back to the scene. Strobing red and blue lights snapped his focus to the moment at hand. "What hospital?" he asked, seeing the EMT lock the doors to the rear, hiding the woman on the gurney strapped in for the ride. Unaware of what prompted his need to know, he waited for the answer.

"Southern Memorial."

He nodded then watched the lights disappear down the block, turning right at the next intersection. Downtown city streets were a bitch. One way and nothing but traffic.

The woman's friend had gathered their shopping bags and was standing, looking around rather stunned.

"Would you like someone to walk you to your car?" he asked her. The brunette seemed a bit shocked and he wanted her to breathe a while before she got behind the wheel.

When she nodded, he signaled for one of the guys on his team to walk with her to her car. He then retraced his steps to his own vehicle, searching for any possible hiding places along the way where the courier could've tossed the memory chips to come back for them later. Ledges, drains, planters. Anything that could be obscure from passing view but reachable. He didn't see a single helpful thing on his way. Those three chips had sensitive information on them. Security sensitive. National security sensitive. They had to be found.

Jonas uncovered the right delivery point to confiscate the stolen chips just that morning from his network. Talk about moving fast when good fortune landed in his lap. Except the damn jerk hadn't had them on his person when he'd crashed into the poor woman. He was positive he hadn't missed the hand off either. That was today. He knew he wasn't wrong about that. The courier was his mark. There hadn't been anyone else in the informant's tip. He even had the guy's description. The delivery to the second. The chips were due to go to the buyer today so the courier had to have them on him somewhere. Only...Jonas didn't know who the buyer was, or where this



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

silent buyer was from. And now the chips were missing.

Not the most auspicious day in his career.

He let out a snarled sigh. Eight months of work and now a dead end to report back to the DOD.

Gripping the steering wheel in clenched fists, aggravation rode his failure like an eight second bull ride up and down his nerves. A not in the least bit pleasant feeling. Out of habit of covering all the angles and possibilities he drove to the hospital. He couldn't pinpoint any deeper need to check on the woman or why she was on his to-do list now. That unanswered oddity wasn't helping his aggravation level in the least.

He parked on one of the multi-level garage floors and headed through the automatic doors, instantly feeling the temperature change and the array of scents in the air. He avoided hospitals like the plague. Working like any other fed the anonymity, made what he was hard to distinguish outside of his own kind. Being one of a very highly respected pack, he had ways of avoiding random drug tests from the city and department piss tests that would make for some very uncomfortable conversations if he should ever have his secret discovered. Could explain his deep dislike for all things medical and nosy.

At the nurse's station, he gave a description and the injured woman's first name, explaining her situation briefly. When the duty nurse frowned, he showed his badge and offered a toothy grin. "It's private business," he intoned coolly. The nurse gave him an arched look for throwing his weight around but divulged the room number after only a moment of searching. Must not have been too many Stacey's that afternoon with head trauma.

He found the room with S. Hales on the temporary door plaque. The door was cracked and he heard conversation. He paused to listen. His investigation was one thing, privacy was another. He could claim either for standing just outside the door.

"Just a headache right now. I don't think they're going to make me stay for long."

"Well, that's good. You didn't look so hot coming in. I know how your blood pressure rockets when they start getting pokey and proddy on you."

An amused chuckle was the answer. "You are a master of understatement. That's why the floor nurse wants me to be watched for a few hours. My blood pressure did a Mount Vesuvius impression."

Confident he wasn't interrupting anything dire, he tapped on the door. A quick "Yes?" drew him through into the room. The injured woman's voice was rich and full, like the dark eyes that

found his. She didn't seem to have suffered too greatly from her mishap on the sidewalk.

"Sorry to bother you," he explained, apologizing for the interruption.

The woman at her side was the same friend from earlier, looking much more in charge of herself. She stood to leave.

"I'll see you later, Stacee. Call me when you get home so I know you're okay, okay?"

Stacee nodded in answer then lifted a hand to the bandage on her head with a combined wince. Watching every detail, it wasn't hard to guess the movement didn't help any. The door drifted closed behind her friend's departure.

He spotted the shopping bags at the end of the bed. "Special delivery?" he asked kindly as an opener, nodding at the brightly colored bags. He walked closer, around the end of the bed to stand at her side. He didn't sit down.

"Work clothes. I probably won't see her until after next week, so better now than naked."

Her humor made him smile. She seemed to be completely relaxed. Even with a bandage the size of a dinner plate on her head, she was lovely. Soft skin that was pale but reminded him of summer peaches. Rich, auburn hair, with streaks of red that flowed around her shoulders. Thick. The kind of hair he could bury his hands into. He briefly remembered the feel of it when he'd sought her pulse earlier. The beguiling scent of her skin filled the room and he drew a deep breath without thinking about why he did. An aromatic, like a lotion mixed with her own feminine scent. Alluring, yet unique.

He dragged his thoughts back from his appraisal, returning to his purpose. It took a few heartbeats to clear his thoughts to get that far. Then he frowned, and fought it. It wasn't her fault that his day had gone to Hell before lunch.

"I owe you an apology and thanks." Best to get it said, get what he needed then get the hell out of that room. Now that he knew that unique attraction of her scent, he found himself wanting more of it, and of her.

"Oh?" she inquired. He felt the weight of her steady stare studying him. He knew the look. He'd just done the same thing to her. And he had to admit, he didn't hate the feeling.

"For being the wall that stopped my guy from getting away. He hit you a lot harder than I think any of us had originally thought. People getting hurt has never sat well with me."

"That's kind of you..." she replied expectantly.

"Jonas. Agent Dreyer."

"Jonas Dreyer?" He nodded in the affirmative. "Stacee Hales, but I guess you knew that

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

already.”

He shrugged but smiled to soften it. He had to check all happenstance. He didn't think this woman was in any way part of the chip theft, just an unfortunate bystander, but it never hurt to ask a few questions. Falling back on training was a safety net too, for being there, in her room. He wasn't sure he could pin any other reasoning to it. He knew he didn't want to think about the attraction that he felt standing so close to her in that bed. She was at a disadvantage for one. Vulnerable. He forced his expression to a placid blankness when he caught her gaze once more.

“Do you think you could answer a couple questions?”

It was her turn to shrug. At least it wasn't a full 'get the hell out of here'. He'd half expected it. He let out a slow breath, ignoring why the thought of her tossing him out on his rear bothered him.

“I won't keep you long.” He asked the basics, pulling out a short notepad and pen. Name and private information. Where she'd been that day, what her next destination had been.

“Saturday shopping with a girlfriend,” she explained, nonplussed. “I got a bonus and was helping stimulate the economy.”

He coughed to hide his chuckle. Her wicked grin was infectious. She had a sweet bottom lip that drew his attention with her laughter. Full and curved with a delicious taunt that crept up whenever those eyes glowed with laughter or teasing. It was the first time he'd ever liked someone on the spot. That was definitely a plus considering.

He snapped the cover of his notepad closed, stunned at the direction of his thoughts. He did *not* need a female complication in his life. Bachelorhood worked just fine. He pulled out a card. “In case you have any questions,” he volunteered, not caring if it sounded lame. He was *not* asking for her phone number. He couldn't remember the last time he'd asked for a girl's number anyway. Probably high school. He'd gone straight to the Army and then onto the force afterward. Even though he had hers, she hadn't given it to *him*. He made sure his subconscious was aware of that fact.

“Agent Dreyer?” She palmed the card and relaxed back onto the bed. “Why all the caution?”

Now that he could answer, just not to her. A gut instinct? A precaution? Something that hadn't sat well since she'd been hit, at the least. He knew someone had been watching the entire time they'd been putting on Drama Downtown for the crowd. Whether it was the next connection, the buyer, or the hand off to the courier he'd caught, he couldn't say. And that uncertainty had every warning bell going off. With an internal smack, he knew why he'd been set on checking on her. He

## DIANA DERICCI

needed to make contact with her. Meet her. Know her. She was going to need his protection.

He never questioned those primal instincts either. This time, he was pretty sure he was going to enjoy his watch.

“Nothing too serious,” he replied, smoothing the little white lie. “Just following through on details.”

“Well, thank you then,” she replied.

He left her room feeling the light breathy sound of her goodbye on his skin for the rest of the day.

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

### CHAPTER TWO

Stacee dropped the shopping bags and her purse on the counter as soon as she was in her house. Then the first thing she did was hunt for the scissors in the kitchen drawer. She cut the information band off of her wrist with a sense of freedom, then tossed it in the trash. She *hated* hospitals. She'd spent enough time in them when her father passed away. She didn't need the reminders. At least she was able to convince them it was their constant poking making her do the blood pressure mambo. There was no telling how long they would've wanted her to stay otherwise.

She leaned over to stretch and immediately regretted it when she went woozy trying to stand straight again. She just needed to eat. It was late, well past eight now after her little sojourn to the hospital for head x-rays. At least the next day was Sunday. A full day to regroup before work on Monday, and to lose the bandage. She didn't need that at the office.

Scrounging through the fridge, she thought back over the crazy day she'd spent. Her back was stiff from being pummeled by a locomotive in the form of a full speed male. Setting the salad bits on the counter next to her, she began to make something light for dinner. She'd regret anything heavier at that hour. Especially since there was a new headache oozing to sit between her ears. She just didn't have it in her to cook over a stove.

She'd been surprised by the agent's concern, silently warmed by it in fact. Agent Dreyer was not a slouch by any means. He had to be close to six foot, and had the cutest dimple in his cheek when he was trying to hold his smile in check. She wondered what it would be like if he let it loose on the unsuspecting feminine world. He had assessing eyes that warmed and froze at intervals. The man had a natural poker face, but she'd seen him relax a time or two while they'd talked. Almost as if he had to remind himself to keep the cool façade while they'd talked. Working in the volatile real estate market for the last ten years had given her quite the insight to human nature and expression, and Jonas Dreyer was a work of art to study. In constant flux. In constant thought. She wondered what kind of thoughts went through that mind of his to make those expressions. She was willing to bet he was a hell of a conversationalist.

## DIANA DERICCI

She palmed two ibuprofens to take for the impending headache with her salad and a tall tea, and settled at the table to eat. Once she slowed down, it didn't take long for fatigue from her day to crawl in and get comfy with her body, probably the aftereffects of the collision combined with the ache in her brain. She'd be the last to argue with it.

With a sigh, she decided to call Kay in the morning. Right now, a hot shower and the rest of her tea was about all she wanted.

\* \* \* \*

The beginning of her week went by rather uneventfully, making meetings, showing houses and going over contracts. It was almost normal enough to make her forget about the bruise on her forehead except for the occasional, almost tactful, worried comment. There was very little she could do to hide the mark in her hairline. Just had to wait for it to fade enough to not be a center of attention.

It was Thursday before she began to suspect something wasn't right on her street. The Neville's, her neighbors several houses down on the opposite side, had a well maintained Cadillac that they kept in the garage, but for three days she'd seen a car sitting right in front of Mr. Neville's pride and joy, their pristine yard. Same car. Same spot. Same time. *Same bat channel* she mused, lowering her eyes to study it as she strode to her own car in front of the garage. Not that she was knocking Mr. Neville's enjoyment in his yard, but his entire retirement now was his riding lawnmower. Looking at the sleek model, she knew his oldest son who lived in town did *not* drive that kind of car.

Was it a visiting friend? She doubted it. The elderly couple's full stretch of friends were limited to the senior center variety. Not to mention that the car was there at seven-thirty every morning. That car looked way too fast and too new for their generation. Especially in her neighborhood, where being over fifty was more the norm than the oddity.

She'd loved the house she owned when it had come onto the market. The neighborhood had been well established and stable. The house had needed very little in repairs, which worked well for her. She could wield a mean hammer and miss her thumb while she was at it, but more than that and she'd be walking the yellow pages for a handyman. There was also stability. Namely, the incoming buyers, when there were, weren't interested in redeveloping the lots, so the market and the

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

neighborhood were safe. It wasn't unusual for new home builders to come in and tear down older homes, rebuild and mess up the entire neighborhood by raising land values and taxes and causing headaches on a palatial scale. Stacee would take safety over new and sparkly any day.

She slid behind the leather strapped steering wheel, the auto seat adjusting as she settled in, trying to get a better look at the strange car without being too blatant about it. Was that a person behind the wheel? As far away as the car was, it was just too hard to be positive. The idea that someone was in the car at that hour of the morning, someone she didn't know, possibly watching *her* gave her a chill, making the hair on her arms rise uncomfortably.

Her father had taught her to always be aware of her surroundings, to take a mental picture if she could. Grab enough detail to make a short list of facts if asked. She did that as she pulled away from her house, in the opposite direction from the parked car. Safe driving habits and attention to those details paid off when she looked up to check her rearview and spotted the dark car. She frowned. Had she been followed all week? Was the car, and the driver, following her? It seemed far too likely as the vehicle kept an even pace with her.

She took an unplanned exit ahead of schedule.

"Damn," she muttered when the car not only followed her, but kept an exact distance from her, even through several stop lights. The only reason she suspected she was being followed was because it wasn't all that rare for clients to follow her to a house to show. Except those instances were ones where she didn't want to lose her tail.

This time, it felt imperative to her to lose this one. And fast.

She clicked a button on her console. "Office," she stated firmly, paying attention to her driving. It would suck to run a red light now.

"Hales Prop—"

She cut off her secretary without an ounce of apology. "Rebecca, I won't be in right away. Cancel my planner for the day and reschedule everything."

"Stacee! What's wrong? You sound completely stressed."

She drew a breath to calm herself, not in the least surprised. She drove, thinking at the same time and praying doing both wouldn't make her have an accident. Breathing seemed to help calm her. "I'm not sure," she replied, not wanting to worry her secretary for nothing. She hoped it was nothing. She spotted a coffeehouse ahead and decided to make a detour. "I'll call you when I get a chance." Then she hung up.

Stacee made a beeline for the drive-thru, digging through her purse for Agent Dreyer's card.

## DIANA DERICCI

She didn't even hesitate when his face and voice appeared in her memory. Not that he was the kind of man she could forget. She was very glad of that fact, and that he'd left her a card.

She dialed with trembling fingers while making her order, glad for probably the first time ever how slow the coffee drive-thrus really were.

"Dreyer," he answered on the second ring. The timbre of his voice was at once comforting.

"Agent Dreyer. Stacey Hales. I'm sorry to call out of the blue, but I think I'm being followed."

"Where are you?"

No pandering. No condescension. Crisp and business-like in a heartbeat. His absolute calm fed into her. She wanted to believe in it and latched onto his voice like a lifeline. She felt her lungs relax for the first time since she'd spotted the car. She told him her location and where she was headed. Although she wasn't going to her office now, she had no better solution.

"No. Don't go to your office. Where can I meet you?"

Inspiration slapped her when she realized what street she had turned onto. "I have an open model on Avian." And the keys were in her briefcase. She'd shown the house just the day before. It was only a few subdivisions away from where she was sitting. Minutes to get her to the house. And to him.

She repeated the address, and he told her he'd meet her there. Everything would be okay. By the time she got back on the street, she'd almost convinced herself she was overreacting and that she'd have to apologize for disturbing him by the time she saw him.

Stacey took her time driving in an unhurried way. She tried to drive like any other person, on any other morning. Not trying to run stale yellow lights as many drivers do. She lost her sense of ease when she spotted the dark car behind her without a problem. Even though she felt scared out of her mind, she didn't want it to show. The coffee stop hadn't deterred the other car in the least. "Just like I'm going to show the house," she whispered. "Nothing to it. Just another day."

Yeah, she'd believe that when she got through her morning.

\* \* \* \*

Jonas traded his coffee for his holster and jogged out to his Explorer Sport, sliding on his jacket on the way. He activated his GPS and found the exact house he needed. He was on the highway in less than three minutes. Time and traffic seemed to drag against him no matter how hard



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

he cursed it.

The memory chip trail had gone cold, and now Stacee was calling him. Twice this week he'd almost called her to make sure she was still safe and sound. Stacee Hales had been like a constant buzz in his brain. A burr he couldn't shake. Now he was glad he hadn't. Something about this woman was connected to the chips. And he had to find them. Apparently, he wasn't the only one who thought she had something to do with their disappearance.

He'd had that niggle on his conscience since he'd met her. Something that appealed, and drew him to her. But right now, her safety was the only thing on his mind. He hadn't had the freedom to dwell on the rest of it.

Jonas clutched at his phone when it rang.

"I'm trying to look nonchalant, but it would help a hell of a lot if you were here," she told him, her voice gritty and forced.

"I'm almost there," he replied, watching traffic fly past as he sped toward the house. He kept his own voice even to try to keep her calm. She wasn't used to this kind of drama. He ate it for breakfast. "Tell me what the car looks like."

"A dark blue foreign. Expensive. I can't make a model from here. A Mercedes maybe. They're more than a block away. They just turned around the corner." Her voice was strong, surprisingly calm. She sounded more relieved when the car disappeared out of her sight. Her voice was doing funny things to his nerves too. He shook it off. He had to keep his focus.

"Stay in the car until I get there."

"Like I was going to move?" She made a crude noise. It made him smile. She wasn't scared. She seemed almost angry by the sound of things. He could forgive her that. It wasn't everyday people were just out of the blue followed on their morning commute.

"I see you."

He pulled up behind her, ending the phone call, and parked his truck. She got out, slipping out of the door like her legs were made for those red carpet style entrances. He felt his tongue push against his teeth, not to mention his cock as it woke up in appreciation. The ache was fast and hard. And he couldn't look away.

The woman had legs to die for. That waist he'd seen in her jeans wasn't bee sized either. It flowed into feminine rounded hips that swayed oh-so-gently when she walked in her heels. A striding sensuality that some women were born into. Stacee had gotten that gene in excess. He watched every single step she took with a growing desire to see more. He couldn't even blink. He

loved heels on a woman, and she walked like she was made for them, as though she owned the ground she walked on. A slow rolling saunter that made him swallow. Hard.

Her hair swayed in loose waves around her shoulders and face. The colors in the sunlight reminded him of chocolate covered cherries from Christmas. Those boxes of red that he saw in stores everywhere every year. Now he knew what they looked like on the inside.

“Hey,” she said in greeting, rolling a shoulder. She leaned closer as his window came down. “Thanks for taking the call. It’s probably nothing, but it freaked me out.”

He almost reached out and caressed her cheek to comfort her, but caught himself at the last second before indulging in the pleasure. He *needed* to see if her skin was as soft as it looked. He clenched his fist against his thigh instead. He was glad he was sitting down. He’d never be able to hide his arousal from her. Having her so close, her light perfume on the air between them, was making him throb like a horny teenager in the uncomfortable confines of his slacks.

He was surprised his voice worked on the first try. His tongue sure didn’t feel like his own. “You did the right thing. The guy who rammed you didn’t have the stolen property on him. I think the next link in the chain thinks you might have it somehow.” He’d actually been dreading this moment for that very reason, but couldn’t really hate it because it brought her back to him. Even he was man enough to admit he had wanted to see her again. It was actually all male thinking behind that want, but he’d do what was necessary first.

She shook her head, consternation and deep thought bringing her brows together. “Not likely. Unless it was part of the dirt I swallowed when I kissed pavement, I know nothing.”

His lips twitched, even in the seriousness of the moment. He noticed she still had a sizeable fading blue splotch in her hairline but makeup had covered it fairly well. “I bet that caused all kinds of questions at work,” he sympathized, nodding at the bruise.

She sniffed. “You don’t want to know. Let’s go inside. I feel exposed out here.”

He wasn’t about to argue.

She released the lock and promptly shut the door behind them. A sigh of relief was loud in the empty house as bolts clicked into place. She wasn’t taking any chances. “How long do you think they’ll sit there?”

“Probably all day.”

She groaned in answer, searching the ceiling probably looking for a quick miracle. “What am I going to do? I can’t have a following entourage in my day to day.”

He took her measure in a swift, calculated glance as she paced, peeking out a side window

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

then dropping it to pace some more. He couldn't lie to himself. What he saw, he really liked.

"I don't think you'll be a real target. The package that was supposed to be handed off between the first courier, my guy, and the collision with you is missing." He flexed his fingers, annoyed with the events of that day even though he couldn't have done it any other way. The package was missing. He just had to be the first to find it.

"So what? I'll be a pretend target?" she asked tartly. She tilted her chin up, challenging him. All he could think of was how badly he wanted to kiss the path of skin beneath her ear.

He cleared his throat. Why couldn't he think straight around this woman? "No. Not exactly."

She crossed her arms beneath her chest and narrowed her beautiful speckled eyes to slits. The woman was a stunner. She'd stunned him at first glance, prone in a hospital bed and he still hadn't recovered.

"Explain 'not exactly' to me Agent Dreyer," she stated, a sheer chill in her words that made him want to stuff his hands into his pockets.

"Well," he began, searching for the best way without divulging too much, but it was as far as he got.

Bullets shattered the window she stood next to and two more into a sparkled fall of deadly shards and ice-like glitter.

## CHAPTER THREE

Stacee squealed, hit for the second time by the solid body of a guy like she was interviewing for the tackling dummy position of an entire football squad.

“This has got to stop,” she muttered, disregarding the fact that she was hiding in his shoulder, shaking. His hand and body cradled and covered her with his protective breadth as the last of the window fragments settled around the pair on the floor.

“Which part? The bullets or the drama?”

She chuckled into his shoulder. Damn, she liked his humor. “Getting laid out like a pancake. It’s hard on a girl’s body.”

He made a sound of admiration. He held her close, one palm wrapped around her head to protect her from falling glass, his other on her hip as he covered her entire body with his length. He flexed his hand on her hip and she couldn’t help but feel every single movement. Searing heat pressed against her possessively now that she had enough air in her lungs to feel his body. The hard wall of his chest covered her completely and she couldn’t help but notice just how solid that wall was against her. His weight pressed into her, forming against her. The tender sensation of his hand against her scalp belied the strength she felt everywhere else. A wild flutter hit her stomach and sank lower as her nerves reported back every little detail about his body against hers.

“Depends on who the girl is, in my mind,” he replied against the shell of her ear in a low growl that was anything but professional. His breath bathed her nerves with a zinging shock as he whispered those slow words into her ear. The rumbled sensual depth of it made her blood run hot. That flutter intensified into its own earthquake and a shiver rocketed down her length. Her heart jumped and tripped for a completely different reason than being shot at. She could feel every inch of his tensed length and even in the most inappropriate of moments, it was hard *not* to take notice. Where he lay above her, the hard outline of his cock was pressed deliciously against her thigh. She felt herself begin to smolder with desire.

“Don’t move,” he warned her, his voice neutral again. Thankfully popping her lust-filled

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

bubble. She had to be out of her mind to be thinking about him like that at a time like this!

He reached behind his back, and she saw a handgun appear from beneath his light charcoal jacket. He rolled off of her body, glass dropping with a tinkling sound to the wood covered floor. Shattered bits crunched beneath his feet as he crab walked along the wall and peeked out between blind gaps. She watched as he followed something outside with his gaze. A second later the sharp scream of tires told her the shooters weren't sticking around to see if the job was done.

He stood slowly at the wall, fixated as the sound disappeared. A moment later, he reached down and offered a hand.

"What, might I ask, was the point of that?" she demanded.

"It's a mind game. They know you are involved and are warning you."

"Really? A strong email would have done just as well." She carefully shook her body to remove lingering glass slivers, trying to not do the natural thing and brush her hands down her suit.

He produced a handkerchief and helped dust her off, carefully lifting the ends of her hair away from her collar and brushing anything harmful free. She noticed his lips were twitching.

"What?" She didn't want to have to deal with a smart-aleck agent next.

"I'm glad you're not the type who falls back on hysterics."

"Hysterics?" *He was kidding right?* She did have every right to, but being the daughter of a policeman she'd kind of had the trait trained out of her.

A solid brown eyebrow rose over his green and blue melded eyes as he paused, his hand hovering over her shoulder. She'd never seen such an artfully constructed color in her life. He dusted her off on both sides. She felt the heat from his hand against her neck and the throb of her pulse quickened. It wasn't the only thing to start throbbing either.

"Hysterics," he murmured. Then he smiled. A real smile, pleased and content. The dimple she'd only seen hinted at, appeared. The urge to press a single kiss to the sexy facial marker made her heart hitch against her ribs. He was a gorgeous guy, several inches taller than herself, with laugh lines around his eyes. He had a slightly short nose and a sexy mouth. Kind of a darker version of Keifer, and she wasn't the kind of woman who'd turn him out of her bed.

It was obvious Jonas shaved regularly. His skin was nearly smooth with a taut suppleness, his face full of character but firm. She spotted only a few grays peeking from the full bodied brown of his trimmed hair. Late thirties was her best guess, and fit and solid if her recent introduction to the world of Agent Hard Bodies was any indication. At thirty-six, she wasn't any kind of spring chicken either, but something about him, his smile, that dimple, made her want to see just what the rest of

him would feel like pressed against her body, without the glass and definitely without clothes. The idea of it sent another warming tingle to between her legs.

Slowly the air in the house changed, became charged between them. It swirled around them with something awakening. Something wicked and taunting and hungry. And she wanted it. Her pulse ticked, beating harder against her ears as his eyes met hers and stayed. A shiver rocked her spine when the lightest touch of his fingers stroked beneath her ear where he'd been clearing her hair of glass fragments. The rough feel of his tips forced a light gasp of shock and pleasure all wrapped together from between her lips. She'd forgotten he was helping to dust her off when she'd become absorbed in her study of him. A delicious study she really wanted to continue. The indistinct scrape of his touch jolted her back to the room.

And the most intense, drugging stare in a pair of eyes she'd ever encountered.

They stood less than a step apart. A single movement, from either, would bring them body to body.

*Just a little closer*, she willed him. She wanted to taste him. She wanted to feel the strength of his kiss, to caress his lips and have it returned.

Jonas made the move before she did. All she could see was the heat in his gaze, the tanned warmth of his skin, the way his lashes lowered over his eyes just enough to make them sizzle when he moved closer. She inhaled and found the warmed scent of something woody, a light cologne maybe, heated by his skin and it made her tremble within as he hovered over her lips. Her breasts grew sensitive, desire making them, her, throb. Her nipples hardened and she ached. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had such a deep and needing reaction after hardly more than a few words.

"Beautiful," he whispered, his breath a bath of heat and hunger against her lips. Then he closed the gap completely. Her eyes fluttered closed as sensations hit her with the shock of a steamroller. Zings of heat coursed through her body and she quivered, feeling the sudden dampness between her legs. She was falling, but he held her as her legs dared to quake. His fingers threaded completely into her hair and held her steady, captured, but not with harsh strength. With a gentleness that shook her to her core. With nothing but the mere strength of his kiss, he held her to him. He brushed against her and she hungered. Her fingers rose and clutched as though seeking a lifeline at his waist in answer. She had to hold on or be pulled in too hard and too fast into the searing heat that enveloped her. Then she stopped worrying about it.

*So long...* It had been so long since her last kiss. Her divorce was a long six years in the past.

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

A few failed dates afterward and she'd laid her sex life on the back burner to concentrate on her business. She remembered now what she'd been missing out on. She moaned as the seductive whip of his tongue stroked her bottom lip and opened for him eagerly.

She knew she felt the earth shift when something deep and hungry rose from him, a growl, a groan, she wasn't sure, but it enveloped her as completely as a cocoon of velvet. The trailing tease of his tongue dared her and she answered, kissing him back with a reawakened desire that scorched her from the inside out.

A shrill tone, a song jingle sliced through her bliss with little welcome.

Calmly, he sipped once, twice, releasing her slowly. She wanted to cry out in denial, but knew it had to end. That was her phone cutting into her moment of heaven. Her office to be exact.

Warm fingers slid from her hair, caressing her tenderly in their retreat. She pressed the button on her Bluetooth when he stepped back then watched as Jonas reached for his own phone. Likely doing the same thing she was doing. Explaining why shots had been fired.

"No, I'm fine," she answered once Rebecca had calmed down. The perimeter company had called the office when the windows had been shattered, disrupting a field of protection. Stacee's gaze followed the man a few feet away as he spoke calmly into his own phone. She heard snatches of his conversation, giving details about the car and answering questions.

"Stacee?" came the worried query. "Is everything okay now?"

She smiled at her secretary's concern. A sweet girl, younger, newly married and sharp as a tack. "I'm fine, really," she went on. "There's been a misunderstanding. I have an agent here with me now."

"Oh, that's good!"

Stacee thought so too, her gaze following him hungrily. "I'll call as soon as I can. Hopefully, things will be back to normal soon."

"Okay." Then she went on to rattle off the changes that had been made for the day, and Stacee nodded or made suggestions as her day was rescheduled.

"I'll call later if tomorrow is bad too." A final note and then she hung up. Jonas was done only a moment after her.

"Everything okay?" she asked him. He seemed troubled, his gaze far away and thoughtful.

He spun on a heel and prowled back to her. She couldn't think of any other way to describe his walk. It was more than a swagger and twice as dangerous. "I'm not sure. I need to get back to the office and check on a new lead." He lifted a hand to her face, cradling her with a tender awareness

that made her heart beat like crazy all over again. She almost whimpered. “You all right?”

She nodded, having a hard time finding her voice. Her lids closed as sensations bombarded her again. The rough but tender comfort of his hand, the strength she’d felt in his body, the undeniable urge to feel him against her. All of that was nothing compared to the piercing sharpness of his eyes. She felt powerless beneath his stare. Her heart was pounding.

She instantly craved his touch again when he let it slide free. What she craved she couldn’t put into words and prayed it wasn’t so obvious in her expression. Every touch added fuel to the hunger.

“If you see anything out of the ordinary, don’t hesitate. Call me. I don’t care how unusual. Okay?” he pressed.

She blinked and nodded, barely able to breathe and talk. It was one or the other, and breathing took precedence.

“The local boys will be here in a couple minutes to take a report on the shooting.” He handed her an extra card, standing so close she was able to see the rise and roll of his chest as he breathed. “Just tell them to contact me. I have to get back to my database. They know where to find me.”

“Why?” she asked, not wanting him to go, knowing there was more here than simply the need to follow through on his case. She palmed the card and waited.

“I caught the license plate on the car. They’re getting careless, which means they’re getting desperate.”

“What was the stolen property?” If people looking for it were getting desperate... It was enough to freeze the unending lust into a block of ice.

Jonas frowned, obviously debating on how much to share with her. His prolonged silence wasn’t easing her worries any. His eyes gave away nothing as he debated. Finally he told her, “Three memory chips. National security sensitive information. They were stolen a few days before you had this,” he tenderly brushed hair away from her forehead, exposing the still tender spot, “happen. We tried to stop them before they actually got the chips, but something went wrong. They had a decoy and slipped out of the noose.”

She caught a ripple cross his shoulders. It could only be frustration. “There was someone on the inside, wasn’t there? Your inside guy gave it away, didn’t he?”

He snapped up, blinked at her suggestion, then laughed a mirthless sound. “Too many drama shows,” he retorted flatly.



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

She shook her head, sure her next answer was going to throw him for a loop. “No, my dad was a cop too. He died in the line of duty. I even took the first year of academy training thinking it was the right thing to do, but it wasn’t. I wasn’t being a cop for me.”

“Shit, Stacey. I’m sorry.” He seemed genuinely apologetic.

She shrugged. His sincerity was appreciated, but not necessary. “He would talk to me about the cases he was working, or the stories going around the precinct and we’d work out the angles. I liked pretending I could be a cop at that point in my life. He said I was deviant enough to see it from both sides.” A reminiscent smile flitted over her mouth as she remembered her father and those discussions. That ability to see more than the obvious was what made her a good realtor now. She could read buyers like her father used to read liars and crooks.

Jonas’s chest rocked with a hard chuckle, shaking his head as though in surprise, then all humor left him again.

He neared her. She felt the tingle of his gaze on her skin, touching her, searching her. “You’re something else,” he said, an unknown meaning to the words. A meaning she didn’t understand at all. But the heat in those marine colored eyes made her want, more than she had in a very long time.

His lips were hot, catching her by surprise, claiming her kiss. Staking his claim. Desire and want wrapped into the single action, and she felt herself sink into it instantly. It was over before she’d realized it had begun, and then he was gone.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Six hours later, Jonas still tasted her kiss. Nearly strawberry but something much, much sweeter. Tantalizing. And a sexy bottom lip that he'd wanted to kiss since the moment she was close enough to smell her perfume. He'd seen the way desire had darkened her speckled hazel eyes. He knew was going to kiss her. Like breathing, it wasn't conscious. It just was.

He dropped his head, cinching his scalp between tightening fingers in frustration. Sexually and otherwise, Stacee was killing him. He ached in so many places, in ways he'd never touched on. That was why he'd left her. He'd run. No lying to himself. He should've stayed and given his half of the incident report. He had to leave or the urge to do more than kiss that mouth would have become a reality. One kiss and he'd almost forgotten everything—including his own name. He wasn't sure what he was doing about any of it yet, either.

Marriage had never been a thought because of his lupine tendencies. It still wasn't. Instead he'd opted to go into the Army, using the underground channels to smooth his enlistment. Secrecy came with a price, and modern times were making it more and more of a challenge but there were those in the pack who thrived in that kind of subterfuge. Hidden from the world in plain sight. It helped that the pack had connections all over the world, in all societies. He had to admit, he'd tasted the adrenaline rush himself. It was part of why he worked for the DOD. Couldn't be much more entrenched in the wheels than working with the damn government.

But Stacee was creating a wrinkle in his world. He'd been told he was too cold, too untouchable by more than one female. They were right. They'd also likely run screaming if they learned why that was the case. But Stacee didn't seem to know that, or care if she had any idea. He knew she didn't have any clue to his nature. It wasn't possible for a human to tell the difference. Only his own kind could, and he knew most of them in his region. Regardless, he hadn't been able to forget her since that first moment, and it was driving him up a wall. He was ready to howl he was so wound up over the woman.

He almost snorted as his thoughts sank deeper into an unknown territory of lust, imagining

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

her the way he'd seen her that morning, forceful, demanding answers then pliant beneath his kiss. He could easily see her in much more arousing ways too. Naked, beneath him, or riding him, taking in every solid inch of his cock. Lush, silky skin slick with passion, her heat enveloping him as he sank deep into her welcoming body. He could imagine quite a lot, as he quickly discovered. He shuddered as the images sliced his control like that horror movie character Jason and his knives.

She even spelled her name like some pep squad cheerleader girl. That same girl had grown into one hell of a woman. His body was only too willing to point that out. Savvy, unshakeable and intelligent were just a few things he'd noticed since meeting her. Curvy and luscious with a scent that made him want to pull her against him and never let her go, and all that hair. If he'd been alone, he probably would've howled for quite a long while.

He thought for a brief instant about slackening his body's hunger but just the idea made him tremble with the urge to hurl. And grown men did not hurl. Not at work. Not at their desks. *God, I have this bad.* He rubbed at his temples a little harder but it had no effect. The last stress relief he'd had in the name of a roll in the hay, because he knew he'd never remember the girl's name, had been longer in his history than he cared to remember. The less he'd had as he'd matured, the less he'd missed it. Until now. And damn, what he wanted, he wanted *bad*. He growled in his throat at the admission. The noise of the office surrounded him, thankfully hiding his turmoil.

"Here's your car info," Randy announced, dropping the file at Jonas's elbow, yanking him back to the chaos of the offices surrounding him.

He snapped around to look up at Randy. The interruption was a touch of relief with the latest news. And a relief to be out of his own thoughts for five seconds. "Thanks for being fast."

Randy shrugged. "There were only so many possibilities with what you gave me, and I didn't think the eighty-two Dodge was going to be it."

Jonas grinned. Randy was thorough besides being fast. He flipped the file open and read the car specs. "Did you put out the APB on it yet?" he asked as he read the details.

"First thing," Randy confirmed, leaning on the edge of Jonas's desk. "You think they are the buyer?" He flipped a look toward the file beneath Jonas's fingers.

"Or the next courier." He glanced at the vehicle owner information on the paperwork. A business entity, one he recognized from months of reconnaissance. He let out a slow breath. They were getting closer. Finally. Unfortunately, seeing how close they were gave his stomach a twist that he really didn't like. He knew who would be next if they were searching from their end if he thought about it. It didn't take very long at all to figure it out either. Hell, they'd just shot at her that

morning.

What was he waiting for?

“Thanks again.” He stood from his chair and grabbed his jacket, shrugging it over his shoulders to hide his holster. No sense in lying. He was going to check on Stacey. The real lie was that his only motivation was to make sure she was still safe and sound.

\* \* \* \*

Stacey left her office ahead of schedule as a precaution. What difference could it make? She hadn't even walked through the door until after two in the afternoon. She checked her mirror every time she'd gone somewhere, whether it was down the block or to show a house. After leaving the house with the shot out windows, she'd specifically bought a fresh coffee and sat in her car in the shade of a large tree next to one of the downtown parks. She wasn't about to get out and make herself a target again, but she couldn't go to work with gallons of adrenaline pumping through her system either. She'd practically jumped right out of her shoes because a cat howled as she approached her car. She needed a few minutes to put her head back in order, to rationalize the shots and her place in this new mini-series of her life. She needed to try to forget those incredible kisses, along with the feel of his hard length against her, pressing into her in all the right places. In ways that made her tremble and yearn. Maybe it was time to start dating again if these chance encounters with a near stranger were turning her insides to silly putty.

By the time she'd hit the bottom of her cup, she had fixed her rattled nerves and went to work. Now, gratefully, it was time to go home. She took every precaution she could, using an alternate route, hiding amongst the large tractor-trailers when she could. A little common sense and her father's sage advice came in handy. Sporadic checks in her mirror showed her to be tail-less, which gave her a sense of relief.

Once she was parked and in her own home, she breathed another sigh of relief. She could use as much as she could get after the morning she'd had. A knock at her door barely ten minutes later took her by surprise.

“Who is it?”

“Meter reader,” came the brusque reply.

Her brow furrowed. Since when did they come to the front door? She leaned closer to the door. “What do you want?”

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

A throat cleared. “Your meter box has been damaged. Looks like a kid hit it with a baseball. Just wanted to show it to you. If you can’t find out who did it, it’ll show up on your bill.”

“Really?” she wondered. When did it happen? No telling since she wasn’t home during the day.

“You better have ID,” she warned them even though she knew she had no choice but to see if her house had been whacked carelessly. Her eyes widened when they landed on the men on the other side.

\* \* \* \*

Jonas drove to her home with a sense of dread. She hadn’t answered her cell phone and her secretary said she’d left nearly an hour before. His only thought was she had better have been in the shower when he called and she hadn’t picked up. When he approached and spotted the dark Mercedes, he knew his answer.

He called in for reinforcements, parking in the neighbor’s driveway without remorse. Drawing his weapon, he crawled along the side of the house, listening as shouts and crashes echoed through the cream colored walls. He breathed, keeping his head cool when he wanted to rush in and beat the shit out of them for coming here. He couldn’t think of Stacey being hurt. The idea of her hurt and bleeding or worse, made him see red. He sucked air in through his nose to calm his racing heart. Patience and training soothed his rattled nerves back to ice.

Rising on his feet, he looked over the pane of one of the front windows and spotted two men, tearing her living room apart.

“...bedroom.” He heard it as a muffled order with a gesture and one of them spun and left his field of vision. He couldn’t see Stacey in the front room but prayed she was all right. He waited until the second moved out of sight deeper in the house away from the only door he knew would likely be open then slunk his way to it, opening it with a stealthy slow twist.

His entrance went unnoticed, closing the door without snicking the mechanism. He doubted they would have heard it anyway with the racket they were making in their search. They were a loud couple of pricks. Sneaking up on the joker in the kitchen wasn’t hard. He wasn’t expecting to be interrupted. The butt of Jonas’s gun against his head solved that problem. He sank to the floor unconscious in a heap. Sparing a brief moment, he locked one of his hands to a cabinet handle with his handcuffs, searching him for a weapon and finding two. He slid them underneath his belt, safety

on, then he skimmed the floor for the bedroom.

He found the second asshole on his toes pulling stuff off the top shelf of her closet when Jonas looked around the corner of the door into the room. Stacey lay splayed out on the bed. His heart tripped painfully at the bruise on her chin. *Bastards*. They were going to pay for that. Her room was already trashed, drawers pulled out and clothes all over the place. His gaze narrowed at a flash of white against dark black denim. Was that lace trim in his front pocket?

Jonas snarled at the sight, no doubt in his mind what this guy's trophy was. He straightened to his full height and gripped his gun, imagining every little thing he wanted to do to the intruder for payment. He'd settle for putting his ass in jail for the moment.

"Hey asshole," he barked, whipping around the door with his gun already aimed at the man's head. "Don't move."

Sweat popped out on the other guy's brow at his appearance. He lifted wild, searching eyes beyond Jonas.

"He isn't coming," he taunted coolly. He motioned for him to raise his hands. "Kneel." He looked like he was only waiting for the right chance to dive for Jonas. It never came.

Swearing when it proved Jonas wasn't lying, he knelt and dropped his hands behind his back. A few minutes later he heard the arrival of booted steps through the front door and knew backup had arrived.

Once the one before him was in handcuffs and he could holster his own weapon, he handed over the guns he'd confiscated then quickly went to Stacey's side.

"Hey, baby, you in there?" he questioned softly, crouched by the bed caressing the hair away from her face where she lay on her side. The warmth of her skin against his fingers alone made him feel so much better, knowing she was okay, just beat up. Again. Poor girl. What a craptastic week for her.

"I don't know. Are they gone?" she whispered back, without moving a muscle. Or opening her eyes.

He stroked her hair to soothe her. "Yeah. Both of them, though your place will need a week's worth of maid service."

She huffed a short breath, but didn't say anything about that. "I was praying, if I stayed still and didn't move, they might leave me alone."

"How long have you been awake?"

"I don't know. I know one of them came in here twice before they started seriously

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

searching.” Her eyes opened and speared Jonas to the quick with the meaning of what she was getting at. She shivered in reaction. “I think he was thinking about it but they had priorities. And I was no fun if I wasn’t fighting back.”

He shook his head at her level of cool, well aware what she meant. Now he wished he had done more than just arrest their sorry asses for putting their slimy hands on her. He put a hand under her arms and stood, bringing her up with them until she was on her knees on the bed. Wrapping his arms around her and holding her tight seemed the most natural thing to do. Her arms curved around his neck and nothing had felt more natural in his life.

A funny tumult hit his heart at the thought, making it worse because he didn’t want to let go. So he didn’t. He didn’t think about it either. Just the here and now. That was something he could deal with.

He leaned back and inspected her face. “You’re getting quite the collection,” he murmured teasingly.

She lifted a hand to her jaw. “Wasn’t expecting it, that’s for sure. Gave me some line then popped me. I thought guys didn’t hit girls.”

He smiled watching her work her jaw back and forth, consternation coloring her cheeks. “The good guys don’t.”

She stopped moving and caught his stare, something so deep, so hungry in their depths, he felt swept up into their dark swirls.

“I like the good guys,” she said, sounding almost breathless.

He was lowering to her lips before he could stop himself. He had to taste her. Had to know she was okay. Had to feel her the way he’d been craving since that morning. Her breasts were pushed against his chest, warm and giving. His hands cradled her, holding her at her waist with a firm but tender weight.

The brush of her fingers in his hair sent another shot of lightning into his blood stream. His hold tightened, finally giving in to the feeling. She welcomed him, devouring his kiss passion for passion.

Sweetness soaked into him as he suckled on her tongue. She shimmied closer, and he felt the teasing heat of her against his cock. He groaned. *So good*, he thought. Then he stopped thinking altogether when she brought them even closer. He couldn’t remember the last time a kiss had been this good, this consuming.

A throat clearing jerked him back to his senses. He relinquished her lips with slow

enjoyment, but he left his hands right where they were. He couldn't give a rat's ass if rumors had started flying five seconds ago. He wasn't letting her go.

He looked behind her as she leaned to rest against his shoulder for support.

"Yes?"

"They are heading down to lockup, sir, if you would like to come make your statements."

"We'll follow you in a few minutes," he stated, brooking no argument from the officer at the doorway. He turned and left the pair in the bedroom. "I'll take you with me." He rubbed his cheek against the top of her head. He couldn't seem to stop touching her. There was only way he'd ever get enough, and even, then he wasn't sure it would be *enough*. It gave him pause, but the argument didn't convince him to let go.

"You don't have to do that," she replied, sounding extremely content right where she was.

"I do if I'm taking you out tonight."

She laughed, burying herself into his neck to hide it. Her warm breath soaked into him just like her kiss had. He'd never felt so hungry for a woman's touch or her kiss in his life.

He fought with himself to sound normal, because he sure didn't feel normal. He felt hot, overheated, hungry, ready to gorge himself on the wonders of her luscious body. She wasn't making it easy for him either.

The sight of her in her business suit was hot. He liked a confident woman, and she dressed to shout that confidence to the world. Sexy sharp skirts. Heels to make his mouth water. She was a total package kind of woman. The idea of her in something like her jeans—the ones he hadn't forgotten—were enough to send him into a lusting tailspin too.

"Why don't you get into something relaxing?"

"Because I don't have a Jacuzzi," she retorted playfully.

He almost groaned as he sucked in air, envisioning her soaked and naked, or naked and soaked, he didn't care. "Do you hurt?" he asked, fighting to keep himself in check. He didn't like the idea that she was still aching from her misadventures.

"Only a little but right this minute, I feel wonderful." She sighed in pure contentment.

"Stacee, if I don't let you go, it'll be hours before we leave this room," he warned her, albeit regretfully.

"I'd be fine with that," she replied, running her tongue up the side of his neck. His eyes slammed shut in reaction. He stretched, giving her room to play, and she didn't disappoint. The slight scrape of her nails against his scalp was just the precursor to the delicious torment he was



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

about to receive. He couldn't find the strength to tell her to stop.

Daring lips and a wicked tongue painted a heated trail from his shoulder to his ear. Tender and wanton, she nipped and scraped against his nerves with her teeth, causing heat and lust to harden his cock until he thought he'd died and gone to heaven. He felt his entire body tighten like steel in answer. His groans deepened into hard growls of need.

The sexy minx was seducing him. And he was almost ready to let her. God, what he'd give to feel himself buried inside of her heat. To feel the slide of his cock inching slowly into her pussy, the soft squeals of pleasure he knew she'd make scorching his nerves with every caress. The taste of her skin on his tongue, the heat of her touch burning him like she already was. He shuddered with sexual longing when she nipped at his earlobe, drawing on it to suckle like he'd played with her tongue just a moment before.

He lifted a hand and swept it through the wave of hair down her back, thrilled at the silky feeling, the richness of it on his skin.

"Sweetheart," he tried, sounding like he'd run a ten mile marathon as he gasped beneath her touch. "We're not alone yet."

"Mmm..." she breathed against his flesh. Hot pants of breath wove over his neck, as she stopped her attack on his nerves. He shuddered with a long lost desire that she'd unerringly awakened with that wicked pouting mouth and eyes the color of the most artistically blended brown and gray marble. "Kiss me Jonas. Kiss me like I need you to, and I'll let you go."

His heart went right through his ribs. He'd never been needed with that breathless intensity before. He'd never been on the receiving end for that deep of a hunger in a woman's touch before.

"Baby." He swallowed his own groan as he lifted his head to stare down into her eyes. Fringed in dark chocolate lashes, lit from within with what she was feeling, with what she desired. Him. Open and trusting, believing in him. And craving just as much as he was, but able to give him what he needed, space and time if he wanted.

If he could give her what she needed to let her know it wasn't one-sided.

He could. In spades.

He lowered to her lips and felt the earth move.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jonas spread the blanket on the ground, trying not to gape at her bared legs beneath her summer dress as he did so. She wore a cream sweater over her shoulders but those legs... He had to remind himself there were other things to look at in the park.

"This was a wonderful idea," she told him, sitting after he'd sufficiently spread out the blanket. He placed the second one nearby for when the temperatures cooled, with the basket dinner he'd brought at arm's reach.

With the sun setting, the bruises she'd collected that week would be harder to see, but the bruises were the last thing he found himself staring at.

Jonas shrugged. He'd brought girls from his pack to the park to listen to the music in past years. The season was just starting. Every Friday night until mid-September. This was the first time he'd brought an actual date though.

"I'm glad you're not disappointed it's not the usual restaurant thing."

She smiled when he looked down at her. "Oh, not in the least. I love being outdoors." He had to sit. Her words had the effect of knocking his legs right out from underneath him. He stretched out next to her, his legs in front of them as he leaned on an elbow. Safer to already be on the ground in case she said anything else that he had that kind of reaction to.

He glanced at her, catching her profile as she studied the layout of the stage and the couples scattered thinly on the grounds. It was early in the season. In a few weeks, it would look like a New Jersey seashore with towels, blankets and people.

Stacee seemed perfectly at ease, very relaxed considering the week she'd had. He'd postponed the offered date to tonight when he remembered the concerts were just starting up again. Stacee hadn't argued, saying a day to relax from the break-in and start the dreaded cleaning of her house should be faced.

She absently pushed a wave of hair away from her face and he followed the entire motion like it was a 'must see' movie clip. He wanted to bury his nose in the crook of her shoulder and just

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

stay there.

He drew a hard breath and faced forward to listen, or at least look like he was.

What was it about Stacee that drove him so hard up that wall of lust? That made him hunger? He dropped his attention to the stage as the first sounds of a guitar soared up to them on the hill incline. Was she the one? The ‘mate’ that many of his male brothers had already found? Jonas knew the right woman for him didn’t have to be pack. She could just as easily be human. The genetic ability he carried was male dominant. The women who found their loves among the packs were no different than most, just better adaptable. And devotional to the extreme. Pack couples never strayed, never divorced.

The idea that she could be that one woman for him struck him with terror and lust at the same time. There wasn’t any point in fooling himself. He wanted her. Just laying there as she swayed and smiled to the music flowing around them, he wanted her. Yet if she was the one, taking her to his bed would make her irresistible to him forever. He almost snorted. Like she was resistible *now*? She was also the first woman to completely distract him from a working case. Ever.

*Not good*, he mocked himself.

He didn’t have the freedom to lose his focus. Those memory chips held the entire nation’s safety on them. Bank codes. Security codes. Access to classified government information. They had to be found.

“You don’t like the song?” she asked, a glint of humor in her gaze.

He relaxed, realizing his shoulders had gone tense with his thoughts. “No, it’s fine. I come here usually once or twice a year.”

“Then?” she asked, lifting a hand to run through his hair. He lifted himself into the caress as though compelled to answer.

“Just thinking about work.” He rarely gave out details. Stacee was the first—the only—to know just what he did.

“This isn’t on the clock tonight,” she reminded him. She leaned over and pressed a kiss to his mouth, soft, warm, giving, flipping his world yet again because there was absolutely no demand in it. It was simply a kiss. For him. “Relax.” Devilish lights rose in her eyes and her lips twitched. “Or I’ll make you forget in front of everyone.”

“Is that a dare, woman?” he asked her, heat coursing through him like lava flow. Damn, would he ever stop wanting her? Somehow, he doubted it.

“Try me and find out.” She arched an eyebrow in challenge, and he couldn’t resist.

## DIANA DERICCI

Weaving his hand through her fall of hair, he pulled her closer until her lips were just above his. “Never dare when you can’t see the challenge through.” Then he kissed her deeply and learned just what it was she’d dared.

Of all the kisses they’d shared, this one burned his brain, would forever be in his memories as *the* kiss that melted him. Suddenly, his jeans were tight in the worst place, and the light denim jacket was too hot. He thrust his tongue into her, claiming her in a way he’d never expected to know. She dueled, meeting his pace, nipping and welcoming him at turns. It was hard as hell to show restraint and not tumble her beneath him with them in very open view of everyone who cared to look.

Thankfully, the next closest couple was several dozen yards away and hardly any more interested in the activities going on around them than he was in them. The only person who had his undivided attention was the woman in his hands.

The sweet scent of her skin filled his lungs with every breath. The deliciousness of her arousal wove around him, making him want more than just the kisses, more than he’d ever wanted before. There’d always been a definite lack of *something* when he’d had sex with the other women in his life. With Stacee, there was an abundance of that missing element, of passion, of fire and desire, and he knew this would be the woman who would stay with him always if she accepted his nature.

If he was ready to show her.

He withdrew from the kiss, his thoughts in ever growing circles of turmoil. With a seeking thumb, he brushed against her bottom lip, noting the blush swollen warmth. He didn’t have that freedom. Not with her in danger and possibly a target for the ones seeking the lost chips. She panted against him. She wasn’t fairing any better than he was if her heavy lidded looks and flushed pink cheeks were any indication. He took the prudent road and didn’t say one word about that kiss. One word would be all it would take to fall headlong into those eyes and shout at the world to leave them both alone.

“Hungry?”

She nodded. The wanting expression on her face told him food wasn’t even on the list, but it was the only thing he could offer her.

\* \* \* \*

He dropped her back off at her house that evening, walking her to the door like any

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

gentleman would have, except the thoughts he had were anything but gentlemanly. They were ravenous and demanding. Every cell in his body craved ripping that dress from her body to see the treasures hidden beneath. The goodbye kiss was much more reserved, gentle. He didn't have the strength for another assault like he'd received in the park. Another one of her kisses like that and he'd be walking with her right into her bedroom. And he couldn't. God, how he wanted to, but he couldn't. Not yet. There was always the possibility of not ever, but he didn't like the idea of not having her in his life, or the picture it created.

Somehow he'd gone from questioning to nearly accepting in one night. He needed to clear his head. It was happening so fast. He should call one of the others in the pack. He couldn't. Most of the men were solitary and didn't do the 'male bonding' thing the way human males did. Males of the pack had higher than average alpha tendencies. Most couldn't stand to be around others for very long without challenging each other in some way. Bloodshed between the pack males was strictly forbidden because of that male dominance trait. It had happened in the past and was punishable in archaic ways.

That only left one choice. He'd have to ride it out. With a final sipped kiss he waited for the sound of her door lock then strode to his vehicle, escaping the hunger that blazed his trail before him.

Once home, he stripped with a vengeance leaving the back light of his home on when he rushed from the porch, landing on four feet easily. With a bounding leap, he was over the rear fence and into the woods behind his property on the outskirts of town. If it couldn't help his thoughts, running until exhaustion forced his mind blank seemed the next best thing.

CHAPTER SIX

“You’re kidding, right?” Kay teased over coffee late Saturday afternoon, her smile as wide as her eyes with her playfulness. “He’s kissed you into a coma and hasn’t made one grope?”

“Nope,” Stacee answered. “He’s been an incredible gentleman about it.” She felt the blush on her cheeks and didn’t even bother to try to hide it. She loved the tender way Jonas treated her, as if she were precious to him. He hadn’t even tried to caress a boob or grab her ass. She’d have to remedy that and soon. She was melting from the inside out with wanting him. She could still turn and find his scent on her skin from where he’d cuddled with her beneath the blanket the night before, or lick her lips and discover the memory of his taste from his kiss. He was driving her crazy with deep desiring lust and he wasn’t even there. It was crazy how much she missed him.

The two women sat in the warming spring afternoon on the patio of their favorite caffeine hangout, just enjoying the light breeze and the scudding shadows from the racing clouds overhead.

“Wow,” was Kay’s awed reply. She sipped, drawing a thoughtful look. Her next words were subdued. “Your mom isn’t going to like this.”

“Again, nope.”

Stacee played with her straw to her iced coffee, well aware of how her mother was going to react to Jonas.

If she even deigned to speak to him, or her daughter, once she found out he was in law enforcement. Like her father.

“She’s going to have cow.”

“You are such a brilliant wealth of understatement,” she replied dryly.

“Well, you know me best. And still love me, I might add,” she said with a playful laughing wink. “Where is wonder guy today?”

“Probably working. He’s been on this one case for months. I’m just glad it looks like they’ve finally pulled me out of the ‘she knows something’ equation.” She rubbed at her arms, dislodging the chill she got for mentioning it.

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

“Who? The cops or the bad guys?”

“Both.” At least she hoped so. “I look like a Laila Ali loser because of all of this.”

“It’ll fade.”

Stacee waved a hand in dismissal. “It’s just been a hassle at work, trying to talk to someone looking like an abused wife.”

“True, true.”

“But it’s temporary. The damage those goons did to my house...” She curled a lip in a rare flare of anger. “That wasn’t cool. The upholstery bill alone is a nightmare. Every cushion in the living room.” She’d spent the weekend making headway in cleaning her house and writing off damages for the insurance company. That had been oh-so-much fun. She still had a long way to go too.

“Ugh!” her friend groaned in sympathy. “But it’s a good chance to redecorate.” Kay tried to brighten the damage with her usual sense of optimism. It was one of those things that Stacee loved about her best friend, even if she was insane most of the time. Stacee rolled her eyes in silent answer.

Her cell phone rang, and her heart sped up at the ring tone. Only one person had that sound. Kay respectfully lowered her eyes to her drink, seeming to have way more interest in her straw than the coming conversation. Too bad she couldn’t shove cotton in her ears too.

“Hello sweetheart,” he purred when she answered. That melting sensation she felt whenever she thought of him grew with a fast boil that raged hotter at the sound of his voice. “Where are you?”

“At the Mocha Hut with Kay. Where are you?”

“About twenty feet behind you.”

She gasped and whirled. She spotted him leaning against a tree at the farthest edge of the patio in the thicker shadows from the shade trees. He must have either just arrived or just showed himself if Kay hadn’t seen him. He was so still she hadn’t even noticed him at first against the tree. He snapped his phone shut and sauntered over, his eyes on her, and hotter than the sun with hungry desire in their swirling depths.

“How’d he do that?” she demanded gaping over Stacee’s shoulder. That answered that question. Kay hadn’t seen him at all.

“Were you spying on me?” she asked, slicing him a look from below lowered lashes, with no real offense in the demand. She liked the way he looked out for her.

“Keeping you safe,” he replied, unrepentant. “I couldn’t take any more voyeurism.” His grin

was lighthearted, but there was a weight in his expression and on his shoulders that hadn't been there the last time she'd seen him.

"Ha. Ha." She jabbed him with a stiff finger in the hip in punishment.

He grabbed a spare chair and swung it to their table, sitting at an angle to see outward while he sat next to her.

She lifted an eyebrow questioningly. "Why were you keeping me safe? I thought the connection to me was cleared."

One of his hands rose to the back of her chair and idly played with the ends of her loose hair. A frown on his sexy mouth made her fear his answer.

"Just a gut instinct." It was a slow, almost half-hearted reply, but immediately she knew it for what it was.

She knew something had happened. She was learning she could trust his sense of danger, and how to read him. He'd saved her twice. She also knew there was a lot he couldn't tell her with Kay there. He was playing with her hair to make their meeting seem nonchalant, relaxed, but his eyes never stopped roving the surrounding areas, never stopped scanning and searching. The beauty of it was no one could tell he was doing it just by watching him. The relaxed image was a lie. His subtlety was unbelievable.

Something had changed, or maybe nothing had changed at all. Maybe she'd let herself fall into a sense of safety with the Goon Boys behind bars. How many more people could possibly think she had anything to do with the missing chips? Chocolate chips she'd vouch for, but computer chips? Not a chance in Hell. Absently she twitched her lower jaw, remembering the burst of pain on her face when they'd rushed her at her house.

A light touch on her spine jerked her back to the table and the sweetest aqua eyes she'd ever seen. "Don't worry, baby," he told her, his thumb stroking her between her shoulder blades tenderly. "It's fading fast."

"I told her the same thing," Kay remarked over her stirred coffee, clearly not upset over being ignored now that Jonas was there. She'd accepted him as a part of the friend circle in a way that warmed Stacey, which made him fair game to Kay's acerbic sense of humor. Luckily, he gave as good as he got and had won Kay over pretty quickly too. Their sparring matches would be the stories they'd share with their friends for years to come.

If Jonas was still there. Silently, she prayed she'd get the chance to find out.



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

\* \* \* \*

Jonas tried not to lose his concentration to the naked legs beneath the table. Shorts. The woman had worn shorts. It was bad enough the tank top exposed some of the creamiest skin on her shoulders that he'd ever seen, dappled with sunlight and shadow. He shifted in his chair, forcing the surge from his lower extremities, focusing outward again. There was no such thing as relief around this woman.

He was there to protect her. That was, unfortunately, the truth. His network had picked up a call conversation between one of his marks and someone else looking for the chips. He was sure the someone else was the man behind it all. The man who was going to make the play the chips were intended for. This new development had completely overridden the sexual desire he'd been battling since Friday night.

The courier who'd started the whole chain reaction was just another pawn. The two in jail were a sacrifice. He knew that now. They weren't going to be bailed out anytime soon either. They'd screwed up and gotten caught without finding a single hint to the chips' location. The memory chips were still out there. That nugget of information worked in his favor too. If they didn't have them, he still had a chance at finding them first. He'd been hunting for them with a single-minded intent since the week before. Double checking every option he had, retracing every connection and step he'd made.

And now the man at the end of the rope had pinned all his attention on Stacee. He had a name for him now too. Gregory Lipton, a low-lying Senator in Washington. That wasn't much of a surprise. That's where the most effective deal would be made for something this combustible. The weight of the government on three little memory chips, boards smaller than the length of his stretched palm, but worth a fortune to the right seller.

Worth his country's safety for the wrong buyer. Every missile launch code, every single triple-threat password. He had no doubt it had taken a *lot* of hacking and under the table cash to get the chips loaded, and now they were a power play. And Stacee seemed to be the woman with the goods.

He glanced down and almost groaned at his own pun.

His eyes almost fell out of his head when he realized she wasn't wearing a bra. Her nipples were blatantly obvious, and begging for attention through her shirt. His tongue pushed against his teeth as his cock swelled in his pants. He'd become an unending hard-on around this woman. He

wanted to taste their lush tips with a ferocity that stole his breath away. She was driving him insane in no slow order.

He swallowed, swiftly looking up, but not before Kay caught him red-handed, a knowing smirk on her face that went right over Stacee's head. He gave her an innocent look and went back to his surveillance.

The problem was this time, if she got him into her house, he wouldn't be leaving, and his nature be damned or not, he wasn't going to make himself leave her side again either. Not after the nights he'd spent dreaming about her legs wrapped around his waist like a vice. Not after the hours he'd spent with her taste on his lips, the heat of her skin on his tongue. He was a strong man, but even he had a limit to this kind of frustration.

He'd hit that limit Friday night when his run didn't do a damn thing to ease his frustration and was paying the price for it just by sitting next to her. And he was in no way a masochist. He hadn't come to terms with what all of that meant yet—there were still many variables in the damn way—but he knew what he had to have, who he had to claim and taste. And if he had to claim her before her feelings, or his, were realized, then so be it. It wouldn't be the first time. But he was done with the self-torture routine.

With his hand around her waist, he led her from the table when they were done with their drinks. Kay waved as she drove away.

"What's on the agenda?" he asked, striving for nonchalance. He almost achieved it.

"More house cleaning. I shoved things into the closet and picked up the drawers in my bedroom. It's all that's left really."

"That doesn't sound too bad."

She made a harrumphing sound in disagreement. He guessed he couldn't blame her. It wasn't his house that had been demolished in the searching. He leaned her against the fender of her car, blocking her from view, feeling her pressed against him in so many delicious ways, places that were begging for the contact. Getting her naked right that second wasn't likely going to happen sadly. He glanced down when he finished a perimeter sweep. *Damn sexy shorts*, he cursed silently after he'd made himself promise to not look. He might as well have stopped breathing.

"So tell me the truth." She wound her arms over his shoulders. "You didn't just happen to stop here and decide to hang out."

"Busted." He exhaled with a wry grin. "I've got the buyer's name."

"A breakthrough? That's great!"

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

He wished he could share her enthusiasm. “The problem is, they can’t be charged until they have the chips, or at least attempt to get them.”

She ran her teeth over her bottom lip in thought. That sexy bottom lip.

“Which leaves...me.”

He nodded, meeting his eyes to hers when she lifted them. He felt the shiver that coursed over her body even as she snuggled closer to him, as if seeking his warmth. He folded her in tighter to his body. He nuzzled the side of her neck, well aware how much his body was enjoying the contact. He let out a slow breath. He was also very aware of the danger Stacey was in because of this whole mess. With him searching for the missing memory chips from his end, and the buyer in Washington doing the same, she was right in the middle. Somehow, he had to keep her safe.

Somehow, he would. He just didn’t know how yet.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Stacee eased one of her hands into the rich brown of his hair, and his eyes glittered in the sunlight. “You have the most incredible eyes I’ve ever seen,” she told him.

“Thank you.”

With little warning she dragged her nails lightly from his scalp down his neck, mimicking scoring his skin. He arched and growled, throwing his head back as his eyes snapped shut. She’d never had the guts to come right out and tell a guy that she wanted to get as naked as possible and see what came next, but if Jonas couldn’t understand *this*, then she really was reading him so very wrong. There was an almost animalist intensity to Jonas. Taking a chance, she dragged those same nails down his chest until she reached his last rib, and held on, digging through the cotton of his t-shirt. Muscles jumped and bunched in answer. He tensed from his shoulders to his knees, and she felt it all along her body. She wanted to see him react, not just feel it.

His jaw was tight. When his eyes popped open, the fire she found in them was rich and deep. “Be careful how you play,” he warned her. She tilted, hearing a deeper *entendre* in the words, but too caught up in the spontaneous wildness of the seduction.

“I want to play,” she informed him, pouting softly. She wanted more than that, and she was pretty sure he knew it.

He lowered until he was right next to her ear. His voice dropped a whole octave, sending shivers cascading down her spine. “Get in.”

She didn’t hesitate to ask why. She found the door handle and slid behind the wheel. He was in on the other side before she’d shut her door.

“Pull out and turn right at Oliver.” She nodded at the crisp directions.

Oliver was a beautiful street with old-style buildings and huge storefronts. Many had historical markers and were kept up as part of the town’s historical presence. He pointed to an alley that was lined on one side by trees. “Park there.” She did. The thick canopy of trees shaded the street and parking between the trunks provided some protection. At least on a Saturday the alley

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

wouldn't see much traffic.

He undid his belt buckle and moved his seat all the way back. "Come here if you want to play," he taunted her in a seductive tone.

"In the car?" She almost giggled, her eyes widening at the idea. She wasn't exactly seventeen anymore. She'd only done it twice in a car in college, and that sure hadn't been all that memorable.

"No. But you should know better than to taunt the big dog on the porch." He reached over and easily lifted her onto his lap when she undid her own belt. His strength surprised her. The way he just plucked her out of her seat and settled her onto his lap made her gasp. He sank down so she wouldn't hit her head on the roof. Her legs tangled with his, and then she couldn't move if she wanted to. She didn't.

She slid an arm around his neck. His hair was already mussed from her hands. What was a little more damage? "Who said I was taunting?" She twirled her fingers through the thick strands.

"Trust me, sweetheart. You're playing with fire." He kissed her, pressing into her firmly. There was no mistaking the hard length of his arousal beneath her and she squirmed to rub against him. Hard and thick, the bulge dug into her rear. She wished they *could* do it in the car.

He licked at her lips, teasing them until she met him halfway, then there was no going back. With a hand behind her head, he slid his other beneath her tank. Her stomach fluttered and jumped at the heated touch of his fingers on her stomach.

Desire hit a new high when he cupped her breast, toying with her nipple. He teased the nub, twisting and raking his nails over it. She was panting and squirming in a heartbeat.

"Like that?" he breathed. "I bet you taste as good as you smell."

She wasn't used to having a guy talk during sex, or making out. She quickly found out it was a fast rush of a turn on.

Moans slipped free when he moved from her lips to the arch of her neck, nipping and running his teeth and tongue over nerves. Lightning zinged from the side of her neck to her breast, back and forth as he teased and licked. She arched and moaned shamelessly when he switched his teasing to her other breast.

"You should never wear a bra around me. I love being able to touch you, just like this." And he showed her, his hand cupping her, rubbing her, between the mounds and then back to the hard peaks he'd created. He shaped them, caressed them. Pinching to within a heartbeat of real pain, then soothing them within his palm. He worshipped her body. "You should see yourself. You're so damn beautiful," he murmured against her ear, licking at the shell then finding the lobe between his teeth.

“I can’t wait to see you completely lost, beneath my touch.”

“Jonas,” she whimpered. Her insides ached with all the teasing. Dampness slicked her core. Muscles were clenching in demand, in unfulfilled need. Craving pleasure she hadn’t had in six long years.

“What baby? You know you want to tell me, to say it. I’ve seen in it your eyes every time I kissed you. You *want*, baby.” She whimpered again. She did want. She wanted everything he was doing to never stop. She threw back her head and gasped as new shivers rocked her body. “I know what you want,” he reassured her when insecurity seemed to have silenced her tongue.

And oh damn, but did he.

He bent down and licked at her breast with his wicked tongue. The shriek was a little louder.

“Shh. Can’t have anyone calling the cops,” he told her with a wolfish grin. He took a deep breath. “Damn, you smell so good, so hot.” Then he ducked down again and suckled on her breast. He tipped her up and encircled her completely in his hot mouth. Drawing her deep with sharp pulls, he bit lightly at her breasts, and she writhed in answer. She clenched his head, her world spinning as her body tightened. He suckled and twirled her nipple until she shook in his hold. She knew she was wet. She hadn’t felt this needy in years.

The snap came free on her shorts and she moved a hip, opening for his touch. She’d beg for it at this point. She ached and burned. A deep sound erupted from his chest when she felt his fingers toying with the curls above her sex. She actually quivered beneath his fingers.

Then he slid his fingers south, and it was all she could do to not scream in ecstasy.

He buried his lips beneath her ear, sucking hard on tender skin as he caressed her clit. “I knew you were wet,” he said, his voice hoarse.

Shocks erupted when he manipulated her folds to give him better access into her heat. He rubbed his fingers slowly up and down, teasing her, spreading the slickness of her arousal over her heated flesh. She stretched out against his shoulder, hooking a leg over one of his knees.

“Yes. Just like that,” he told her then swirled his thumb over her clit. “I’m going to make you come, Stacee. I want to feel you come, your pussy tight around me, feeling me.”

She quaked. “Yesss,” she moaned. “Please.” She stopped caring about anything; her entire world was his hands and what they were doing to her body.

He slid one finger then two into the aching heat of her pussy. She clutched at anything within reach as he stroked her walls, easing his fingers in and out in a slow rhythm.

“Imagine my cock doing this to you.” He drew out then pushed in, twisting a little to touch

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

several places, then his thumb flicked at her clit. “You want to feel me filling you, don’t you?”

“Yes!” she gasped, fighting hard to not shout.

“Take my cock, Stacee. I’m filling your pussy.” His voice was a dark grinding in her ear, filled with delicious temptation and pleasure she’d never known. He pulled out and slammed his hand into her, ramming the heel of his palm against her sensitive skin. She whimpered. “You’re slick and so tight.” He did it again, twisting and touching as he mimicked the motion of his hard cock filling her body. Contractions raced down from her womb. “Yes, Stacee. You want to come. Let yourself go.”

Somehow he wrapped his other arm around her and traced her mouth with a finger. Lost in the sea of desire, she wantonly sucked his digit into her mouth, suckling on him as he fucked her pussy.

“Shit Stacee,” he groaned. Then he increased the tempo and she was lost. Her orgasm started as a whiteout, a blast of ecstasy that spilled stars into her eyes. She sucked harder on his finger and he didn’t disappoint, pounding against her flesh in a rapid, intense rhythm. “Come sweetheart,” he ordered. “Come now!”

And she did. Gasping for breath, her body bucked as she tightened around his hand. He ground against her mound. Shocks flared in all directions, up her body and down her legs. With her head tossed back, she sank into the orgasm, floating as her body clutched and milked the hand that filled her. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d felt that good, felt that level of pleasure, if ever. It took a few minutes to finally begin to recognize the world surrounding her. And the very hard body of the man beneath her.

He was panting, resting against her shoulder.

“Jonas?” she whispered.

“Shh. Don’t move. Just...don’t move.” He was gasping for breath the same as she. She shook when he twisted his fingers then pulled them away. What he did next was surprising and erotic. He drew each finger into his mouth and savored the flavor, licking away the slick sign of her pleasure with the utmost care and enjoyment.

“I knew you’d taste good,” he told her, his expression calm even though she felt how tense he was beneath her. He had to be in pain. But he stopped her when she tried to move. “No. Don’t move.”

“But—”

“I’m fine.” He swept his arms around her and tucked her against his shoulder, just holding

her. He brushed her hair to the side and said, “You’ve got a new bruise, but your hair will cover this one.”

She placed a hand over the sensitive spot and felt the way her pulse beat against it. He gave her a hickey? “I’m not complaining.” She grinned at his apologetic blink. “About any of it.”

He tipped her chin. “This wasn’t a onetime deal, Stacey. I want you; we both just need better timing.”

“I think I can do something about that.”

He smiled, those aqua eyes of his warming. She snuggled in closer to his shoulder, and he looped his arms around her. Her eyes drifted shut in satisfied bliss, while she enjoyed the feel of his arms wrapped around her.

A few minutes later, he told her, “There’s something I have to tell you before that happens though.”

*Oh, that did not sound good.* All kinds of serious problems came to mind. Diseases were at the top of the list. Was he married? He didn’t act like the guilty, deceiving type. Was it something physical? He didn’t seem to have an erectile problem. She had felt it more than once.

“What?” she queried when he seemed hesitant to explain more. Anxiety was running all kinds of worrisome problems through her thoughts now that he’d said that.

A buzz sounded beneath her hip. He reached into his pocket and answered his phone.

“Dreyer.” He sat and listened for a brief moment. “Okay. I’m on my way.” He snapped the phone shut. “Sorry sweetheart. Back to the grind.”

“Just tell me you’re not married,” she demanded quickly, unable to hide the hurt frown.

He froze, then caught her gaze. He relaxed beneath her, snuggling her closer for a tender moment. “Not at all. Never have been.”

Then that only left... “Okay, what is it then?”

“It’s nothing life threatening or hideously awful.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead. “I got ahead of myself. I’ll explain it, but it’s not an emergency.”

“You promise? This isn’t teasing to get even for me taunting the big dog, is it?” She slid from his lap, finding herself back in her own seat once more. She lifted her hips to button her shorts and straightened her tank top.

“Baby, you can taunt the big dog all you want. He’ll never bite you. I promise you that,” he assured her with a wink. “I want to explain it, and I will, but I need to get back to the office.”

When she couldn’t meet his stare, he lifted her chin with a gentle hand. “Sweetheart, you



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

trust me with your life, don't you?" She nodded, swallowing hard. It wasn't fair when he looked at her that way, as though she was the most perfect woman on the planet, and she was his. "Trust me a little longer and I'll tell you everything. Okay?"

She knew she had no choice to but see it through. She was falling. Falling hard for the agent, and the man.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

The last of her house was clean. *Hallelujah*. She didn't want to go through this again. *What a mess*, she thought with a derisive head shake. Her newly upholstered couch cushions were due by the end of the following week along with several smaller pieces that she'd had to special order to replace. A few knick-knacks she'd simply written off. The less hassle the better after the week she'd spent.

Her closet was mostly put back together, the last of her tossed possessions going back to where they belonged as she tidied up. She spotted the shopping bags on the floor, her latest finds that she'd all but forgotten about with people following her and breaking into her house.

After that glorious stolen interlude with Jonas, she'd come back home to work on her house, and he'd gone back to his office. It was something she would have to accept. It was his work, his job. She knew he wasn't in quite the same kind of danger her father had lived in everyday, but it still wasn't like working in an office everyday either.

Honestly, she didn't think she was lying to herself to admit that she could accept that his job was dangerous. Someone had to do it, and Jonas was damn good at it. He'd told her some of his background Friday night over thick hoagie sandwiches and wine while they listened to the music in the park. It had been the best date she'd had since her divorce. Even cuddled beneath a blanket, all he'd done was massage her thighs or arms. He never tried to push for something more. Although she'd found out today just what happened if she was the one who pushed for it. And she had no complaints. The smile she'd worn since he'd left her side was pretty self-explanatory.

She lifted the different store bags from the bottom of her now mostly clean closet, setting them on her bed to spread out and clip tags to disperse the new things through her wardrobe. There wasn't a rush to get to them. They were winter clothes, from last season on sale. Not that anyone else had to know that.

She pulled the long sweaters out and spread them on her bed, admiring the colors, feeling a bit victorious over finding the designer labels for a steal. She pulled the receipt from between two of

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

them, remembering exactly how her day had gone after she'd first touched it, then folded the bag to toss.

A skittering sound inside of the coated paper bag stopped her. Curious, she opened it and looked.

And felt her heart slam to a dead stop.

A single small bubble package, less than an inch thick slid along the bottom of the paper bag. It was roughly as long as her hand when she pulled it out and held it.

"Oh shit," she choked out, feeling her stomach shoot into her throat then fall like a rock to her feet.

\* \* \* \*

Jonas was rereading files on the Senator, trying to find his connection to pin him with the intelligence espionage when Randy stopped by his desk.

"Hey, Dreyer. Did you hear? Your courier boy was bailed out this morning."

He snapped up. "He was? When?"

"About ten." Jonas looked at his watch. It was well past six. He'd left Stacee over two hours ago.

"Who set his bail?" He was already rising from his chair. When things move, they moved fast and for the first time, he tasted real fear. Only it wasn't for him.

"He claimed it was a relative, but the money was wired in from D.C."

"And the other two?"

"Still sitting in their cells."

"Shit," he ground out. "He was the only one who may know where the memory boards are. Trace that money wire!" He started for the front doors of the ground floor nearly at a run. He knew that the courier was heading straight for Stacee. It wouldn't be hard to play connect the dots at this point for anyone and come up with Stacee Hales.

His phone rang just as he jumped into his vehicle.

"Dreyer."

"Um, Jonas. You know that certain thing you've been looking for?"

He winced at the violent tremor in her voice. "You found it, didn't you?"

"Uh huh."

DIANA DERICCI

“Lock your doors. I’m on my way.”

“Thank you,” she whispered, sounding completely relieved. “I—”

“Stacee!” He shouted her name. He didn’t care that several heads had swung around to gape at him. The line had gone eerily dead.

He punched speed dial with his heart stuck between his ribs. “Randy. Stacee Hales found the boards. Her line just went dead.”

“Rally the troops?” he asked.

Jonas narrowed his eyes as he hit the freeway well over the speed limit. “Bring who you can spare.”

“On it.”

He disconnected and tossed his phone to the seat, gripping the steering wheel until his knuckles popped. He counted the minutes as he floored the gas pedal, ticking off miles to Stacee’s house.

\* \* \* \*

Stacee’s hand shook. “Jonas?” she squeaked. Nothing. “Oh God. This is not funny.” Dropping the cordless phone from her bedroom, she raced for the front door, making sure she had locked it. She lurched to a frozen stop. She heard footsteps outside her door and gulped air. Jonas couldn’t possibly be there already.

Backpedaling for the kitchen, she opened the dishwasher and tossed the small package in the silverware basket, locked the door, and ran for her bedroom.

Someone jiggled the front doorknob behind her, and she slammed her bedroom door just before whoever was outside her front door shot the lock out of it. Her whole body flinched at the explosive sound and the ensuing crash as the door was shoved inward.

“I told you she would be easy to find,” she heard someone say through the door, hearing far more bravado than a voice that young should have. He must have been the one with the gun. There was silence to his statement though. Was it one or two? How many were out there? She frowned when she heard steps, apparently unconcerned with being noticed. Definitely more than one. Why was her house the one getting all the assholes?

“Yeah, yeah. No, they haven’t found the chips. She has to still have them.”

Stacee gulped again and anxiously searched her room for something, anything, to protect

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

herself with. The pillows off her bed? Not even. She refrained from cursing. She didn't even own a bat. Her mother had her father's remaining gear at her house. She had nothing. She heard a crash and winced at the shattered sound. Probably one of her large lamps or TV. Just that much more to clean up. Another loud crash. Her poor living room. She wanted to cry. It seemed they didn't know she was still in the house. She'd put her car in the garage since it was Sunday. Lucky her. The phone cord must have been a precaution.

Her gaze went to the open closet in desperation. One of the extension pipes from the vacuum cleaner? She dismissed it right away. Where was her mini tool kit? She did a mental search and discarded the idea with disappointment. The toolbox was in the hall storage closet. No hammers here.

*Damn!*

*Okay, think Stacey! What do you have?* She searched and got an idea, a trick her father once told her about when she had rented her first apartment. She only hoped it would work.

Unplugging her lamp she set her plan in action, thankful she still had the scissors on her bed from when she'd been snipping tags free from her clothes.

Wrapping the wires quickly, she twisted the ends together to hold bared copper flush against the knob then carefully plugged the cord in. Nothing happened, but she wasn't going to be the one to test the theory either.

She leapt for the other side of her bed, forcing open one of the side slide windows then shoved the screen free. It popped out with a wrenched crack. The loud thuds of footsteps were definitely heading in her bedroom's direction. They knew she was home now.

She swung a leg over the sill and shimmied herself out to the other side just as a loud scream filled her house to the rafters right before a solid crash on the other side of her door shook the walls. She didn't turn to look, falling to the ground and hugging the side of the house. Violent curses were echoing up and down the house. The sudden vacuum of no electricity hit her home.

She stilled with a stunned feeling. It had worked.

One toasted bad guy. The rank stench of melted wires and what was likely singed hair filled her nostrils from the window just above her with her next gasped breath. She shook it off, searching for the safest route.

She spun on a foot and raced for the front of the house. There was no sight more welcome than Jonas's Explorer pulling up to the curb on her side of the house. Hiding at the side of the house, she waved a hand to him from the shadows to get his attention, then held up two fingers,

flipping them from herself then toward the house when he spotted her. He motioned for her to stay where she was and crept up to the house, drawing his gun as he neared.

Her heart was beating so hard, she wondered how it stayed in her chest.

Jonas inched through the door, and then she couldn't see him. She prayed like she never had in her life. Not when her father was dying in the hospital, no medical miracle saving him, not when she'd sold her first large commissioned house, not even when she'd divorced her ex and prayed his dick would fall off out of spite. No, this praying was deep, spiritual and aimed solely for Jonas.

She needed him to walk back out that door. Tense minutes passed, or maybe only seconds. She had no idea. Silence and agony of the unknown were all she had.

A gunshot rent the air with sickening sharpness.

She jumped, swallowing the scream. Her skin instantly iced over with fear. She slumped against the side of the house, tears filling her eyes as her greatest fear filled her heart and soul. She knew at least one of the thugs who'd broken in had a gun.

Silence.

She gasped a hard sob.

"Stacee?"

She snapped straight in a heartbeat. Lurching off of the wall, she barreled around the corner of the house and ran into his arms.

"It's over, baby."

She sobbed as his hands tucked her emotionally drained body into his.

CHAPTER NINE

Not three minutes later, police cars began to pull up, circling and blocking her house and every way in or out of the neighborhood. Several were unmarked and had men in starched suits pour out of them. Doors cracked open up and down the street, and people gathered in pockets on the sidewalk to watch.

“Drama and bullets,” she muttered, rocking her head against his chest.

He chuckled, running his hands up and down her spine in comfort. “You’re the best drama around, sweetheart.” His breath was warm against her ear as he kept her close, protecting her from staring eyes.

She thumped him on the shoulder with a limp fist trying hard not to laugh, just too happy to express that it was Jonas who walked out that front door.

“Agent Dreyer.” One of the suits addressed him when he approached. “The memory chips?”

He nodded and tipped down to press a kiss to her temple.

“Dishwasher,” she breathed for him and him alone.

A rumble of surprised laughter shook his chest. “Do you want me to stay here?” he asked her, willing to stay if she wanted.

She blinked back the sudden heat of her tears at his offer, but shook her head. “No. This needs to end.”

He drew a deep breath, and she felt as a heavy tension covered his frame as if he wanted to say something, but one more breath later, it was gone. He nodded and caressed her cheek.

“I’ll be right back.”

She realized, with no small shock, that she would willingly wait for him every day, forever, as he walked with the Secret Service guy into her house.

\* \* \* \*

Silence. What an amazing sound. Blessed silence. A good silence, the quiet of nightfall at her home.

No more questions, no more strangers tromping through her house, over her yard, or a dozen cars parked like an auto-maker's fence line at the street. The moon was just rising beyond the row of houses across the street, somehow making the last hour or so seem very surreal. All she had to do was turn around to know it had all happened.

The front door was ajar behind her where she sat on the porch, watching the moths dance and flutter beneath the streetlamp over the sidewalk. It wouldn't close properly until it was repaired and that would be tomorrow at the earliest. Her window screen would also need to be repaired. Thankfully, the medics who'd arrived to tend to the shot victim had also dealt with the guy who'd electrocuted himself into a numb stupor right outside her bedroom door. She hadn't seen any of the aftermath, but had received several impressed looks for the idea.

Silently, she sent a prayer to her dad. Her mother was still hurting for the brave, loving man who'd been shot in the line of duty doing what he loved outside of his family, and she couldn't blame her for her pain. As Stacey got older, she'd understood that pain better, but she would never forget the things he'd taught her.

Warm thighs pressed against hers as Jonas sat behind her on the porch, wrapping himself around her in a cocoon of warmth. The strength of his steeled arms circled her, and she never felt safer.

"You shouldn't stay here tonight," he said, leaning until his chin rested on her bare shoulder. "No power, a door that doesn't lock."

"It stinks inside," she added offhandedly.

His chest moved with a short laugh. "Is that why you're out here?" he asked, pulling her closer.

"Some of it."

She shivered when his hands found skin and massaged. "You're cold. It's still too cold at night to be out here in shorts, baby."

"I could call Kay," she told him absently, loving the feel of his palms on her thighs, rubbing warmth back into her. She arched back into his chest and he dropped a kiss on her exposed throat. Warmth seeped into her quickly, her body recalling what had happened between them just a few hours before.



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

“I don’t think so.”

“Oh?” she breathed, quickly falling under the tease of his fingers and lips.

“Come with me,” he beckoned in a seductive voice that sent a thrilling shiver down her spine.

Her hands landed on his, halting his rubbing, which had slowly been maneuvering toward the inner part of her thighs. A delicious sensation that she hated stopping. “You want me to come home with you?”

He sat in contemplative silence for a moment, then laced his fingers through hers. “Actually, I want you to come home and stay.” Wicked heat flared when he taunted her earlobe with his tongue.

“Jonas?” This was moving fast between them, into territory she wasn’t very familiar with. She’d been out of the dating game for a long time. Attraction was one thing, even lust. Taking it to the next level? She wasn’t sure if she was that ready.

“Hm?” he answered, deeply engrossed in the slope of her neck and shoulder, dropping heated and seductive kisses where he could reach. He did that a lot, given the opportunity.

“I don’t do one night stands.”

He shrugged behind her. “I don’t either. I told you earlier, it wasn’t just that once. Not by a long shot.”

Her mouth popped open, but he silenced her with a finger over her lips. “Just come home with me,” he purred against her ear. “Let the rest sort itself out.” He slid his hand with a teasing lightness down the front of her throat until he found the weight of her breast. She moaned as he circled sensitive skin and teased her nipple to a hard point beneath her tank top. She shivered with renewed desire as he worked his magic over her, finally caressing her, arousing her only the way he could.

The warmth of his touch flowed until it rested on the top of her thigh, his fingers between her legs, just *there*. Not moving, not seducing, not inciting. They both knew what he was capable of, but he wasn’t using that to force a decision. But the memory of the pleasure he’d given her was burned into her.

He was the devil reincarnate. She agreed completely overrun with a delicious hunger for his touch, a passion only he could give her.

\* \* \* \*

Jonas helped her while she packed a couple bags with clothes and womanly necessities. She locked her car in the garage, and he installed a heavy security lock on her front door to keep it as safe as possible when they left.

He didn't doubt what he was doing, but it still made him nervous. His future with this woman was hinged on two things. Whether or not she could accept him and his secret, and if she couldn't, if she'd ever forgive him for using the bonding of sex to keep her if she couldn't accept his nature. Because he wasn't going to let her go. Not now. Not ever.

He hadn't had a lot of time to assimilate that afternoon's tryst in her car, but it had driven home just who she was, and that she was meant to be with him. He'd never felt so compelled, consumed like he did like when he was with Stacey. The world could blow up and he wouldn't notice, and likely not care so long as he had her in his arms. Her scent, her flavor, the silkiness of her skin and the brush of her hair. All of it drove him wild, in a deep primal way. Even then, after hours of questions and telling and retelling of the facts, he couldn't remove the taste of her from his tongue. He craved to taste her heat for himself, to lap up the pure honey of her pleasure. If he was the big dog, she'd reduced him to a rub-my-belly puppy.

He knew the truth, what he was skirting around like a kid on hot concrete running around the pool on his toes with anxious skips, wanting the coolness of all that water, but terrified of the leap. He didn't fear it, but just the same, it left him tangled in knots to know what he was facing. That this could be the biggest change of his life, or the worst relationship he'd never escape. Give him a shoot-out in a dark alley any day. This was going to kill him without ever touching a gun.

"You know, my mom is going to love you," she said in a low distracted voice from her side of the vehicle.

"Oh?" he asked with an arched eyebrow, surprised that mentioning her mother was the next thing she'd bring up. It told him that he wasn't alone on this thoughtful train.

"Yeah." She fluttered a hand between them. "She'll love you until she learns you're a cop, then she'll hate you. She'll eventually learn to like you."

"I see. Would telling her I'm not a street cop help?"

"She won't see the difference between an agent and a cop. You carry a gun," she told him with a crooked smile. "Just thought I should warn you."

He nodded. "I understand."

"I thought you might."

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

“But her daughter, your father’s daughter, is a woman to be proud of.”

She lightly shrugged away the compliment, unable to hide the pleased smile in the small confines of the vehicle. “She still has some bitter moments.”

“We’ll smooth them over.” He slowed and pulled into a long driveway. An electronic gate opened, and he rolled through, double checking in the mirrors as he moved past it that it locked in place.

“This is a very nice house,” she said, sitting straight to take it all in. “I didn’t picture you as living in the woods.”

He was rather proud of the house himself. A large sprawling ranch house that he’d added the fence to. The trees were bountiful and towered over the yard, and reached for some distance from the rear where he preferred to run, unhindered and undisturbed.

“A house made for a family,” she said almost whimsically.

For the first time, he saw it through her eyes and could agree. He also knew he had the right woman. If everything went well tonight. He felt that growing fist in his gut twist at the worrisome thought.

He glanced at her in the dim lights surrounding them. Her face glowed from the ambient lights, her attention elsewhere as she studied his home. His only thought was he’d never known a more beautiful, brave woman in his life. There was only one thing left to do.

He took the plunge, and the water felt incredible.

CHAPTER TEN

Jonas silenced the truck and turned to her. He brushed the thick hair away from her face, spotting the hickey. *His*. And he'd cherish and protect her for as long as she lived. "Are you sure you're okay?" He searched her.

She cupped a hand over his. "I'm fine. Now."

He swallowed when his heart danced. His physical response was keeping him off center, but he tried to keep it from showing. Between his body's crying need to possess her completely, his nature demanding he claim her as he should, and the worry he felt at all of the above, there was no center of gravity for him. He was teetering hard, deciding which direction to move in first. Claim and let it work itself out, or explain and pray. He wished he knew. The indecision, the worst of his life, was causing his stomach to take on a permanent pretzel feeling.

"What's wrong?" she asked him, tenderly swiping her thumb over his bottom lip.

He drew a breath, pulling in his wandering worries and let it all back out. "Nothing. Let's go in."

He palmed her bags while she carried her purse and he let her go in first. The first woman to stay with him. The first woman to walk into his den, into his home.

"Jonas, if you'd rather I stayed somewhere else, I can stay with Kay. She won't mind." He jerked up, aware he'd been frowning in the direction of her suitcase.

"No," he stated firmly. "This is just... I've never had a woman here before."

She nodded, as though unsurprised. "I can see that. You're very territorial."

That she'd read him that well, amazed him. "How do you know?" One thing he knew, was Stacey knew people, knew how to interpret silence, or looks. He realized he'd really have to work to keep things like Christmas presents a secret from her.

"You always put yourself between me and whoever else may be nearby, even Kay. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind it, but I know when you're being possessive. You have an assertive nature, or you wouldn't do what you do. You're an alpha. I know what that looks like."

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

He blinked, struck speechless at her choice of words. He swallowed, not daring to let himself touch her. Barely daring to breathe. He wasn't used to feeling fear. He refused to start now, even as it clashed with an unexpected hopeful elation. "And you don't care that I'm like that? Because I can't change it."

She shook her head. "Nope. Doesn't bother me in the least."

Relief swelled and he felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He could do this. He could tell her. He slid his jacket off his shoulders, exposing his holster. He reached for one of her hands and led her into his living room.

"Don't worry. We're going to talk first," he told her as he sat her down. He tossed his jacket over the back of a chair and unbuckled his weapon to hang on the tree with his denim jacket. "I told you earlier before we went further, there was something I had to tell you."

She sat on the edge of the chair, attentive. "I remember." She watched him as he paced.

Okay, not as easy as he'd believed. He sucked in another hard breath. "It's going to sound crazy."

"Well, if you're not sick, or have some disease, what could it be?" A perplexed frown had overtaken her brow.

His heart banged against his ribs as trepidation filled his body. He knelt next to her and reached for one of her hands, holding her in between his. He forced the four words from his mouth. The first time he'd ever told another of his nature. "I am a shifter."

He couldn't look up, dreading what he'd see. Disbelief, shock, astonishment, alarm. Fear.

Seconds grew thick with silence and that fear he refused to acknowledge returned.

"And I'm a natural blonde," she snipped, her words devoid of all humor. "Don't tease me, Jonas. You don't have to tell me some ridiculous lie if you don't want to see me again. It's not like we actually slept together." She yanked her hand free and pushed him away to stand. He blocked her, and she tumbled back down to the chair. "Although why the big show to get me to come home with you..." She trailed off and put more distance between them.

He growled. He did *not* like her losing her trust of him. "You trusted me until five minutes ago to not hurt you, to never lie, to protect you. Why would I lie about this?"

"Because shifters are a fictional thing!" She threw her arms up then around her body in protection. "You are sick. How they never found this on your psyche eval, I'll never know."

"I can prove it," he stated calmly, finally looking up at her. "I can prove it. The reason I brought you home with me is because I had a choice to make. I either trusted you enough to tell you

before I took you to my bed, or took you first and hoped like hell you could live with the beast within the man, because there's no going back." He took a breath and stood before her. "I trusted you enough to tell you first."

She shook her head, trying to not laugh, the first sign of hysteria.

"I *cared* enough to tell you first," he added. "Will you at least let me prove it to you before you leave?"

Her melded eyes were dark, but glistening as her thoughts tumbled around behind them. He feared what they were, and hoped like hell he'd never have to find out. He wanted to dispel every doubt, every disbelieving glare.

He frowned. "I'm not going to hurt you, Stacee. You *do* know that. I would not, could not hurt you. This big dog never could."

"What are you?" she whispered in a thready voice, still watching him suspiciously.

The first taste of relief was impossible to ignore. Curiosity was a strong reaction. "Wolf. My pack is scattered through the city."

She nodded, as if trying to absorb it all. "Wolf," she repeated numbly.

He offered a hand. She stared at it. "Come with me, sweetheart. It will all make sense soon." When she hesitated, he knelt again. "Stacee, look at me." He waited until she did. "You know who I am. You know I would never hurt you." He almost blurted the three little words. They wouldn't help right now. It surprised him how easy they had risen into his throat. He guessed he should've listened to his father a little better. Once he'd given in, it all seemed so easy. It was just the execution that was killing him.

Hazel eyes watched him with suspicion. At least it wasn't the fear. He could battle suspicion and win. "Where are we going?"

She wanted information. Fair enough. "Just to the rear of the house. Claw marks are a bitch on hardwood."

Eyes widened, then blinked. "You're serious?"

"Never been more serious in my life. You wouldn't believe how much it cost to get them sanded and buffed the first time."

A nervous grin popped out with a chuckle. She reached for his hand. Together, they stood.

\* \* \* \*

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

Stacee followed him as he walked through the house toward a room in the rear. The hallway wasn't very long on this end. The room he stopped in was wide and open with a closet filled with blankets and a single table, empty at the moment, at one side. There were a couple throw rugs, as though the room acted as a mudroom for the house. Glass doors showed a view into the dark shadows of the woods in the rear. She could make a clear view of the fence at one point, like it was purposely kept clean of vines and debris. The rest was buried within the encroaching forest.

Vertical blinds hung fully withdrawn to show the entire expanse of the entrance. He opened one glass door and flipped the switch for the lights outside. A porch fed off the rear of the house and a single chair.

He led her to the chair and asked her sit. "Just in case," he stated.

"Just in case?"

"You feel the need to collapse," he told her with a touch of his humor.

She eyed him. "You're really serious about this?" She knew she should be running as far and as fast as she could away from him and this house, but some morbid sense of curiosity was keeping her right where she was. Whether it was to call him a liar and be done with it or... And it was the 'or' that wouldn't let her just run. He was acting too serious about it, too sure of what he was trying to make her believe. There wasn't an ounce of deceit in his mood, words, or actions.

Either he wasn't lying or he deserved to be in Hollywood.

He had started to unbutton the work shirt he'd put on over the t-shirt she'd seen him in earlier in the day. Sinewy arms appeared out of the sleeves.

"I've never been more serious. See, I could've skipped this entirely. Made love to you first but then you'd have had no choice in the matter. I'm not that kind of evil," he admitted calmly, winking at her.

"No choice," she repeated in a dazed murmur. "Thank you, I think, for not going that route."

"You're very welcome." He'd shucked his shirts and had kicked off his shoes and socks and placed them on the table. His jeans went next and his underwear.

Her mouth went dry seeing him naked. He wasn't in the least bit shy about it. Her gaze started with what she knew and traveled his length in sheer womanly appreciation. His penis twitched and moved as her gaze caressed him. He wrapped a palm around the shaft, then stood proudly for her inspection.

He glanced down at his erection, and raised an eyebrow. "You think I do that for just

anyone?”

She dropped her gaze immediately when she felt her cheeks heat. His laugh was kind, warm, and sultry.

He leaned over and stole a quick, gentle kiss then he walked off the porch. “Watch closely, because it goes pretty quick for someone my age.”

“Does it hurt?” she asked. Was she believing this nonsense? *No. Firmly. Of course not.* She just never would’ve pegged Jonas for being unstable.

“No.” He held up a hand, stalling any more interruptions. “You can ask to your heart’s content when I know you believe me.”

So, with that, she sat and watched, just waiting for the moment to call him a liar to his face and be done with him. She’d never been made a fool of. *First time for everything.* Except she didn’t see what she was expecting. In less than a minute, she felt her jaw become unhinged as he seemed to fold in on himself.

The transformation was amazing, incredible, unbelievable, but there it—he—was. Legs bent as he fell to four legs instead of standing on two. Fur appeared on skin. His face grew longer and ears grew pointed. He was a rich brown pelted wolf with the wildest green-blue eyes she’d ever seen in an animal.

It was a good thing she’d already been sitting. She *would have* collapsed. Hell, she probably would’ve fainted if she’d been standing! He shook out his coat and ran a paw over his face, as though clearing his vision. Then he sat and cocked his head, waiting expectantly. She sat on her hands to hide their trembling.

“I think you better come back,” she managed, sure she sounded weak. Lightheadedness swooped down on her with a swift strike and the shadows tilted.



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

### CHAPTER ELEVEN

Jonas watched her eyes roll into the back of her head and her body slump in the chair. The chair idea had been spot on. He shifted back, his body reabsorbing the teeth, tissue, and bones into his own shape until he stood straight again. Well, he guessed fainting was a step up from hysterical screaming, but he hadn't expected that reaction from Stacee to begin with.

Scooping her up, he carried her to the bedroom and laid her out next to him, curving his body around hers. He wished she weren't still completely dressed but better this than finding herself in the bed with a naked man *and* being naked herself. He was used to sleeping in the raw. And with clothes in the way, he sort of had to behave himself, when he really didn't want to. Not when he'd showed her and wanted her with every fiber of his body.

Hell, he still had the damn erection! He nuzzled her neck to not groan. Talk about torture. Instead, he covered them both with the blanket and wrapped an arm beneath her, cradling her head on the pillow, running a hand along her side with the other as she breathed unaware. Buried as he was against her throat, she smelled like vanilla and cherries today, and that sweet honeyed scent that was only her. That same ripe tantalizing scent that he'd found holding her in the car earlier when he'd been unable to *not* touch her somehow, especially after the invigorating sensation of her claws digging into him. That marking feeling had brought the wolf wide awake in an instant. Jonas had needed to have a taste, needed to know the truth.

He hadn't been at all prepared for the lust, the hunger or absolute pleasure he'd experienced with her in the car. There'd been no chance to fulfill his body's howling desires. Bringing Stacee to orgasm had been the closest thing to pleasure and pain he'd ever experienced. He'd do it again in a heartbeat too. Feeling her climax had been one of the most erotic moments in his life. He had a feeling his woman was an erotic dream just waiting to happen. He'd been playing back his hottest dreams for a week now, imagining her in every position possible. Like a porno reel. That in itself had been its own kind of torture.

He hoped before the end of the night, he'd have the chance to experience at least a few of

those fantasy induced dreams. For the moment, he kept himself relaxed and gradually managed a light doze next to the woman who stirred him like no one else ever had.

Jonas was aware enough to feel her move and instantly snapped fully awake at the first sensation of her stretching next to him.

Glancing at the clock, a little less than an hour had passed. Good, she had probably needed a little rest after all the shocks she'd had earlier. No harm in a nap.

"Hey baby," he breathed against her shoulder.

"Hey," she answered. Still no screams. He took that as a good sign.

The weight of her hair played through his fingers when he brushed it. Moving it, he dropped a kiss to her shoulder. She fit snug into his shape, her ass pressed against his groin and his reawakening erection. He wouldn't rush this part. It almost killed him to not roll her over and indulge his fantasies.

"You said 'your pack' earlier."

"Mm hm." He nuzzled her, letting her talk, ask, decide.

"How many are there?"

He did a quick headcount. "In the south pack, about thirty. Last I knew, there were eight packs in the city."

"I see." Silence. "So the odds of people knowing you exist are slim."

"We protect our secrets, our kin, and our pack. We have for as long as I can remember."

"Are there others?"

"Shifters?"

She nodded.

"Yes."

"Wow," she breathed.

"I'm sorry I frightened you," he said moments later. "I never meant to."

She rolled over in his arms to find his gaze. God, he loved her. Those stone and chocolate eyes, lips that tasted of heaven and a body that he'd want until the day he died.

"You didn't frighten me. You shocked the living shit out of me," she retorted. "You. Do. Not. Exist."

His mouth popped open, but she covered it with gentle fingers. Was she denying him? Was she going to walk away after all? His stomach lurched. The sudden pierce of a knife sliced him from the inside out. Pain like he'd never known. His skin felt icy all of a sudden. He couldn't move. She

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

was going to leave him. She was going to walk away from him. His worst nightmare was about to happen.

“Jonas. I’ll keep your secret forever.” It was a whispered promise, and one that crashed his entire world into a vacuum of pain.

His features froze. His entire being felt brittle, from his heart outward. Like he would shatter. He had to find a way to win her to him.

He couldn’t believe he was the only male who’d failed.

He was so caught up in his misery he neglected to notice what Stacee was doing, oblivious to the movement when her fingers slipped from his mouth to trail over his ear.

The warmth of her hand on his face dragged him back to the bed in slow increments.

“But I do exist. You saw me,” he challenged. The pounding in his ears was his breaking heart.

“Yes. But outside of this room, outside of this house, you can’t. I know that. I’d never break that trust.”

He shook himself. She was touching him. And had been. How long had she been doing that? Trailing her fingers around his ear, down his neck. *She’s touching me. And she knows.* It took a second for that to sink in as well.

Shudders racked his body when she pressed her nails into his chest and dragged them down his body. A slow growl rumbled out of his chest at the sensation that left fiery trails in their wake. “Stacee,” he cautioned. He wouldn’t take her if she couldn’t accept him. Fuck, she was killing him.

“So I take it, this isn’t the kind of secret you share with just any girlfriend,” she said, taunting his nipples with light flicks.

“No,” he replied, although the one word felt torn from him as desire raged through his body. She didn’t know what she was doing to him. The animal she was toying with.

She seemed to be studying her hand as it meandered and caressed across his chest. His stomach clenched when she traveled down the thin line of hair that led due south.

“That’s good to know.”

He snapped up from watching the hypnotic sway of her nails on his skin. What was good to know? Damn it!

“Stacee!” He clasped her hand, stilling it in a firm clutch. He couldn’t follow even one conversation with her touching him that way.

“Jonas?”

He swallowed and drew a deep breath. “What?” He tried not to snarl it, but he was a wreck and she wasn’t giving an ounce of mercy.

The glimmer of her eyes sparkled up at him as her lips twitched, her expression all innocence. She ran a foot up his calf, teasing him.

“Why am I still dressed?”

He fell silent for a solid three seconds. Then she squealed with laughter when he tossed her onto her back and ripped the tank from her body with a single tearing yank.

“Hey!” she shouted.

“I’ll buy you five more,” he said just before he ravished her mouth. Her hands plowed into his hair and held him captive as he thrust between her lips, no request in the motion.

It was sheer claiming.

Her nails scored his scalp and back, giving as much as he was, taking whatever he dished out and giving it right back to him, passion for passion. She lifted her hips and rubbed her center against hard flesh, and he groaned. Taut buds rubbed his chest with each breath.

Grabbing her hands, he pinned them in one grip over her head. Lavishing a trail, he drew his tongue from one wrist to the soft skin of her inner elbow, nipping until he reached her shoulder. Each kiss created a telling shiver on his travels. “You smell so good,” he said, burying his nose into the crook of her shoulder.

She whimpered and arched into him. He didn’t stop licking her there. He caressed her collarbone, then dipped into the shallow of her throat. He wanted to taste every inch of her skin on his tongue, and knew by the end of the night, it’d be close to accomplished.

He swirled around the tight tip of her breast and she lifted in answer, whimpering for more, pressing into the heat of his mouth. Tugging gently he felt her respond, her breast warm and soft in his hand. He cupped her, molding and gently kneading her body to his hand. Her skin was as sweet as summer wine, and just as heady. She quivered with each new pull on sensitive skin. He drew her deep, scraping his teeth and tongue over her sensitive nipple to heighten her arousal.

Releasing her, he dipped down to her belly button and unsnapped her shorts once more. So close to her sex, he found the proof of her arousal easily, and it only made him hungrier for her body. And this time, he would taste her the way he wanted to.

She lifted her hips with an impatient nudge to remove the offending shorts then he moved to lie between her thighs, brushing tender kisses to her trembling legs. He slowed down to savor her. Her body, her taste, her scent. He wanted to know her, all of her. Lifting her ass, he hooked her legs

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

over his shoulders, tipping her treasure to his mouth. She shivered with anticipation and moaned when he brushed his fingers over the tight curls guarding her core. He drew a deep breath. There had always been something about a woman's arousal that had excited him. Now that he had Stacey, her pleasure, her scent was the only one he needed.

"Beautiful," he murmured, then he spread her labia and licked.

She moaned, long and deep. He blew a slow stream of air over her damp flesh. He saw the way she fisted the covers of the bed, felt the way she quivered with desire and pleasure. He loved that about her, that she gave all of herself over to his touch.

"Has anyone ever made you come this way?" he asked her.

"N-No. Why?" she managed on gasping pants of air.

"Relax, baby. I've wanted to do this so badly," he admitted. "Today almost killed me in the car, but I don't regret a second of it. Now, it's my turn."

Rolling her clit between his fingers, he licked at her pussy, lapping at the honey that glistened on her skin. He groaned as the sweet taste poured through his system, sending heat and fire through his body and straight to his groin. She thrashed and moaned in answer. The scent of her body swam all around him as he lashed at her pussy, long delving strokes that made her jump and push into him, seeking what he gave her until he reached the swollen sensitive nub of her clit. She quaked harder. He thrust his tongue as deep as he could to lap up the sweet juice of her desire.

Sliding two fingers into her channel, he deepened the pressure of his tongue and she moaned, a throaty sound that ricocheted off the bedroom walls. Sucking sensitive flesh into his mouth, he rolled his tongue over her, devouring her in increments. He'd never tasted a sweeter heat, a hotter pussy.

Pressure built as he stroked her inner walls, eliciting sharp moans and cries with his rhythm when he began to drive into her, pulsing against aroused flesh, using his thumb to stimulate her with each thrust. He felt her climax building, felt the way her pussy tightened around him as she neared that precipice.

No words were needed this time. He twisted his fingers to rub his knuckles against swollen flesh, thrusting them deeper with hard twists, finding the secret spots that were meant to be pleased. She exploded, crying out as liquid silk coated his fingers. He buried his mouth against her, drinking in her juice like ambrosia. He lapped up every drop, lost in her passion, craving her satisfaction.

Lifting over her body, he pressed kisses of wonderment to her flesh, awed by the beauty he'd

found, inside and out. The strength of this woman, his woman. Settling on an arm, he sipped at her lips as she floated, her cheeks flush with satisfaction. Reaching for the drawer of his nightstand, he withdrew a small box. Tearing into one of the foil packets, he covered himself quickly, feeling her fingers wandering along his back and hip.

Glancing to her, he caught her arched eyebrow.

Feeling busted, he explained, "It was an impulse thing after Thursday morning."

"I'm glad you thought of it," she replied, sounding genuinely relieved. Considering it had been more than three years since the last time he'd needed one, it had been very impulse. Then he was fitting himself between the creamy softness of her thighs and thinking ceased to matter.

Air hissed from his lungs as he sank into her folds, feeling the shudder and quake of her tight body accepting him. She moaned and grasped at him, arching to take his full length. It only took a few moments to find that point, that perfect rhythm of pleasure between them. Sharp gasps escaped. Sweet pleasure rocketed up and down his body as her muscles held him, caressed him, and he was lost.

Fire spread as his strokes deepened. Her leg wound over his calf, pulling him tighter into her and he answered, driving in harder. She was close. Her entire body shook with the depth of her desire. Her hips lifted to meet his driving thrusts. He ground into her mound and she shouted, clawing and bucking. Her pussy clenched down on his cock, and he clenched his teeth, lost to her orgasm. Hot wetness bathed him and he threw back his head, shouting out his own release, a pleasure like he'd never known, soaring with brilliant bliss through him. He pushed himself deeper wanting to feel this forever, this heat, her pussy wrapped around him in sated desire. The last spurts of his climax escaped.

Gasping for needed air, he collapsed to his elbows, his face comforted by the swell of her breast. Her arms wrapped over his back, holding him to her. He couldn't think of one other place he'd rather be.

\* \* \* \*

She dozed beneath his weight, or maybe she had a brief moment of unconsciousness. Stacey wasn't sure. That had been the best orgasm of her life. Her entire body felt languid, loved. She'd never felt that before, sheer satiation. She prayed she'd get to feel it again. Jonas wasn't laying on her fully, supporting himself to not crush her, but she honestly didn't care. She didn't want him to move

## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

at all, loving the feeling of his skin next to hers.

She nuzzled his face, brushing little kisses to his temple and he moved to give her better access.

Running her hands up and down his back, she felt the way the muscles bunched and moved beneath her touch. Something was bothering him.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

“I’m not sure,” he replied. “Did I happen to tell you I love you yet?”

She smiled. “No, but I had an inkling.”

He lifted to look into her eyes, the aquamarine of his, deep and adoring. “When?”

“When you told me you’d never told another your little furry secret.” She stretched her arms over his back then resumed her meandering touching. “I had no idea shifters were real, but it explains a few things.”

He rose onto his flat palms. “Oh?”

“Your strength, for one. The way you can go still as stone. That’s not really a human trait. It’s very hard to do and keep still. Models train years to accomplish that technique to mimic mannequins. I don’t exactly see you as the model type,” she told him with a soft chuckle.

“So, you’ve been watching me,” he challenged playfully, nipping at her chin.

“Oh, I’d say I’ve been watching you a lot. I love what I see.”

“After only a week?” he mused quietly, as though to himself.

“After only a week,” she confirmed. She cupped his face and brought him down to her. “I love you, Jonas. Now, it’s my turn to make you scream a time or two.”

The wicked grin that appeared showed he was more than ready to be tested.

## DIANA DERICCI

### About the Author

Diana DeRicci is the sexy, flirty pen name of Diana Castilleja. A romance author at heart, DeRicci's writing takes you into a saucier spectrum of sensuality and sexual adventure, where a happily-ever-after is still the key to any story.

Diana lives in Central Texas with her husband, one son, and a feisty little Chihuahua named Rascal.

You can catch the latest news on all of Diana DeRicci's writing and books on her website:  
<http://www.dianadericci.com>

Feel free to drop Diana an email. She'd love to hear from you.



## WATCHING HER EVERY MOVE

Purple Sword Publications, LLC  
Publisher of romantic speculative fiction.  
Escape to new worlds with our authors at  
[www.PurpleSword.com](http://www.PurpleSword.com)