

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



SECOND to NONE
RHYANNON BYRD

Second to None

Rhyannon Byrd

For eight long years, Jason Hawkes has bided his time, waiting for the chance to snare Remy Frost for his own. When fate finally delivers a panting, wide-eyed Remy right into his arms, he intends to never let her go. His objective—to convince the wary redhead that he wants her forever. And lucky for Remy, this ex-soldier is ready to play “down and dirty” to get what he wants.

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Chapter One

In a flash of feminine scent, skin and long, scarlet hair, Remy Frost crashed through the open doors of Finnegan's Pub...and straight into the strong, hard, possessive arms of Jason Hawkes.

"Oomph!" she grunted, silently cursing the uncompromising breadth of his mouthwatering bod.

Lord, it was like running headfirst into a brick wall. Everything about the man was impossibly hard. Her lungs and sides ached from her panicked run through the shadow-filled night and now she felt dazed from the force of impact into what had felt like a solid barrier of pure, ripped muscle. Not to mention the way her spine cracked when the backpack she had slung over one shoulder slammed into her side with a dull thud. Her pulse skyrocketed with what she strongly suspected was a heavy dose of arousal on top of the heady rush of adrenaline she had going—and Remy didn't even want to think about what was suddenly happening between her legs.

Damn traitorous body always reacted like this to the gorgeous goliath holding her shuddering form against his strong, beautiful length of corded sinew, long bones and starkly defined muscles. She knew he didn't work out with weights, but a man like Jason Hawkes didn't need to. The grueling years he'd spent in the military had kept him in prime physical condition. Now his work as a PI ensured that his sexy-as-sin physique didn't go to flab. Her throat went dry and she swallowed an embarrassing moan of bliss-filled pleasure. It seemed as if she'd been snuggled there for hours, dragging in gulping lungfuls of his warm, testosterone-based scent, instead of the measly second it had actually been.

"Damn, Remy. Slow down, honey, and just take a deep breath," the sexy brute murmured above her head as her lungs continued to work hard and fast, his deliciously

solid, intensely ripped arms pulling her tighter into his shirt-covered chest. Then, with one big fist planted beneath her chin, he tilted her face up to his and, as always, the dreamy, molten whiskey-brown of his eyes seemed to drill straight through her, right down to her core, creating a flood of lust and need and hunger that she couldn't ignore. Her sex swelled, readying itself to be fucked as hard and rough as she could possibly take it, just like it did every time she so much as thought about this man. She watched with heavy-lidded, worried eyes as his nostrils flared, the heat burning hot and strong in that golden gaze, wondering for the thousandth time if his senses were as acute as her brother had always claimed.

Could Connor's best friend smell the way she went slick with desire every time he was near? Did he know an empty hollow ached in her womb, desperate to be filled by no one but him?

As if he had all the time in the world, he sent a cocky look over her head toward Connor, his deep voice rumbling up from his chest in a slow, lazy drawl that vibrated against her breasts, making her damn nipples go spike-hard from the sexy sensation. "When I demanded my prize from that last game of pool, buddy, I never expected you to pay up so soon." He looked back down, instantly snagging her gaze, and Remy could only blink at the warm, smoldering heat of physical interest flaming there, stoking a fire of her own deep within. "And I sure as hell wasn't expecting anything this *sweet*. Not often that little Remy blesses us with her presence anymore, now is it? And damn but if she doesn't get more gorgeous every time I set eyes on her."

Oh hell, she thought with a frown that had him chuckling knowingly beneath his breath. He may have been talking to her brother, but she knew the words were meant for her. He was on to her. On to the fact that she'd been avoiding him ever since he and Connor had left the Special Forces and come back home for good, ready to settle themselves back into the real world by going into business together and starting up their own investigations company.

“Stop trying to get a rise out of me, you ass,” Connor rumbled as he moved off to the side of the front door. Jason nudged her forward, so that they too moved out of the path of any incoming customers, but he didn’t release his hold on her. She worried her bottom lip with her front teeth, wondering just what the sexy stud was up to, but figured she had to deal with the dragon breathing at her back first. Turning her head, she watched her older brother cross his arms over his brawny chest as he pinned her with his “you’re gonna explain yourself right now, young lady” look. Gaack, she hated that one...and he was a master at it.

Connor Frost—the most overprotective sibling in the world. Not to mention one of the baddest badasses around and mean-looking as hell. And his best friend, going back to the beginning of their days in the service together, was no different. Well, no different except to Remy.

Connor was the brother whom she loved like no other—the only family she had left that she could depend on...the only one left who cared. And Jason Hawkes? Well, Jason had become the bane of her existence for the last eight years of her life. God, had it been that long? Nearly a decade that she’d wasted lusting after her bro’s best friend, dreaming about him nearly every night?

Man, girl, you are such an idiot. As if you could allow yourself to become just another notch on the stud’s belt.

Jason Hawkes could have any woman he wanted, probably with as little effort as crooking his finger at her, and Remy knew that getting involved with him would rank right up there at the top of idiotic things she could do with her life. He’d probably breeze through a relationship with her, treating her like something fragile that needed protecting, then, when he realized how bored he was with her, end up hitting the road so fast there’d be a dust cloud left in his wake. He’d hightail it away without ever looking back, leaving her broken and wrecked, and Remy refused to let that happen.

But that didn’t mean she had any control over her pathetically hungry body.

She searched for a valiant means of ignoring him, of turning a blind eye to the head-spinning effect he'd always had on her, but damn if it was possible. No matter how fiercely her sensible, logical intellect screamed *Caution*, her underfed, seriously pissed-off libido chanted the same age old refrain of *Mmm...baby*. Sad, yes...but what could she do about it? She'd spent years trying to purge him from her system and not a single goddamn thing had worked. It didn't matter how sexy or funny or attentive a man was, because in her heart, they just couldn't compare. Jason Hawkes was, quite simply, second to none. There just wasn't anyone else like him.

With one smooth movement, he took her backpack from her shoulder and slipped it over his own, then tightened his arms around her, pulling her even closer into the heat of his powerful body, making the growing bulge of his immense erection an impossible fact to miss – despite the warning growl coming from the giant standing at her back.

"Do you have to hold her so goddamn close, you perv?" Connor muttered, then turned the full blast of his ice-blue stare straight back onto her as she sent him another impatient look over her shoulder. "And aren't you supposed to be out on some date with the coffeehouse runt, Remy?"

With her Irish temper burning fiercely, she looked up at her brother, a fine tremble of angry irritation shimmying through her limbs that she knew Jason couldn't miss. Not with him pressed so snugly against her. Her hands, which had somehow found their way to his bulging biceps, tightened into fists. "Not that it's any of your business, considering I'm nearly twenty-seven and no longer in need of your brotherly supervision, but I'm not dating Roger."

A scowl pulled the otherwise handsome features of his face into a fierce expression that would have quelled most people. "I thought his name was Carson. Who the hell is Roger?"

Remy rolled her eyes and groaned at his tone. "Roger is my *friend* from Delia's Coffee House and Carson is my *neighbor*. And no, I'm not dating him either. I'm helping Carson with his thesis. And they are hardly runts, Connor. But please enlighten me,"

she drawled with a sweet, saccharine smile that she knew would annoy him. “Just who are you late for tonight? Is it Miss Double Ds this time or Miss Daddy Long Legs?”

Jason snickered under his breath, causing his chest to rasp against hers again, but he still wasn’t letting her go. In fact, Remy didn’t think it felt like he was planning on letting her go anytime soon, considering he’d clasped his hands at the small of her back, holding their lower bodies pressed together, while a subtle rocking of his hips nudged his monstrous hard-on into her stomach in a seductive pattern that was quickly tripping up her heart rate.

Connor grunted his frustration at what he always considered her “attitude”, narrowing his cool stare on her the same way she imagined he did when eyeing down a potential criminal. She tried to stay just as cool and keep her cards close to her chest, surprisingly pleased that she must have succeeded when he jerked his chin at her and muttered, “Well, downtown is no place for a girl to be out by herself, even if it is the restoration area. I expect you to have more sense than that. You should have called me if you wanted to come and I’d have picked you up.”

“Damn it, Connor, I am not a *girl*,” she gritted through her teeth, promising herself that hell would freeze over before she ‘fessed up to him about anything. If she wasn’t careful, he’d have her under twenty-four-hour surveillance with his little goons on her ass night and day and she refused to be suffocated like that. And more importantly, she refused to be controlled. It might be naïve, but she liked to think that she was handling this irritating little situation pretty damn well on her own. Well, up until tonight at least. Tonight she’d ridiculously panicked and now she was paying for it big time.

“Really? Not a girl?” Jason teased as she looked back to him, his eyes wide with mock surprise, while a boyish grin played at the corners of his sexy mouth. “If that’s true, then you’re the prettiest damn guy I’ve ever set eyes on, Frosty.”

A snarl of frustration started to rumble in her throat at the irritating nickname and the embarrassing memory it brought to mind of the only other night she’d ever been in his arms. But her breath stumbled in her lungs at the feel of him suddenly stroking one

wide palm up the sensitive line of her spine, then slowly exploring the contours of her back on its way down again. The action should have been soothing, an offer of comfort, but Remy knew better. She wasn't sure if he was holding onto her to get a reaction out of her, or if he was trying to hide the fact that he had an outrageous erection from her brother, but it hardly mattered. The effect was still devastating. Every second spent in his arms only led her that little bit closer to a place she knew she couldn't go. Not with him. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

Lord, this entire night was turning out to be one never-ending nightmare. Granted, there were worse forms of torture, she supposed, than being held in the arms of the sexiest damn man she'd ever known. If her brother wasn't giving her his *I'm trying to read your mind* stare, drilling it into the back of her skull, she might have even allowed herself a breathless moment of enjoyment.

Just a moment. Anything more would mean the kind of personal trouble she was dead set on avoiding.

With a casual arrogance that made her want to stomp her foot, preferably on top of his big boot-covered toes—as if he wasn't turning her entire world upside down with the press of his big, hard, beautiful body and stroking palm—she watched as Jason turned his attention back to her brother. “Look, you go on and grab your date, man,” he rumbled in that sexy rasp of a voice that sounded like he was drawling words into a woman's ear while he fucked her into a sexual oblivion that would ruin her for other men. Remy wondered just how many women he'd “ruined” in just that way and distinctly disliked the thought. “I'll take it from here.”

She took a deep breath as she struggled for some sort of calm, but frustration renewed its roiling burn through her blood at his words. *He'd take it from here!* As if she were an “it”—a pet to be taken and controlled at his will. As if it wasn't her decision to make. And her brother was no better. As if she wasn't even there, Connor ignored her threatening growl as she turned her head to glare at him, his cold eyes intently studying the man who held her. Jason just stared right back, a silent communication taking place

above her head that she found as asinine as it was ridiculous. *How dare they*, she silently fumed, no longer willing to waste her breath on the deaf, blind, arrogant Neanderthals. What freaking century did they think they were living in anyway?

Twisting in Jason's hold with a determined jerk of her hips, she poked her muscle-headed brother in his thick chest with her finger, ready to stomp on his damn foot too if he didn't look down at her, which he thankfully did.

"This overgrown ape won't be taking anything from here. You got it? I'm tired of wasting my breath explaining the facts of life to you, Con, but I can damn well take care of myself. That means I don't need rides to Finnegan's just because the sun has gone down. It means I'm capable of making my own decisions about where I go and who I see. And it sure as hell means I don't need a chaperone to see that I get home okay."

Jason's palms flattened against her stomach, pulling her back into his body, and his thick cock was suddenly nestling itself against her lower back, making itself at home. Her breath sucked in on a sharp wave of arousal and her eyes nearly crossed at the delicious sensation. Oh hell, how was she supposed to be strong when he was tempting her with something so outrageously seductive? The one blasted "thing" she wanted most in the world, other than a fairy-tale romance with the man, which she knew was never going to happen. The sheer audacity of his actions had her grinding her jaw, ready to bite, and her dumbass brother wasn't helping.

"Jason's just gonna make sure you get home safe for me, Remy," Connor explained in that grating tone that always seemed to be saying *the world would be so much easier for you if you'd just listen to me*. It never failed to set her on edge and the fact that he was leaving her to be "handled" by Jason was just the icing on the cake. "I don't know what you were thinking, coming out to this part of town by yourself."

"Oh, trust me, Connor. You really don't want to know what I'm thinking right now. And no, Jason's not going to make sure I get anywhere," she grunted, her small hands trying to pry the big, unmoving fingers from her stomach. "I hate to break it to you, Con, but I'm done being handled and managed by you. That was the reason I moved

and got my own place, remember? My own life.” The cold look she sent her brother promised murder if he left her in Jason’s “care”. How freaking humiliating could it get? And when were these two he-men going to realize that she was a fully grown, fully independent, fully capable woman?

Huh, probably when hell froze over. Maybe not even then.

Connor looked between her and the giant at her back, their expressions equally determined. Then he cast a quick glance down at the thick silver watch on his wrist and cursed beneath his breath. Running one big hand through his short, black scrub of hair, he sent her a hard, *you-better-mind-yourself* kind of stare, before giving his attention back to Jason. “Do me a favor and don’t let her out of your sight until you’ve gotten her home and worked your way to the bottom of this.”

Oh hell. He did not just say that. This? Now she was a freaking this?

She went numb with outrage, her entire body stiffening in indignation, but Jason only held her tighter. “Don’t worry, Connor,” he drawled, his voice as lazy as ever, as if he didn’t have a care in the world, while one big palm stroked dangerously low on her tummy, his pinky finger nearly grazing the button fly on her Levi’s. “I’ve got it under control.”

Oh, like hell he does.

Remy turned to look over her shoulder at him, watching the slow smile spread over his rugged face like a smooth sin, all sexy arrogance and carnal intent, and wondered if her brother had lost his mind by leaving her with this man. Couldn’t Connor see that something volatile and dangerous was brewing between them? Something threatening to rage beyond her control. And she’d worked too damn hard to gain control of her life. With a slow, deep breath, Remy glared harder, determined not to let her feelings, where he was concerned, show.

Rule number one in their legendary rules of combat—never let the enemy see your weakness.

And in this case, Jason Hawkes was both.

* * * * *

Jason watched as Remy looked back over her graceful shoulder, meeting his gaze, her clear green eyes big and wide, while one slim auburn brow arched in irritation. He bided his time, wanting this woman to himself more than he wanted his next breath. She'd been avoiding him ever since he'd come back home, for good this time, and he was tired as hell of it. Shit, it was driving him outta his fucking mind. And now that he had her in his arms, that lush little body pressed so close he could feel the rapid expansion of her lungs as she breathed, he sure as fuck wasn't letting her go.

Looking over her shoulder, he noticed the way the top button on her white cotton shirt had finally given way beneath the laboring of her panting breath, allowing the fabric to part. From his vantage point, it revealed an eye-boggling amount of delectable cleavage that he just wanted to dive into, pressing his face and lips to all that tender, succulent flesh, sucking and licking and nipping with his teeth until he made her come from nothing but the play of his mouth at her gorgeous tits. For such a petite thing, she had an abundance of curves in all the right places, creating a sensual package that was hard as hell on a guy. The ache in his cock kicked up another notch, pressing into his zipper until he wondered if the teeth would hold.

Fuck. What was his problem? It wasn't like he wasn't capable of thinking with anything but his damn dick. If that were the case, his ass would have been dead years ago. But Remy Frost just fried his brain.

Her brother wanted him getting to the bottom of this—and there wasn't anything on earth he'd rather be doing than getting to the bottom of this fiery-haired woman. Just digging down deep, sinking into her sweet-as-sin body and staying there forever. And now he had her in his arms, right where he wanted her, and he sure as hell wasn't letting her get away. But it wasn't until Connor said "Later" and turned to leave that Jason let his slow smile of anticipation show. His arms loosened as Connor walked out the front entrance of Finnegan's, just enough to allow Remy to twist back around and glare up at him. But one look at his pained expression and her brow furrowed, some of the angry heat dimming for an instant in her big green eyes. "Are you okay?"

Jason tried to clear the lump of lust in his throat, brought on by the sight of one full, round lace-covered breast exposed when she'd turned, the top of her shirt suddenly gaping, and croaked, "Yeah, why?"

Her slim shoulders lifted in a graceful shrug. "You just look kinda...warm. You don't have a fever, do you?" Her hand lifted, as if she'd test his forehead, then dropped back down before actually touching him, as if she'd checked the impulsive action, judging it unwise.

No, but I'm burning up. Hot and hard and horny as hell, dying to sink inside of you every fucking way there is, any way you'll let me.

He just kept staring and Remy just kept fidgeting in his arms. Then she laughed, shaking her head at some inside joke she apparently wasn't going to share, and the husky sound made his dick rise up another notch. Jesus, he'd never in his life gotten as hard as he did whenever Remy Frost was around. And he'd waited too many miserable years to make her his.

God only knew he couldn't wait anymore.

They needed some privacy and quickly...which meant he was going to have to get her buttoned back up before they found it. No way in hell was he marching her lush ass through Mike's place, letting every jackass there get an eyeful of her gorgeous, lace-covered breasts. His hands lifted, reaching for the now-gaping top of her shirt, and she gasped, lurching away from him.

"What the hell are you doing?"

He jerked his chin at her revealing shirtfront. "Your button came undone, baby. Thought I'd put you back together before every guy in here gets an eyeful."

She looked down and muttered under her breath, cutting him another glaring look from beneath the delicate arches of her russet-colored brows while quickly refastening her shirt. "Gee, thanks for telling me," she sneered.

"Hey, sweetheart, I was the one trying to button you back up, remember?"

"Yeah," she muttered with a soft, feminine snort that made him laugh, "but not before you had an eyeful yourself."

"Well damn, Remy," he drawled, winking at her, "I'm not stupid."

Her cutting look said he shouldn't hold out for her agreement on that one and he couldn't help but laugh at her fire. God, he liked her. Everything about her, from her fiery personality to her gutsy temper and those sultry, sexy-as-all-get-out looks, just called to him. He'd spent years trying to ignore the way he felt about her, knowing the timing was all wrong, but things were different now. He was back home, settling himself back into a world that didn't consist of enemies who wanted to cut his throat or stab him in the back, and she wasn't a freckle-faced little starry-eyed eighteen-year-old anymore. Finally, the goddamn timing was right and he wasn't letting her run from him a second more.

"Come on," Jason drawled, casting a quick look around the noisy pub—a look that Remy knew had taken in everything. He and Connor were just alike. Too much training, she assumed, to the point that she wondered if they even had the ability to kick back and relax. Heck, they probably had sex with one eye on the door and the other on their bed partner, wondering if they could trust the woman beneath them. It was sad, but then Remy knew they had chosen their paths and wouldn't have wanted to live any other way. Pulling her behind him, he set off toward the back of the pub, saying, "We can't talk in here."

It was on the tip of her tongue to inform him they weren't talking *anywhere*, because there was nothing to say, but she got distracted. They hadn't taken two steps before a woman walked by, her almond-shaped, kohl-colored eyes all but devouring Jason from the toes of his scuffed boots up to his tousled head of honey-blond hair. He sent the woman a sexy little half smile, the kind Remy had seen the Irish actor Sean Bean use in one of his movies, and despite her anger, it was devastating on her senses. Judging from the drowsy, bedroom look in the other woman's eyes as she strolled past, it was pretty

damn effective on her too. Yeah, he definitely had that bad boy Sean thing going on, though Jason was a bit more muscular because of all of his physical training.

And she didn't like to think of the churning, kinda achy feeling in her stomach that had come to life when he'd smiled at the gorgeous brunette. It had Remy grating her back teeth and seriously struggling with the urge to kick him in the back of his leg. In a fit of temper, she tried to pry her fingers out of his grip, but his hold wouldn't budge.

"Where the hell are you taking me?" she huffed, knowing she sounded like a spoiled child who hadn't gotten her way, but was too irritated to care.

The look he sent her over his broad shoulder was filled with arrogant humor and intent, the smile curling across that sexy-as-sin mouth reminding her of the wolf with Little Red. Too damn bad the idea of being eaten by Jason Hawkes was one of her favorite bedtime fantasies.

Her breath caught at the wicked thought and she knew he sensed it. *Shit.*

"You're not afraid of me, Remy," he rumbled, "so why are you worried about where I'm taking you?"

"I'm not worried," she muttered as he pulled her toward a door that led into a short hallway beside the long wooden bar packed with an eclectic assortment of customers, from suits to cops to good ol' everyday Joes. Michael Finnegan was busy behind the gleaming countertop, filling orders for a group of female thirty-somethings who looked like they were right at home, flirting outrageously with the Irish hunk as they sipped their wine spritzers and batted their lashes at him. Always the consummate flirt, he had them all in his thrall. Remy couldn't help the smile that curled her lips at Mike's ability to twist females around his little finger. Then Jason tightened his hold on her hand, demanding her attention, and she glared at the broad, long line of his back, still wondering where in the hell he was taking her...and just what he planned on doing to her once he got her there.

As if he could read her thoughts, Jason laughed and murmured, "Stop glaring holes through my back, Frosty. You know you can trust me, honey."

They entered the first door on the left and Jason pushed her gently into the room, then flipped the light switch as he closed the door behind his back. "See," he laughed, watching her as she tried to surreptitiously move away from him. "It's just Mike's office. No hidden dungeons with chains hanging from the ceiling and whips on the walls."

She twisted her hands in front of her, but snickered softly under her breath at his teasing and held her shoulders back, her head high. With a funny little spike in his pulse, his heart turned over at her actions, the same way it always did with this woman. She was such a little fireball. It'd come as a shocking surprise the day he'd realized he admired her as much as he wanted her. After the things he'd seen in this world, there weren't many people who earned his admiration, but Remy Frost was one of them. Her fiery spirit and pride and loyalty were rare treasures in Jason's world and he absolutely adored the way she tried to appear so tough. Like now, moving away from him because she was scared shitless of their attraction, he knew, but unwilling to make it obvious. No, her pride demanded that she give as good as she got and he couldn't wait to see if she could hold her own against him when he finally got her sweet little ass beneath him. Hell, who was he kidding? He'd probably be the one struggling to keep up with her!

He wanted to get there *now*, just pull her into his arms and find out if she tasted as amazing as he remembered from that long-ago experience that had been far too brief – but first things first.

"Out with it, Remy."

"Out with what?" She smiled, arching her brow at him, knowing it would irritate the hell out of him.

"Connor's got a lot on his mind and he's not thinking too straight right now." *And he's sure as hell not thinking about you the way I am – twenty-four fucking hours a day.* "It's not our usual night at Finnegan's and you weren't thinking you were gonna catch us for

a chat or some games of pool. So what the hell were you doing running in here like you had the devil on your ass, sweetheart?"

Remy shrugged her shoulders. "My car broke down a block up the street, over at the corner of Fletcher and Park, and the streetlights were out. It's still not the best part of town over there and I just got spooked."

"Jesus," he swore with a dark scowl. "So you go running off down a city street by yourself? Why the hell didn't you use your cell to call one of us?"

She sent him an impatient look. "The stupid battery wasn't charged. You know how Connor is always griping at me about that."

Remy watched him give a slow nod, a silky, honey-colored lock of hair falling over his brow that made her fingers itch to reach out and stroke it back into place. The tiffany-style lamp sitting on the corner of Michael's desk cast the room in a warm, sensual glow, painting the golden sheen of Jason's hair with warm streaks of vibrant color that made her want to sift her fingers through the thick, warm mass, just to watch how those mesmerizing colors would play through the shaggy, unkempt length. The guy needed to get to a barber, big time, but she couldn't deny that she loved this new rough-and-tumble look he'd been sporting since leaving the service, like he'd just rolled out of bed...after spending the night riding her through the mattress.

Damn...she had to stop thinking like that. *Now*.

He jerked his golden-stubbed chin at her left hand, where the crumpled piece of paper she'd ripped off her windshield still remained clutched in her damp fingertips. Hell, how had she forgotten about it?

"And what's that, honey?" he asked in his silky rasp, the same one that never failed to make her melt, as if warm honey had been poured onto her body, all rich and sticky sweet.

“What’s what?” she asked, her voice breathless, trying to slyly slip the paper into her front pocket as she shoved her hands into her jeans. Why hadn’t she gotten rid of the damn thing when she’d had the chance?

He took three steps toward her, narrowing the distance between them until she felt cornered, knowing there was no way to reach the door without him catching her first. It should have pissed her off, but she wanted to howl with frustration when the idea of being caught by him only made her hot. Hotter than she already was, as if she was the one with the freaking fever.

And to think people actually thought she was made of ice. Hah! Jason Hawkes was all it’d ever taken to set her on fire.

“You’ve got two choices, Remy. Either you pull out that little scrap of paper you’ve been twisting to pieces in your tight little grip and hand it over to me...”

“Or what?”

The corner of his mouth kicked up in a smile that was devastating in its sensuality and purely devilish in its intent. “Or, honey...I’m going in after it.”

Chapter Two

"Like hell," Remy said in a low, throaty voice. "You are *not* sticking your hands into my pants, Jason Hawkes."

"Don't tempt me, Remy. I've wanted to get my hands in your pants since I first set eyes on you...among other things," he muttered.

"Look, I told you what happened with the car," she huffed. "It's not some great conspiracy, Jason. What more do you want from me?"

"That story still doesn't explain what you were doing driving around down here at night," he pointed out in a reasonable tone, while he tossed her backpack into one of the black leather chairs situated against the wall at his right.

The gentle slopes of her eyebrows raised high on her forehead. "And maybe that's because it's really not any of your business."

Jason crossed his arms and leaned his hip against the edge of Mike's dark oak desk, arching a brow at her sarcastic tone. "Now that attitude's just not nice, Remy. Especially when I'm saving you the irritation of involving your brother in this."

Twin bright spots of color flared on her high cheekbones. "I'm not afraid of Connor, Jason."

"No, but you *are* tired of him cramping your style. Hell, you've been tired of it since you turned eighteen and moved in with him." That had been the year he'd finally met his best friend's little sister. The beginning of it all—eight long years of heaven, hell and every fucking emotion in between. "We can do this any way you like, honey. I'm in no rush to be anywhere."

"Are you blackmailing me?" she gasped, the delicate features of her face shifting between genuine shock, laughter and blatant frustration. "With my own brother?"

"Now would I do that, sweetheart?" He laughed, shrugging the wide line of his shoulders. "I'm just pointing out how much simpler this whole situation will be if we settle it ourselves, without having to draw Connor into the middle of it."

"Unbelievable. How freaking unbelievable," she repeated, shaking her head. "You're as bad as he is."

Jason narrowed his eyes, hating the way she kept trying to lump him into the same brotherly category as Connor, knowing she did so on purpose. But he wasn't going to let her get away with it. "No, angel, I'm worse," he warned in a voice so low that it would have been whisper-soft were it not for the rough edge to his words. "Trust me, Remy. When it comes to you, I'll sink my teeth in and never let you go."

A momentary flash of panic burned through her dark green eyes at such a clear declaration of intention. Then she shook it off and squared her shoulders like a soldier facing the firing squad. "Fine, whatever. If you're going to be a jerk about it, I was on my way home from a new night class I'm taking," she muttered, obviously pissed at having to explain herself to him, but choosing what she considered the lesser of two evils.

"Class?" he murmured, lifting his brow in surprise. "As in school?"

"Yes, class," she hissed, crossing her arms over her chest in a perfect imitation of his own stance. "Something *you* so apparently lack, dragging me in here like a bullheaded brute."

"Sweetheart," he drawled with a slow smile, "if you're trying to insult me, you're going to have to do better than that."

Her gaze narrowed, the thick fringe of her russet-colored lashes throwing shadows over the gentle curve of her cheeks. "Don't tempt me, Jason," she muttered, throwing his earlier words back in his face.

He cocked his head to the side as he studied her, thinking she was about the sexiest thing he'd ever seen. Everything about her made him hard and aching to fuck. The woman was hot, no two ways about it, with her soft skin and those luscious tits that she

always tried to hide. Then there was that long red hair, those damn green eyes and that heart-shaped ass. Silky lips, siren smile, throaty laugh. She'd been driving him outta his goddamn mind for years. "Do I tempt you, beautiful Remy?"

Her tiny pink tongue flicked out to swipe erotically against the lush pad of her lower lip, but she refused to answer him, simply staring him down with those piercing green eyes, giving him the coolest go-to-hell look he'd ever seen. It'd have worried him if he hadn't seen the roiling fire of need burning deeply within that crisp, verdant gaze.

The seconds ticked by, the tension winding tighter and tighter, until Remy finally said, "Is there anything actually *important* you'd like to ask me, or am I free to go, soldier boy?"

"So eager to escape me, honey?" His smile was hard, his deep voice nothing more than a low, gruff drawl.

God but she loved that voice. For as long as Remy could remember, Jason Hawkes had been under her skin, stealing into her dreams, making her life a living hell, no matter how hard she tried to fight the attraction. And the fight was only getting more difficult. Her lust-fed emotions were a vital, brilliant thing gaining possession of her will—like a spreading disease that she couldn't find a cure for. Despite her mental efforts, his words brought back memories of that long-ago night and she tried not to flinch. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, Jason, but I'm not that starry-eyed little teen anymore. And I'm not the girl who everyone thought was made of ice."

"Yeah," he rumbled, the word rolling off his tongue like a sweet temptation that she couldn't wait to taste. "I noticed. And you of all people should know that I never thought there was anything cold about you."

Remy shook her head in denial, wanting to pull the thick mass of her long hair in front of her and use it like a shield, to cover the betraying signs of desire in her body. Her damn nipples were hard and stiff and swollen, pressing against the thin fabric of

her shirt, and she couldn't claim that cold was the culprit. Lord, it was ninety degrees in Michael's office. What the hell was the matter with his freaking air-conditioning?

Swallowing the thick, exciting lump of lust in her throat, she said the only thing that she knew with any certainty. "This isn't going to work."

"Why?" One word. Hard. Bitten out from between his tight lips.

Her gaze shifted to a point on the wall behind his right shoulder, refusing to meet his fierce stare. "You're like chocolate."

From the edge of her vision, she watched him shake his head in confusion, shaggy blond hair tumbling over his brow before he pushed it back with a frustrating swipe of one big hand. "Huh?"

"You're like chocolate," she repeated, stealing a quick look at his face and scowling when she caught his smiling expression.

He snorted softly. "Is that supposed to make sense?"

"Look," she sighed, "I don't eat chocolate, but it isn't because I don't want it. Of course I want it. Chocolate's my favorite food in the entire world. I'd eat it morning, noon and night if I could. But I can't, because it's bad for me. It makes me break out in hives, not to mention what it does to the size of my backside. So, I just don't touch the stuff. I may be *tempted* to have it, but after a while, that temptation starts to fade. It's the same with you. My body may be screaming at me that having an...an affair with you would rock my world like a volcanic eruption, but to give into that temptation would be nothing short of stupid. I'd have tasted the chocolate...and then I'd crave it long after all the chocolate was gone and I couldn't have it anymore."

Jason's expression turned to one of hard, cool speculation, while he tried to ignore the link his cock was making between sex and chocolate. Hearing her say she loved to "eat" the stuff had his dick jumping to attention, hoping like hell it fell into the same category. Christ, he didn't think there could be anything sexier in the entire world than seeing Remy Frost sucking his cock, swallowing him into her mouth, those plump lips

stretched wide for his thick width while he tunneled his shaft in and out of that tight, pink little hole. His dick jerked in his jeans and he knew the fat head was wet with precum. Trying to get his mind back on track, he asked, "Why wouldn't you be able to have it anymore? You planning on ditching me?"

She looked at him as if he'd grown a second head. "Not me. *You*, Jason."

"Me what, damn it?" he demanded, feeling like he was losing the train of conversation. Shit, maybe too much blood had drained from his brain into his damn pants. It sure as hell felt like it.

"Look, you are *not* a relationship kind of guy...but I am most definitely a relationship kind of gal. We don't make any sense. It's like oil and water. They don't mix. You'd bail the minute you thought you were losing your freedom, after stripping me of mine, and then I'd be left craving you. Better not to even sample the temptation to begin with."

"You think you've just got it all figured out, don't you, Frosty? And if I'm not careful, you'll have me fooled into thinking you really are that little Ice Queen everyone used to whisper about."

Her expression tightened, telling him he'd hurt her with that one, but damn it, he was fighting for his life here. And if he had to get down and dirty to get through to her, then he'd do just that.

"I just have one question. Are you actually buying any of this bullshit, or do you just think if you say it enough times, it'll start to be true?"

Her spine went ramrod straight and the closed expression falling over her face reminded him of the lifeless visage of a doll. He hated it. "I don't have to stand around here and be insulted by you."

"Hell yes, you do. If insulting you is the only way I can get your attention, then I'll shell out as much as it takes. I'd rather be fucking you, proving just how much I want you, but we'll play things your way for starters, Remy. But one thing needs to be out in the open here and now."

"Ooh, I'm just breathless with anticipation," she purred.

"You should be, because you're finished running. I'm done sitting on my ass waiting for you to realize that I'm here and I'm sure as hell not going anywhere."

"I wouldn't want you to go anywhere, Jason. We're friends. Shoot," she drawled with a sly smile, "we're practically *family*."

It was his turn to make that growling noise of frustration in the back of his throat. "Friends, yeah, but I'm not your fucking brother, Remy. And you know it. Cut the bullshit."

"Come on, Jason. You've known me for years. Why the sudden interest?"

"Sudden?" he asked with a knowing smile.

"Yeah," she said in a hard voice, obviously unwilling to go where his look was daring her, back to that night.

"You know as well as I do that there's nothing sudden about it. But you were too young before and after that I wasn't here. Not long enough to give you what you deserved. That's changed. You're a woman and I'm not leaving. After all this time, the *timing's* finally right and I've waited too goddamn long for this shot to let you blow it because of some stupid perception you have that I'm some dickhead Casanova."

"I heard the stories when you guys came home on leave," she argued, "staying up late with your beer and pool games. Spare me the denials."

"One, don't believe everything you hear," he said, pointing his finger at her for emphasis while trying to rein in his temper. Of course, he knew she was pushing his buttons on purpose, choosing to fight with him rather than face up to this thing between them. "And two, if there's something you want to know about my life, just ask. I don't have any secrets from you, Remy. If you want to know about women, then yeah, I've had them. But you'd be surprised how few since meeting you. And as you've gotten older, I've gone longer and longer between..."

He hesitated for a second and she purred, "Fucks?"

His eyes narrowed at the attitude she put behind that word. "Fucking anyone but you no longer holds its appeal. And that's the truth. Take it or leave it, but I've no reason to lie to you, Remy."

"No, you're just a saint, aren't you, Jason?" she drawled with a heavy dose of sarcasm.

"Goddamn it, Remy," he growled, "don't tell me you don't think about it."

She squeezed her eyes shut, then slowly opened them, meeting his stare. "Think about what?"

He barely resisted the urge to laugh at her stubbornness. "What it'd be like if we fucked. What it'd feel like if you let me strip you bare, bury my face in your sweet little cunt and tongue-fuck you 'til neither one of us can remember what year it is? And that's just for starters, sweetheart."

"Jason," she groaned, covering her face with her hands, but not before he saw the warm flush of embarrassment flare beneath her skin and the sparks of hunger fire brightly in her eyes.

"Come on, Remy. Christ, I think about it all the time. Think about *you* all the time."

Jason watched her hands fall away from her face, her gaze lower to stick on the bulge of his cock, and had only one thought. *Hell*. His hands started to shake and he felt a trickle of sweat drip down into his eyes, stinging of salt and lust and desperation.

"You...you're not hard for me," Remy argued, shaking her head in denial until her long red hair was streaming around her shoulders in a wild, fiery mass. She was ready to grasp onto any kind of straw with a desperate intensity that worried her almost as much as her heart-pounding, undeniable feelings for this man. "It was...was probably that brunette back there in the spiked heels."

He was still for the span of ten seconds. Then he moved.

Uh-oh, she thought with a sick feeling burning in her tummy as she watched him stalk away from the desk and slowly advance on her. He didn't stop until he stood directly in front of her, so close that she had to tip back her head to look him in the face. So close that she could see the sexy lines crinkling at the corners of those seductive bedroom eyes, the tips of his lashes and the small, faint scar zigzagging over his left temple.

"Stop reaching for straws, Remy. I'm too old to get a hard-on just because a woman smiles at me and I wouldn't touch Alexis with a ten-foot pole—especially with my dick. She fucking eats men for breakfast. And in case it slipped your notice, I've been rock-hard and aching since you ran into my arms."

The terrifying fact that she wanted to believe him caused the panic in her belly to spiral swiftly out of control. She heard the words spill out of her mouth in a swift, breathless rush. "I want to leave. Now."

"No."

Her eyes widened and her cheeks flushed with so much warmth, she knew she must look burned. "Isn't that my line?" she panted.

He had the audacity to smile at her. "Hey, guys can say no too."

"Yeah, I'm all too familiar with the theory," she sneered, desperately searching for a way to hold on to her anger while physical hunger struggled to take over.

"Damn it, don't you dare even think about holding that over my head right now. You were too young and I was too deep into work to be what you needed. Putting an end to that was the best damn thing I ever did for you, Remy."

"Oh, spare me, Jason," she snorted, lifting her chin in a stubborn expression of disbelief.

"You know what your problem is, Frosty?" he rasped, taking a step closer to her. "You have issues."

"I have issues," she sputtered, feeling the roiling frustration of his words burn a scorching path of discontent through her blood. The gall of the man! "You're the Casanova Rambo and you think *I* have issues?" she seethed.

As if he didn't hear her, he said, "Do you know I'm always like this when you're around? Hell, even when you're not near me, I think about you and this is what happens. You're the sexiest thing I've ever set eyes on or smelled or heard or known and I've wanted to fuck you since the first time Connor introduced us and you said, 'Nice to meet you. My name's Remy'."

"Damn you," she gasped, wetting her lips, her tummy flipping at the way her action made him groan and curse hotly under his breath. Then he backed her into the wall until no more than a handful of inches separated them. She shrank away, willing herself to seep into the plaster at her back, hating the way her lips trembled as she stared up at him. "That is such crap, Jason."

"You want me to treat you like a woman, Frosty? Then stop running from me and I'll show you just how much of a woman I think you are," he all but snarled at her. The feral look in his molten gaze melted into her, making her limbs go liquid and soft, until she longed to touch him with every inch of her body.

"And now I'm what?" she demanded in a breathless rush. "Convenient to fuck 'til your next screw comes along?"

The gap between them was suddenly gone and Remy felt the intensity of his heat and strength and solidity from her breasts down to her toes. She'd have pressed against his chest to push him away, but there was no room for her arms between them and she knew she was no match for his strength. Oddly, her helplessness excited her as much as it infuriated her. She glared up at him as he glared down at her and their mouths almost touched, so that when he growled at her again, she could actually feel the heady warmth of his breath against the sensitive surfaces of her lips.

"There isn't a goddamn convenient thing about you! It's been months since I've been with a woman, Remy, because I got tired of screwing one woman while imagining

I was with a certain little redheaded hellion. Because the *only* one I want is you...and you've been acting like you didn't even know I had a dick!"

Months! Yeah, right, she thought, finding the idea as absurd as it was unsettling. She knew his provocative appeal—had seen firsthand how easily women gravitated to him, enticed by his ruggedly sexy looks, sharp air of command and wicked edge of danger. For eight long, painful years, she'd witnessed how they all but threw themselves at him. No, men like Jason Hawkes didn't go without. Not unless they were in love and Remy knew better than to let her mind travel down that treacherous road to temptation. With her temper steaming and her pulse roaring a pounding cadence in her head, she curled her lip and sneered, "Not notice you had a *dick*, Jason? Hah! Not bloody likely! It's hard to miss that thing when it's always hard and making a bulge in your pants worthy of any oversexed satyr!"

His eyes widened and then he laughed right in her indignant face, making her wish she could just kill him or temporarily maim him. Anything that entailed pain and torture and retribution would do just fine.

"Why, Remy Frost," he rasped in a sexy drawl that rolled down her spine like the teasing press of a lover's lips, "I do believe that's your way of telling me you find my cock as fascinating as I find your sweet little pussy."

With his hands planted against the wall at either side of her head, he leaned down and nipped at her lower lip, grinding his hard-on into the warm, wet notch of her thighs, dragging a ragged whimper from her throat. Nipping carefully at her chin, her jaw, he whispered roughly, "I'll show you mine if you'll show me yours. Whaddya say, Frosty?"

Her mind screamed that she couldn't let her body win like this—giving in so easily—even as she wrapped her arms around his lower back. Her palms first found the hard, unyielding bulge of his gun, but she'd known it would be there, since he wasn't wearing his shoulder holster. Slipping her eager fingers beneath the hem of his shirt,

she bypassed the cold, deadly weapon, until her palms grazed the hot details of his flesh.

Oh god. This was Jason beneath her hands, his wicked tongue suddenly tangling with her own as he slashed his sinful mouth across hers, giving her everything she'd always dreamed a kiss could be—consuming, devouring, like a desperate ache for life that could only be found in the taste of the person in your arms. His flavor was warm and honey-sweet, exquisitely delicious, his skin hot and silky in the way that only a man could feel—like the sleek, luxuriant coat of a panther, stretched taut over deadly muscles, slightly sweaty and utterly male. His scent and taste had always been her very favorite things in the world, stamped on her, ruining her for other men. Imprinted upon her system like a mark of ownership...and no other had ever been able to compare.

How in god's name was a woman supposed to resist that kind of temptation? Her pussy was swollen and aching and empty, soaking her panties until all she really wanted to do was rip off their clothes 'til they were two naked, writhing masses of flesh rolling across the floor, fucking each other's brains out. God, that would be so sweet. The operative word there being *would*.

Damn, why couldn't she just be a mindless body and go for what her sex glands were so desperately begging? Why did she have to have a brain, one that told her Jason Hawkes couldn't possibly want her for more than anything but a quick fuck to get him by until a better offer came along? Or a conscience that made sure she knew she'd hate waking up tomorrow knowing she'd simply added her name to a long list of his meaningless sexual encounters. Not to mention a heart which told her that for her, there wouldn't be a single meaningless thing about it. Fucking Jason would be the most important, significant thing to ever happen to her, which was exactly why she couldn't let it happen.

If she gave in to this thing between them, what would happen when he gave her the brush-off and wanted to go back to being casual buds? No, just thinking about it made

her chest ache and she knew she couldn't risk that kind of torment, no matter how badly she wanted to.

Closing her eyes, she turned her face to the side, trying to escape the teasing, tempting, evocative brush of his lips as he tried to recapture her mouth. "Jason, stop it," she panted, sounding as if she'd run a great distance, and all of it uphill. "Please."

He pulled back, but not enough to allow her escape. "Why?" he demanded, his deep voice husky with lust. "What do you want from me, Remy? I've told you how I feel and I know you want the same thing. Christ," he groaned, pushing the hardened ridge of his jeans-covered cock against her. "I can smell your juices, Remy. Your hot little pussy's already dripping and damn near all I've done is breathe on you."

The space he'd made between their upper bodies gave her just enough room to pull her arms up and shove against his chest, allowing her to sneak out to the side and get the hell away from him. "I didn't say I didn't want it...that I didn't want you, Jason." She rubbed her damp palms on the tops of her denim-covered thighs, fighting the urge to grab hold of him and wrestle him to the ground. "I just...I can't think straight about this right now."

He planted his hands on the lean line of his hips, blond head lowered between his shoulders as he stared at the floor. "Why are you so dead set on denying this thing between us, Remy, without even giving it a shot?"

"Men leave and they roam, Jason. That's a fact of life." God only knew she'd seen it enough times. First with her dad, when he was still around. Then with her mother's endless string of loser boyfriends. Even Connor and Jason, the two most important men in her life, had always left her—and though she'd always understood the invaluable importance of what they did, the honor and trust and pride their actions deserved, it had always torn her apart to watch them leave, knowing she might never see them again.

His face lifted and he nailed her with the piercing intensity of his whiskey-brown gaze, drilling the savagery of his emotions straight into her with a brutal force that was almost painful. "That's such bullshit, Remy. You don't really believe that."

"How do you know what I believe?"

"Because I know you. And what I don't know, I sure as hell can't wait to find out. You twist me up inside, killing me with the need to fuck you senseless and just hold you close all at the same time. You think this is easy, feeling like this? You think that I've ever felt like this before...or for anyone else? Fuck, Remy, I didn't even know that I *could* feel like this, but it grows every goddamn day. When we came home, I knew what I wanted. Why the hell do you think I planted my ass here, instead of going back to Indianapolis where my family is?"

"I don't care why," she said through numb lips, lying through her teeth.

"Because of you, Remy. Because you're here and all I was able to think about was coming home and getting you under me. Keeping you there for good once I got you there. And then you go and throw that bullshit in my face, and you know what, sweetheart? I'm not buying it. Those are a coward's words, and you, Remy Frost, are no goddamn coward."

She wrapped her arms around her chest until it looked as if she were holding herself together. "I'm also no fool, Jason."

"Then stop acting like one. Reaching out for help from the people who care about you doesn't make you weak, Remy. Believing in someone and having faith in them, when they care about you, makes you stronger."

"It makes you vulnerable," she argued.

With a sweeping arc of his hand, he swiped at the thick tension in the air that lay between them. "Goddamn it, woman. So you won't even give it a chance? You don't think I feel vulnerable as hell here, laying it all out on the line while you throw my words back in my face?"

"If that's true, then why are you just getting around to this little talk now, Jason? I've known you for years. You've been home for ten months!"

"And you've been running from me since I got here," he growled.

"That's ridiculous," she mumbled, hating the way it made her sound, as if she were scared of him, running away with her tail between her legs.

"Is it? Every time I show up, you bail. If you know I'm going to be somewhere, you cancel. You haven't given me two goddamn seconds since I settled my ass here, Frosty, and I'm tired of it."

It was true. She had been avoiding him and he was a hundred percent right about why. Damn it, she *was* scared. This man terrified the hell out of her. Not physically. No, it was the emotional damage she knew he could do. The scars she knew he could leave behind that she'd never recover from.

"You need a man in your life who can be there for you, Remy," he gritted out in a deep, dark voice that seemed to stroke her skin like the rough palm of his hand, eliciting breathless pleasure in its wake.

"Stop it, Jason. I don't need a daddy."

"That's good, then," he snorted, "because I sure as fuck wanna play with you, but house wasn't what I had in mind."

"I'm not a plaything, damn you."

"That all depends on what stakes we're playing for." *And I'm playing for keeps*, Jason vowed, choking back the words, because at this point, he knew they would send her running faster than anything. She wasn't ready to let herself believe them. No, she was going to fight him like a little warrior until he fought his way past those goddamn defenses she'd built around her heart.

Her eyes moved to the door, then cut back to him. "If you don't let me leave here, I'm going to scream."

"I'll have you screaming, Frosty," he murmured, knowing if he let her go now, he might never catch her again – and he couldn't let that happen. "Just as soon as you stop running from me."

"I mean it, Jason."

It was the sharp edge of panic in her voice that had him moving farther away, suddenly worried that he'd pushed her too far. Shit, he wasn't trying to be an ass, but it was hard as hell to be rational when everything you wanted was on the line.

He took a minute to find that cool, calm place he lived in when he worked, tried to bury the emotions twisting him up inside, if just for a moment, and said, "Fine. Fuck. Whatever. If you're too chickenshit to talk about us right now, then why don't you tell me about this class you're taking? You already have an MA in design. What the hell are you going to school for now?"

Suddenly the idea of discussing school was infinitely appealing compared to talking about their tenuous relationship and Remy nearly sighed with relief. Not that they had a relationship...or ever would. And she refused to think about why that statement made her feel so damn sad and empty inside.

Taking a deep breath, swallowing the tight feeling in her throat, she moved several feet away, rested her shoulder against the wall and said, "Connor doesn't know about it, because I know he'd have one of those annoying conniptions, but I've started taking a life drawing class over at Piedmont Community College."

"A what?"

"Life drawing. It's an art class, Jason."

"I know what it is," he rumbled. "Guys come in and strip down to the buff and you draw their naked hides, right?"

"Well," she replied in a sarcastic drawl, "you make it sound so lovely, but yes, there are nude models. The purpose, however, is to achieve a better understanding of the

human form. I thought it would be a good way to keep my drawing skills sharp, since I do so much graphic design nowadays.”

Yeah, he knew all about her work. And damn it, he was proud as hell of the thriving business she had going. While he and Connor had been in the Middle East for the last year of their service, she had started her own PR company, specializing in everything from web design to advertising to promotions for local artists and businesses. He could appreciate her reasons for taking the art class, but that didn’t mean he had to like it. Before she could stop him, he turned and walked back to the chair where he’d tossed her backpack, picked it up and set it on top of Michael’s desk.

“Hey, what are you doing?” she huffed as he undid the zipper and reached inside.

“I just wanna take a look at your work, honey,” he replied in a smooth tone as his fingers found the thick art tablet inside. Remy rushed across the room and made a grab for the book, but he held it up high with one hand and shook his head at the snarl purring in the back of her throat. “Calm down, Frosty. I just want to admire your handiwork.”

There was no missing the flare of panic firing through her green eyes and his curiosity revved up into a higher gear. Whatever was in that little black book, she didn’t want him seeing it.

“Jason, give me that,” she demanded, gritting the words out through the clenched line of her teeth.

“Kiss me again, like you mean it, and I’ll give it back to you,” he drawled with a wicked grin kicking up one corner of his wide mouth.

“No.”

The smile that spread to life from the grin was slow and sinful. “Then step back, Frosty.”

She muttered under her breath as she stomped away, turning her back on him to stare angrily at a painting of an Irish landscape hanging over an oak filing cabinet. Jason shook his head at her temper, then lowered the book, flipped through the pages and was instantly reminded of just how talented she was. With his thumb, he skipped through page upon page of exquisite charcoals and pencil drawings of several male and female forms. Then his gaze landed on one that snagged his attention, riveting him. His eyes went wide, his surprise clear and loud in his deep voice as he muttered, "Holy shit! You gave this guy my ass!"

She refused to turn and look at him.

"Remy, is this or is this not my ass on this guy?" he laughed, flipping through the next few pages, all drawings of the same model. And sure enough, the model's backside had a spherical scar just on the upper curve of his left cheek. The scar from the wound Remy had seen stitched up on that fateful night seven years ago, when she was only nineteen and he was too old for her. Shit, no way in hell was this just a coincidence. She'd drawn his ass on some pretty boy's body. Pretty, he knew, since the model was lying on his hip in several of the drawings, backside to the viewer, looking over his shoulder so that you could see his face.

"Jesus, this is priceless. Why did you give this guy my ass, honey?"

She shrugged the stiff line of her shoulders, still refusing to look at him. "Honestly, Jason, it's no big deal."

"Well, who the fuck is he?"

Jason watched as she turned her head to look at him over her shoulder. "His name is Jon," she muttered, "and he's *obviously* our latest model. He took the job in order to make enough money for his summer Surfari."

"Surfari?" Jason snickered, shaking his head.

"I think it's where a surfer moves from beach to beach, traveling around so he can surf all the best spots," she said with another shrug.

"Huh," he grunted, flipping through a few more drawings. "And has he asked you out yet?"

"No," Remy snorted, "though to be honest, I'm not sure I'd know if he did." She laughed softly. "Take my word for it—listening to Jon talk is like a torture session for your brain."

Not to mention the fact she wasn't interested in the guy, because he wasn't the one she wanted...the one sharing the small, intimate space of Mike's office with her. Plus, the way Jon stared at her while he modeled, to the point of freaky, was, in short, really creeping her out, no matter how cute he was. Add to that the notes...and she was ready to steer as clear of the "surfer dude" as possible.

"Why can't you understand him?" Jason asked, the jealousy in his voice apparent, even through the veil of curiosity.

"Trust me," Remy said with a smile, "if you met him, you'd understand."

"Yeah, well, I'd still like to know why you're giving the little dickhead my ass."

A low, frustrated sound of tension vibrated in her throat. "Will you just shut up about it?"

Jason snorted. "Sure I will, just as soon as you explain why you drew *my* ass on this Jon guy."

That low vibration turned into a full-fledged, feminine little growl and he couldn't stop the corners of his mouth from twitching with humor. "It won't make any sense if I try to explain it to you," she argued.

"Yeah?" he asked, still grinning. "Try me."

Her chin found that familiar stubborn lift. "I don't think so."

"Come on," he teased, flipping to another drawing that had pretty surfer boy's equipment in far too much detail for his liking. His gut went hot at the thought of her

sitting there in class, staring at this prick's naked dick. Studying it. Drawing it. "Damn it, Remy. Someone like you shouldn't be seeing crap like this!"

Her eyes narrowed as she turned around to face him, hands planted threateningly on her hips. "Someone like *me*?" she demanded, any embarrassment apparently forgotten beneath the heat of her exasperation with him.

She took a quick succession of steps toward him, closing the distance between them, the corner of her lips kicking up in a sexy smirk that made his mouth go dry.

"I'm hardly a virgin, Jason," Remy said with a far too innocent smile, blinking her lashes at him until she saw a muscle jerk in his stubble-roughened jaw.

Okay...so maybe "hardly" was pushing it, but no way in hell was she letting him get away with this. She'd only slept with a few boys back in college, when she'd been so determined to purge the dreams of this one from her mind, but at least she hadn't been sitting on her rump, waiting for him to get over himself. At least she hadn't sulked in a corner, bemoaning the sad fact that Jason Hawkes would always think of her as too young, too naïve and too inexperienced. Maybe even too *cold*.

Oh crap, hold it right there. What on earth was she going on about? She didn't care how he thought about her, because anything between them was out of the question. Lord, why couldn't she get that thought through to her miserable, misguided sex organs? If she kept this up, she was going to be committed for split personality disorder. One part of her wanted to throw him to the ground and ride him silly. The other half wanted to run far and fast in the opposite direction, until she'd reached a place where the thought of his face no longer put that funny little ache in her chest, or that warm, twisting rush of sensation in her tummy.

"Damn it, Remy. Women like you don't—"

"Don't what, Jason?"

"You know damn well what they don't do," he snarled.

“No. I know what you ‘think’ they don’t do, but I’ve got news for you, Jason. They do. You can bet your gorgeous, arrogant ass that they do.”

“Connor would put you over his knee if he heard you right now.”

She faced him down, feeling like an enraged Amazon, breathing fury and determination in spades. “Wrong. I hate to be the one to burst your bubble, but time didn’t stand still while you and Connor were off playing Captain America. I grew up, Jason. I’m not that gangly, starry-eyed little fool anymore with a reputation for being cold. And I got tired of waiting for you to notice.”

For the second time that night, she muttered, “Oomph!” The force with which he slammed her back against the wall, pinning her there with his big body, knocked the air right out of her. His fist twisted into the long mass of her hair, hauling her up hard against him with an ease that left her breathless in its wake, despite her firm intention not to fall all over him like every other woman who set eyes on him. She struggled within his grasp, her body trapped in place by two hundred plus pounds of rock-hard muscle and pure male perfection.

“Like I said before,” he rasped in a husky, seductive drawl, “if you don’t think I’ve noticed, then you’re not nearly as smart as I’ve always thought you were.”

Then his hips pressed forward, forcing the massive bulk of his cock against the softness of her belly. Her body went heavy and damp. She felt momentarily dazed by the flood of need that shot through her, melting into her core. But that wasn’t the worst of it. No, the worst was watching the smug satisfaction cross his face, as if he’d catalogued her every reaction, knowing exactly how he affected her. He smiled and in another wickedly sexy drawl, he said, “And if you haven’t figured out by now that I’m going to be the *only* man fucking your sweet little ass from here on out, then you don’t know jack shit about men, Remy. You don’t know jack shit about *me*.”

A challenging smile worked its way across Remy’s lips—one she couldn’t help, though she knew she was playing with fire. Hell, she was standing in the middle of the pyre, dancing to the howl of the heat while the flames licked at her heels. She couldn’t

fight it. It just felt too damn good to know she'd ruffled a man who was known in Special Ops for the ice that ran in his veins.

He stiffened, every muscle on his incredible body going tight with tension, unbearably hard, and he pulled her even closer, nearly cutting off her air. She gasped and the soft sound was swallowed by his rough growl as his mouth opened over hers again, his tongue claiming immediate possession—a hot, heady weapon that he used to devastate her in a shivering rush of aching, violent lust. And there was something more—buried beneath the need—that she couldn't put a name to. His lips moved over hers as his head moved from one angle to another, each position finding a way for him to get deeper into her, until she felt completely ravaged, drowning beneath the onslaught of sensation.

Hell, and here she thought she'd prepared herself for this. Whatever passion she'd managed to incite in other men was nothing compared to the storm of anger and need and necessity coming from Jason Hawkes' lips, and tongue, and teeth.

Oh god, what was happening to her? She could feel her ability for rational thought simply shutting down as sexual hunger and starvation took over, something dark and dangerous churning inside her, demanding she take her pleasure from the one place she'd always wanted it. *Noooo...*this wasn't supposed to happen, damn it! She was supposed to be strong and stalwart. A rock, for god's sake, not turn into a creamy puddle of need because he was kissing her. But damn, what a kiss. Maybe she was being too hard on herself. What woman in her right mind could mount a defense against such a tactical, mind-shattering attack? It was only sensible to give in and beg surrender. To allow herself this one taste of paradise. Something to hold close and sip at for the rest of her life, when this man walked away and all she was left with was the memory.

Damn it...noooo!!!

Remy thought of pushing him away, but then pulled him closer, clutching onto his bulging biceps as if they were her lifeline in a world shifting too quickly beneath her feet. Just one taste. One touch. One moment of heaven...

Somewhere through it all she began kissing him back, though she didn't know when or how, considering he'd burned every thought from her lust-dazed brain. She was giving in to him, sobbing into his mouth as her hands moved higher, clutching at his wide shoulders as if she'd pull herself right inside him.

She bit his lip, hungry for the taste of his mouth, and the growling sound rumbling up from his chest deepened. His big hand—the one not twisted in her hair—grabbed her ass to haul her even closer, so that the wickedly impressive ridge of his cock could push against the denim-covered vee of her thighs as he dipped his knees and forced her to ride the hard bulk of flesh burgeoning against his fly. He was huge, massive, and her body clenched hungrily at the thought of having this man—this ruthless warrior who haunted her every fantasy—devastating her with that mouthwatering cock. Hell, no wonder women crawled around after him like he was god's gift to womankind.

He came up for air and she gulped down a huge lungful, not realizing until that point that her lungs were burning from neglect.

"Open your eyes, Frosty."

Her treacherous body obeyed automatically, far more loyal to his dictates than they'd ever been to her own. His mouth remained against hers, lips touching, so that she felt, as well as heard his words.

"You're mine," he grated, grinding his cock against her cream-covered core, the layers of denim separating them an insubstantial barrier beneath the heat and power of his need as his gaze snagged hers, holding her captive. He made her feel every intoxicating slide of that hard, heavy shaft promising to pound her into one endless orgasm after another. "Do you understand me, Remy? Do you understand how it's going to be between us? I was going to go easy on you, sweetheart, but maybe that's not what you need after all. Maybe you need me to show you once and for all how much I

can give you—how hard I can give it to you. I’m going to fuck you ‘til you give me what I want, Remy. Fuck you ‘til you stop being so goddamn afraid of me and finally realize what’s been waiting here for you all along.”

She strained in his hold, as furious with herself as she was with him, because every word he said was true. And she knew he could make every threat a reality. Her mouth opened, but before she could deliver a biting comeback, he said, “But first things first, sweetheart,” and slipped his big hand into the front left pocket of her jeans, pulling out the rumpled piece of paper she’d tried to keep from him.

Chapter Three

Well, that couldn't have gone worse, Remy thought with a sickly smile, locking her front door behind her as she walked into her cozy apartment. They'd argued for a good fifteen minutes about the meaning of the note. Argued and bitched and aggravated one another beyond belief, but had reached no resolution. She'd insisted that it was just some kind of stupid prank, trying to explain that she'd only gotten spooked after her car had died and she'd suddenly found herself on a dark street in a bad part of town. Her run to Finnegan's had simply been because it was the closest place she'd known that was safe. But Jason was ready to call in the cavalry for protection, just like she'd known he would. Which was why she'd kept the bothersome little notes a secret in the first place. They had first started appearing on her windshield around a month ago, whenever it was parked at the school. And each one had contained the same message. *Stay away from Jonathan*. It made sense that she hadn't had one before then, since "Jon" hadn't begun modeling for the class until just before that time. What didn't make sense was why.

The why of it was really starting to piss her off. It wasn't like she'd given anyone reason to think she was interested in the "surfer dude", even if he reminded her of a young Brad Pitt. But the way he stared at her during class, like he was almost afraid to take his eyes off her, gave her the creeps, and she went out of her way to avoid him. Especially during the frequent breaks scheduled to assure Jon's muscles wouldn't get stiff from holding the various poses.

Remy's only theory was that it was either someone from her class or one of Jon's old girlfriends spying on them all, taking exception to his bizarre interest in her. She'd even tried watching her car a few times from the classroom windows, but on those

occasions nothing had happened. Finally, she'd spoken to Miss Hutchins about it, but the attractive, somewhat shy instructor hadn't been able to offer any insight.

Still, as odd and strangely unsettling as the notes were, Remy's gut told her they were a harmless prank, albeit a weird one. They had to be, because she refused to be suffocated by fear and intimidated into hiding herself away. It was that somewhat loner part of her personality that had earned her the painful moniker of "Ice Queen" back in high school and college, and she refused to let it be true.

So, she and Jason had argued and snarled and all but growled each other's heads off, until Michael had finally come in for an employee's paycheck and broke up their verbal scuffle. With a swift change in tactics that had had her wondering if Jason was really just trying to get her the hell away from the hunky Mike and his sexy, adorable, lopsided grin, complete with dimples, she'd found herself in a taxi, headed home, while Jason stayed behind to deal with her car. And she had to admit, she didn't mind him taking control of *that* situation, since she'd had no desire to stand out in the cold, freezing her ass off, waiting for the tow truck to come and pick it up.

But their battle wasn't over, she knew. It'd just been put on hold. He'd closed the back door of the taxi, only after informing her that they'd finish their "conversation" later. Then he'd handed the driver a roll of bills and watched them drive away. That was nearly twenty minutes ago. Before she could even think about rallying for their next verbal skirmish, which she assumed would begin with a phone call from the gorgeous jerk in the morning, she dragged her exhausted body into the bathroom for a nice, steaming hot shower.

Thirty minutes later, Remy found herself lying between her crisp, cool sheets, her hair damp and her body miserably alive with the remembered sensation of being plastered up against Jason's breathtaking, muscle heavy body, while his mouth consumed hers in such a savage, ragingly passionate way that her toes were still curling from the pleasure. Damn, but the man could kiss, and that wicked thought only led her

deeper into dangerous territory, wondering what else he could do with such utter, devastating skill.

And she couldn't help but compare tonight's ravaging onslaught to the sweet, tender, intensely controlled kiss she'd experienced at his hands seven years ago. That one had been tightly leashed, probably because he'd felt guilty as hell about kissing his best friend's nineteen-year-old, virgin sister—but there was nothing controlled about the way he'd kissed her in Mike's office. Lord, her lips were still feeling bruised, so that she'd looked kind of bee-stung when she'd spied her reflection in the bathroom mirror.

Unfortunately, her lips weren't the only part of her body still reeling, bearing the marks of arousal. Her nipples ached, pressing stiffly into the soft, sheer cotton of her sleep tank. On top of that, the sensitive folds of her sex throbbed with a low, urgent beat of frustration against the delicate crotch of her white cotton bikini panties. She'd only just slipped the things on and already they were damp with her fluids. Then there was the ache that churned within her womb, making her want to writhe beneath the light covers and rub her thighs together until she could find a measure of peace.

If you don't take the edge off yourself, honey, her body purred with restless discontent, then we won't be sleeping tonight. We'll be lying here thinking about that hot, hard, hunky stud all night long. What's it gonna be?

With a smothered growl of frustration into her pillow, Remy punched her mattress, then rolled toward her bedside table and reached for her mini iPod. Five seconds later, she had her ear buds in and the soft, sultry tunes of Alicia Keyes filled her senses, while the deep, moonlit shadows of her room created a cozy, intimate atmosphere. A slow smile curled around the edges of her mouth as she reached for the top drawer in the table, her pulse kicking up as she began to let the fantasy take hold of her. In her mind's eye, she created a breathtaking image of Jason as he'd looked when he was pressing her against the wall, those whiskey-brown eyes burning with savage sexual heat, the long, strong lines of his body strung impossibly tight with primitive hunger that was all for her. She moaned beneath her breath and quickly selected one of her favorite "toys",

kicked away the stifling covers and shimmied out of her soaked underwear. Then she closed her eyes and lay back on her pillows, thighs sprawled while she flicked the switch at the end of the long, blue jellied vibrator and placed the flared tip against the pulsing bud of her clit.

Sensation struck straight through her body at the thought of what Jason would do if he could see her now. She bit down on her bottom lip to keep from crying out, a fresh surge of moisture flowing from her sex, drenching the thick seam of her labia. Her back arched as she slipped the vibrating toy lower, playing at the tender entrance of her pussy, and a wicked smile spread across her mouth as her fantasy sucked her under a pulsing wave of pleasure—deeper...and deeper...and deeper.

* * * * *

After knocking for a good five minutes, Jason slipped the special tool out of his wallet, inserted it into the disgustingly flimsy lock on Remy's front door and slipped into the dark living room. The rich, sensually crisp scent of incense teased his senses, the low, shimmering glow of light coming from a lamp in the dining nook casting the open floor plan in a wash of warm, mellow gold.

God, he loved her crazy apartment, with its candles and walls of books and smells of incense and vanilla—but then there were so many things that he enjoyed about this woman. He loved the way she smelled of exotic coffee in the mornings and like a lover at the end of the day, all flushed and windblown with her scarlet hair wild around her shoulders. He loved that she never took an umbrella anywhere, but would just let the rain soak her through, laughing like a child caught out in a storm. He loved *her*, damn it, and he didn't know how in the hell to tell her, or make her understand, without blowing it. Hell, she already thought he was just out for some fun with her, looking for a way to scratch an old itch or whatever the fuck was going on in that cynical mind of hers. If he started pouring out his heart, she'd probably think he was just playing the ultimate asshole by trying to use the "L" word to ease his way into her pants. Shit, she'd run like hell in the opposite direction so fast his friggin' head would spin.

Fuck.

Rolling his shoulders to relieve the stiff, hard ache of tension in his muscles, he listened to the heavy silence of her apartment, the only sound that of the distant electrical buzz of her refrigerator in the kitchen. It was so quiet, he wondered if maybe she'd dozed off and was already too deeply asleep to hear his knocking. The corners of his mouth tilted down at the thought as he made his way through her living room, thinking that she hadn't looked all that tired at Finnegan's. Pissed, yeah, but not worn out enough to warrant sleeping through the racket he'd been making.

At the entrance to the hallway leading to her bedroom and bath, he flicked the switch on the wall, setting everything to light with a soft, low-wattage bulb that softened the harsh, basic white of the standard apartment walls...and that's when he heard the first moan. Panic sent him barreling around the corner, straight through her open bedroom door—and shock stopped him so quickly that he nearly fell over from the velocity of his forward motion.

Holy fucking shit! he thought, swallowing hard on the thick knot of lust clogging his throat before he choked on it.

With wide, nearly watering eyes, Jason watched the lush, graceful form she made as she writhed atop her covers—watched as the plastic rotating cock moved in and out of the delicate flower of her labia. Warm, thick, wet cream coated its knobbed surface as it plunged steadily into the crimson perfection of her pussy and every hard, hungry inch of his body ached with the need to be right *there*. Tongue, fingers, impatient cock, all of them wanted to take the place of that driving dildo and be fucking themselves into Remy Frost's precious little piece of pussy.

Four steps took him to the end of her bed, and all he could think was *Christ, she's gorgeous*. Her sex was small, but beautifully delicate and plump, swollen with need, a deep pussy-pink at the hot, wet center that flowered into a pale, pearly, blushing rose in her outer labia. Up above, that sweet little clit that he wanted to stroke with the flat of his tongue begged for attention. Down below, the innocent little rosebud of her ass, so

tight and pretty, was just waiting to be forced open by his thick cock as he fed it into her.

She was magnificent, earthy and sultry and so fucking hot he didn't know how he hadn't just melted into a puddle of steaming need. Sweat slicked the feverish surface of his body, stinging his eyes, trailing in twining rivulets down the long line of his spine, and his fingers twitched, curling into his damp palms. His hands clenched, making fierce fists, impatient to reach out and grab handfuls of her glorious female flesh and hold on for life...forever. He wanted to squeeze and stroke and claim possession of every mouthwatering little inch. Wanted to tame and tease and drive her so far over the edge that she couldn't find her way back without him.

Fuck, he'd never have thought he was capable of feeling like this, of carrying so much emotion inside his coldly trained mind and body, but Remy had shattered any self-conceptions he'd carried and ripped him open, allowing everything to twist and turn inside him until he was all but bursting with it.

With love.

Shit, there wasn't anything else it could be and it was every bit as confusing and irritating as he'd always suspected it would be. But then, it was more magnificent and awe-inspiring than he could have ever imagined. And if she'd just give him an inch, a fraction, then he strongly suspected the irritation would fade. Only damn reason it was there in the first place was because he wanted and he couldn't have.

Until now.

In the pale, golden light spilling in from the hall, he watched as she arched her back—mouth open on a soundless scream while the delicate fingers of one hand stroked the ripe little bud of her clit, the other jamming the dildo at a faster tempo that made him choke on a moan. Then she shivered and froze, the toy shoved deep between her spread thighs, and her precious cunt began fluttering around its base as the orgasm washed through her.

"Jason!" she cried, her eyes still screwed tightly shut, voice husky and raw, and he damn near came in his jeans. "*Oh god, Jason,*" she moaned, melting back against the mattress as the tension flowed from her body and she slipped the soaked dildo free from her clutching depths. Her pussy made a wet little pop of sound when the round, buzzing head finally pulled free. He smiled, thinking of how sweet it was going to be when he shoved himself into her, cramming in every inch, packing her full.

So, so, sooo fucking sweet.

"Jason," she sighed, her voice sleep-heavy and thick, eyes still closed as she twisted off the vibrator, pulled the ear buds free and snuggled deeper into the pillow beneath her head.

"Yeah, baby?" he groaned, reaching down with one hand to flick the top button on his jeans.

Her body went utterly still. "Jason?" she croaked in a whisper-soft voice, a small crease forming between her delicate brows.

"Remy, baby, open your eyes," he muttered, beginning to carefully work his zipper down. "I'm right here, honey."

One lid cracked open, her mouth forming a perfect O before she screamed at the top of her lungs, flinging the soaked dildo to the end of the bed as if it were a poisonous snake, before lurching up against her wrought iron antique headboard. "Jason!" she screeched. "What in the hell are you doing here?"

He frowned, his hands pausing in the act of trying to work the zipper past the bulging, massive ache of his cock. "Remy, calm down, honey," he murmured, making his voice as soothing as possible in the face of her obvious panic.

"Calm down!" she gasped, green eyes as round as saucers as she looked him up and down, gaze catching on the undone button at the top of his fly. "Calm down! When you said we'd talk later, I thought you meant on the damn phone, not my apartment! Get the hell out of here!" she gritted through her clenched teeth. "This is *mine*, Jason.

You can't just come barging in because you damn well please! Haven't you ever heard of fucking privacy?"

"Jesus, Remy," he snorted, "it's not like I was trying to break in on you. I knocked for five minutes. You didn't answer and I was fucking worried! You expect me to just stroll away and assume everything's okay?"

"Yes," she hissed, untangling one arm from the cord of the ear buds and setting them down beside the iPod on top of the table. The silence of the night was thick and piercing as it closed in around them, filled only by the soughing cadence of their harsh, heavy breaths.

Oh god, how am I ever going to live this one down? Remy silently moaned, wanting to simply disappear. Anything to get her away from the searing sensual knowledge in his eyes—the flame of possession that was about to burn her alive. And she'd been moaning his friggin' name the entire time she was coming. *Crap.*

"Come on, Frosty. You know me better than that. And I *did* knock. I've probably woken up the entire damn complex."

"I can't hear anything when I have those damn things in," she muttered, glaring at the ear buds. "I didn't hear you at the door."

She could tell he was having a hell of a time trying to hold in his smile. Instead, he managed to croak out a tight, "Yeah, I don't imagine you did. I came barreling in here like a bull and you didn't even bat a lash."

Her gaze narrowed and she hoped the threat in them looked as menacing as she felt. "Shut up, Jason."

His own eyes twinkled with humor, those sexy, silk-rough lips rolling inward as he struggled not to grin. "I didn't say anything, darlin'."

"You don't need to. I can see you laughing at me in those damn shining eyes."

"I'm not laughing, honey. Except maybe at myself. It's been a long time since I've shot my load in my pants, but I'm feeling pretty fucking close to it right about now." He looked down at his bulging crotch with a bemused expression on his sexy face. "Too fucking close for comfort."

"You were going to call me," she growled.

"I never said that. I said we'd talk later and it *is* later."

"Later," she scoffed, still choking on embarrassment. His reasonable tone made her want to grab the glistening dildo and chuck it at his golden head. "What in the hell are you doing here, Jason?"

His eyes, when he looked up and snagged her gaze, shone like mesmerizing pools of fiery gold, his thick golden lashes creating a shimmering rim that any woman would have killed to possess as her own. "I'm tired of not sleeping at night. This is bullshit. I need you."

The stark emotion in his deep voice washed away the angry words hovering on the tip of her tongue, leaving her breathless and on edge, drowning in everything she felt for this man.

"And you need me too, Remy. I know you do, honey. Can't you at least give me that much?"

Ignoring his question, or at least trying to, she asked, "Just how did you get in here anyway?"

"I picked your lock." He grinned, then scowled, adding, "And you need a new one. That fucking thing is pathetic. I can't believe Connor hasn't changed it."

"Picked it with what?"

He held up the tiny length of metal, then shoved it in his back pocket. "Tools of the trade, angel."

"Isn't that illegal?"

"Well, I don't go around using it to break in on innocent people, Remy," he laughed. "And the bad guys very rarely complain about a little B and E to the cops. We *are* on the same side as the law, you know."

"Yeah, I know. But it seems you don't mind twisting it a bit to get what you want."

"If it means catching some shithead sleazebag, you bet your ass I don't."

"Well, next time, why don't you just try knocking harder, or throwing rocks at my window?" she mumbled, realizing she was beginning to feel more aroused than embarrassed. It was difficult to remember why she was fighting this thing so damn hard. With him standing there, watching her, her body alive with sensation and half naked, her reasons for denying herself what she wanted were suddenly paling in comparison to the heavy, demanding weight of need twisting inside her.

"We could make this easy and you could just give me a key," he drawled, smiling when she snorted under her breath. Remy watched his gaze search, then darken when he found the wicked sight of the blue dildo lying atop the folded comforter at the foot of her bed. A slow, wolfish grin spread across the rugged line of his mouth, dark eyes narrowing with such a powerful wave of lust, she could have sworn she felt it crash against her. "Why's it so small?"

Remy blinked in infuriated fascination. "What?"

"That little plastic cock, Frosty. Why the hell's it so small?"

Despite the emotional roller coaster she was riding, it was difficult not to laugh. "Five inches is *not* small! Now can you please turn around so I can get dressed?"

His eyes snagged on the damp curls between her legs, her tank too short to reach past her navel, panties lying somewhere in the covers. "You sure you want to do that, beautiful?"

Before she'd even known she was going to say them, the words were simply spilling past Remy's lips—soft and unstoppable. "Honestly, no, but then I'm not sure what I want right now, Jason." She wet her mouth, blinking slowly against the soft shaft

of golden light washing into the room. "This whole night has been...confusing, to say the least."

"So you weren't thinking about me while you were driving that scrawny dick into your pretty little pussy?" he rumbled, stepping closer to the end of the bed. "I could've sworn that was my name you were shouting when you started coming."

"Jason," she groaned, ready to hide under her pillow.

"Don't get embarrassed, Remy. I think it's sexy as hell. And god knows I've jerked myself off enough times thinking about you. More than I'll admit to, I'll tell ya that."

"You masturbate thinking about me?" she asked, wondering when her voice had gone so low and husky...and thinking that his admission was just about the sexiest damn thing she'd ever heard.

"You bet your sweet ass I do. For years, honey. And you know what really blows my mind. You're even prettier in the flesh than in my fantasies. I can't get my fucking head around it."

"Jason."

He dragged his eyes up from the tempting sight of her swollen nipples to her luminous green eyes. "Yeah?"

"What's happening to us?" For once there was no anger or suspicion in her soft voice—only need.

"Something that's been brewing for a hell of a long time. You can either run from me, or meet me halfway, but either way, it's here. It's here and I want it more than anything. *Anything*, Remy."

"Is it really me you want, Jason? Or are you just trying to keep close to me, because you don't believe me about those stupid notes?" she asked, worrying her bottom lip with her teeth.

"Look," he grunted, the long, sleekly muscled line of his body giving off that same sharp, raw-edged energy that she'd always sensed in his presence. "Forget the fucking notes. Forget that you're pissed at me. Forget *everything*. If there's one thing in this world you can believe, it's that I want you more than any other woman I've ever known. That's the fucking truth, Remy. Why don't we try to go from there?"

"Jason..."

"Please, Remy," he rasped, the sexy, utterly male line of his lips twisting with emotion. "I'm fucking begging here, honey. Whatever you want. Just tell me and it's yours."

And it was that stark emotion that broke her. That intimate glimpse into his soul that she'd never thought a dominant, purely aggressive man like Jason Hawkes would reveal, because it showed his weakness. The kind of emotion that she'd always, in that secret part of her heart that held nothing but her dreams, hoped he could feel for her.

Jason swore he could feel the heavy pulse of his heart as the seconds ticked by in a slow, painful rhythm—and then his breath caught at the fey, shy smile that teased over the bruised pink silk of her mouth, her red hair wild around her pale, sleek shoulders. She was so beautiful, it made him tremble. And the haunting perfection of her taste, like peaches and woman and Remy, burned through his blood, making the knot of lust in his damn dick nearly explode. He wanted to press his mouth to hers and taste her again, losing himself in the liquid soft perfection of her. Christ, he wanted to fucking devour her, everywhere, from the top of her head down to those cute little toes with their two silver rings.

"I guess this is one of those soul-searching moments, huh?" she said in a whisper-soft voice that spoke of intimacy and secrets. "Where you know one path will take your life in one direction and the other in a completely different one."

"Yeah," he rumbled, giving her a slow nod, wondering where she was going with this and hoping like hell that it was going to lead her into his arms...his life.

"I know which one I want, Jason."

"Yeah?" he croaked, unable to drag his gaze away from where it had caught on her pretty, pink little pussy, just visible beneath the tiny little puff of wet, glistening curls. Fuck, but it was beautiful.

In a siren-smooth move, he watched as Remy raised herself to her knees and crawled to the end of her bed. She placed her hands on the bunched muscles of his shoulders and her bright, deep green eyes burned into him, so hot he felt the heat of her stare fire across his skin. Then, with a trembling breath, she pressed the gentle cushion of her mouth against his own and he felt the sweet pull of her hands as they fisted into the shaggy strands of his hair.

"Oh damn," he growled, and was on her before he'd even realized he was moving. He came over her, pressed her into the giving softness of her down-filled comforter, held her there with the steady weight of his big, hard, heavy body, and simply soaked in the pleasure of feeling her soft, lush length trapped beneath him. Then he caught her around the waist and moved her up the bed, straddled her hips and caged her within the solid, immovable frame of his thighs. She stared up at him, those big green eyes smoky and watchful in the pale golden light, and a smile of pure, unadulterated pleasure played over his mouth, his blood pumping like a son-of-a-bitch as he rasped, "God, I love your tits."

"Excuse me?" she laughed, her cheeks going crimson, while he ran his rough hands up and down her sides, his calluses snagging at the soft material of her shirt.

"Your tits. I love them." He stared, transfixed, unable to tear his eyes away from the puffy, pointed tips beneath the thin cotton of her tank top. It was old, nearly threadbare, revealing their dark pink coloring through the hazy thread of cotton. "Always have," he moaned, stroking one peak with the tip of his finger. "And I can't get enough of these sexy little nipples."

"Oh," she gasped, arching her back as he pinched the bud between two knuckles, his gaze hot with hunger and lust.

"Love them so much I wanna fucking play with 'em and lick 'em—just fucking suck on 'em until you come."

"Oh...I, um, *wow*—"

His eyes cut up at her beneath his brows and he knew they were filled with more life, more feeling, more emotion than he'd ever shown before. "You gonna let me have 'em?"

She gave him her answer as she struggled out of the flimsy tank and it cleared her head, her magnificent breasts lying soft and proud before him, making his friggin' mouth water. At least he hoped this was her answer. If she was just fucking with him, teasing him with the breathtaking sight, Jason knew he was gonna die. Smack her sweet little ass raw and die from the burn of lust boiling through his blood. It was hot and thick, his heart pumping hard and heavy to push it in a slow burn through his veins.

His hands slammed into the giving cushion of her soft bedding beside her shoulders, palms flat, biceps bulging, trapping her beneath him. And his eyes trapped her, too, holding her in place, without even touching her. "You know where this is going, Remy," he suddenly growled, melting her with the heady sound of primitive power and aggression. "Once I get my hands on you, you won't be shaking me off again. I'm going to be rammed up your cunt, buried up to my balls, packing your hot sweet little body so fucking full, and not just the countless times I'll take you tonight. Your creamy little pussy is gonna be mine whenever I want—however I want it—for as long as I'm able to breathe."

"Don't you mean for as long as you're able to fuck?" she teased, a part of her wondering just how far she could push him.

"Remy, when the time comes that I can't get it up to fuck you, darlin', I'll be ready to die. You gettin' the picture?" he grunted, his dark voice a sexy scratch against her already weakening defenses.

Arching one brow, she smiled. "Yeah...you've painted it pretty clearly."

"You got anything to say about it?" he drawled with that crooked, boyish grin that always stole her breath.

"Yeah, actually, I do."

"What's that?" he asked as he lifted up, his attention snagging on the quivering of her belly as he stripped his shirt off and reached back for his gun. The stark black metal gleamed eerily in the low light as he leaned forward to set it on her bedside table. Then his big hands went back to the partly opened fly of his jeans.

Knocking him off balance as she rolled to her side and scrambled out from under him, Remy quickly jumped to her feet, then smiled at the look of stunned surprise on those rugged, sexy-as-hell features. Laying the gauntlet at his feet, she lifted her chin and purred, "You're going to have to catch me first."

* * * * *

Remy had known what she was doing, taking the tiger by the tail and giving a hard, teasing tug, and she loved it. Suddenly she just wanted to break free—from all of it—everything. She wanted to let go of the worry and frustration and regret, to stop living in the "what ifs" and "maybes", before she lost any chance at the "right now". Before life passed her by and she was growing old with nothing but her work and her battery-operated boyfriends.

She wanted to let go of the past.

And there was no denying that a secret part of her heart beat out one strong, steady refrain that she was finally willing to believe in...to listen to.

Trust him, Remy. This time won't be like the last.

A freeing, exhilarating wave of happiness broke over her and she laughed out loud, delighting in his rumbling growl at her back. She dodged around the corner, feeling the aggressive heat of his body closing in on her, and then she was caught, trapped in the vising, possessive hold of those wonderful arms and he was pinning her down on the smooth, polished surface of her small dining room table.

He stared down at her, the look in his dark, thick-lashed gaze making her feel like the most beautiful woman in the world, when she knew damn well it wasn't true. "Remy," he groaned, her name rolling off his tongue like a rich, sweet spill of molasses. "God, Remy, do you have any idea how many nights I've dreamed of getting you right here? Just like this."

She ran her hands over the bunched muscles of his shoulders, down to the powerful bulge of his biceps, loving the way he felt against her, all hard muscle and man, his musky, outdoors scent filling her head until she felt dizzy from the force of desire pulsing through her. "Me too, Jason."

"Yeah?"

"Oh yeah." She smiled, cupping the side of his hot face in her hand. The golden stubble on his cheeks and strong, square chin was sensually scratchy. She moved her thumb over the sexy rough-silk texture of his lower lip, laughing and then gasping when he moved his head and caught the tip between the straight white edges of his teeth.

"Tell me what you want," he rasped against her skin, nipping the sensitive pad, then laving it with a slow, sensual stroke of his tongue.

"Everything, Jason. All of you." *For as long as I can have it.*

Her breath caught at the intense, raw-edged flame of possession that blazed in his whiskey gaze—at the stark, utterly male lines of lust that tightened his expression. Remy wanted to spend days, years...lifetimes just looking at him. Investigating all that dark, golden skin across the hard width of his chest. The tiny scars scattered like stories, as if he wore his past upon the golden beauty of his flesh. He was dark and rugged and dangerous—so insanely sexy she was ready to come just from looking at him.

Leaning forward, Remy licked a hungry trail across his firm abs, then nipped teasingly at the dark disc of a brown nipple. "You're so beautiful," she moaned.

"Not hardly," he scoffed, sounding endearingly embarrassed at her words.

"You are." The words came thickly from her throat, heavy with meaning. "You take my breath away, Hawkes."

"Then I'll give it back," he promised in a husky, rasping voice that sounded like sin, rubbing his lips into hers. "Damn, woman, you make me tremble," he groaned, breathing the words into her mouth as her lips parted in keen expectation. "Nothing and no one else has ever been able to do that to me. I don't mean it to sound arrogant or like I'm full of myself. I just want you to understand...to know how it is. You're...different, Remy. Every single thing about you."

His hips nudged her thighs wider apart, settling himself within their cradle, and one hand moved between her legs, his calloused palm cupping her pussy in a possessive hold, as if it belonged right there, in the palm of his hand. Remy sobbed out some kind of strangled, broken cry under her breath and a low, purely animal sound vibrated from his chest, sending goose bumps racing over her skin. "You're still so wet, honey. But I want you wetter. I want you soaking in your cum, Remy. Want it dripping down these soft little thighs, slicking over my skin when I fuck you, all sweet and slippery."

"Yes," she gasped, her neck arching, and he sank his teeth gently into the exposed column of her throat.

"But right now, I'm starving, Remy. Bet you'll never guess what I want to eat?" he drawled with a slow, feral smile that had a fresh surge of cream washing through her sex. She'd never been so wet, or turned on in her life, as she was by the idea of Jason going down on her.

Before she could even respond, he was moving down the shivering, soft line of her body, pressing a tender kiss to her collarbone, before opening his mouth over the more delicate tip of one nipple. He smiled around her flesh, the teasing scratch of his cheeks only adding to the delicious, pulling sensation as he suckled the swollen nub relentlessly, until she was writhing and cursing softly under her breath, her hips lifting to rub the wet pad of her pussy against his muscle-hard belly.

"You're so fuckin' hot," he grunted, taking a quick taste of the other nipple, leaving it shiny and wet while his head moved lower, teeth grazing her navel, breath teasing the tiny patch of curls she'd kept at the top, then lower, until he was suddenly licking a long, wickedly intimate line through the heavy seam of her smoothly waxed labia. Remy arched her back, arms flung wide, and shouted out a raw, keening cry of sound that echoed through the silent apartment, while the heat in her womb twisted with such a vicious, drumming force of hunger that she struggled not to scream.

And then his wicked mouth closed over the sensitive, pulsing nub of her clit and she *did* scream—a sharp, husky sound that ripped straight up from her chest—as he licked and suckled, the heavy growl breaking out of his mouth vibrating against her tender flesh.

"So fucking sweet," Jason snarled, twisting his head for a better angle, while his big hands caught her trembling legs and forced them out high and wide, leaving the plump, pink folds of her cunt open and at his mercy. He pulled back to savor the breathtaking sight, cock feeling as if it would simply bust through his zipper, and knew that he'd never get enough of this precious little piece of woman, craving it more every day of his life. "Perfect," he growled, burying his face back into the damp, silken heat. "Goddamn fucking perfect."

Her skin was like wet, pink silk, juices creamy and honey-thick, and his tongue eagerly stroked out to lick and explore, seeking the tender, puffy edge of her vulva and shoving deep, wanting to get as far inside her as he could. He fucked her with long, strong shafts of his tongue, swallowing her sweet juices down with a greedy, savage, carnal abandon that he'd never experienced with any other woman.

But then they'd never been his Remy—the one woman that he wanted for his very own. The only one who set him on fire and twisted him with need. The only one who could break his heart with little more than a smile.

The instant he felt her hands sift through his hair, holding onto him, he stroked deeper, his thumb lifting to rasp and tease over the thrumming pulse in her clit. Her thighs were shivering around his shoulders, her warm, sweet cunt spilling down his throat, and he knew it was time to push her over the edge...and then fuck her beautiful little brains out. God knew he couldn't wait much longer to get inside her or he'd end up blowing his first load in his jeans. And he didn't want to waste it. He wanted to spend the whole night filling her up with his cum, marking her as his own.

"Oh shit, Jason," she panted, twisting and quivering with the building wave of release, her body primed and ready to break. "I'm going to come."

"That's what I want," he growled against her lush, damp folds. "I want to taste it. Feel it on my tongue. Do it, Remy. Come in my mouth, angel."

"No," she moaned, writhing beneath him, instinctively struggling against the intensity of it. "I can't."

"Hell yes, you can. Right here." He tweaked her clit with his fingers, making her shudder and gasp. "I'm going to suck right here. And you won't be able to help yourself. You're gonna spill all over my face, sweetheart."

His head dipped back down, his strong tongue licking a sinful path from the pucker of her tiny asshole up to her swollen clit, and she broke, going rigid while a low, primitive cry broke free from her throat. Jason pressed his face deep, tongue digging deeper, eager to have the sweet wash of her cum in his mouth, needing it more than he needed his next breath. She came in a beautiful, sensual dance of rippling pleasure, her tender pussy milking his tongue, hot and wet with that delicious cream that he loved...and he lost it.

One moment he was pressing his lips to her clit again, her hip, her navel, tasting the pulse of desire on every inch of her damp skin, and then he was ripping at his jeans, damn near breaking the zipper in his desperation to get his cock free. She was still rippling with the fading tremors of her release when he pressed the fat, wet head of his dick to her tiny, creamy hole and shoved hard, his jaw grinding in bliss-filled ecstasy at

the incredible feel of her squeezing down on him, her pussy sucking on him tighter than a hot little mouth.

He watched through narrowed eyes at the way her hole stretched wide to take him, wider and wider as the thick bulk of his cock pushed through the resisting flesh. She was pussy-pink and so damn pretty, her delicate skin a tender, provocative contrast against the long, vein-ridged, dark reddish-purple of his bulging rod as it just kept ruthlessly pushing in—slowly, so slowly, wanting to savor every second of this first penetration.

With a rumbling, animal growl, he pulled back out a little, loving the way the top of his cock was coated in her rich cream, wanting more of that sweet tasting juice in his mouth. But that could come later. First he had to get inside that fist-tight clench of her stunningly narrow passage and claim it as his own—forever. All the way inside. Balls-deep and saturated in heaven.

“Jesus, Jason. There’s too much,” she panted, gasping, blinking up at him in the soft glow of the lamp, her hair damp at her temples, shockingly red against the pearly creaminess of her skin.

“You can take it,” he whispered in a low, scratchy drawl, voice husky with lust, thick with need. “You’ll take my cock, sweetheart. No matter how tiny this sweet little pussy is, it was made for me, Remy. Made for me to fuck. To make it feel good. I just wanna make you feel good, honey. I wanna blow your fucking mind,” he added in a deep, hard tone that evidenced the strain he was under from trying to go easy on her. “You just gotta let me in first. Just relax and let me in, Remy.”

Dragging his eyes off the intoxicating sight of his hardened flesh drilling slowly into her primed little cunt, Jason looked back up at her beneath his brows, knowing he was on the verge of losing complete control.

He’d enjoyed sexual encounters with more women than he could remember—knew a woman’s body inside and out—knew everything there was to know about sex and fucking and then some. But this was unlike anything he’d ever known before—

anything he'd ever experienced. It was as if a thousand extrasensory sensors had been planted on his cock, drowning him in sensation, and a line connected the thick purple head of his dick straight to his heart, flooding him in a riot of raging emotions. Every shafting stroke that worked him into her brought a reciprocal tug, until he was grinding his jaw, his skin soaked in heat and sweat, afraid of where this was taking him—and what he'd do when he gave himself over to it.

Her eyes were wild with need—his own savage gaze reflected back at him in the clear black pools of her wide pupils. Jason placed one hand at the back of her neck, pulling her forward, forcing her head down at an angle that he knew would put her in the perfect position to watch and witness.

“Look at us, Remy. You're so sweet and pretty, and I'm about to fucking rip you apart.”

A rough groan broke from her lips and he smiled above her at the evidence of hot, thick cream gushing against his cock as he worked the wide head in and out of the suctioning wetness of her tight, clenching slit. The lush, lusty responses of her body told him that she loved it as much as he did—needed it as much—craved it.

“Do you see what you do to me, Frosty?” he asked, his smile shifting to a wicked grin. “See how hard you've got me, honey, like a fucking I-beam?”

His hips jerked forward, shoving in more inches than he had before, and a strangled gasp broke from her chest, followed by a low moan as her cunt squeezed down on him so hard it was a delicious, bruising pain. “Yeah, you feel it, don't you, Remy?”

He moved the hand clutching at her hip to stroke the strained, drenched rim of her vulva, where she was so beautifully stretched from his brutal penetration, and rasped the rough tip of his finger across the delicate tissues. “So pretty, Remy. So sweet and soft and pink. I love looking at you. Love watching the way your pussy stretches open for me. The way it fights to be able to take my cock. The way it creams and trembles

when I shove into you. You're the sexiest fucking thing I've ever seen. So goddamn beautiful you make my knees shake."

His hand moved up into her wild tumble of hair, twisting long strands into his fist as he pulled her face up to his. When she looked him in the eye, her breath panting against his face, he growled, "Before we're done here, you're gonna understand, Remy. I'm gonna give you every inch, more than you've ever had, harder than you've ever had it, and fuck your sweet little brains out 'til the only man you know is me. 'Til the only cock this hot little cunt remembers is mine. 'Til I'm the only one it craves."

Her lips parted, but whatever she would have said was swallowed by the eating kiss he forced into her mouth, as if he could draw her heart out from between her lips. "Hold on," he warned. "Take a deep breath, Remy, and don't let go of me."

Remy gulped a huge lungful of air that tasted like Jason, ridiculously aroused, her entire body turned into one throbbing, beating pulse of need and lust for this man who had stolen her heart so long ago. He released his hold on her hair, gripping her knees to pull them out wider, higher, and she fell back against the table on to her elbows.

Biting her lower lip, she looked down the length of her damp body, down to the open, drenched pink seam of her sex, and there was Jason Hawkes' savage cock, only half buried inside her, and already she was fuller than she could bear. Fuller than she'd ever been, but she loved it. Loved the press of his hot, sweat-slick skin. Loved the deeply tanned expanse of his muscle-defined chest, with its small, dark nipples, and the tawny line of hair arrowing down from his navel, until it pooled into a rich, dense patch at the base of his impossibly thick erection. To Remy, his cock was as beautiful as a perfect sin, with its fat tip that gleamed dark like a bruise and the ridged, heavy network of veins. She wanted to hold it in her hand, test its weight, feel it pulsing against her palm, so vital and strong. Wanted to lower her head and map its texture with her tongue, claim its taste and its dark sensual scent of musk and man for her own. Wanted to dip her tongue into that glimmering slit on the broad head and taste the

pearly fluid glistening there. It was animal beautiful, savage and raw in its power, and she craved it with a hunger that nearly undid her.

"Jason," she groaned, feeling desperate and on edge, her body hurting with its need, until the only thing she knew was that she had to have more. Had to have everything. "Please," she panted, her voice throaty and low. "I need you—all of you. God, Jason, *please*," she cried out, her hips lifting for more—her body screaming for it. She looked up at him, unable to find the precise words for what she needed and he smiled, his fingers biting tightly into her skin, holding her in place for his short, teasing strokes that were driving her mad. "Damn it," she growled, as he began pulling back again, having only given her the top portion of his cock, "don't you dare leave me!"

Jason groaned a deep, vicious sound of emotion, his words choppy and raw as he rumbled, "I'm right here, Remy. Trust me, honey, not even the devil himself could drag me away." Then he hammered his hips forward, shoving the brutal length of his shaft deeper into her sweet, clenching depths, feeling the hot cream coat him, the strong muscles rippling around him as she tried to suck him even deeper. It was perfect and Jason didn't know how long he was going to be able to hold it, but he didn't want it to fucking end.

"Do you have any idea what I would've done to have you these past seven years?" he grated out of a dry throat. "Do you know what hell it's been trying to stay away, let you have the life you deserved? Trying to keep my hands off of you, instead of claiming you as my own, when I *knew* you fucking belonged to me."

She shook her head and he took a deep, shuddering breath, then crammed every inch straight into her tiny hole with a thick, hot, scraping thrust that plunged him in to the broad root, his balls crammed up tight against her ass. She stiffened from the brutal, savage invasion and he knew everything he felt was right there in his wild, primitive stare, burning through for her to see...and she shut her eyes, shutting him out.

"No, goddamn it!" he roared, any semblance of his cool, calm, legendary control so far gone he didn't know if he'd ever get it back. All he knew was that he was fighting for his life here and they'd have to kill him before he gave in and let her walk away. From him and their future. From his love. "Don't you dare fucking shut me out. You asked for all of it and that means everything, Remy. Not just my goddamn body. Open your eyes."

She shook her head again and he leaned close, nuzzling the side of her neck, his tongue flicking out to taste the need on her skin. "I won't let you hide from me," he promised in a husky rumble, his voice as dark as sin. His mouth moved higher, teeth biting gently into the tender flesh of her lobe, her sweet cunt tremoring around his cock, killing him with the jaw-grinding pleasure. "And I sure as hell won't let you hide from what's happening here between us."

His head lifted, one hand moving to her face, and his thumb caressed the soft skin of her cheek, trailing to the tender vulnerability of her throat, seeking and finding her drumming pulse. His hips pulled slowly back, then thrust forward again with a thick, driving stroke that fed the massive bulk of his cock into the tight clench of her pussy, forcing it in, and he said, "Open your eyes and look at me, Remy. *Now.*"

Remy felt the rough pad of his thumb press against her pulse as it danced out a frantic cadence of suspense, of need...and followed his command, helpless to deny him. He stared down at her, gaze heavy with passion and lust, the whiskey-rich brown of his eyes smoldering with something so overpowering, she felt lost in it.

"Your mind doesn't fear me, Remy, because you know I'd rather die than hurt you. It's that prickly little heart you keep hidden from me that's scared shitless."

"Don't," she moaned, her voice thick with both pleasure and fear, body jolting to his strong, plunging strokes.

"I won't let you run away from me, sweetheart," he said in a low, black magic voice.

His hot lips rubbed across her cheek, his scratchy jaw rasping her chin, and then his mouth was eating into hers, his wickedly talented tongue teaching her things she'd never realized could be found in a man's mouth.

He wrapped her into the hot, protective hold of his arms and pressed deep, thrusting into her, cramming her full of all those incredibly long, deliciously thick inches until he was pressing against the mouth of her womb. The long, hard, sinewy length of his arms—roped with muscle, scarred, glowing a deep, dark golden brown in the lamplight—held her close, holding her beneath him as he drew out then pressed deep, surrounding her, filling her, steeping her in his male heat and the hungry, searing reality of his possession. She felt vibrantly alive, as if her body were being charged from within, her cells energized with the jolting force of electricity, something inside her unfurling to life that was brilliant and bright and blinding.

"Remy," he cried out, sobbing into her mouth with a masculine, utterly male, entirely primitive shout of demand as his mouth took hers in a savage, blistering kiss. His body pounded her against the table until it went driving into the wall with a roaring groan of wood against plaster and still he didn't relent. He slammed into her harder, faster, their skin going hot and slick, and Remy went crashing over the edge, arching and screaming, sobbing into his kiss.

Jason swallowed the sounds of her release down with a growling cry of victory, then threw back his head as a triumphant, snarling shout of ultimate satisfaction rumbled up from his chest, and he followed her over. It was the most intense, shattering, incredible climax that he'd ever experienced, rolling in a thick, voluptuous wave of ecstasy through his rigid shaft—hot, pulsing spurts of cum jerking deep into the hot, wet clench of her body, while his dick nearly turned him inside out.

His head fell into the hollow of her shoulder, mouth open as he breathed a ragged tempo against her hot skin, and Remy clutched at him with desperate, needy hands,

never wanting to let him go, wondering with a wry shake of her head how she could have ever thought to resist him. God, she must have been mad. He was like water, air, food – something she had been starved for since the moment she'd met him. A necessity for life that without which she would go mad.

Had she thought this night was hell? No, now she knew better. This was as close to heaven as she'd ever been and, if she were honest with herself, she'd admit that the man holding her so securely in his strong, protective arms irrevocably owned her heart.

It had been his all along.

Chapter Four

Two days later, Jason found himself pulling into the crowded parking lot of Piedmont Community College, while Remy sat cool and calm in the passenger's seat. Though many things still remained unresolved between them, one thing was for damn certain—the last two days had been the best forty-eight hours of his life.

Staying at her apartment, they'd made love so many times his dick felt raw and basically tuned the rest of the world out. Since she worked from home and had just finished her latest project for a new client, Remy had simply let her phone ring until her automatic voicemail picked up. And knowing work could make do without him for a few days, he'd left a message at the office, letting Connor know he was taking some long overdue personal time. Then he'd turned his pager and cell phone off.

They'd explored each other's bodies from bottom to top, laughed and shouted out their pleasure until their throats were sore and talked about everything, except the two most important things on his mind—their past and their future. He wanted that talk more with every second that ticked by, but at the moment, he was more concerned about the *now*.

Remy directed him to the Art complex at the back of the school and he pulled into a space toward the far side of the crowded lot, on the opposite side of the building from where she normally parked.

"Your hands are freezing," he rumbled in a low voice as he reached over the center console and wrapped her slender fingers in his big grip.

"Ice Queen strikes again, huh?" She smiled, trying for a laugh that fell sadly flat as he released her hand to flick on the heat.

"Honey, there isn't a goddamn thing cold about you."

"Thanks," she whispered, watching a group of students, backpacks slung over their shoulders, scuffle their way to class.

"I don't want you getting out of this car until we know exactly what's going on here, but you're not going to change your mind, are you?"

She shook her head, the long, thick scarlet silk of her hair tumbling about her shoulders, making him just want to bury his face in the fragrant mass. "Ah hell, then I guess we're going. I can't say no to you. It's pathetic."

Remy felt her shoulders shake with silent laughter, loving him even more than she already did for the understanding she could see there in his beautiful gaze as she turned her head to look at him. The dark, masculine beauty of his face took her breath away, so ruggedly handsome in the pale glow streaming down from the parking lot lights as the sun made its final dip into the distant horizon. "I don't think it's pathetic. I think it's sweet."

"You would," he snorted, shaking his head, then shoving the still shower-damp blond streaks off his forehead. "You're not the one who's become a poor pitiful wreck of a man," he muttered, sounding adorably disgusted with himself.

"Ohhh, poor baby," she crooned, reaching behind her seat for her backpack.

"Yeah, well, I plan on doing everything in my power to redeem my manly image when we get home and I get your sweet little ass back in bed."

Her backpack landed on top of her jeans-covered thighs with a dull thud, brow arching as she reached for the door. "I do so hope you'll be *up* for the challenge."

"Sweetheart, I already am," he said with a hard smile, but beneath the smile Remy could see his concern evidenced in the warm depths of that narrow golden-brown stare, the corners of his eyes crinkling, revealing the character lines that she loved.

"Jason, you really shouldn't worry. I told you, it's just a prank. Nothing's going to happen."

"I can't help it," he muttered, reaching over to recapture her hand. His fingers opened, and with a sharp little pain in his heart, he gazed at her slender hand lying within his palm. So fragile...delicate. "I'm in love with you," he rasped out of a dry throat. His gaze lifted, catching at the bright, wide-eyed look of surprise on her face. "Asking me not to worry about you is like asking me not to breathe, Remy."

"What?" she gasped, pressing her hands to her chest. Her voice was so small that he would have missed it if he hadn't been looking at her mouth.

"You heard me," he laughed in a low rumble, the deep sound filling the musky-scented leather interior of the SUV.

Leaning over the console, he pressed a soft kiss against the sweet heat of her mouth, then forced himself back to his side of the car before he got carried away and she blamed him for being late. "We'll talk about it tonight, honey, but if you don't get going, you're gonna miss the start."

Her eyes flashed to the blinking digits of the digital clock on the wide dash. "Shit, I gotta go," she muttered, still looking stunned, and turned to reach for her door handle, then turned back and threw herself over the console. She plastered her mouth against his with a tender, eager yearning that damn near broke his heart while it made his dick go thick and his mind go fuzzy. He was just reaching for her waist, ready to pull her into his lap, the fucking class be damned, when she pulled away, gifting another tempting kiss to his stubble-covered chin. Then she flashed that precious smile that always made his belly do that funny little free fall, his heart skip a beat, and climbed out of the Jeep, rushing off through the diagonal lines of parked cars.

Jason rubbed at his chest for a moment, almost afraid to look too closely at how damn good he felt, then reached back for his denim jacket, since he was wearing his shoulder holster, turned off the engine and climbed out.

Though he'd wanted to go to class with her and keep his eyes on her the entire time, they'd finally agreed on the current plan. Remy would go by herself and he'd

watch from the other lot, hoping to catch sight of someone looking for her car. And the car would be there, since they'd called the garage that morning and given Billy instructions to drop it off in that particular lot, new alternator and all. It wasn't much of a plan, but then they didn't have a whole hell of a lot to go on. All they had were the stupid notes, and because Remy still believed there was going to be some kind of harmless explanation, she'd argued against doing anything more. She didn't want him following her, scaring off whoever it was before they caught them, and she didn't want him snooping into everyone's privacy, or running checks on them either. Stubborn woman had his hands tied, and so here he was, snooping around in the dark like fucking Sherlock Holmes.

Shit, if Connor could see him, he'd laugh his know-it-all ass off.

Watching her make her way through the long lot, his eyes sharp, unwilling to take his attention away until he'd seen her make it safely into the classroom, Jason leaned his ass against the hood of the Cherokee and reached for the crumpled packet of cigarettes in his jacket's front pocket. He didn't smoke often, just if the occasion called for it, and god knew this one did.

He'd told her he loved her—first damn time in his life he'd ever said those three little words to a woman who wasn't his mother—and she hadn't given him the same words in return.

Fuck.

He lost himself in thought for a moment, until his ass went cold against the Jeep's hood, the cigarette pinched between his thumb and forefinger about to singe his numb fingers, and all he wanted was to go running after the headstrong little fireball and demand she tell him how she felt.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

With another low, foul curse on his lips, Jason set off on foot, his steps silent and smooth as he stuck to the edges of the lot, a thick, towering grove of pines on his left and the dimly lit parking area to his right. His sneaker-covered feet—courtesy of the

packed duffel he always kept in his Jeep for emergency assignments—silenced his footsteps against the grainy asphalt, so that no one could hear his approach. The night was cool and brisk, the ruffling wind carrying the distant sounds of the countryside to the modern landscape of the college. As he made his way around the wide, rectangular Art complex—situated at the back of the campus, with three sides surrounded by parking lots and one facing a grassy quad that also held the auditorium, cafeteria and library—his eyes remained alert. Watchful. Focused.

But his mind kept drifting back to that morning.

He'd awakened in a sweet, tangled twist with Remy atop the wrecked bedding that smelled intimately of their loving, knowing he'd dreamed again. The same damn dream of that first kiss that had been haunting him for the past seven years. The memory, as it hovered on the edges of his consciousness, was bittersweet and filled with regret.

If you'd told him seven years ago that he'd ever be waking up one day with Remy wrapped around him, he never would have believed it. Not because he wouldn't have wanted it, but because she'd been so angry and hurt when he'd turned her away that night.

He remembered all of it in vivid, wrenching detail. The pain on her delicate face when he'd pulled away from her. The ache that had followed him through the years as he'd struggled against the need to make her his, even though he knew she deserved better than he could give her. His life had been dangerous, hell, it still was, but at least now he had stability. A base. He could come home to her every night, do everything in his power to make her happy. And that's what he wanted more than anything—to make Remy happy.

He'd turned to look at her that morning, the soft, hazy shafts of sunlight falling over her sleep-soft features, and vowed that he would. Come hell or high water, this thing wasn't going to end like it had before, because god only knew he'd handled it all wrong.

He'd been in a bar fight that night, of all things, and ended up with a beer bottle stabbed in his ass, which was where the jagged wound had come from. Connor had stitched it up himself, while he was bent over the dining room table in the condo Connor shared with Remy while she was going to school. She'd refused to leave while Connor fixed him up, helping with what she could, her eyes wide and watchful at the sight of his naked backside. It'd have been impossible not to get a boner from the way she'd stared at him over her brother's shoulder, if he hadn't been in so much fucking pain.

He'd been staying with them during the short leave that he and Connor had taken and it was the pain that had brought him down to the kitchen for more Tylenol later that night, after everyone had headed to bed. And there she'd been, standing at the back door in a thin nightshirt that barely reached her knees, her soft breasts pressed against the delicate fabric, watching the moon with a faraway, dreamy expression on her young face that had captivated him. He'd wanted her for a long time. Hell, he'd had feelings for her that went far beyond friendship or lust, but she was his best friend's little sister and his life had hardly been the kind to offer to a young woman. And still, he'd been unable to turn around and take his ass back to the spare bedroom.

Instead, he'd walked to her and she'd turned to look at him, a thousand different emotions swimming through the liquid green of her eyes. He'd known in that moment that this woman belonged to him. Felt it with every fiber of his being.

"One of us needs to go back upstairs," he'd rumbled, his rough voice a rasping sound slashing across the heavy silence of the night.

"Why?" she'd asked in a breathless rush, her nipples teasing against her nightgown, making his mouth water and his dick ache.

"Because if we don't," he'd softly growled, "one of us is going to end up doing something that you'll regret – that gets my ass killed."

"You mean Connor? I'm not a child," she'd argued, wetting her mouth. "I'm nineteen."

"Don't remind me," he'd muttered and she'd jerked as if he'd slapped her.

Then she'd swallowed and asked, "Why did you get into a fight with those jerks at that bar? Connor told me what happened after you went upstairs. One of them was Brett Harper's uncle, wasn't he?"

"Just forget about it, Remy." He'd shrugged, trying like hell not to stare at the swollen tips of her breasts as they'd pressed harder against the thin cloth in a blatant sign of arousal. "It isn't important," he'd all but croaked, sounding like he'd swallowed a fucking frog.

Her back had gone straight, head high as she'd faced him down like a regal queen. "It is to me. Brett Harper is a conceited pig and so are all his buddies. I want to know what his uncle said to make you mad enough to get into a fight with him."

"Just some things I didn't like, okay? End of story." And for years after that little episode, he'd taken a shitload from Connor and the rest of the guys. He'd been trained to take down a roomful of men in hand-to-hand combat, and yet, he'd had his ass cut by some drunken beer-bellied asshole in a brawl because he'd let his goddamn temper get the better of him.

"Oh, let me guess," she'd laughed in a low, bitter tone. "Something about me being a cold fish? The Ice Queen of Cardell College?"

"Forget about it," he'd growled, hating to hear her say those things. "Harper and his tagalongs are just jealous little shits. Probably pissed that you don't put out for all of them. And you don't, do you?"

He hadn't known where in the hell the question had come from, but there it was, and there'd been no taking it back.

"No." Then she'd taken a step closer to him and his cock had jerked in his pants just from the scent of her skin and her hair...the dark, heavy look of want in her eyes. "I don't. They don't tempt me."

“And do I tempt you, beautiful Remy?” He’d laughed, trying to be an ass, hoping like hell he’d have the strength to leave her alone or she’d tell him to fuck off. “Come on, Frosty, you can trust me. I won’t tell Connor your dirty little secret.”

“Why are trying to be a jerk?” she’d said in a low, hurt voice, turning to leave, but he’d reached out and grabbed hold of her arm.

“So eager to escape me, honey?” He should have let her go, but instead, he’d taken a step closer to her and growled out a demanding, “I want an answer, Remy. Do I tempt you?”

Her whispered “Yes” had sliced into his desire-thick system like a sword, breaking him down, and the next thing he’d known he was kissing her. He’d made a choked sound of frustration, grabbed her around her slim waist, pulling her into the hard, hunger-crazed length of his body, and captured her mouth.

It’d been the hardest thing he’d ever done in his life—clawing to maintain his control—as she’d surrendered the lush, sweet promise of her mouth to his. She’d been so perfectly untutored, so obviously innocent that he’d been terrified of scaring the hell out of her. And so he’d choked on his own hunger, drinking in the addictive taste of hers. Shy passes of her lips, her sudden jolt when he’d slipped his tongue gently into her mouth, tasting her with slow, torturous strokes that had somehow been painfully erotic. A slow, meaningful, tender tasting, where he’d been able to take in every detail, every flavor and texture and breath, and it had scarred him for life. Ruined him for other women. And stolen his heart. Her smiles and her laughter, those shimmering green eyes and that faunlike beauty that he’d known was going to mature into the kind of sensuality that would be hell on a man, had dented his defenses until they’d crumbled one by one.

“God help us,” he’d grated into the sleek, delicious well of her mouth. She’d moaned a sound of pure carnal abandon, pressed her lithe, young body against him, and the knot in his cock had thickened into a primal, painful ache. She’d tasted as if she’d belonged to him—tasted like *his*. Fresh and pure, and yet, like something

forbidden—something meant to be worshipped from afar—and he'd known it was wrong. Lust had surged hard and savagely through his blood. He'd used every ounce of his training to keep from losing control and pulling her to the kitchen floor, eating at her mouth like an animal while he fucked her precious little pussy into one screaming orgasm after another.

He'd fought it, but then he'd touched her tummy, just with the stroking backs of his knuckles, and she'd sobbed out a raw, hungry kind of sound into his mouth that had nearly shattered him. The next thing he'd known, he'd had one hand on her ass and the other pressing between her legs, the thin barriers of her nightshirt and panties between them, and even then he had still felt the slick, sweet heat of her cunt. She'd been soaking, hot and ready, and he'd wanted to fuck her so damn badly that he hadn't trusted himself to keep touching her...kissing her. If he hadn't pulled back when he did, he'd have had her over that table, his dick buried up inside her sweet depths, and there wouldn't have been a force in hell that could have stopped him.

And her life would have been ruined. Hell, what had he had to offer her? Months spent alone, worrying about him, while he risked his life on the other side of the world, so deep into work that he wouldn't have even been able to contact her for weeks at a time. No, he hadn't been able to do that to her.

He'd panicked, knowing he wouldn't be able to control himself if he touched her a single moment longer, so he'd pushed her back with his hands at her shoulders and stepped away. "No, damn it," he'd grunted. "This isn't going to happen."

She'd looked at him with big, bruised eyes, rolling her lips inward as a fat tear had caught and hung suspended from the tips of her thick lashes. "Why? Is it...is it because I really am cold?"

"Cold?" he'd grunted, pushing his hands through his short hair in furious frustration. "Not fucking hardly. But this isn't right. Get out of here, Remy, now, before we both regret it."

And so she'd left him, choking on tears as she'd run from the room.

* * * * *

With a frustrated snarl, Jason tossed the butt of his cigarette on the ground, stamping it out in the same way he wished he could do to that goddamn memory, and reached for another. He'd just lit the slender column, drawing a long, satisfying drag in from the side of his mouth, exhaling a spiraling plume of smoke through his nostrils when the door to her classroom opened. Taking another long drag, he waited while students filed out for one of the quick breaks Remy had told him they would take. It was easy to spot her as she walked with a small group to the cafeteria, her red hair catching his gaze like a beacon in the dark of night. The corners of his mouth twitched with a grin when she looked over her shoulder toward the lot three times, trying but failing to see him. Then a lone, familiar-looking figure dressed in loose sweats walked out of the class, his sun-bleached hair hanging long and loose around his shoulders, and Jason knew instantly who it was. He watched through narrowed eyes as the blond headed around the corner, in the same direction that Remy had just taken.

Jason slipped silently out of the shadows, finding himself reacting on pure, jealous instinct at the thought of the guy prowling after her. All it took was five seconds and he had the pretty-faced beach boy plastered against the side of the building, one arm twisted up behind his back, before the guy even had the time to blink. Squeezing his fist around the model's wrist, he leaned down and muttered in his ear, "Just where the fuck do you think you're going, Jon?"

"Shibby! How the hell do you know my name, dude?" Jon gasped, yelping when Jason twisted his arm higher, his thick fingers biting into the sensory centers that he knew would cause the most pain.

"Uh-uh. I ask the questions here, got it? What the fuck are you doing sneaking off after Remy Frost?"

"Remy?" the guy grunted as Jason added a bit more pressure.

"Yeah. You know, that gorgeous little redhead you stare at during class, until it's enough to make her skin crawl, you sniveling little shit."

"You better chill, brah! No reason to go aggro on me. I only stare at her because she's the most bangin' Emma in there – after that boglius little Betty with the bodacious ta – Ouch, man!" he muttered, panting, while Jason increased the pressure on his wrist. "I swear, dude...I just didn't want everyone in there knowing how hard I've nose-dived for Miss Hut –"

"Bangin' Emma?" Jason snarled, shaking his head as if to clear it. Ah hell, he was starting to comprehend just what Remy meant about understanding the guy. It sounded like English...but his brain was having trouble making head or tails of it. "Boglius little Betty? What the fuck are you talking about?"

"My sunshine girl with the killer baby blues," Jon gritted through his teeth. "She's like a –"

The pain-garbled words were suddenly cut off as two gangly young men, both looking to be in their early twenties, one with shocking pink hair and the other with curly, soft brown locks that gave him the appearance of a cherub, came running over. "Hey, did we hear someone say Remy?" Pinky gasped, out of breath, while Cherub wheezed, "Yeah? We've been looking all over the school for her. Do you know where we can find her?"

Jason turned a sharp, narrow stare on them and suddenly they both went wide-eyed, backing a slow step away, as if only just realizing what they were seeing.

"What the hell do you two want with Remy?" he asked in a low, hard voice that demanded an answer, while Jon shouted, "Make this asshole let me go. Get help! He's totally flailing on me and I've got no barnie with the dude!"

Pinky mumbled "Uhh..." while Cherub stared down at his Converse-covered feet, then at the dark sky, then at Pinky, his soft green eyes looking anywhere but at Jason and the struggling model, while he swallowed so hard you could see his throat working.

When it became obvious that they'd both been stunned into silence, Jason muttered, "Hell, don't move," then turned his attention back to Jon.

"You've got two seconds to explain to me what those fucking freaky ass little notes are about, or you're not going to like what I do to that pretty face of yours. And let's try it in English this time."

"Notes?" Jon grunted. "Kiff, man? What the hell are you talking about?"

"Don't play stupid with me, you little shit."

"As if," Jon groaned, his voice tight with strain. "Listen, man, I don't know anything about any notes. This is all some kinda killabrenda! I'm telling you the truth! The only reason I stare at Remy is so that no one will realize how badly I've tubed for Miss Hutchins!"

"Who?"

"The instructor," Jon muttered, trying to look at Jason over his shoulder. "The school had some kind of whacked harassment case last year between a model and one of the professors. So now they've become majorly paranoid. I didn't want to get that pretty little Betty into any trouble just because the sight of her makes me feel like I'm pulling a three-sixty on the face of a killer wave. You know what I mean, brah. Like I'm executing some major tunnel love."

"Oh shit, I don't fucking believe this," Jason growled, and yet, his gut was buying it. With a disgusted growl at the whole goddamn situation, he shoved Jon away and crossed his arms over his chest before he gave in to the urge to punch someone. "So you mean to tell me that you don't know anything about the notes warning her to stay away from you? And you don't have a crush on Remy?"

"Hell no, dude! We've got no beef, man. This is bogus. I don't even know what notes you're talking about," Jon argued, rubbing his sore arm as he took three stumbling steps away. "No way would I thrash the bitchin', totally boss feeling of transcendental connection, like we're one with Mother Ocean, I feel for my wickedly sweet little crippler chick. Just the sight of that blonde hair and those sweet blue eyes messes with my head...makes me feel totally amped. Like I'm totally carving, man. Without a doubt, it's da kine, but it makes me feel like I'm gonna pull a total kali, too."

Like I'm on a major cruncher. She's got killer class and I'm out of my element, brah, feeling like I've just been totally launched. Like I've maytagged big time. Caught up in a spin cycle. Like I'm in orbitzville. Like I've—"

"Oh Christ," Jason grunted, cutting off the seemingly endless spiral of nonsense, while Pinky and Cherub both choked on sudden mouthfuls of laughter. "Where in the hell did you learn to talk like that?"

"Like what?" Jon asked, blinking his long, sun-bleached lashes.

"Like a bad surf movie on acid," Jason muttered.

"I can't help it," the young man gritted through his immaculately white teeth, nearly blinding the three sets of eyes watching him. "I embrace the waves, man, and this love thing is wickedly doke. She makes my head spin, man, and it's epically danza. Supremely nar nar. Inspiring, dude. You should try it sometime."

Oh, Jason was feeling inspired alright. Inspired enough to thump Jon the Dude on his pretty boy backside. Turning to Pinky and Cherub, he demanded, "And just what the hell do you two want with Remy?"

"What do *you* want with Remy?" Pinky surprisingly demanded right back, obviously finding a little backbone.

Jason took an intimidating step forward, wondering how this whole situation had become so friggin' bizarre. "*I'm* her boyfriend."

"Remy doesn't have a boyfriend," Cherub argued, feeling brave now and trying to stare him down.

Jason let his meanest smile spread slowly across his mouth. "She does now."

"Yeah?" Pinky asked, standing a little straighter as his gaze flicked over Jason's right shoulder, back toward the parking lot. "Then why don't we ask her?"

Jason swung around, and sure enough, there was Remy walking toward him, dragging a protesting, middle-aged woman behind her. He narrowed his eyes as he tried to see her better. Then a pale beam from an overhead parking light illuminated her

face, aided by the soft glow spilling down from the silvery moon, and his heart nearly stopped.

"Why the fuck are you bleeding?" he roared, ready to take someone apart with his bare hands, nearly losing it at the sight of her bloody lip.

"She refused to come with me," Remy said calmly, though a bit out of breath as she reached his side. Then with a smug smile, she added, "So I insisted."

"Who the hell is she?" he demanded, shooting a quick look at the frowning woman who had the makings of a fierce black eye coming on.

"Miss Hutchins," Remy replied, while her green eyes shone with laughter. "And I snuck out of the cafeteria and into the parking lot just in time to catch her trying to slip a note on my car, while you were busy terrorizing these three."

"It was *her*?" Jason shook his head, feeling as he'd been poleaxed between the eyes, unable to keep the shock out of his voice. Miss Hutchins appeared to be somewhere in her forties, with light gold hair and big round eyes the color of cornflowers. Overall, she was quite a looker, though a bit too buttoned-up. She had the schoolmarm image down to a T, but Jon was all starry-eyed the moment Remy came walking up, dragging the reluctant, red-faced instructor behind her.

"I told you it wasn't me," Jon grumbled as he stared intently at Miss Hutchins. "So you can stop giving me the stink eye, man. And just so ya know, I think this is totally bogus. No way could it have been this fine little Betty. She's too nectar...too—"

"Oh, for the love of god, put a sock in it," Cherub mumbled, while Miss Hutchins flushed a deep crimson at Jon's words, her mouth forming a small O of stunned surprise.

Jon cut a glowering look at the snickering duo of Pinky and Cherub. "Why don't you two go get bent? This is so waxed. I'm tellin' you, someone so hella soft and dank could never—"

"Honestly, Jon, listen to the guy and put a sock in it or I'm going to shoot you just to shut you up!" Jason grunted. The instructor at Remy's side gasped, trying to twist out of her hold, but Remy wasn't letting go.

"And you had better explain yourself right now, young lady," he demanded in his deepest, I-want-answers-this-very-second voice.

"Explain myself?" Remy gasped, looking like he'd just slapped her with a fish. "Young lady?" she snarled, shooting daggers at him.

"Yeah, you were supposed to be hanging out with your classmates, not snooping around out here."

"Well, it's a good thing I was," she huffed, raising her chin to that stubborn angle that he loved, "or you'd have missed her while you were busy beating up on Jon!"

"I'm not gonna hurt him, honey. I'm just gonna rough him up a bit," he delivered in a slow, sweet drawl, as if he were looking forward to it...even though he was only teasing.

Of course, his words sent Miss Hutchins into a flying panic.

"Noooo!" she cried, tearing out of Remy's grip to throw herself in front of the pretty-faced model, her bountiful chest still swinging well after her body had stopped, looking as if her bosom would sway away from her, never to return. "Don't you dare lay a hand on him, you...you...macho-headed bully!" she screeched.

"It's hard to believe," Remy laughed, giving a wry shake of her head, "but she wants him. Um, his interesting vernacular and all."

"Jon?" he muttered, unable to keep the disbelief out of his voice. "Are you telling me that all of this was really just because she has a thing for the ass guy?"

"You're the ass guy," Remy snickered, which had the small crowd looking at him with expressions that ranged from shock to intrigue, to suppressed laughter. "But yeah, it was all about Jon. Miss Hutchins just 'fessed up to leaving the notes when I'd go into the cafeteria to get a soda during break. Said she didn't think she could ever have him

for her own, but it still worried her that he had some kind of crush on me and that I'd decide to make a go for him. She just wanted me to stay away from the guy."

"And you already got all of this out of her?"

Remy lifted her shoulder in the same cocky movement he'd seen her brother use a million times and he felt a slow grin spreading across his face.

"And you gave her the black eye, too?"

"Yeah, but only after she bloodied my lip trying to run away. I think I scared the hell out of her when I snuck up behind her and caught her red-handed slipping another one of those notes under my windshield wiper."

"Damn, honey, you really are a little badass, aren't you?" he laughed, voice full of pride.

Remy winked at him. "I tried to tell you I could take care of myself."

"Yeah, I guess you did," he rumbled, wanting to pull her into his arms and kiss her silly. He would have, too, if Jon hadn't started spouting out enough transcendental surf slang to fill the Pacific Ocean, apparently trying to convince the older Miss Hutchins that he didn't have a crush on Remy and didn't care about their stupid age difference, swearing that he'd always think she was a major Betty.

"There was no need to leave any notes, Miss H," Jon said, shaking his head, his sun-bleached locks falling softly around the perfect features of his face. "You should have just talked to me. I'm not sweet on Remy. I only stared at her because looking at you makes me feel like I'm on a major railer and I didn't want to land you in a gnarly barnie with the school. Plus," he added with a sheepish grin, "I was worried those killer baby blues of yours might have me sporting a harpoon in front of the whole class if I wasn't care —"

"Jon, shut up," Jason muttered, pinching the bridge of his nose, a headache pounding behind his eyeballs that made him want to snarl...only he was *already* snarling again. Shit.

Looking over at the blinking, owl-eyed instructor, he tried to find a measure of calm and grated out, “Miss Hutch—”

“Betty,” she said in a soft, lyrical voice as she turned to look at him.

“What?” Jason grunted, half-afraid she was going to start drowning him in that nonsensical surfer slang too. Damn, his freaking head was going to explode!

“My name is Betty,” Miss Hutchins murmured, shooting quick, hunger-filled looks at Jon, where he stood right at her side.

“See,” Jon smiled. “She’s Betty...and she’s *a Betty*. It’s so hella cool. It’s—”

“Not. Another. Word,” Jason bit out through his teeth, staring the surfer dude down until the guy held up his hands in surrender.

“Kiff?” Jon said with a wide grin, his hungry gaze catching again and again on Miss Hutchins’ flushed face. “Whatever, brah. Like I said, no barnie, man.”

Taking a deep breath, Jason tried not to lose his grip on that scant amount of patience he’d managed to claw onto. “Look, Betty, I’m trying to make sense out of this and god knows that’s more difficult tonight than it should be. Now—”

“I’m sorry,” the shy blonde cut in, her voice a low, breathless rush of anxiety as her big blue eyes flickered between him and Remy. “I didn’t mean to worry Remy,” she mumbled, gnawing on the corner of her bottom lip as she wrung her hands together. “I just wanted her to stay away from him and I couldn’t think of any other way to handle it, without giving away how I feel. I know the notes were childish, but they were all I could think of.”

“If you...er, are interested,” and he tried not to choke on the idea, “in Jon here, then why didn’t you just talk to him? Let him know.”

“I wanted to tell him,” she said in a low, miserable tone, turning a dull shade of red. “I couldn’t care less what the school thought, but I just didn’t think...” she stammered, her turbulent gaze casting quick, hungry looks at Jon, as if she couldn’t keep her eyes

off him. "I mean he's so beautiful, and I'm so much older than he is, and it's not like he would have...at least I didn't think, but —"

"Sweet Mother Ocean," Jon said with a dazzling smile, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her flush against his long, lean body, while a startled, pleasure-filled gasp escaped her lips. "You should have just told me you're sweet on me, Betty. I think it's da kine. Da mamie. Majorly dunza, my bangin' little Emma."

"Why *does* he talk like that?" Pinky asked, staring at the cooing couple as if they'd grown second heads.

Remy shook with silent laughter and smiled as Jon called the blushing woman the totally wooka, tropical summer breeze of his heart. "Sounds like he's been watching too much *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*," she snickered. "Or maybe *Point Break*."

"You've actually watched those movies?" Jason snorted, shooting her a disbelieving look.

"Hello," Remy laughed, "they have Keanu Reeves in them. You bet your 'bodacious' backside I've watched them."

Jason scowled at the way she all but purred Keanu's name, then jerked his chin at Pinky and Cherub. "And just who in the hell are these two?"

"This is Roger and Carson," Remy said with a smile, then, as if suddenly realizing they weren't supposed to be there, she scrunched her nose at them and said, "What are you guys doing here, anyway?"

"We were worried about you," Carson muttered, "and we knew you had class tonight."

"Yeah, I've been leaving messages and you never called me back," Roger grumbled, flipping his hot pink hair back from his forehead with an angry toss of his head as he cut a glaring look at him that made Jason want to smile. He made two of the guy, but Remy's friend was more than ready to take him on if she needed the help, and damn but if it didn't make him like the runt. "Like Carson said, we were worried."

"Yeah, and I knocked on your front door for thirty minutes yesterday morning," Carson muttered, not wanting to be left out, "but no one came to the door."

Jason tried to remember if they'd heard knocking and ignored it, then decided that they'd probably been fucking in the shower when the kid came by and just didn't hear. With a slow, feral smile spreading across his mouth at the memory, he said, "We were—"

"Probably out," Remy cut in, shooting him a glaring warning, while she used her sleeve to dab at her bleeding lip.

Jason shook his head and let his smile widen, deciding to tease her a bit for not trusting him. He'd only been going to say "Busy". It's not like he was going to announce to the world that they'd spent the entire time fucking like bunnies. "I don't know that I'd say out, honey. I think in would be better. Yeah, definitely deep in—"

"Jason, another word out of you," she warned, narrowing her eyes to mere slits, "and you won't be *in* anywhere, you get it?"

He opened his mouth, but both Roger and Carson started in again, and suddenly his fucking head was spinning with the nonstop chatter as her friends talked over one another and Remy tried unsuccessfully to get a word in edgewise. Then Jon started spouting out more of his confusing surf babble and suddenly all Jason wanted to do was walk over to the wall and start banging his damn head against it. For a brief moment he considered shooting his gun into the air, then thought better of it. What went up had to come back down, and with the way this bizarre night was going, he'd end up shooting himself in the goddamn foot.

Then the pretty-faced surfer went down on his knees, professing his "righteous" feelings for Miss Hutchins, while the flushed blonde teetered between smiling beatifically at the young man's attentions and sheepishly apologizing to Remy for her embarrassing jealousy, while Carson bugged her about going to the exhibit with him and Roger whined about her missing their lunch date the day before. Finally, when he couldn't take it a second longer, Jason shouted, "Enough!"

Everyone went silent, staring at him with wide, worried eyes.

“Look,” he barked, pointing one finger at Roger, “she’ll call you tomorrow. And you,” he added, turning toward a red-faced Carson, “we’ll *both* take you to the damn exhibit, got it?” A quick look at Remy showed her wearing a grinning, bemused expression at his words. Then he turned to Jon, whose sun-kissed face was all but glazed with passion as he gazed at Miss Hutchins. “And you, stop spouting that beach bum mumbo-jumbo, forget about the goddamn class, and take her ass home, where you can show her how you feel, for god’s sake!”

Then, before anyone could mutter another word, he turned to Remy and swept her up into his arms, cradling her against the hot, vivid heat of his body, and carried her off into the night.

* * * * *

When they found a quiet, deserted nook created by the outside wall of the auditorium and a maintenance shed, he let her slide down the long length of his body, pressed her against the wall at her back, and in a voice heavy with insult, muttered, “How could you give that pretty-faced ‘surfer dude’ my ass?”

“Because,” she murmured, “when everything started going weird, drawing your hunky backside just made me feel better. And, as painful as that night was when you got that scar, it was still the most romantic thing anyone’s ever done for me.”

Connor had given her brief details of the fight after he’d stitched Jason’s backside up, cleaning out the glass and then sewing the torn flesh back together with tiny, neat sutures that she knew he’d been trained to perform, in case one of their men was injured in the field. It had sickened her to see Jason’s body hurt, bleeding, and yet, there’d been that undeniable part of her that had been breathless at the sight of his taut, golden buttocks, firm with muscles and so surprisingly sexy. She’d never have guessed she’d be turned on by a guy’s butt – until she’d gotten an eyeful of Jason Hawkes’.

"That scar is still one of the sweetest memories I've ever had. Up until two nights ago," he rumbled, pressing a searing kiss into the slender hollow of her throat, tilting her head back. "Do you know how hard it was for me, that night, not to toss you over that table and cram you full of my dick?"

"Mmm...knowing that only makes the memory sweeter," she laughed, arching against him.

"And do you know how much I regret not grabbing hold of you then? I was so wrapped up in coming to terms with how I felt about you. Shit, you were so young when we met. So innocent it made me feel dirty just to think about the things I wanted from you."

Her mouth opened, the argument right there on the tip of her tongue, but he held up his hand and held her off, determined to get it said. "Despite this vast experience you claim, you're still innocent. It'll take a hell of a lot more than those boys you've known to destroy that. And you're Connor's baby sister. It was a lot to take in."

"And what about now?" she asked in a quiet voice. "I told you my gut was right about this—that there was no great danger. It turned out to be no big deal, just some silly misunderstanding...or whatever you want to call it, and now this whole 'Remy needs protecting' thing is over."

"That's one way of looking at it." His expression shifted, that pure, mischief-made grin of his that she loved curling across the wide line of his ruggedly sculpted lips. "Or..."

"Or?" she asked, looking up at him while a thin flame of hope began to burn in her heart, spiraling out through her body in a breathtaking wash of suspense.

"Or," he rumbled, a deep breath expanding his lungs, "you could say it's just beginning."

That thin flame flared, burning fierce and bright...and she struggled not to bubble over with it.

"The way I see it, we've about said everything that could be said except for the two most important things, Remy."

She swallowed hard at the emotion in her throat, wanting to smile and laugh at the same time, and he hadn't even told her what they were yet. But she could tell she was going to love them, just from the burning heat of emotion smoldering in those whiskey-brown eyes, so beautiful they were already melting her heart.

"I fell in love with you that night, seven years ago, and I've been in love with you ever since."

"Seven years ago!" she screeched and he shook with laughter.

"Yeah, though how in the hell you didn't figure it out before now is beyond me. Everyone else knows. Even your brother. Shit, he probably had it figured out before *I* did."

Remy watched that sinful, bad boy grin kick up the corners of his wide, beautiful mouth, wondering if her heart would shatter from the thundering of her pulse. "Oh god," she gasped, blinking at the salty wash of tears suddenly blurring her gaze, "you loved me? Then? But you left me, Jason. You pushed me away, walked away, and I didn't see you for an entire year after that. *A year!*"

"Yeah, I know. And staying away from you was the hardest damn thing I've ever had to do. But I did it because I *did* love you, baby. If I hadn't, I'd have carried your sweet little ass off with me and your life would have been a living hell. I couldn't do that to you, Remy. Not with the way I felt about you."

"Jason," she groaned, pressing her palms against the solid slabs of his chest, feeling the heavy beat of his heart through the soft cotton of his shirt. "My life *was* a living hell."

He leaned his forehead against hers. "Mine too, but I thought I was doing the right thing, Remy. I didn't want to fuck your life up. And it didn't seem like it was right, until I came home and settled in, but you didn't want to have anything to do with me by

then," he muttered, his voice betraying the strain of the last ten months she'd spent running from him.

"Only," she growled, "because I thought you hadn't wanted me. I thought this new interest was just some kind of need to grab a taste of something you'd passed up. I didn't know... I had hoped...but I was too afraid to hope for too much."

He looked down at her, that rich, molten brown gaze squinting against the feelings she could see swirling through their golden depths. "And now?" he asked, the sexy line of his mouth tight with tension.

"Now I'm ready to grab hold of everything. Of you."

"Thank god," he said in a strong, gusting rush of air, "because honey, once I stick, there's no shaking me loose."

"What?" she laughed. "You stick like glue?"

Jason smiled, letting the happiness sink sweetly into his system. "You bet your sweet ass I do." He lifted his hand to her face and cupped the gentle curve of her cheek. His hungry gaze caught on the erotic sight of his big thumb as he rubbed the lush pad of her lower lip, wiping away the last smear of blood, while a tumble of erotic images and desires took shape in his mind, catching at the beat of his heart. It could be theirs. All of it. It was all right there, just waiting for them to grab hold of it.

"I fall deeper in love with you every day and I'll just keep falling, baby, until the day I die. You, Remy Frost, just push me over the edge," he rumbled, his rough voice thick with the powerful combination of lust and tenderness. "You make me go fucking wild with the need to love you, to take care of you, and to fuck you so hard that you can't even think about walking for the next twenty-four hours. The only thing I want you thinking about is how far you can spread them, how deep you can take it, and how loud you can scream."

"Why, Jason Hawkes," she hiccupped, clutching onto his shoulders, her eyes shining while her lips spread in a slow, sweet smile, "who would've ever guessed there was a poet buried beneath all these wicked muscles and badass scars?"

"You love my muscles and my scars," he growled, pressing the bulge of his erection into her soft tummy as he bit at the tender skin beneath her ear. Then he pulled his hips back, his big hands already going to work on the fly of her jeans, tugging them down to her knees. Remy gasped, but before she could protest, he had two long fingers digging beneath the edge of her satin panties, two fingers digging deep into the flesh that was already going juicy for him.

"You know what else you love?" he rasped, working a third in alongside the other two, filling the tiny hole of her cunt to bursting with three thick fingers, loving the way she creamed all over him, so sweet and clean and fresh. He wondered how bad she'd kill him if he just went to his knees and buried his face in her damp folds right then and there, and treated himself to some of that sweet, delicious, addictive little pussy to hold him over until he got her ass home. "Me," he rumbled, growling the words into her mouth as her strong, tender channel clenched around him, sucking on his fingers in a lusty, provocative rhythm that was quickly unmanning him. "You love me, don't you?"

"Yeah," she sighed, kissing the hammering pulse in the base of his throat. "I love you, Jason. I always have. I always will."

"Oh, hell," he groaned, knowing he wasn't going to be able to wait, not when she'd just given him the one thing he wanted above all others. The only thing that had ever really mattered.

The warm, smoldering look in his gaze told her exactly where his train of thought had taken him. "Do you *ever* think about anything other than sex?" she laughed.

"Of course I do," he drawled, sipping from her lips as if he were starved for the taste of her. "I think about you. I'll admit a lot of the time I'm thinking about fucking you, but there's more there."

"Yeah, like what?" she sniffed.

"Like the way you smile. I think about making you happy. I think about us spending the rest of our lives together, which is the second thing we needed to talk about. Having kids, dogs, a whole goddamn menagerie. Creating a family so that our house is loud and full of life and laughter and we have to sneak off every chance we get for hot, satisfying quickies, until they all go to bed at night and I finally get your sexy little ass right where I want it. I think about creating a life with you, Remy. One that matters. One that lasts.

"I know what I want, Remy, and I've known it for a long time. I know that what I feel is real. More real than anything I've ever known, and more important, I know it's going to last forever. That it's the most important thing to ever happen to me and always will be. I know I'd die before I ruined it or hurt it and I know that I want to spend the rest of my life making you understand just how fucking much I love you."

She shivered as he pulled his fingers free of the tight hold of her body, tilting his face down so that he could hold her stare, unwilling to release that glistening look of warm, melting emotion swirling there in that luminous green gaze that drilled straight through him. "You want to know what now?" he smiled, lifting his damp fingers to paint her lips with that delectable, dewy pussy-juice that he couldn't get enough of, loving the way her eyes went heavy with a carnal hunger that perfectly matched his own as he stroked the plump, slippery surface of her mouth. "Now I get to spend the rest of eternity so madly in love with you, it makes every other woman green with envy."

Her shoulders shook at his words. "You're such an arrogant shit, you know that?"

"Yeah," he grinned, "but I'm *your* arrogant shit."

A single tear tracked down the side of her hot face, leaving an iridescent river of moisture across the silky perfection of her skin, but he knew it was okay. Knew they were tears of emotion, because his eyes felt hot too. Then the edge of that siren-sexy mouth tilted up in the most endearing smile he'd ever seen and she blinked a look of love and need up at him that damn near stopped his heart. Her palm lifted to brush his

hair back from his brow and she sniffled an adorable little sound as she said, "I love you, Jason Hawkes. With all my heart, I love you and I want you forever. For always."

"I won't ever get tired of hearing it," he groaned. His mouth found hers before he could think about skill or seduction or blowing her mind. He was driven by need and hunger and the possessive necessity of stamping his claim all over her. His lips ate at the silken perfection of her plump mouth, tongue driving past her soft lips to seek and enter and claim the sweet, warm well. He tasted her tongue, her teeth, the hollows of her cheeks, desperate for all of it, every intoxicating inch. Emotion trembled through his body, setting him to a fine, uncontrollable shiver, and he could feel any last vestiges of control being swept away on a wave of something so overwhelming, he knew was being carried away with the tide...and loving every minute of it. "Hell, I love you so much, woman. Always, Frosty. I'll never be able to get close enough, in deep enough, have you enough. More," he growled, knowing he sounded desperate, but too damn in love to care. "I'll always want more, Remy."

In the next instant he'd lifted her, carrying her deeper into the shadows, until suddenly they were submerged in darkness, the shimmering dampness of her love-filled eyes illuminated by nothing more than a pale shaft of iridescent moonlight as it painted the beauty of her expression with an ethereal glow.

Remy felt the cold, hard stone of the auditorium at her back, her front covered by hot, hard, trembling male animal as he seemed to be everywhere at once. There was no practiced seduction in his touch. No, he was nothing but primal need and hunger and she loved it. Reveled in her power over this magnificent beast and gloried in her own surrender to the wonder of everything he made her feel.

Strong, hard, callused hands grasped the soft denim of her faded jeans and shoved them all the way to her ankles. Then one long-fingered hand ripped at the delicate scrap of her panties so quickly, her head spun from the rush of pleasure pumping through her.

"Have to fuck you...be inside you...now. Sorry, baby, but I can't wait," he muttered, ripping at his jeans, his actions revealing his desperation. Her breath caught at the hot, searing heat of his thick cock as it pushed between her thighs, nudging at the sensitive folds of her sex. "Fuck, I can't wait."

And he meant every word.

Jason came the instant he shoved the brutal width of his shaft inside her, instantly filling her with a powerful surge of cum that eased his way, so that he was able to press even deeper, shoving the fat head against the mouth of her womb and holding it there. He pressed her hard to the wall as the vicious, teeth-grinding pleasure pulsed through him, jerking through the core of his cock like a hot, blistering wave of lava, and muffled his raw shout in the fragrant silk of her hair.

He didn't know if he'd passed out or what, but suddenly she was shifting in his arms, her tender sheath rippling around him in urgent, hungry little pleas for more. "Ah hell, I don't believe I just did that," he muttered, his husky voice tight with embarrassment at his appalling lack of control.

"Shh," Remy whispered, "it's okay. I loved it. It was so sexy. I love feeling you come inside of me."

"Thank god," he grunted, loving the feel of her hands on him as she stroked the hot skin of his throat, his ears, sifting her fingers through his hair, "because I love doing it."

Remy made a purring sound of contentment and arousal in the back of her throat, shifting in his arms, and he groaned, "No. Don't move. Not done. Nowhere near fucking done," he gritted through the savage bite of his teeth, his breath hot and moist against the sensitive side of her throat.

He was still rock-hard, packing her so full it felt as if he took up all her space, stretching her to that point that he always took her to, where the pain blended so erotically with the pleasure that she craved that stinging bite, that stretch, loving that

she was woman enough to take everything he had to give. She reveled in her power to take him, to take her pleasure from a man who was so much...*everything*. Her sex grew heavy and wet and he moved thickly through the hot slickness of his own cum as it coated her narrow inner walls.

"Ah damn," he grunted, his voice scraping and hard in the dark, silent night. "I love fucking you. Can't get enough of the way you take me, squeeze me, suck me in like you're trying to swallow me whole. There isn't anything like it in the world, Remy. You were made for me."

"Always for you, Jason."

He shoved back into her creamy heat, the slick, warm rush of her juices covering him, and Remy reveled in the intimate, wickedly sweet sensation of his naked dick as he fed it into her, forcing his way inside. "Only for you," he rasped.

She watched as he smiled down at her, his whiskey-colored eyes burning with love, bright and intense and mesmerizing in their beauty. "Your cock, woman. Every inch, all for you, Remy. And I'm going to give it to you every fucking chance I get. You getting the point?"

"Yeah," she gasped, jolting to the pounding rhythm of his strong, thick strokes as he worked the hard, vein-ridged length of his shaft into her, forcing his way through the tight clench of her sex. "I'm getting your point, Jason. And enjoying every second of it."

"Ah hell," came a deep, familiar voice from the dense shadows off to their side, maybe fifteen feet away. "I really, really don't want to be hearing this shit."

Remy shrieked, trying to pull him into her body as she clutched at his shoulders, and Jason groaned long and low, dropping his forehead against the crown of her smooth, silky hair. "Oh fuck, you've got really shitty timing, you ass."

"Well, when I came looking for my sister," Connor snorted, "I didn't know I was going to find *this*."

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Jason snarled, while Remy kept trying to curl into a tighter space between him and the wall. He could hear her muttering something softly under her breath, then smiled when he realized she was chanting "*No, no, no, this is sooo not happening*" over and over again.

"I went by Billy's to check on her damn car and he told me you'd had him bring it here," Connor drawled, thankfully not sounding any closer.

"And so you just had to come and investigate, huh?"

"Hey, she's my sister. Then I ran into Carson and Roger in the parking lot and they pointed me in this direction." There was no mistaking the wry edge of humor in Connor's deep voice. Jason figured he should be happy his best friend wasn't trying to pound his ass into the ground, considering he had his baby sister nailed to the wall with a monstrous hard-on.

"Well, I'm sure Remy appreciates your concern. Now get lost before this gets any weirder. We'll call you later."

"With pleasure," Connor snickered, "just as soon as she tells me she's okay."

"Yeah, she's fine. More than fine," Jason drawled in a husky rasp that left no doubt to anyone that he was no longer talking about her health and safety.

"Christ, you couldn't have waited until you got her home at least?" Connor grunted.

"It was...uh, kinda urgent," Jason choked, trying not to laugh.

"Hawkes," Connor growled in a menacing snarl.

Remy sank her teeth into Jason's shoulder, making him say, "Ouch." Then, in a blush-filled voice, she muttered, "I am fine, Connor. Now go home."

"Love you too, Remy," her snickering brother laughed, turning to leave.

"Hey," Jason called out, "just so you know, she's decided she loves me."

Connor muttered a few choice phrases beneath his breath, then said, "That right, Remy?"

Jason could see her slow smile in the pale moonlight as it played softly over her mouth. "Yep, I'm afraid so," she mumbled. "Though I probably wouldn't mind killing him right about now."

Connor's soft laughter carried huskily on the wind. "Yeah, and knowing Hawkes, honey, I reckon you're gonna feel like that again."

"True," she sighed, "which means he's damn lucky that I *do* love him."

"Here that, *bro*?" Jason snorted. "We're gonna be family now, man."

"Oh hell, you two are gonna make me sick," Connor muttered with disgust, though they could both hear the smile in his voice as he muttered the words.

Jason waited thirty seconds as they listened to Connor's boots ringing clearly now against the hard concrete of the walkway as he moved away. Then he licked his tongue over her still damp, sweet pussy-flavored bottom lip, smiling when she moaned and shivered from the wicked action.

"Now where were we?" he rumbled, smiling as he slowly pulled his hips back, so that she felt the brutal rasp of his thick-rimmed cock head dragging against her tender, sensitive walls, before pumping back in with a hard, possessive thrust.

"You mean before the humiliating moment when my brother caught me getting nailed to the wall?" She laughed, nuzzling the base of his throat with her mouth, then flicked her tongue against the slick heat of his skin once, then again...and again.

He felt the growl work its way up from the soles of his feet, vibrate through the core of his cock, and gave in to the grinding need to fuck her deep and hard and raw. "Connor aside, you like being nailed to the wall with my cock, gorgeous."

"Yes," she gasped, holding onto his shoulders for dear life. "Yes I do."

"And you're going to get it again and again. I'm so fucking crazy about you, Remy. I'll never be able to get enough. Never. You're going to be getting fucked like this for the rest of our lives."

"Then I guess that makes me a lucky girl."

"It makes you mine, Frosty. All mine."

"Makes you mine too. And you, Jason Hawkes, are second to none."

"Yeah?" he smiled, "I like the sound of that, darlin'. But as long as I'm yours, I'll be happy. From the moment I met you, that's all I've ever wanted to be. I'll try not to smother you and I'll do everything I can to make you the happiest woman in the world. But, just to warn ya, honey, I'm never getting over this need to protect you. You mean too goddamn much to me."

"I'm fine with that, Jason," she moaned, breathless and shivering on the verge of a climax so powerful, it threatened to blow both their minds. "Really, I am. There's just one problem."

"What's that?" he groaned, wondering if she was going to lay into his ass again for being a bullheaded brute.

Remy pulled him down for another soul-scorching kiss that left them both breathless, then nipped his bottom lip, making him jerk deep inside her. "I'm just wondering who's gonna protect you from me?" She smiled, her soft voice full of sensual challenge that made them both chuckle.

And they were both still smiling when they fell over the edge.

About the Author

Rhyannon Byrd is the wife of a Brit, mother of two amazing children, and maid to a precocious beagle named Misha. A longtime fan of romance, she finally felt at home when she read her first Romantica® novel. Her love of this spicy, ever-changing genre has become an unquenchable passion—the hotter they are, the better she enjoys them!

Writing for Ellora's Cave is a dream come true for Rhyannon. Now her days (and let's face it, most nights) are spent giving life to the stories and characters running wild in her head. Whether she's writing contemporaries, paranormals or even futuristics, there's always sure to be a strong Alpha hero as well as a fascinating woman to capture his heart, keeping all that wicked wildness for her own!

Rhyannon welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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