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Deceived

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

DECEIVED

Lexie Davis

Dedication

To Josh

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Queen of the Damned: Ann Rice

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Prologue

"We're going to get in so much trouble for this." Shayne smiled at Matt as he climbed into bed beside him. "You know relationships within departments are prohibited. What are we going to do when they find out about us?"

Matt sat up and stretched before facing his lover again. "Nobody has to know anything. You're my partner and best friend. As long as you don't squeeze my ass in the middle of the department I think we'll be okay."

Shayne snorted. "How will I ever control myself?"

Matt couldn't remember a time before now when he felt complete. For years, he'd been focused on his career as a narcotics detective and completely in denial about his sexuality. That was until he met Shayne. From day one on the job together, they butted heads. He smiled recalling the practical jokes they'd pulled on one another. The teasing finally turned into more when Shayne confessed he was gay. It happened during a stake-out on probably one of the worst nights. Two weeks later, Matt finally scrounged up enough courage to ask him out.

He leaned down to place a kiss on his lover's lips, one that quickly turned from a simple peck to a struggle for dominance. Shayne cupped Matt's ass in his hands, giving him a squeeze for good measure. Matt grinned and pulled back long enough to reach for a condom. Shayne rubbed his lover's hips and thighs while Matt rolled the condom on in a hurried motion.

The bottle of lube was somewhere in the twisted sheets, and after patting them for a few seconds, Matt found it. He squeezed a generous amount on to his rubber-covered dick and smeared it with his palm.

Pushing Shayne's legs to his chest, Matt leaned forward and captured his mouth in a kiss as he slowly eased his way into his lover's body. Shayne squirmed a little, lifting his ass for deeper penetration. Matt sucked his lip between his teeth and continued kissing him as he pushed his hips forward, ever so gently.

"I can't get enough of you," he whispered. He moved his mouth to Shayne's neck, kissing and licking a path to his collarbone.

He pulled back in a long, slow movement and pushed inside Shayne again, a small moan escaping both of their lips. Shayne was his partner in all sense of the word. At work, in friendship and now in the bedroom. He'd never been happier than when he and Shayne were together. They were soul mates, and Matt counted his lucky stars that his sweet lover walked into his life when he did.

As his cock pumped in Shayne's willing body, he wondered what the other man thought about him. By nature, Shayne was a quiet guy, choosing instead to mind his own business unless confronted directly. His actions said he felt the same way Matt did, but the words never left his lips.

"I love you," Matt said, shooting his load inside him. Immediately after coming, he pulled out and slipped the condom off before kneeling over Shayne and taking his cock between his lips.

That was all it took. Shayne's hot seed shot into his mouth and slid down his throat with ease. Matt had never tasted anything better than his man's come. He never wanted to taste another man. Wholeheartedly, Matt pledged himself to the man lying before him, staring up at him with dreamy eyes.

"I love you too, Matt." Shayne's voice was raspy, from either their sexual workout or emotion – maybe both. He pulled him over him and planted a kiss on his lips. "I want you to move in with me."

* * * *

"Vaughn!" Lieutenant Porter stepped out of his dank office with a scowl on his face. "My office now!"

Matt shared a look with Shayne and tipped his coffee cup to his lips. Lieutenant Porter had a way of making everyone in his department feel cosy. If the yelling and red-faced scowls didn't do the trick, it was the constant review of reports filed, busts logged and drugs catalogued. He was the head of the narcotics department, and it was his way or the highway. In the blink of an eye, he didn't care to transport you out of his department for looking at

him wrong. It only made sense that he was barking at Matt for something minute. What had he done now? Forget to dot his I's or cross his T's? Maybe he should draw cute little hearts over them for good measure.

Matt chuckled and entered Lou's office, taking a seat in the plastic orange chair that had to be as old as his thirty years.

"Explain this to me." Lou tossed the narcotics drug log at him. "Next to the heroin we should have five hundred kilos from the last drug bust at the notorious Big E factory. Why does it say zero?"

Matt frowned. It had been his job yesterday to catalogue the narcotics and make sure what they had documented matched what they had locked up. Yesterday, he'd marked the five hundred kilos on the sheet and put his initials beside it, following protocol.

"This isn't the sheet I turned in yesterday. I remember counting the heroin. I specifically marked down five hundred kilos and put M-V next to it." He looked up at the lieutenant. "There must be some mistake. Is this an old sheet?"

Lou sat behind his desk and narrowed his eyes. "That is the paper that was in the file this morning. I also checked the cell log. Matthew Vaughn, badge number 24-3445, was the last person to be in the narcotics cell. You'd better have a better explanation for this than 'there must be some mistake.'"

Matt stared at the numbers. All were in his writing but the heroin count. There were no obvious signs of tampering but deep in his gut he knew something wasn't right. He didn't write that zero. "How much is stored in the cell right now?"

Lou pressed his lips together, studying Matt before he finally answered. "See, this is where the plot thickens. After seeing the zero, I immediately knew something wasn't right. I went down there to count the heroin blocks myself."

Matt waited for some sort of explanation and Lou didn't offer any. "And?" he prompted.

His superior leaned back in his chair. "Vaughn, I've known you for a while now – what has it been, seven years? If there is something you need to tell me about this, say it right now. Otherwise I must follow protocol with my next movements."

Matt's jaw dropped. "You think I did something with the heroin? That's bull shit! I helped take out the scum that produces it."

“Then explain to me why all the blocks are gone. Five hundred kilos suddenly disappeared and you were the last one to see it. Explain to me how this happened, friend to friend.”

Matt’s palms started to sweat. Not because he did anything wrong, but the evidence against him didn’t look good. He retraced his steps from the time he logged in to the cell. It was around eight o’clock when only he and the lady working dispatch were working that night. Most of the other guys had gone home to their wives and families—including Shayne who had promised to meet up with him at the 34th Street Pub when Matt was done.

He’d entered the cell and started counting and evaluating the drugs, making sure they hadn’t been tampered with and were in the same condition as when they’d arrived. He had started on the left side of the cell and worked his way around, saving the heroin, which was right beside the entrance, for last. He remembered it well because most of it was in blocks and some was in liquid form, the vials positioned right next to the powder.

He leaned forward with his eyes closed, recalling the moment he wrote down the five hundred kilos. He’d glanced at his watch. It’d been around eight-thirty and he had specifically wondered if Shayne was still at the pub. He’d filed the chart in the folder next to the door, locked the cage and signed out of the system. The place had been nearly bare except for the dispatch lady who gave him a polite ‘goodnight’ in passing.

“I did everything as I always do, Lou. I signed in, counted and marked my findings accurately, filed the report, closed the cage and logged out of the system. I don’t know what happened.”

Lou pressed his fingers together. “This doesn’t look good, son. If you give me an explanation and recover the drugs, I’m willing to bend the rules a bit for you. I’m willing to help you out, but you have to help me out. Otherwise, you know the next move. It’s not one I particularly want to make, but it will happen unless someone tells me what the hell is going on.”

Matt met his eyes. “I didn’t do it, sir. I don’t know who did or why my name is last on that log and the drugs are missing, but I didn’t take them. You have my word I had nothing to do with this.”

“I’m sorry, son.” Lou grabbed a slip clearly marked ‘warrant’ on the front. “You’ll wait in a holding cell while we check your house.”

Matt stood along with Lou and waited for the older man to open the office door. Outside, the entire department eagerly awaited Matt's return, Shayne in particular. Just seeing his face nearly had Matt weeping like a little school girl. What would he say to him? He had no proof of his innocence. He had no alibi. He'd called Shayne when he left and found out he'd gone home for the night. In consequence, Matt had decided to go to his home as well to pack his things for them to move over the weekend. No one had seen him. He'd been completely alone.

"Danvers! Yokely!" Lou hollered, waving the warrant around. "I've got a search warrant for you."

Danvers shared a look with Matt before crossing the small area to take the paper from Lou. Normally, Matt was sent to search houses. "What am I looking for, sir?"

"Five hundred kilos of heroin." Shayne's eyes widened and Matt knew everyone suspected what was happening. "Lewis, escort your partner to the first holding cell. When Danvers gives me his report, I'll inform you of what to do next."

Shayne's jaw dropped. "Lou, you can't seriously think —"

"I didn't ask your opinion!" The redness was creeping upon his face again. "And the rest of you, get back to work."

Lou headed back into his office and slammed the door behind him. Shayne, Danvers and Yokely gathered around Matt waiting for an explanation.

"The heroin from the narcotics cell is missing and my name was the last on the log. I have no proof I didn't take it, but I didn't do it."

"Shit." Shayne rubbed a hand over his mouth.

"Dude, you know I gotta search your house. If you didn't take it then you should be free and clear, right? That should count for something." Danvers tried to sound hopeful, but the reality only made it worse.

The thought entered his mind that someone could have planted the evidence in his house without him knowing. With all the boxes sitting around and the clutter, he honestly couldn't tell if someone had been there without his consent or not. The more he thought about it, the easier the set up turned out to be. He was a perfect target.

"Give me your keys." Danvers held out his hand. "We're all on your side, man. You've been working with us for years. We know you had nothing to do with whatever happened to the drugs."

Matt handed him the key ring. After Danvers and Yokely left, Shayne gripped his arm and led him towards the holding cells of the jail.

"Tell me what the fuck is going on."

"I think I'm being set up."

"By who?" Shayne stopped and pressed the elevator call button to go to the basement. "Who have you fucked over so badly that they want to frame you like this?"

Matt's head pounded as he thought back. "Shit if I know. Everybody I deal with on a daily basis could be considered my enemy."

The doors opened and Shayne pushed him inside and pressed the circle with a B. "I'll try to help you, but Matt, from what you say, it doesn't look good."

Matt nodded. "Yeah. I know."

* * * *

It'd been fifteen days since he'd been arrested with a laundry list of charges sure to keep him in a jail for a long time if convicted. The arraignment had happened almost immediately, and he'd pled not guilty. A lot of good that did him. His court hearing was in thirty minutes and the close confinements of the cell were pushing the limits on his sanity. The judge had refused to offer bail so that meant he spent his days and nights within the half-concrete, half-iron cell with the very people he put behind bars. He couldn't sleep at night with the constant promises of inmates pledging to murder him when he did. He had a flimsy mattress with one little sheet that barely even covered his torso, much less his whole body. It was nothing but pure hell, and he didn't deserve any of it.

"Are you nervous?" his lawyer asked.

Matt nodded. His stomach was in knots. The DA had tried to bargain with him since he was a police officer. She knew just as well as he did that prison wouldn't sit well with him. He'd be crucified if given the chance and not one single soul would have an ounce of remorse. It didn't matter if he was guilty or not.

“Relax. The jury will sense your nervousness and mistake that for you being guilty. Just go in there and tell the truth.” His lawyer patted him on the shoulder. Matt supposed he was a decent guy. He came highly recommended from everyone he talked to, including his parents with their high standards.

Matt glanced at the clock again. *Why wasn't Shayne here?* Ever since they'd found the heroin in his apartment, Shayne hadn't been to see him. Matt tapped his foot against the tile, staring at the door. People of all different nationalities, sexes, ages and status entered, making up the vast array of citizens filling the main foyer. Not one of them was Shayne.

He took a deep breath and stood, walking with his lawyer to the courtroom. His hands were cuffed and he begged the guard to leave off the shackles. Thankfully, the man was someone who knew Matt well and provided him that small amount of freedom.

He looked around and noticed how different the room seemed when he was on the other side. The large room was anything but welcoming. Like a normal court room, the jury's box sat to the right side. Ahead, the judge's bench took up the front wall with the witness stand to the right and the stenographer's seat off to the left of the room. While reality made the room seem larger than most, it felt as tiny as the cell he'd spent the past week in.

People came in to hear his verdict and weigh the outcome. Danvers and Yokely patted him on the back, their form of moral support. Even Lou took his seat on the prosecution's side, nodding his acknowledgement. Matt turned completely around and stared at the door. Shayne had to come. This hearing decided his fate, his future. *Where was he?*

“You're getting anxious again,” his lawyer scolded. “Relax. You have nothing to be nervous about. You didn't do anything wrong.”

Matt nodded. He glanced one more time at the door and held his breath when it opened. In walked Shayne, dressed in a grey suit with his blond hair spiky and his demeanour the tough cop he was. Matt felt sudden relief when Shayne met his eyes.

He crossed the room to where Matt sat and took his seat behind him. He didn't say a word.

The trial was long and boring as all the evidence was brought out before him. The logs, the database, the pictures of the heroin taken inside his house – but the most interesting of all was the surprise witness – the dispatch employee who worked that night was called to the

stand. After the prosecutor questioned her, she informed him that she saw Matt leave with a large, bulky backpack. Obviously to store the heroin in.

Matt thought back and remembered grabbing his overnight bag from his locker with the intention of staying at Shayne's house that night. As the witness spoke, Matt knew he had no chance. He had no evidence of his own. No alibi. No proof. He had nothing against the person who framed him.

When given the chance to prove his innocence, he was brought to the stand and said again what he'd said all along. He was even questioned about the backpack and vaguely explained the ordeal there. He tried not to get too defensive when the prosecutor accused him of ill intentions. She suggested he was a dirty cop and planned on helping the people he confiscated the heroin from by giving it back to them. His lawyer objected. The judge overruled.

After going through that personal hell, he returned to his seat while the jury left to discuss the outcome of his life. It didn't take them too long. He stood for the verdict, holding his breath as the forewoman took her stand at the microphone.

"In the case of the state of New York verses Matthew Vaughn, we the jury find the defendant... guilty." She started listing his counts, but Matt's mind could only wrap around the one word that took his life from him. *Guilty*.

He sank to his chair, his legs too wobbly to hold his weight. His body was numb to the pats of comfort and reassurance his colleagues gave him. His lawyer promised him they'd fight it again, but Matt made no comment. When the bailiff dragged him away, Matt cast one last glance towards Shayne and saw his best friend and lover's seat empty.

He was gone, and Matt had a feeling he wouldn't be back.

Chapter One

Shayne Lewis hated paperwork. It was nearly ninety percent of his job so technically that meant he hated his job as well. After two years of non-stop chatter about Matt from his colleagues, he couldn't stand the constant bickering of whether or not he was truly guilty of stealing those drugs. Differences of opinion still remained after all this time and even the new recruits threw in their two cents' worth. It pissed him off and he didn't know why.

He stared at the piles of paperwork on his desk and knew he'd never get it all done in time to go home—or better yet to his lakeside cabin for the weekend. A little R and R sounded like heaven on a day like this and he'd been counting down the hours since this morning. He made a mental note to thank his father for talking him into buying the cabin.

The department was busy for this time of day, his co-workers trying their best to get their job done so they didn't carry anything over to Monday. After Matt was arrested, Shayne couldn't think about doing the same job with a different partner. He didn't want to. He sighed. At least the desk job paid the bills. He hated every bit of it, but it brought home the money he needed, and that's what mattered, right?

Shayne lifted his coffee cup to his lips and drank the last of the stale black liquid. None of it was the same anymore. He was away from the hustle and bustle of the narcotics division and trying to move on with his life—a life without Matt.

A woman with a screaming child sat in the waiting area, adding to the chaos that drifted around him. At times like this, the problems of the narcotics division seemed so small. It was quiet down there. His friends were down there. They were away from people and children—not that he had anything against children.

The kid wouldn't stop crying and Shayne had had enough. "Ma'am, has someone helped you?"

She shook her head and tried to quiet the child down. Shayne looked around for a detective and found Laramie filling his coffee cup. After hollering at him, Shayne introduced the lady to the detective and Laramie escorted her into an interrogation room, the screaming child going with them. It didn't give him silence, but it did give him less of a headache.

He went back to his desk and hunched over the file he was working on. Everything from minor drug busts to mafia killings sat on his desk, and it would take nearly all weekend to sort through them all. He tipped his coffee cup to his lips and sighed when he found it empty. He couldn't think in this chaos. *Why the fuck did I give up one type of hell for another?*

"Hey there, sugar." Patrol officer Emily Ritchie saddled by his desk, leaning her hip against it as she stopped to chat. "You look like you've had a long day."

It was on the tip of his tongue to ask her if she looked around her lately, but he gave her a tight smile instead. "Long days come with the job. You get used to them after five years."

She gave him a flirtatious giggle. "Honey, don't I know it." She shifted, scooting closer to him. "What do you say to me buying you a drink? We could go to the pub after work. It'll relieve some of the tension if you allow yourself to relax. I always say there's nothing like a good shot of Irish whiskey to ease the pain of the workday. What do you say? Totally my treat."

With herculean strength, Shayne tried really hard to keep from rolling his eyes. He blinked instead. "Thanks for the invite, Em, but I'm heading off to the cabin when I leave here."

Her eyes glittered with mischief. "Oh, how nice. I didn't know you owned a cabin. Are you going by yourself?"

He leaned back in his chair. Emily had been after him for over a year now, ever since he switched departments. She hinted at wanting more than friendship, and Shayne had to become creative in his ways of letting her down. He wasn't open about his sexuality, but he didn't think he exactly hid it either. He thought he'd made it clear he had no interest in Emily as a girlfriend and never would.

"Yes. Two peaceful days all to myself."

She smiled. "I've always wanted to spend the night in a cabin. Does it have a hot tub?"

Shayne pressed his lips together. Why wouldn't this woman take no for an answer?

"Look, Em. I'm busy. I'd like to get this work done before I head out."

"Oh." Her smile faded. "Okay."

When she finally left, Shayne sighed. He couldn't finish work at his desk. As much as the department tried to make the conditions of the main room as quiet as possible, life and general matters of the public got in the way. He grabbed his briefcase and stuffed the pile of

folders inside. Taking work home wasn't anything new. The department didn't like it, but it was the only way he could do his job correctly. He wasn't cut out for this. He liked narcs, missed it actually. The adrenaline high he got while chasing a junkie was beyond explanation. He loved working with Matt and that had been the main reason he left. Everything he did revolved around his partner — former partner — and all the shit that went down with him. Lou nearly took his badge when rumours started to spread that Shayne helped Matt steal them.

Maybe I should just quit the department altogether? He couldn't focus since Matt had been arrested and Shayne honestly didn't trust anyone around him.

Was he really guilty? He stopped stuffing the folders inside his briefcase and stared at his desk. His job was to uphold the law. He found proof and convicted the bad guy of the crime. In Matt's case, all the evidence had pointed towards him. He'd had the drugs in his possession. Shayne had seen the pictures taken, some of the heroin bricks torn as if he'd already been into the stash. He had checked the records. Matt's name and signature had been on the log. He knew it as well as his own, and it'd been right before his eyes plain as day. His badge number had been logged into the system and was the last recorded.

It'd been two years and still nothing had happened. Matt's lawyer tried for an appeal but was denied. To the best of Shayne's knowledge, Matt was still in the minimal security penitentiary in upstate New York after being shipped to several different jails. All the evidence pointed towards him, despite his claims of innocence. The dispatch woman even claimed she had seen him carrying a bulky bag out of the station right after, the perfect place to store five hundred kilos of heroin.

But it was Matt.

Shayne pulled himself out of his daze. His father always warned him about trusting the wrong people. *But Matt is my partner. Was,* he amended regretfully.

Matt had saved his life a time or two in drug busts gone wrong. He had taken Shayne to the hospital when he'd been shot in the leg and had to go through a few surgeries to repair the damage. That kind of person didn't steal drugs from his department. Yes, he'd had access but what was the motive? He didn't dare entertain the idea of Matt using drugs or helping Big E's drug emporium out in any fashion. Matt hated that fucker just as much as Shayne.

He finished stuffing the folders and smiled when his desk was bare. Kind of like his life, he mused. After years on the force, Shayne had learned ways of separating the guilty from the innocent. Motive was key. The motive presented from the prosecutor was helping a drug lord, Big E, win his stash back for money. To anyone who knew Matt, knew that wasn't a strong enough reason. Matt had money. Granted he wasn't Donald Trump, living in the luxurious Trump Towers, but he'd lived comfortably and depended on no one for anything. But the DA had twisted it around.

How did he get the money to live life comfortably? He worked for a measly cop's salary. Granted they were paid a nice salary, but Matt had always had money. He hadn't had a second job, had no trust fund. He didn't come from a wealthy family. Where had he gotten his pocket change?

Of everything, that was what confused Shayne the most. They'd never talked about money before, hadn't really seen the need for it. But Matt always had a wad of cash on him at all times. Mainly hundred dollar bills, and he never had an explanation for it.

What did someone need with that kind of money on a daily basis?

Shayne grabbed his jacket and slipped it on. He didn't have any answers. There was no logic and nothing to prove Matt's innocence. He honestly didn't want to believe the conviction, but had no choice but to. All the fingers pointed Matt's way. All the evidence collected was on him. There had even been talk about Matt setting up a meeting with Don, Big E's go-to man. The phone records had shown that much, and when questioned, Matt didn't have a reasonable answer. He had said it was part of his job, that he'd contacted Don to see when the next deal was coming in.

They'd been working on this case for over seven months and that had been the first news Shayne had heard about setting up a meeting with Big E. He'd felt betrayed. His partner had been keeping him in the dark and because of that, he had no alibi to give him. In his sworn testimony, Matt had insisted he hadn't done any of this. The jury didn't believe him. As soon as Shayne heard the verdict, he'd left and never looked back.

That had been two years ago, and even today, it still ate a hole inside him.

Trust was a funny thing, he mused. It didn't matter about your personal feelings towards the person. Once it was broken, it was hard to get back. Sadly, everyone around Shayne had to pay for Matt's sins. Shayne trusted no one.

"Leaving early?" Connors, another detective on the force, asked.

"Yeah. I can't think with all this chaos. I'd do my work better at home."

Connors nodded. "Do you miss the narcotics division? I'd kill to have that job."

Shayne stared at the younger man, taking in his over-enthusiasm. With light brown hair, the boy had a fresh face of someone new at the precinct. He didn't look like a drug addict, so Shayne brushed off his comment. He was probably an adrenaline junkie, something Shayne used to be some time ago.

"Right now I do." The woman with the crying child stepped out of the interrogation room and Shayne smiled at her. "See ya later, buddy."

The night was cold and dark as he stepped outside. His little Saturn sat in the parking complex across the street from the department, which meant he had to cross four lanes of traffic. He waited at the light, punching the button to walk as he shivered in the New York weather. It wasn't enough that the air chilled his skin. The wind made the already cold temperature ten times worse. He pulled his jacket tighter around him, hoping to block most of the chill while he waited for the light to change.

Half an hour later, he sat in traffic along the main freeway heading out of the city. His suitcases were in the back, his briefcase beside him and his mind on nothing but the panoramic scene of the lake behind his cabin. He couldn't wait to open a beer, sit on the back screened-in porch and stare out at the magnificent lake view.

On the radio, Billy Idol sang about crying for more, more, more and Shayne cranked up the radio to sing along. As he crept along at a turtle's pace, he went through six songs, five commercials and two nonsense chatters before he finally passed the wreck that seemed to be what was holding everybody up. It took exactly three hours and forty-five minutes to reach his cabin and by then it was already most people's bedtime.

By the time he pulled in the drive, the sky was black and crickets chirped a merry song. He parked his car in front of the door and began to unload his suitcases from the back. He set the bags at his feet, locked his car and fiddled with his keys to find the one that went to the cabin.

He forgot all about dinner on his way up here and hoped to hell there was something edible in the kitchen cupboards. He finally found the key in the dark and stuffed it in the

lock. Maybe instead he'd head straight to the hot tub on the screened in porch. Nothing like heat and massaging bubbles to take the stiffness out of his muscles.

He opened the door and bent to retrieve his luggage. The briefcase was on top and he pushed it inside first. He then grabbed his suitcases and stepped inside. Immediately he was surrounded by darkness. He reached for the light switch and flipped on the one that lit up the kitchen, which was to the left. He set his bags to the side and rubbed his eyes, his growling stomach on his mind.

The refrigerator was at least as old as the cabin and looked a little rough from non-use. He opened the door and grinned. *The old man must have been here.* He reached in to grab an ice cold beer bottle.

A clicking sound reverberated throughout the room and Shayne's eyes widened. The blunt tip of a gun pressed against his head and Shayne retracted his hand away from the beer. He held up his hands and slowly, pulled back to turn and face his captor.

Shayne sucked in a breath.

"Miss me?" a gravelly voice asked.

Shayne gripped the door to the refrigerator. *It couldn't possibly be...*

Chapter Two

He still looked the same. Matt smiled inside as he stared at Shayne, overwhelmed with emotion. His blood heated as his cock swelled in his pants. Only one man on earth ever had that affect on him, and he was one hell of a lucky son of a bitch to have that person standing before him—even if he was holding a gun to his head.

“What are you doing here?” Shayne questioned. His face was a bit pale in the fluorescent light and his dark hair fell straight, stopping at his shoulders.

“You haven’t heard the news?” When Shayne shook his head, Matt informed him. “I broke out of jail.”

Shayne snorted. “Obviously.” He batted at Matt’s hand. “Get the damn gun out of my face.”

“Give me your guns.”

“Are you serious?” Shayne’s voice rose a notch. “You come in here uninvited as an escaped convict and make demands for me to give up my guns to you?”

Matt held out his hand. Having done many strip searches of his partner before, he knew Shayne packed a gun at the small of his back, one at his ankle and probably had at least two more in his jacket and suitcases.

Shayne reluctantly cooperated, going for the one at his back then the one at his ankle. He set both of them on the kitchen table next to Matt. “No matter how dumb you’re acting right now I think you at least know I won’t kill you.”

“You don’t trust me.” Matt grabbed the weapons and shoved them into the bag lying on the table. “You’ll do anything to defend yourself, and I’m not taking chances.”

“What are you doing here, Matt?” Shayne propped his hands on his hips. “The police will be looking for you and they’ll come to me first. I nearly lost my job the first go around. You being here is only guaranteeing me a spot in the cell next to you when we get caught.”

“I’m going to clear my name, Shayne. I didn’t do anything wrong and don’t deserve the hell I’ve been dealt.” His whole body tensed. “I want you to help me. That’s the least you can do since you ran out on me two years ago.”

Shayne opened the refrigerator door and grabbed the beer he'd been going for earlier. "I didn't run out on you. And besides, who are you to talk? How the hell did you get all that evidence against you if you didn't do it?"

"I was set up." He finally lowered his gun and placed it at the small of his back.

After two years of thinking about all the people he'd done wrong, the enemies he'd made and reasons someone would want revenge, he had a few ideas of who it could be. The only thing he could come up with was whoever framed him had connections on the inside.

"You're going to have to do better than that. You know 'I was holding it for a friend' and 'I was set up' are the most common answers criminals make when we do drug busts." Shayne leaned against the cabinet.

Matt bit his lower lip. God, Shayne looked good. His usual attire of navy shirt and snug jeans moulded to his body. A small piece of blond hair curled slightly over his forehead, but otherwise, as usual, the pretty boy's hair was in place. Shayne tipped his beer bottle to his luscious lips, and Matt finally met his eyes.

"What do you want me to say? I have no proof. I have no idea how they hacked into the system or got my number but they did. I have no idea how they got into my house and stashed those drugs there. But I swear to you I didn't do it! You know me, Shayne. Why is it so hard for you to believe me?"

Shayne set the bottle down. "Fine. I'll humour you and say I believe you. How the hell are you going to clear your name if you have no proof? A jury isn't going to feel sorry for you just because you're a cop."

"You've gotta help me, Shayne. You're my only chance at freedom. Otherwise, I'm screwed. I need your help."

Matt really didn't want to resort to tears, but he damn near felt like crying. For seven years, he put people in jail that he truly believed deserved to be there. For the past two years, he'd lived with them, dined with them and fought with them. He didn't want to go back to that place. He didn't want to spend his life inside a cage like an animal. He didn't deserve it.

Shayne blew out a breath. "Matt, do you have any idea what you're asking me to do? Housing a criminal is guaranteed prison. I'm a police officer. I'm supposed to uphold the law and do what is right for the citizens of New York."

"Yeah, and what about the innocent? You're supposed to help them too. You know me, Shayne. You know the kind of person I am, both as a partner, a lover and a friend. I have no reason to do this. I'd been in narcotics for seven years and at any given point I could have taken whatever I wanted, if I wanted it. Don't you think I would have been a little smarter about it, if that was the case?" Matt pulled out a chair at the table. "I've had two years to think about this. I'm not an idiot. Someone set me up."

Shayne grabbed his beer and followed Matt to the table. "Okay, let's talk hypothetically. How would you steal those drugs differently?"

"Little by little so nothing was missed." Matt ran his fingers through his hair, the long locks oily from going a few days without being washed. "It's cocky to take all those drugs in one setting. I know someone saw it. I know someone on the inside knows what really happened. Do you really think I would have used my name, my badge if I was going to take the shit? I had access to everyone's badge number, including yours. Why wouldn't I use someone else's identity to cover my ass?"

"Like you said, cocky."

"Maybe, but I wouldn't have been dumb enough to hide it in my house. If I was going to hide it anywhere, why wouldn't I put it in a plain box and move it with the rest of my stuff to your place?" Matt took a deep breath and felt a little queasy. "I know procedure. Why wouldn't I think it through before I did something this stupid?"

"Any number of reasons. You were high. Cocky. Desperate. There are dirty cops all over the nation. Your reputation counts for shit when something like this comes out."

"I didn't do it, Shayne. I swear I didn't do it." He pleaded with him, the tears he'd felt since the day Lou called him into his office prickling his eyes. "Will you help me?"

Shayne pursed his lips. Matt had no where else to go. His parents begged him to admit what he'd done and take the plea bargain before the trial. He refused. He wasn't about to admit to something he didn't do, no matter how much jail time he faced. If he went back, he'd probably tack on another five years to his sentence, which was fine and dandy. He'd be an old man before he'd get out and by then Shayne probably wouldn't even remember his name.

"How did you make your money?"

“What?” Maybe it was life on the run, but Matt’s head pounded with a headache that wouldn’t quit.

“That’s the hang up I can’t explain. You bring home about three thousand dollars a month with your salary. You have bills just like everyone else and we both know your lifestyle wasn’t cheap. Yet you always have plenty of money on you – at least five hundred dollars – in cash.”

Matt stared at his best friend, suddenly realising why Shayne didn’t believe him. “You really think I made pocket cash by selling drugs?”

“Answer the question.”

Matt smirked a little. “Yeah, Shayne. I steal drugs, sell them to dope heads then arrest them. It’s a win-win situation.”

“I should turn you in, dickhead.” He stood to retrieve another beer. This time, he came back with two. “If I’m going to help you, you’ve got to give me an explanation for everything.”

Matt accepted the beer and popped the top without a second thought. “Do you want me to rehash what happened that night?”

Shayne shook his head. “I’ve had a long day.”

They stared at one another with the unspoken question hanging over their heads. Matt wanted to ask but couldn’t muster the words. Shayne drank half of his beer before he spoke, pushing away from the table.

“I’ll help you.” He held up his hand before Matt could say anything. “But let’s get one thing straight. If we get caught, I have one of two options – shoot you myself or claim you held me hostage. With the way I’m feeling right now, I’m leaning towards the first of the two.”

“But then you’d go to jail for murder.”

That made Shayne grin. “I said I’d shoot you, not kill you.”

Matt shifted in his seat. His cock pressed against the fly of his jumpsuit. Of all things for him to be thinking right now, it shouldn’t be about getting Shayne in bed. His life was literally at stake, or at least the life he knew. He shouldn’t think about tasting Shayne’s lips, wondering if he still tasted the way Matt remembered. And then his thoughts went completely in the gutter when he thought about Shayne’s lips wrapped around his dick.

He had to really fight the urge to come as he pictured Shayne between his legs with his cock in his mouth. Matt must have groaned because Shayne's mouth dropped open.

"You've got to be kidding me." He stood and delivered his empty beer bottle to the trash. "*That* is so not happening."

"What?" Matt tried to play it cool though moving practically guaranteed him creaming his pants.

"I'm not fucking you."

Matt grinned. "Hey, you're the one that brought it up. Got some secret fantasies you want to act out? An adult version of Cops and Robbers?"

Shayne's eyes turned dark. Matt could see the desire he remembered and recalled often when he'd lain alone at night wishing he was any place but in jail. He swallowed unable to look away.

"You can sleep on the couch. I'll get you some blankets."

Matt reached out and grasped Shayne's hand. "Nuh-uh. I've slept on a flimsy mattress that felt like concrete for two years and am not about to sleep on the couch my first night out. I want a warm bed with a hot guy in it. Luckily, you have one to share with me."

Shayne didn't look happy but his gaze roamed to the gun in Matt's hand. "Fine. Keep your fucking dick to yourself or all bets are off."

"What bet would that be?"

"My promise not to kill you."

Shayne left the room and Matt sank back into his chair. It felt so good to be home.

Chapter Three

What the fuck was wrong with him? Shayne rubbed his hands over his face as he stared at the bathroom door while Matt showered. One look in Matt's eyes and Shayne wanted to forget the past. He seriously had to be twisted in the mind since Matt held a gun to his head and forced his way inside his cabin. He should have called the cops then.

In that moment, he had the perfect opportunity to turn him in. All he had to do was pick up the phone, dial the number and give them directions. And he thought about it, long and hard. From the time Matt disappeared into the bathroom until now, he debated putting his trust in the man he once loved. He stared at his cell phone, knowing perfectly well if he went to the front porch he'd get two bars of reception. He could make the call, come back and act like nothing happened. When the police arrived, he could say their time has ended and they got caught before they had a chance to do anything about Matt's case. It could work.

Shayne sighed and tossed the phone on the nightstand. He couldn't stand facing Matt if he did. Deep in his heart, he didn't want to believe he was guilty. Matt was a good cop. One of the best at busting the bad guy. They worked well as a team and that partnership made their personal relationship even stronger.

The smart thing to do was turn him in. It was the law and Matt definitely broke that one. And by hiding and helping, he was breaking the law too. Shayne lay back on the bed, groaning when the soft foam mattress moulded to his body. He didn't want to believe his lover was guilty, which meant he needed to find a way to help clear his name.

The shower stopped and Shayne turned so his head was comforted by a soft pillow. Seconds later, Matt came out, his body sprinkled with water droplets while his long hair dripped down his chest. He turned the bathroom light out and crossed the room to the other side of the bed.

"Are the police on their way?"

Shayne grinned, his eyes closed. "Maybe. I'd rather keep it a surprise. It brings excitement to our lives, don't you think?"

He heard the towel drop to the floor and knew without doubt, Matt was crawling into bed naked. His heart raced as the mattress dipped beside him. He bought the stupid mattress because the advertisement said your partner's movements wouldn't keep you awake. *Yeah. Right.*

"What? Are you afraid to look at me now?"

Matt tugged at the sheet and Shayne finally opened his eyes. Matt was completely covered with the flimsy top sheet, the massive hard-on tenting the white cotton between his legs. Shayne rolled his eyes and stood to undress.

"Why didn't you get rid of that thing in the shower?" He pulled his shirt over his head and started to work on his jeans. Unlike Matt, he always slept in his boxers—even after they had sex.

Matt fluffed the pillow beneath his head. "Because that *thing* wants you."

Shayne kicked his jeans to the side and flipped off the bedroom light. He didn't know what he was supposed to do. Did he trust Matt? He wanted to. He wanted to with all of his heart, because deep inside, he still loved him. It had torn him apart when he'd seen the bailiff take Matt away, so bad he'd had to leave the room before he did something really stupid. Like pull his gun and shoot the guy. But his head wasn't with his heart. There were questions still unanswered. There was stuff that needed to be clarified. Forgetting about the past without rectifying it was asking for disaster...and heartbreak.

"Go to sleep, Matt." Shayne sat on the side of the bed, unable to lie down. Too much was on his mind, prohibiting him from going to sleep.

"Do you still love me?" Matt asked after a while.

Shayne tucked himself in bed and pulled the covers around him. He lay on his side, facing away from Matt. "Yeah, I do, and it only makes seeing you harder."

Matt's fingers caressed the back of Shayne's arm. "I stayed up nearly every night during the first five months thinking about you. With all the shit going on around me, thinking about us—how happy we were and all our plans for the future—was the only thing that got me through it." His hand drifted beneath the sheet to Shayne's thigh. "Do you remember the first time we spent the night in this cabin?"

Shayne smiled to himself in the dark. "You stripped as soon as you came through the door because you wanted to get into the hot tub."

Matt's hand wandered a little lower until he brushed his knuckles against Shayne's erection. "You got mad at me because I forgot my towel and tracked water all over the place."

Shayne rolled to his back, consequently giving Matt full access to his cock. "You really pissed me off when you got the sheets wet." He touched Matt's shoulders. "Sort of like now, with your hair."

Matt slipped his hand inside Shayne's boxers and he sighed. "I made it up to you though, didn't I? I'll make it up to you again, right now."

Shayne closed his eyes and shut his mind off. For the moment, it didn't matter that Matt was with an escaped fugitive on the run. It didn't matter that he was risking his job and all that went with it—including his freedom—to help Matt out. All that mattered was Matt being home.

He pushed Matt's hand away from his cock and sat up. Without giving reason to Matt for his notions, he shucked his boxers and turned towards him, kissing him for all he was worth. He wanted to take things slow but it wasn't happening. Shayne gripped Matt's hand in his own and began stroking his cock.

"I promise next time will be better." Shayne pressed his face into Matt's neck and breathed in the familiar scent of his body wash. "Oh, god, I—" He didn't finish the statement before his body erupted in pleasure, warm sticky fluid jetting out to cover their hands.

Matt gently pushed his lover back and threw the covers to the end of the bed. Without any words between them, he took Shayne's cock into his mouth. God, it felt good to be surrounded by something other than his own fist. He lay there while Matt licked then sucked his dick like it was the best treat on earth.

"I've missed you," Matt said replacing his mouth with his hand. His thumb caressed the tip of his cockhead before slipping to the sensitive spot a little lower.

Shayne pulled at his shoulders until their mouths met. He teased Matt's lower lip with his tongue before slipping inside to taste the man—his man. Matt couldn't possibly know the effect he had on Shayne's heart when he said those words. It was beyond wild lust. When Matt said "I love you", it was heartfelt and he meant it with all of his soul. And Shayne knew the only person he'd ever admitted saying those words to was him.

“Condoms and lube are in the nightstand.” Shayne fisted his hands in his lover’s hair.
“Please hurry.”

Matt reached for the light and flipped it on before opening the drawer. Shayne blinked a couple times, getting used to the brightness and watched while Matt quickly covered himself with both the condom and lube. Shayne sucked in a breath. God, he was big. Bigger than he remembered, and longer too. What the hell did they do to him in jail? Pump him up on those male drugs that advertise bigger penises? Shayne licked his lips. Whatever it was, he was happy with the outcome.

“Roll over.”

Shayne did, his excitement growing as he got into his favourite position. Matt slid his finger between Shayne’s cheeks and pressed against his hole. Two years was a long time to go without sex, and honestly, it was the last thing that seemed to cross Shayne’s mind lately. Matt pulled away and flipped the top of the lube bottle. Next, Shayne felt a dollop sliding down his crack ever so slowly.

“God,” Shayne hung his head down, panting for breath.

Matt chuckled behind him and started working his lover’s ass with his fingers. First one sank inside him and then two, gliding and stretching the small hole in preparation for Matt’s cock. Shayne closed his eyes and waited impatiently for his lover to take him.

“Are you ready or do you need me to work you some more?”

“Fuck me,” Shayne whimpered. “Just do it.”

That was all the encouragement Matt needed. Seconds later, his dick probed at Shayne’s ass. With a slow, steady motion, Matt pressed forward. He filled and stretched Shayne to the point he gasped for breath. Matt was bigger. Shayne didn’t know what the man did to increase his penis size but his cock was a lot bigger than he remembered before.

Matt hissed when he was completely imbedded inside Shayne, both of them gasping as he stayed completely still. “I’m going to come if I move.”

Shayne gripped his renewed erection and started pumping his fist. “Don’t hold back.”

And he didn’t. With his big hands clasping Shayne’s hips, Matt pulled out and plunged in, repeatedly. Each stroke drove him higher than the last until Shayne collapsed, unable to hold his weight. Matt’s cock hit just the right spot within him, and he groaned his pleasure,

spilling come all over the sheets beneath him. Matt continued to pump inside him until finally he let himself go.

Matt rolled next to him, his cheek resting against his pillow. Shayne didn't know what to say. Reality shoved itself at them, their peaceful, dreamy moment crashed. The last thing he wanted to do was talk about where they went from here.

"Stop thinking, Shayne." Matt's eyes were closed but his lips curled up in a smile. "I can practically hear the gears churning from over here."

Why did he always have to be the responsible one? "In case you've forgotten, you are a fugitive and the police are looking for you. That's something to think about."

Matt opened his eyes. "I didn't mean it that way."

Shayne stood and grabbed a couple of tissues to clean up. "I was stupid to let you touch me."

He turned away from Matt then snatched his boxers from the bed and pulled them on. The sheets were wet from both semen and sweat, ironically only on his side. Complicating their relationship more with sex was leading them to disaster. What was he supposed to do if they didn't clear his name? The thought had lingered in his mind from the get-go. Too much pointed towards Matt. What if there was nothing out there to prove he wasn't guilty?

When he returned, Matt sat up. He pulled the condom off with a pop and tossed it in the trash bin beside the bed.

"All I meant was thinking can wait until tomorrow. I'm sorry if I upset you yet again but please don't say you regret being with me. I don't want those kinds of memories invading my mind when I think back to this day."

Shayne felt like a heel. "I'm sorry. I just...I don't know what to do."

"Turn off the light and wrap your arms around me." Matt sank back into his spot and waited.

Shayne did as he said and rolled on his left side, facing him. "What are we going to do?"

Matt pressed a finger to his lips. "Shh. We'll talk about it in the morning. I've been dying to make my famous chocolate chip pancakes...and to see the sun rise."

Chapter Four

When Matt woke, the bed was empty. He sighed and knew exactly what Shayne was up to. His lover didn't sleep a wink because he couldn't shut off his mind. Matt glanced at the window. It wasn't even light yet. He threw the covers back and set out to find him, ignoring his nudity.

The living room was dark minus the bright glow of the laptop sitting on Shayne's lap. Matt came around the couch and arched an eyebrow. Folders were scattered around, littering the floor with papers and documents. Shayne sat in the middle of it, not even bothering to glance up at his company.

"You're working?"

"Yep." He lifted his coffee cup to his lips.

"Have you even been to sleep?" Matt sat on the couch next to him, lifting a few folders from the seat.

"Nope." He continued clicking away at his computer.

Matt sighed. "Come back to bed, Shayne. It's not even light outside."

"No. I found something interesting." Shayne finally looked up at him with a grin as wide as the state of New York itself spreading across his face. "I brought your case file with me. Did you know the witness that testified she saw you carrying out that bag?"

Matt ran his hands through his hair. His stomach growled in hunger. He needed food before he could get into this with Shayne. "I don't know. You brought my case file? Why?"

He nodded taking another drink of his coffee. "We're still working on Big E's enterprise. You, unfortunately, are a part of that. Plus, it's all I've been able to think about since they took you away."

Matt stared at him. He didn't think Shayne had seen them take him away. He didn't think that Shayne wanted to help him because he'd never come to see him. His heart swelled as he thought about Shayne's words. He wanted to ask him why he hadn't come to see him. He wanted to know why he let him sit in that cell for two years and think that the one person

he loved didn't give a rat's ass about him. But all that could wait. He needed to clear his name first, then everything else could be dealt with.

Matt's stomach growled. "I'm going to make some breakfast. You hungry?"

Shayne nodded. "Yeah. Breakfast would be great."

He stood, annoyed with himself, and retreated to the kitchen. He grabbed the apron that said "Kiss the cook" and draped it over his bare body. The room was a bit chilly, and Matt thought about asking Shayne to build a fire but his mind roamed to why his lover was sitting in the middle of the floor studying his folder.

Matt busied himself with making the batter for pancakes, then pulled out a skillet and turned on the heat. He didn't have to wait long before he poured the batter in the hot skillet and set the bowl to the side. He stared out the window above the sink, watching as the sun peeked out from behind the clouds lighting the dark sky. Matt stared in wonder, trying to recall the last time he'd seen something so beautiful. Immediately, the trip he and Shayne took on an Alaskan cruise line came to mind.

He smiled and returned his attention to the skillet. The only reason they'd gone on the stupid trip was because his parents couldn't go. Non-refundable tickets were a bitch. During the cruise was also the first time they had sex with each other. After one too many beers, a whole lot of kisses and a bed that felt like a cloud, they shared a night of passion together.

Matt set the pancake aside and poured more batter in the skillet. He wanted that kind of passion again. He wanted to see the love Shayne had for him in his eyes. He said the words, but with his previous actions, Matt wondered if he really meant it. How could you go two years without seeing the person you loved? If the roles were reversed and Shayne was in his shoes, he'd be fighting like a pit bull to get him out of that hell hole. But then again, they had different personalities. Shayne was the calm, rational one who thought everything through before he made a decision. Matt, on the other hand, was the impulsive one, dealing with the consequences later.

How the fuck did you get yourself into this mess?

Shayne came up behind him right as he lifted the second pancake from the skillet. "These look delicious."

Matt shrugged and poured more batter. "It's been a while since I made them. I hope they're good."

Shayne's lips brushed against Matt's arm. "I'm going to help you get out of this mess."

Matt glanced over his shoulder at him. "You believe I didn't do it?"

"I *know* you didn't do it." He broke off a piece of food and leaned against the cabinets.

"The girl that was on the witness stand doesn't even work for the police department."

Matt whirled around. "What?"

Shayne disappeared for a moment before bringing two pictures back. "Look real close. Tell me what the difference is."

Matt shifted the last pancake to his plate and clicked the stove off. After wiping his hands on the apron, he took the pictures and stared at them. Both of the women looked identical. The pretty brunette, the one who took the witness stand, was at a holiday office party in one, and by herself, on the witness stand in the other. At the office party, she wore a nice red satin dress that fell to her knees and held up a bundle of mistletoe over her head, pressing her lips together in a kissing like motion. In the other picture, her make-up was done in black, her brown hair straight and her expression dark. The playful gleam in her eyes in the party picture was gone and replaced with something mysterious. She also had a tattoo on her right forearm, something in colour, but Matt couldn't make out the design.

"One looks like the girl next door and the other looks like Queen of the Damned come to life." Matt looked up at Shayne, wondering what this had to do with clearing his name. "She also has a tattoo."

"Bingo." Shayne came to him and pointed out the dates. "They are practically around the same time frame, right? One was at your trial. The other a few months afterward. Well, I was curious as to what made her change her look so drastically, so I hacked into the police profile and found out she has a sister. A twin sister."

Matt's eyes widened. "What are you saying?"

"Well, I thought it was a bit ironic. The prosecution pulled this girl out of thin air and questioned her on the stand. So I ran a background check on her. Looks like 'ol sis has a few priors that involve drug trafficking and possession of various substances, including heroin."

Matt leaned against the counter, needing the support. "Go on."

"Well, I haven't proven she had anything to do with Big E yet, but I'm working on it. She could be the key to solving both cases and setting you free."

Matt stared at the two photos. "How? Why? What made you connect the two pictures?"

Shayne poured coffee in a fresh mug. "Well, I knew it had to be someone on the inside. You brought up the point that you had access to everyone in the narcotics department badge numbers so what made dispatch any different? So I started investigating her. I found some photos in my briefcase that Officer Ritchie gave me from the company Christmas dinner and sure enough she was at the party. I compared the photo of her in the red dress to the one on the witness stand and that's when I saw the tattoo. I was curious because of the day and night change in her. I mean, I know it's a trial and you wouldn't normally be all peppy but there was something about her eyes that made me think we weren't dealing with the same person. Then the proof started to fall into my lap. The holiday picture was after the trial. She couldn't possibly have gotten rid of that kind of tattoo that fast."

Matt's knees felt too weak to hold him up. He stumbled to the dining table and sat in one of the matching chairs. Could this really be the break he needed? Was it as simple as this? He leaned forward and cradled his face in his hands. He recalled the event as if it had happened yesterday.

The day had been long. Big E wasn't about to go down easy and Matt had worked his ass off trying to pin something illegal on his ass. The thing about it, though, when you were high in the mafia rank, ties to you didn't exist. Big E played it well, making sure he had an alibi for every single thing he did. He lived out his flashy lifestyle and never seemed to mind that they followed his sorry ass everywhere he went. The worse part yet, Shayne hadn't been able to let the case go. It had literally taken over their lives and Matt had worried that it would affect their relationship.

So he'd made plans to meet Shayne at the pub after he finished the narcotics count—something that certain officers were in charge of and that day had just happened to be his lucky day. It was sort of like jury duty. No one really wanted to count a bunch of drugs but they had to. He'd checked in with Sarah, the brunette at the front desk, and made sure no one had been down here messing around. She confirmed all was well.

He should have noticed her smile. The real Sarah always gave him a warm, friendly smile each time he spoke to her. The Sarah that night had grinned as if she knew what was about to happen.

Matt came back to the present when Shayne's warm hand reached out to touch him. "Tell me what you're thinking."

"I want to kill the motherfucker that framed me!" Matt jerked away from him but Shayne didn't pull back.

"No killing," Shayne said quietly. "We're trying to clear your name, not give them a reason to lock you up."

Matt stared at him in disbelief. "How can you be calm about this?"

Shayne knelt in front of him and pulled him into an embrace. "I fight with words not my fists, you barbarian. And I'm pretty sure lack of sleep and the caffeine high has something to do with it."

Matt let Shayne hold him as he rested his cheek against his shoulder. He wanted to believe everything would be fine. He wanted to think his life on the run was about to end and he could stay in Shayne's arms forever.

"Honey, why don't we go in the bedroom?" Shayne pulled back and gave him a gentle smile. "I need some sleep and I want you beside me."

Matt brushed a kiss against Shayne's lips. "I'm bringing my pancakes."

Shayne chuckled. "Deal."

Chapter Five

Shayne smiled and buried his face into the pillow as Matt gripped his cock. After a few tender strokes, he was hard as a bat. "Babe, I'm all for making out but my coffee high is running down."

Matt chuckled. "That's the only thing that's down. Relax, Shayne. Let me take care of you."

Shayne rolled to his back and let Matt strip off his boxers. His cock sprang free into Matt's awaiting hand. He watched with droopy eyes as Matt lowered his head to take the tip of Shayne's cock. God, the man's mouth was heaven. Slick, wet and warm, Matt sucked him fervently. He hollowed his cheeks and took Shayne's cock to the back of his throat.

"Oh, damn, that feels good."

Matt's hair tickled Shayne's legs as he bobbed his head. Matt swirled his tongue, licking the length of Shayne's shaft before pulling away. "Do you want a blowjob or do you want to fuck my ass?"

He kissed around the base of his cock before he nuzzled his balls. Shayne didn't know what he wanted. Would this be the last time the opportunity to fuck like bunnies was presented to them? Matt glanced up at him as he flicked his tongue across the head of Shayne's cock.

"Ride me."

Matt grinned and kissed his cock before pulling away. "Somehow, I knew you'd say that."

Shayne grabbed a condom and handed Matt the bottle of lube. After the protection was taken care of, Matt spread some lube along Shayne's cock, taking time to tease. "Hurry up, dickhead. I'm hard but I'm not made of stone."

Matt straddled Shayne's hips and slowly sank onto his cock. Shayne hissed in pleasure. Of all the times they'd fucked in the past, Shayne could count on one hand how many times he buried his dick in Matt's ass. It was always Matt sucking him off and then fucking Shayne's ass when he was through. Or they had a quickie where they sucked each other off.

Matt moved on top of him, and Shayne had to bite his lower lip to keep himself under control. God, he didn't know what got into Matt to suggest this since he never suggested for Shayne to have him, but he loved it.

"Matt, I'm—" He didn't finish his statement before hot bursts of pleasure shot throughout his body. Shayne closed his eyes and rode the wave, letting it come over him, consume him.

Sometime later, he opened his eyes and Matt was smiling down at him. "I love putting that look on your face."

He leaned forward to kiss Shayne. "What look?"

Matt moved off him and disposed of the condom. "The I-just-got-fucked-real-good look. I came just from watching you come."

Shayne chuckled, closing his eyes. "You're one cocky bastard."

"Yeah, but you still love me anyway, right?"

Shayne opened his eyes and saw Matt standing in the bathroom doorway. "You know I do."

With a smile Matt went into the bathroom and seconds later the shower came on. Shayne curled up on his side, hugging a pillow to his body. He was too tired to even cover himself and fell into a blissful sleep watching Matt soap his wet body.

* * * *

The buzzing sound of Shayne's cell phone woke him after he indulged in a few hours of sleep. Matt groaned next to him as Shayne pulled away from his lover's warm embrace and grabbed it from the nightstand. He rubbed his eyes and glanced at the caller ID.

Danvers.

"Shit." He sat up and warned Matt to stay quiet. "Lewis."

"Have you seen the news?" Danvers asked. "Vaughn broke out of jail."

"Oh, fuck." Shayne managed to sound about as surprised as he could muster. "Where is he?"

"Well, we were hoping he was with you. Or maybe planning to come that way?"

Shayne took a deep breath. If they suspected he was hiding with him, that meant the police were on their way to scope the place out. Which meant Matt needed to get out of here. Now. He rubbed his eyes and threw the covers back.

"I haven't spoken to Matt since the day they carted his sorry ass to the pin where he belongs. Why the hell would you assume he'd come to me for help?"

Danvers wasn't buying it. "Because you were his partner."

"Fuck." Shayne meant it this time as he stared into Matt's eyes. "You really think he'd come to me? After all the shit that's happened?"

"I don't know, man." Danvers' tone changed. "Just be on the look out and if he shows up, call my cell. Oh, I have something to show you about his case. I'll be there in a few minutes."

Danvers hung up and Shayne turned his attention to Matt. "We're in deep shit now. You've got to leave."

Matt stood and started to search for his clothes. "How bad is it?"

"You made the news. Now they'll go to everyone close to you. They've probably been stalking my house and your house." Shayne rubbed his brow. "Shit, Matt."

Matt came around the bed and pulled Shayne into his arms, kissing him. "You keep our secret, and I promise they won't find me."

Shayne knew better. Once Danvers suspected, he was a bull dog with a bone until he confirmed he was right. Having to force Matt away nearly crushed him. He'd only had one night with him. One fabulous night that made him long to make up the past two years of passion they could have had. Why hadn't he checked the file sooner? Why hadn't he gone to visit Matt? It had to have been lonely. He couldn't imagine Matt being scared of anything but Shayne knew if roles were reversed, he would be.

"I'm sorry."

Matt pulled away and forced Shayne to look at him. "Sorry for what?"

"Not being there for you. I should have at least gone to see you. I'd like to kick my own ass for not doing so."

"Leave the ass kicking to me, sweetie," Matt joked with a smile before he cupped Shayne's cheeks. "I love you, and I promise you everything will be fine."

Shayne nodded and watched as Matt gather up his clothing from the floor. "Wear something of mine. I don't think that damn jumpsuit would be the best attire for an escaped convict. Especially you." He moved to his bag and pulled out a pair of jeans and a large white T-shirt. They might be a little snug but it was better than the damn prison garb. Matt took the clothes and squeezed into them while Shayne watched.

"Where are you going?"

Matt grabbed his bag from the floor in front of the dresser. The ragged duffel belonged to his lover, as did the gun he retrieved from under the bed. After digging in the sack, he realised it was unnecessary to collect both. He tossed Shayne's two guns on the bed and checked the ammo in his lover's backup pistol before sliding it into his waistband at the small of his back.

"Don't worry about it. You still have the same cell number, right? I'll call you."

Shayne grabbed his wallet and pulled out a few hundred dollar bills. "Here. I'm going to go back to the city and see if I can reopen your case. I'm getting you a different lawyer and we'll work everything out. I'm going to clear your name, Matt. I promise you I will."

Matt pocketed the money reluctantly. "They're going to be watching you. Don't fuck up, okay?"

Shayne pursed his lips. "I won't. It's going to kill me not knowing where you are with no way to contact you."

Matt smiled at him. "Babe, it's a wonder that you don't have ulcers. I promise you I will keep in contact."

Shayne nodded. "I'll still worry though."

Matt's face sobered. He pulled the other man into his arms and held him tight. To Shayne, their time spent together was way too short. Once he cleared Matt's name, they were taking a vacation to some island where you had to have a boat to get there and there was absolutely no phones allowed.

Matt pulled away much too soon and Shayne tried his best not to cry like a baby. Everything would be okay because he would make it right again. He would find what they needed and provide it to the courts. He had to because if he didn't, the best thing that ever happened to him would be gone from his life...for good.

Chapter Six

Matt hated cold weather. Shayne had forced him to wear his clothes and take his leather jacket, but neither helped. The wind chill made the temperature seem like fifty below and he shivered because of it.

After hiking to the main road, he decided on a new look. A twenty-four-hour mom and pop barber shop sat in a dilapidated building with a cardboard sign in the window announcing it was “open”. He glanced around, looking for anything suspicious and entered the building.

“Hiya, sir. What can we do for you today?”

Matt smiled at the young woman who greeted him. “Shave and cut please.”

“Sure thing. It’s just me today, manning the shop. I hope that’s okay.”

“That’s fine.”

She smiled. “Great. Follow me.”

She led him back to a chair where she washed his hair, chatting nonsense about this ridiculous weather. He closed his eyes and let her massage his scalp, revelling in the slight comfort she gave him. Once she was through, she wrapped his hair up and pulled out the supplies to shave him. He listened and nodded occasionally as she changed the subject from the weather to her latest shopping adventures to her on-again, off-again boyfriend. He honestly didn’t care what she said as long as she didn’t question him, or recognise him from the TV.

“So, do you like football?” She swiped the straight blade against his cheek, smooth and sure, taking her time to do it right. “My boyfriend, Patrick, is planning on taking me to a Jets game for our fifth anniversary and I haven’t got one clue what those barbarians are doing out on the field. To me, it looks like they want an excuse to kill each other.”

He smiled. “Jets are pretty cool. Not something I’d choose for an anniversary celebration though.”

“Exactly my thinking. Though he didn’t like my idea as an alternative.” She wiped the blade on a towel. “I wanted to go ice skating.”

She tilted Matt's face the way she wanted it and began working on the other side to rid him of the stubble growing on his cheek.

"Why didn't he want to go ice skating?"

She snorted. "He's a thug. It's not cool to be seen holding your girlfriend's hand while you skate along a patch of ice. I think it's romantic, but he doesn't know anything about romance. His idea of a romantic dinner is going to Hooters for buffalo wings. Give him a beer, TV and a hot waitress and he's in heaven. Do you know those tight little orange shorts literally show their butt cracks?"

Matt chuckled when she wiped the blade on the cloth again. "I can't really say I've noticed since I'm gay."

She stopped and stared at him. "Really?"

He nodded. It wasn't like he was a circus freak, but with the way she stared at him, he felt like the Elephant Man.

"Well, good for you," she finally said. "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes."

"What's he like?"

Matt smiled. "He's the best damn thing that has ever happened to me."

Thankfully, she shut up her babbling after that. After giving her directions on how to cut his hair, she finished, pretty damn proud of herself. Her cheeks blushed when he caught her staring at him in the mirror, and Matt realised why she acted the way she did before when he told her he was gay. She liked him.

After paying for the cut and shave, he grabbed his jacket and left. He'd walked a few miles before he saw Danvers' car heading towards the cabin. His throat tightened when he thought about leaving Shayne again. Even if he had to live the rest of his life on the run, he couldn't go back to jail. He couldn't do it.

Matt found a motel close by that was a simple one-storey, eight-room establishment. It wasn't the best of places but it'd do. He paid for the room and thanked the little old man before leaving. Now all he could do was wait. His mind drifted back to the time spent in prison. It was a minimal security format where all the prisoners shared a dorm with bunk beds. He couldn't count how many death threats he'd received and thanked his lucky stars when they'd offered to transfer him upstate. It hadn't gotten any better though. He'd shared

a cell with one other person, a toilet and lovely concrete walls to look at, but fights had still broken out – mainly in the lunchroom – and he couldn't stand it. He hated being paranoid all the time, always on guard and never feeling safe. Even looking at someone the wrong way or for a bit too long could lead to the first punch.

Some of those people had reason to hate him – he'd put them there. But some just wanted to see who the top-dog was. And if matters couldn't get any worse, when a cop came to town, everyone on the inside knew. It had been a constant battle to keep up his badass reputation, a reputation that spoke loud and clear that he wasn't taking shit off anyone. The guards had taunted him, liked to abuse him when they could, only to make matters worse. But luckily, his quiet cell mate had barely known he existed.

He'd never been scared of anything more in his life. He'd taken out some of the meanest criminals around without thinking once that he risked his life to do it. But after two days of minimal security with a know-it-all prisoner trying to act like a badass, he'd known it wasn't the place for him. One wrong move could turn every guy in that room on him – or if for nothing else, just to have bragging rights that they'd kicked a cop's ass was enough motivation. And had the guards come in to his rescue? No. They'd placed bets outside the cells on who would win. He'd learnt his lesson really quick. *Consider it initiation.*

And he didn't deserve any of it.

Matt flipped on the TV and changed the channel to the news. From the way his picture was slapped across the screen, one would think he was some serial killer who was armed and dangerous. Thankfully, though, the picture they used was of him with long hair. He looked different now, a difference he hoped would buy him a little time before someone recognised him.

He changed the channel and settled on cartoons. The bed was beyond being comfortable. *When was the last time they updated this place?* Orange carpet covered the floor, but it was clean. Yellow and green paisley print curtains hung over the windows shielding most of the light. The furniture was old and looked like from what he pinned to be the seventies.

It's better than prison. The thought lingered in his mind as he settled back, relaxing within the confinements of the small room. *Anything is better than prison.*

Shayne packed his bags in haste after taking a quick shower. He was on a race against the clock. How long would it take before someone spotted Matt and turned him in? His cell phone rang and he glanced at the caller ID. Twenty people have called within a three-hour time frame to ask him about Matt. His parents, Matt's parents. Siblings. Friends. Co-workers.

He shoved Matt's folder inside his briefcase and did a three-hundred-sixty around the room to make sure he didn't forget anything. Matt's jumpsuit was packed in the trash and taken out back the very second the man himself left Shayne's sight. *God, where is he?*

Shayne forced his mind away from worrying about Matt and focused on the case. Plan A was to meet with a lawyer to discuss an appeal with the new evidence in hand. He needed more proof though. Concrete evidence was best and the only way he could get that was by talking to Sarah herself. Maybe if she disclosed information about her sister, he'd have another lead to go on.

A knock disrupted his thoughts, and Shayne crossed the room to answer the door. Danvers stood on the other side, toothpick hanging out of his mouth and sunglasses covering his eyes. Shayne stepped aside and let the other man in.

"I'm not a cop today, just so you know." Danvers took a few steps inside and glanced around. "If Matt's here, I want to see him."

Shayne moved to the kitchen. "I already told you, Matt's not here."

Danvers followed him. "Look, Shayne, he was my friend too. He needs our help because I know he's not guilty."

Shayne played it cool. "Oh, really? How do you know this? His case has been closed for two years."

Danvers gripped the back of the dining room chair and cast his eyes downward. "Yeah, but I never gave up. He helped me more times than I can count. You weren't there when we found the dope. It looked staged. Besides, Matt's not stupid. If he did do something like this, he wouldn't be dumb enough to take the evidence back to his house." He met Shayne's eyes. "Come on, Shayne. He was your partner. Surely you don't believe he could do something like this, do you?"

Shayne's suspicions went on red-alert. Not that Danvers was a bad guy, but until he found the leak in the department, no one needed to know anything. Sarah—or whatever her

name was — was just one person. Getting through the department without knowing the ropes was highly unlikely.

“Guilty until proven innocent.” Shayne poured himself a glass of iced tea. “Too much shit was against him. Not to mention he didn’t tell me about his supposed dealings with Big E. What kind of partner does that?”

Danvers sighed. “I don’t know. That’s a fuck-up on his part, but it doesn’t make him guilty.”

Shayne shrugged, feigning indifference. “You have your opinion. I have mine.”

Danvers sat in the chair before him and folded his hands. “I know this sounds silly, but I thought you two were lovers.” Shayne didn’t bother hiding his shocked reaction. “I mean you actually make a cute couple. I’m not gay or anything, but you guys had a different kind of relationship together than you did with any other members of the squad.”

Shayne hid behind his glass, stunned speechless. Relationships within departments were frowned upon, therefore no one knew about him and Matt. They even went so far as to concoct a fake reason for why he was moving in with Shayne.

“I mean I’m not saying you’re a fruitcake, it’s just...I don’t know.” Danvers finally met Shayne’s eyes. “I thought you’d care about him a little more than you’re acting.”

Shayne ignored the comment about being a fruitcake and sat at the table across from him. “Okay. So you’re on Matt’s side?”

Danvers nodded. “He helped too many people. It’s not his style for something like this to go down the way it did. You know as well as I do criminals have signature moves. This reeks of Big E, not Matt.”

“So what do you believe happened?”

He gave a loud sigh. “I don’t know. It’s definitely a set up, but I don’t know how they got someone on the inside. I’ve been watching people to see if I discovered anything suspicious and kept a log about my findings, including dates if you’re interested.”

Shayne tried to hide his excitement. “Where’s it at?”

“My car. I’ll be right back.”

As Danvers left, Shayne couldn’t help wondering if he could trust the man. He definitely was more aware of his surroundings than most and questioned everything. Plus, his little log might have information about Sarah and her evil twin.

When he came back, he set the notebook on the table. "I started a few weeks after Matt was arrested."

Shayne pulled the notebook to him and started flipping through the pages, looking for anything with Sarah's name. He hadn't flipped two pages before he found the first two entries.

12:01 Monday, Jan 18: Sarah meets with twin sister for lunch at La Perrot.

12:00 Thursday, Jan 21: Sarah meets with twin sister for lunch at La Perrot.

He pointed to the entry. "Why is this suspicious?"

Danvers read it and looked up at Shayne. "Sarah always brings her lunch. I questioned her about it one time and she said it's because she can't stand to eat fast food. I wrote it down and noticed a pattern in her behaviour. Even though she said that, she always met her sister at the restaurant across the street. She didn't eat anything but traded conversation with her twin. I didn't even know she had a twin."

Shayne swallowed and flipped through the pages, reading every entry about Sarah. Mondays and Thursdays were when they met up. Every Monday and Thursday for three months straight, they met at the restaurant on Sarah's lunch break. *Why Monday and Thursdays?* The said event that implicated Matt happened on a Friday.

"Who do you think framed Matt?" Shayne asked.

"Well, I'm suspicious of Sarah. No one said anything when he was arrested and she only came forward the day of the trial weeks later as a surprise witness. It doesn't add up."

Shayne flipped through the pages. "Do you think she's connected to Big E?"

He shrugged. "You're not going to tell Lou I'm doing this, are you? I'm not sure what the consequences of helping an escaped convict is. I'm not hiding Matt in any way, but I do want to help clear his name."

"I suspected Sarah too," he admitted. He hesitated. Telling Danvers too much information could lead to fucking up everything. "Can I trust you?"

He nodded. "I'm not a dirty cop if that's what you're thinking. I only want to do what's right. Keeping Matt from his freedom is wrong."

Shayne glanced at the journal. "I brought his file up here with me and I found something."

He moved to get it from his briefcase and carried it back to the table. Pulling out the three pictures, he watched Danvers' eyes grow wide. For a third-year cop recently thrust into the world of narcotics, he wasn't half bad. He did what you asked, which was key to staying on Lou's good side. And above all, Shayne really believed all he wanted was to make things right. To get justice for those who deserve it and protect the innocent from that which they did not do.

"Sarah's twin sister was on the witness stand posing as Sarah?" He shook his head in disbelief. "How? What? Why?"

Shayne rubbed his hand across his face. "I'm still trying to find that part out. Since Sarah's been meeting with the unidentified twin, I'm assuming she's the leak. Either she hooked her sister up by stealing the dope and covering her tracks or she switched places with her sister and the twin impersonated Sarah while Matt counted the drugs. I'm not sure which, but the twin was on the witness stand posing as her sister."

"That's a pretty serious offence."

Shayne nodded. "And hopefully it will give us something to go on."

Danvers stared at the photos. "Won't the pictures clear his name?"

Shayne sighed. "All they prove is that she lied in court. Two years and she's out, maybe even before that. We can't pin them at the scene just yet, but hopefully with a little digging, we will soon."

"What do we look for?" Danvers turned the page in his notebook and grabbed a pen from his pocket, ready to take notes.

"Any criminal activity. Speculation isn't enough. We need something concrete." Shayne stood and carried his glass to the sink. "I'm going back to the city, and hopefully, together, we can find something to connect her with the drugs. I did a background check on the sister and she came up with priors for drug trafficking and possession of illegal substances — including heroin."

Danvers' eyes lit up. "Then she'll be buying or selling."

Shayne smiled. For a young guy, Danvers was okay. He wasn't exactly a rookie, but he was still fresh. Shayne only hoped he was good enough to back him up because this war was about to get ugly.

Chapter Seven

Sirens roused Matt from a deep sleep. He jerked up and glanced around before finally realising they were on TV. Sweat dripped from his brow and he swiped it with the back of his hand. He wasn't cut out for the criminal lifestyle.

It'd been twelve hours since he left Shayne's cabin. After a boring day of watching nothing but cartoons and then primetime movies, he wanted to hear Shayne's voice. He picked up the phone and dialled his cell number waiting while it rang.

"Lewis."

"Hey." He shifted the phone as he relaxed against the pillows, getting comfortable. "You still not sleeping?"

Shayne snorted. "You know me. I'm back in the city now, so if you need a place to stay, the cabin is free. There's food and stuff there." Matt closed his eyes and listened to Shayne talk. "Danvers stopped by. It seems he's your new best friend. He's helping me with your case."

Matt's eyes popped open. "Danvers knows about me?"

"No. Not really. He collected his own evidence against Sarah. It seems she's been meeting with her twin for quite some time now and it's only on Mondays and Thursdays."

"Of course it is. She's giving her the information for the next drug count which is on Fridays." Matt fumed. "How could I have been so stupid? I knew something wasn't right."

"Calm down. So hypothetically speaking here, Sarah meets with her sister on Thursday and gives her the numbers—for what? What does the twin need with the badge numbers?"

Matt sighed. "I think she meets with her on Thursday, gives her the info and her ID badge and trades places with her on Friday. Then they meet again on Monday to trade back. I'll bet you anything Sarah doesn't enter the building using her badge on Mondays or if she does, it's the twin and not her."

Shayne's side of the line grew quiet and then he said, "Fuck it all to hell. It makes sense."

"Yeah. Sarah didn't give me her normal happy smile when I walked in that Friday. She gave me a sardonic grin instead. It was like she knew what was about to happen and mocked me because of my stupidity."

Matt couldn't get that stupid grin out of his head. The way her eyes darkened and her lips curled slightly. He thought it was strange at the time since Sarah was normally peppy and happy but didn't think anymore of it. Everyone had their bad days and that Friday could have been hers.

Boy, was I wrong.

"We'll get to the bottom of it, Matt. I'm not in narcotics anymore but Danvers is, and the boy watches everything like a hawk. Maybe we can set them up on the next drug count."

Matt sighed. He hated being helpless. He couldn't defend himself. He couldn't prove himself innocent. He couldn't do anything but lay low and not get caught. He wanted to confront them. Big E had to be in on it since Matt had done nothing to piss Sarah or her twin off. But he couldn't make the connection. He'd thought about it for two years and the slimy mobster hid his tracks well. How were the Bobbsy twins connected to the most notorious drug lord?

"Did you do a background on the girls?"

"Yeah," Shayne replied. "Sarah doesn't even have a parking ticket and the twin has priors for drug trafficking and possession."

"That's it then. The twin either buys or deals for Big E. Big E conned her into using the sister as a payback for me being on his ass all these months. I wouldn't put it past him to pick me out of the crowd specifically."

"Why didn't he pin me too? I was involved just as much in the case as you were."

Matt cringed. "Uh, no. Not really."

"What are you talking about?"

"Well..." Matt stood and crossed the room to the window, peeking out of the curtains with the phone at hand. "I had those calls on my phone that the prosecution brought before the court. I'd been watching him and we had a little confrontation. I might have punched his right hand man, broke his nose."

Shayne didn't say anything and Matt knew he was pissed. Unlike Matt, who went off on a rampage when he was mad, Shayne got quiet. Really quiet. Matt sighed and sat back on the

bed, rubbing his eyes with his fingers. He needed to get back to the city. He couldn't stand being caged up anymore. One day of nothing but television and he was ready to kick in the set. He had to get out of here.

"Look, I know you're pissed but I had a lead and had to go with it. I almost caught a drug deal and made the arrest, but the little fucker wanted to pick a fight. So don't be mad at me, okay?" Shayne still didn't say anything and Matt wondered if he'd hung up. "Shayne, say something."

"What do you want me to say? You can obviously handle the case, your life, without me. What's left for me to say?"

Matt fell back against the bed. "Shayne, don't do this. You know I need you. Not only for the case, but I need you in my life. Just watch your back, okay?"

"Fine."

Fine. Matt stared at the ceiling, taking in the cracks and water stains. He needed to get back to the city. Staying holed up in a motel wasn't an option anymore.

"I'm coming back to the city."

Shayne shuffled some papers on his side of the line. "Sure. Okay. Would you like for me to call the police and have them waiting for you at your house? Oh, wait, you already have a crew watching your house."

"So? I'll come to your house."

"Matt, you can't. Staying at my cabin is one thing. Staying at my home is another. I can still get fired for helping you, not to mention going to jail for hiding a felon."

"I'm caged up, Shayne. Staying here is like being in a glorified cell."

"What are you planning on doing while staying at my house?"

"Fuck your brains out?"

"Real funny. Sorry, I'm not around to satisfy your needs."

Matt smiled, knowing Shayne was beyond joking mood. "So does that mean you don't want to have phone sex?"

"Grow up, Matt." Shayne hung up the phone and Matt sighed.

"I'll take that as a no." He replaced the receiver back in the cradle and reclined on the bed. Shayne was really mad and Matt knew it would take some serious sucking up to get him past it. "There's always tomorrow."

* * * *

Shayne sat on the couch and stared at his phone. *Why did he always do this?* Shayne rubbed his eyes and groaned. There was no doubt in his mind Matt would be on his doorstep tomorrow. There was no doubt in his mind that he'd try figuring the case out himself. It was possibly one of the worst things about his personality that simply drove Shayne insane. Matt never thought about consequences. He'd always had someone in his life to bail him out or used his charm to get away with murder. Of course it also helped he had a badge to go along with that charm.

Shayne shifted his laptop to the coffee table and decided to go to bed. With his much-needed vacation over, he might as well catch up on his beauty sleep. For the first several months after Matt was arrested, Shayne had barely slept at all. He'd stayed in shock of the verdict, the thought that his partner and best friend could betray him like that making him physically sick. The more he'd thought about it the more he'd convinced himself he had trusted the wrong person and was let down because of it.

But then Matt came back into his life and everything went back to the way it was before he'd been found guilty. Shayne couldn't look into Matt's eyes and believe wholeheartedly that he stole those drugs, no matter what the jury said. It was the thing that baffled him the most. His mind told him to believe what was laid out before him, but his heart and instinct told him the truth. Matt wasn't guilty, and the more they dug into his case, the more evidence they'd have to prove it.

Shayne stripped his clothes off and slid between the cool sheets, boxer clad. He missed Matt's companionship most of all. The way he grumbled in the morning when the alarm clock went off because he was *so* not a morning person. Shayne missed sharing ideas with him about everything from what colour he should paint the walls in the kitchen to who he thought was guilty in their current case. And he missed the sex. He didn't want to admit it but the physical part of their relationship was the highlight in his day.

He signed in the dark and rolled to the centre of the bed. A little part of him wanted Matt to come to his house and embark in a quickie before they started their day. A little part of him wanted Matt now, if for nothing else than to feel his arms around him. It was ironic how

true 'you don't know what you've got till it's gone' was. He'd taken Matt for granted and felt like scum because of it.

Unable to sleep, Shayne flipped open his phone and dialled the last number that called his cell phone. It rang three times and Matt finally answered.

"You make me furious, you know that!" Shayne didn't even give him time to respond. "You piss me off to no end and then I'm lying here in bed wanting you. What the fuck is up with that?"

Matt chuckled. "We're demented."

"You got that right. I'm totally fucking insane without you, because right now – risking all that I have, all that I've worked my ass off to get – I want you to come home. I want you here in my bed fucking me. I want you here giving me your smart-assed comments along with your brilliant insight on this shit. You are the reason I am an insomniac, because regardless of everything, I want you here with me right now and I can't sleep because you're not." Shayne flipped on the bedside lamp and waited for Matt's response.

"Is that your commitment vows to me?" Matt chuckled and continued. "Honey, I'm coming home tomorrow. Is your dick hard right now?"

Shayne grinned and propped himself up with the pillows. "You seriously are one horny bastard."

"Yeah, I am. It's that damn speech you gave me about you lying in bed wanting me right now. You know better than to play with fire, Shayne." Matt was silent for a moment before he continued. "Okay. Now answer my question. Are you hard for me right now?"

Shayne glanced down at his crotch. His cock bulged within the confinements of his boxers. "You know I am."

Matt snorted. "And you talk about me. What do you want me to do to you?"

Shayne closed his eyes. "Nothing. I want to do stuff to you."

Matt's side grew quiet again before he said, "Like what?"

Getting in the mood, Shayne reached down and started to slowly stroke his cock. "I want to kiss you first. Start out with a slow, teasing kiss that drives you crazy. It's been a while since I've had your lips on mine and I miss the way you taste."

"And then what?" Matt questioned.

"I start moving down your body, kissing your neck while rolling your nipples between my fingers. You love it when I play with your nipples, don't you, Matt? Maybe I'd kiss them too, taste them and tease them with my tongue until you're begging to come. Is your cock hard now, babe?"

"Damn straight. I want your mouth sucking me."

Shayne smiled, picturing it in his head. "Okay, when you've had enough torture, I'd move down your body and lick the single drop of pre-come from the tip of your big dick. God, you make me so hot. The way your cock fills my mouth, stretches it wide until you bump the back of my throat—I can't get enough. I've been aching to taste you, to drink up your come and revel in the pleasure I give you."

Matt's breathing became laboured. "So suck me, dammit. I need that hot, wet mouth accepting every thrust I make."

"Patience, sweetheart. Now where was I?" Shayne closed his eyes and swallowed at the vision he created in his head. "I want your hands cuffed above your head while I drive you out of your mind. You try thrusting into my mouth, but the more movement you make, the more I withdraw. You beg me to penetrate you, but I deny. You taste too good to stop with your hot come coating my tongue. Your balls are heavy and tight, and I rub my thumb lightly across them. You curse and scream, writhing like a man in pain. I love building up that tension. I love getting you so hot you beg repeatedly for me to fuck you. Any way. Every way. And I want that too. I want to feel your ass sucking my cock inside, the tight heat squeezing my dick as if you're telling me you don't want me to go."

Matt groaned in his ear, and Shayne paused in the dialogue, listening as his lover climaxed. He imagined the moment, Matt covering the tip of his cock to catch his jets of come. The warm, sticky fluid was enough to fill his lover's hand and Shayne licked his lips. Why hadn't he sucked Matt before now?

"You okay?" Shayne asked after several moments of silence.

"Hell yeah." Matt's voice was deeper. "Are we going to live out that fantasy when I arrive?"

If only. "Sure. And we'll think of new ones too."

Matt chuckled. "You can't possibly know how much I love you."

Shayne smiled to the empty room. "I have some idea." He fisted his cock harder, pushing himself closer to the edge of bliss. "I'm going to jump your bones though when you walk in that door."

"Looking forward to it, baby." He paused a moment. "I'm actually planning on it because we will live out that fantasy, and you, Mr. Hot Shot Detective, will be the one handcuffed to the bed, held completely at my mercy."

Shayne pictured it in his mind. Matt's large body poised over him, clicking the handcuffs in place. Shayne knew his lover would tease, depriving him of the climax he desperately wanted. Then he'd take him, sinking slowing inside, making him feel every inch of penetration. The image alone pushed him over. Hot fluid filled his hand as he cupped it over his cock. Tomorrow couldn't come fast enough. Shayne swallowed hard once he caught his breath. *What have I gotten myself into?*

Chapter Eight

At eight o'clock, bright and early Sunday morning, Matt found himself entering Shayne's house through the backdoor. He'd been careful while coming home, hitchhiking with truckers who spent a lot of time on the road and probably didn't have much chance to see the TV. A taxi drove him within five blocks of Shayne's house and he walked the rest of the way. He really needed a shower from the morning workout he accumulated. But after searching for the hide-a-key, he locked the back door and crept towards the master bedroom.

He entered the large room and immediately stopped to admire his lover's sleeping frame. Curled on his side, Shayne moaned and grunted in his sleep. He whimpered slightly, gasping for breath as he rolled to his back. Matt smiled when he saw the rock hard cock pushing against his cotton boxers. His lover was in the middle of one hell of a wet dream.

Matt went to him, careful not to wake him as he slid Shayne's cock through the fly opening in the front of his underwear. Smiling, he rubbed the pre-come drop with his finger before leaning down to taste it. Shayne writhed, still half-asleep, as Matt's mouth hollowed and took his man's cock deep. It wouldn't be much longer he knew. Shayne was there – all he needed was the little extra push.

Matt pulled back, scraping his teeth lightly along the length of Shayne's shaft. Shayne's hips thrust upward as a cry left his lips and Matt drank every bit of the hot fluid spurting into his mouth. He stroked Shayne gently, coaxing every last bit out before he swirled his tongue around the head, gently flicking the slit at the top.

He let him go and tucked him back in his boxers before wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Shayne's lazy smile informed Matt his lover was awake. He couldn't hold back any longer and kissed Shayne's lips. Matt had never been much of a morning person but this morning, having his lover like this, was one hell of a start to the day.

Shayne slid his tongue between Matt's lips, trying to dominate the kiss. It didn't work. Matt leaned over him with a hand on each side of his face as he took his lover's mouth with his own.

"You are so much better than a pitiful wet dream." Shayne pulled back and finally opened his eyes. "Are you really here?"

Matt nodded. "Alive and in the flesh." He bent forward and nipped at Shayne's lower lip.

"You cut your hair."

"You like it?" He kissed him one last time before pulling completely away. "The long hair started to get on my nerves. Plus it gets in the way during oral sex."

Shayne sat up and studied him. "I don't know. The long hair was growing on me. It gave you a ruggedness that made you look extremely sexy. Now you're back to being the pretty boy with the handsome face and delicious body."

Matt tugged off the white T-shirt Shayne gave him to wear. "I'm not the pretty boy. That's all you, babe."

Shayne shrugged. "Whatever you say. You're hot either way."

Matt smirked as he undid the zipper on the too-tight jeans and shucked them. His dick sprang free and he groaned at the relief. The jeans were confining to begin with and adding a hard-on to the mix didn't help matters any. "Please tell me you still have some of my clothes here."

"What, you're not getting in bed with me?"

Matt's chest tightened at the pleading look in Shayne's eyes. How could one person affect another so much? "I will after I shower. I walked a lot to get here and I'm sweaty and I stink. I promise it'll only take a second."

Shayne's eyes lowered to Matt's crotch. "Hurry."

Matt rushed to the bathroom and flipped the shower on. After a few seconds, the water heated enough for him to step beneath the spray and he immediately started to wash his hair and his body. God, it felt good using familiar soap, in a familiar shower, in a place he called home. He was tired of the stupid bar soap that the prison had to use—that you shared with several others who came before you. Even when he bathed at the cabin, he used the Irish Spring bar that Shayne packed.

Matt lifted the body wash and squeezed a sizable dot in his hand before putting the bottle back on the shelf inside the shower. Axe body wash was a damn good brand and way better than the bar soap he'd been forced to use. It amazed him how much of the small things

in life he missed. After rinsing his body, he turned the water off and stepped out, grabbing a towel hanging on the rack to the left of the shower.

He dabbed at his arms, chest and legs before wrapping it around his waist and heading out into the bedroom. Shayne laid on his stomach, still in his boxers, as he watched a movie on TV. Matt crawled over his body to the other side of the large bed and kissed Shayne's cheek.

"I've made a decision," Shayne said. "We're not going to do any work today. It's a lazy Sunday that we're going to spend together doing practically whatever we want within the confinements of the house."

Matt chuckled. "Fine with me."

The phone rang interrupting their conversation. Shayne groaned and pushed up from the mattress to answer the damn thing. "Hello?"

"Hi, honey," Georgia Lewis said. "How are you doing?"

Shayne rolled his eyes at Matt, who mouthed, "Who is it?"

"I'm fine, Mother. I'd be a lot better if Matt was safe and cleared of all the charges he didn't commit, but aside from that, I'm fine."

Georgia Lewis hated the idea of her son being gay. Shayne still felt bitterness towards her every time she called, knowing he'd get an earful of how it wasn't right to be 'having relations' with men. Half the time, he toned her out.

"The news said it was a fairly easy stunt he pulled, escaping and all. Do you know where he is?"

Shayne snorted. "Why would I know where he was? Our relationship didn't exactly end on the best of terms. If I had to guess he's probably out of the country by now, flying to Switzerland to live a life of bliss without me."

His mother grew quiet and Shayne met Matt's eyes. Maybe he was being too rude. His mother had good intentions but was highly misinformed. She lived by old standards, completely closing her mind to people and ideas that didn't follow what society deemed to be right. His being gay, in her mind, did *not* fit.

"I'm sorry for that, Shayne. I really am," she finally said.

Shayne switched the phone to the other ear. "Yeah. Me too."

"You really loved him, didn't you? I could see it in your eyes when you looked at him. I can hear it in your voice when you talk about him. You loved that man."

Shayne swallowed, not knowing what to say. "Yeah, Mom. I love him with all that I am."

"I just don't know how to deal with it, Shayne. You grew up liking girls. How can you come to me out of the blue one day and say you like men?"

It was the same old song blaring with a slightly different tune. "I'm done discussing that with you, Mom. It's been over seven years since you've known. If you haven't accepted the fact that I'm gay by now, you never will. I've accepted that you never will and am done speaking about it."

"I don't mean to offend you. I just... It's hard picturing you and Matt as a couple. That's what I mean."

Shayne leaned forward with his feet on the ground and rested his face in the palm of his hand. "Matt and I aren't a couple anymore."

"If he's your true love, he'll come back to you. I believe that with all my heart." Georgia Lewis spoke as if she had experience. "For your sake and happiness, I hope that's true for you. I hope that everything will work out so you two can be together, if that's what you really want."

Shayne pulled the phone away and stared at it a moment before putting it back to his ear. "Are you serious?"

"Why wouldn't I be? I miss having my son around, regardless of who he shares his life with. If you can get over my judgments in the past, I want to be in your life again. I want you to attend Christmas dinners like you used to. I want to see you more, Shayne. Life's too short for me not to."

"Thanks, Mom. I appreciate what you said but I'll have to think about it."

Matt moved beside him and rested a hand against Shayne's thigh. Was he really hearing this right? His mother wanted him to come to Christmas dinners after she made a big scene at the last one he attended when he brought his 'surprise' boyfriend to meet the family. He could still hear the bickering and the utter disgust his family had for him and Matt and their relationship. They were the exact opposite of Matt's family who loved and accepted them both for who and what they were. And now Georgia Lewis was turning her old fashioned ways around?

“All I ask is that you try to forgive us. Not just me but everyone in the family. We truly didn’t mean to hurt you or Matt. I’m sorry that we did.”

They chatted a bit more and then Shayne hung up the phone, his emotions jumbled into a tiny knot.

“You okay?” Matt asked, sliding his hand down Shayne’s back in a light caress.

“Yeah.” Shayne pushed his thoughts about the conversation aside and gave Matt what he hoped was a convincing smile. “How about you make us some breakfast while I take a shower? I’ll meet you in the living room when I’m done and we can start on our lazy Sunday.”

He didn’t wait for a response. He locked himself in the bathroom, and under the cover of the shower, he dealt with his pent up emotions.

Chapter Nine

Their lazy Sunday lasted until noon. Shayne fell asleep after a heady round of love making and Matt decided to look at the stuff he had laid out in the living room. The pictures were to the right of his computer along with a notebook and some printouts about the two women. It seemed the twin's name was Lindsay. Written in the notebook was Shayne's script. *How is she linked to Big E?*

Matt continued to read Shayne's notes. *Maybe she was his mistress? What could she possibly have to gain from framing Matt?* He read the background information on the twin and decided Big E covered his tracks by using someone with inside connections. It was typical Big E conduct. Matt played out the scenario in his mind. Lindsay probably needed the drugs so badly she promised to do anything he asked. *But why would Sarah help her sister?* Matt thought about his brother Scott, and wondered if the roles were different if he'd do the same for his brother? Of course he had means of helping a drug addict – which Scott was not – but that was beside the point. Would he risk his job, his life, and future to help his brother in the same way Sarah did for Lindsay?

Shayne came into the living room, disrupting his thoughts. "What are you doing?"

"Looking over what you've got." He flipped through some papers, reading up about what Shayne printed on the girls. "Would you risk your badge for a sibling?"

Shayne sat beside him on the couch, propping his feet up. "Since I don't have a sibling, my assessment wouldn't be fair, but technically I'm risking my badge for lover. Does that count?"

"What if they were on drugs?" Matt stared at the pictures of the sisters. "I can't figure out what Lindsay said to Sarah to make her comply with the scam. Did she say her dealer threatened her life? Did she blackmail her? What's in it for Sarah?"

"I thought we weren't going to work today."

Matt glanced over at Shayne. Ever since his conversation with his mother, he'd been acting different. "Shayne, I would like nothing more than to spend a week in the bedroom with you, but I don't know how much time I have."

Shayne scoffed and moved his feet. "Okay. What's in it for Sarah? Portion of profits?"

"Doubt it. Big E doesn't share money with anyone."

"No. I mean drugs."

Matt stared at the picture of Sarah. Having been around dope heads for years, he could spot a heroin addict a mile away. This picture didn't show 'heroin' flashing like a bright neon light.

"She doesn't look like an addict."

"Maybe not. But she could be selling. Stealing from Big E to make her own fair share of dough. It makes sense because Big E's reputation on the streets is having the cleanest, purest shit out there. Maybe she thought since it was so great she'd sell it for more and create a cushy life for herself."

Matt nodded. "Understandable. But how are we going to clear my name?"

"Danvers and I are working together this week. He's got our old job working on the Big E enterprise. It's his turn to count on Friday and I'm going to stake out the place to see if anything happens. We're hoping to catch them in the act."

Matt's hope grew. Could they really be wrapping this up? "What about meeting with the lawyers? Did you find one that will take a look at my case?"

"Yep, also happening Monday." Shayne rubbed a hand over his face. "Right now all we can do is wait, Matt."

Matt nodded and closed the computer. It was after lunchtime and his stomach growled to remind him of its abandonment. "I hate waiting."

"I know." Shayne reached for Matt's hand and linked their fingers. "Stop thinking about it. We're good for today. Just live it up for now."

Matt leaned over to kiss Shayne's cheek. "After lunch, we're going to work on that new fantasy we talked about last night."

"Cop and convict?"

"You read my mind, lover. You read my dirty, very graphic mind." Matt gave Shayne a thorough kiss before leaving to make lunch. "Now the only question I have is do we have any whipped cream?"

* * * *

Shayne lay helpless on the bed, handcuffed to the headboard while Matt squirted cold whipped cream along his chest and abdomen with an evil grin. When, if ever, was the last time they had this much fun together? Maybe it was the fear of Matt getting caught that made them closer, more appreciative of each other. They never knew if this time they had sex would be the last time.

Matt tossed the bottle to the side and spread Shayne's legs wider to make room for his body. Never in a million years had Shayne thought he'd be in this position—completely at the mercy of someone else both physically and sexually. It was like being in college again when hormones ran high and one round of sex wasn't enough. They were both thirty-two years old and only paused in their sex escapades for food like randy teenagers.

He kissed Shayne's stomach, licking lightly at the whipped cream. Each smooth swipe teased. Shayne willed his body to relax as Matt's tongue played, swirling in his navel. He finally looked up. Matt gripped Shayne's hard cock and started a light stroke. Shayne's breaths came in pants.

"I could do this all day you know." Matt leaned over Shayne with his hand still gripping his cock and flicked his tongue against Shayne's nipple. "You taste too good to quit."

Shayne writhed. "You always get to have the fun. I want to taste you, suck you."

Matt ignored him. He continued to pump his hand, his mouth kissing and licking anywhere, everywhere. Shayne could do nothing but trust Matt and allow him to give the release he needed. While one hand fisted Shayne's cock, two of Matt's fingers slid into his mouth then between his lover's legs finding his bottom hole with ease. Matt grinned with mischievousness and bent to lick at the topping still covering Shayne's chest while he pressed inside. Shayne didn't bother holding back any longer. He probably couldn't even if he wanted to.

His orgasm came in a fast rush, his mind swimming from the intensity of it. Matt's hand covered the tip of Shayne's cock, catching the hot, sticky fluid as he pumped his fingers in and out of his lover's ass.

"Undo me now."

Matt lifted his head and tilted it to the side, staring at Shayne. "I thought you were having fun."

Shayne swallowed, trying to find the words. He didn't mean for his words to come out demanding or harsh. "I am having fun, but that doesn't mean I don't want you to sweat a little bit. Undo me so I can tease the hell out of you."

"You're not handcuffing me." Matt's unyielding tone made Shayne wonder if it had to do with him being arrested.

"I have other ways to keep you submissive to me." Shayne thrust his hips at Matt. "Undo me."

Matt got the key and straddled Shayne's chest to unlock his arms. Once free, Shayne reached out and guided Matt's thick dick into his mouth. The salty taste bit into his tongue as he sucked, swirling it around to make Matt hiss in reaction. Shayne gripped his lover's sides and gently pulled him forward, relaxing his throat enough to take Matt's cock deeper.

Matt gripped the headboard, sucking in air as he stared down at Shayne. "Damn, baby. You keep sucking me like that and I won't last worth shit."

Shayne mumbled around the cock in his mouth. He didn't care that Matt couldn't understand him. The look of pleasure on Matt's face was enough for Shayne. He wanted to give him everything he desired, wanted to be the only one his man thought about, the only one he needed.

True to Matt's word, he didn't last long. Shayne gave him just enough pressure to push him over the edge and happily drank up every bit of come spilling into his mouth. Matt's bulky body glistened with sweat as he gripped the headboard and thrust against Shayne's open mouth.

Matt finally pulled back and moved to the side of Shayne's body. "Where did you learn how to suck cock like that?"

Shayne chuckled and sat up, wiping his mouth with his hand. "My fill-in lover taught me everything I know while you were gone." He turned towards Matt. His lover had a painful expression on his face. "Matt, I was just joking. I haven't had sex with anyone since you were arrested."

He shook his head. "I know you were joking."

"What's wrong then?"

"There's a lot we've missed out on with each other."

Shayne waited for him to elaborate, but Matt stopped, lost in his thoughts. "Tell me what it was like."

"Typical. I was in moderate to minimal security and nearly got my ass jumped a couple of times. Don't get me wrong, I didn't get in fights left and right, but when everyone found out I was a cop, they wanted to take a shot at me." Matt scooted down on the bed. "I didn't sleep much at night. I think the first time I slept longer than a couple hours at a time was our first night together again."

"Were you scared?"

Matt scoffed. "I'm not a pussy, Shayne." Matt slowly lifted his gaze to meet Shayne's. "Why didn't you come visit me?"

Matt wanted to ask him that since the first time he saw Shayne, back at the cabin. He hadn't written. He hadn't stopped by. Matt waited while Shayne shifted on the bed and covered himself with a sheet.

"I don't know, Matt. For one thing, I couldn't understand how or why you did this. I felt betrayed in the court when they proved you went behind my back. We're partners and we're supposed to work together." He shrugged. "Plus I couldn't face you in lockup. It nearly killed me to see them take you away. I would have gone ape shit seeing you behind bars so I stayed away. I convinced myself if I forgot about you, about our memories, it'd all go away. I changed departments, got a desk job that didn't require a partner and settled in. I hate every bit of it but it's my life now."

Matt stared at Shayne for a long time not saying one word. Shayne couldn't handle seeing him? What kind of excuse was that?

"Say something."

Matt scooted from the bed and went to the dresser to grab a pair of clean boxers. He pulled them on and waited a few seconds before turning around to face Shayne. "You couldn't come see me because you couldn't handle it? What about me, Shayne? I didn't want to be there but I really didn't have a fucking choice."

"Matt..."

"What, Shayne? That's my fuckin' name; what the hell do you want?" Bitterness filled him and flowed over him like an erupting volcano. "You claim to love me but you couldn't pack your ass up to come see me? Not once in two years?"

"You don't know what it was like!" Shayne threw back the covers and stood. "Every day I had to live with people talking. 'The poor schmuck. Too bad his partner backstabbed him like that.' Or if it wasn't that, it was 'How could you be such a damn fool?' Some even went as far as to say I helped you and, when it came down to it all, made you pay for what we did. I couldn't stand it. I left narcs and settled for a boring ass job doing paperwork.

"I don't know, Matt. Maybe I didn't believe you. Maybe I blamed you for making my life a living hell." Shayne crossed the room and grabbed a pair of boxers to pull on. "Maybe I didn't want to see you. You happy now? I didn't want to see you."

Matt stumbled to the bed, Shayne's words cutting him to the bone. "Well, sorry to have fucked up *your* life."

Shayne scoffed. "Shut up." He slammed the dresser drawer. "Just shut the fuck up, Matt. You've always got to be the martyr. It's so fucking annoying."

Matt stared at Shayne, resisting the urge to slam his fist into the other man's face. "You claimed you love me. What was that? A fucking joke to you?"

"No. I still do, Matt. You wouldn't be here right now, in my house or in my fuckin' bed if I didn't." Shayne ran his hands through his messy hair. "Look, it's all in the past. If you're going to sit there bitchin' like a little girl, fine by me. I want to help you. I want to clear your name so all this between us will disappear."

"What's in it for you?"

The question hung between them, the answer left unsaid. Matt waited, not breaking eye contact with Shayne. His chest ached; the pit of his stomach knotted into a tight little ball. He didn't understand this shit anymore. Love was so simple. Their life had been planned out right down to the commitment ceremony Shayne had insisted on. And then it'd all fallen apart.

"You know damn good and well what's in it for me," Shayne finally said. "*You* are what's in it for me, Matt. You. Stop being so damn stupid. I love you. There's no question about that, no matter what happened two years ago. I'm sorry I stayed away but I'm here now and I'll be damned before I let you go back to prison for something you didn't do."

“Great. Then let’s get to it. I’m so fuckin’ tired of sitting around and doing nothing.”

Though Matt had no idea what they would do, it still being Sunday, he needed to get out of the house. He needed to get his mind on the job and away from their personal issues. Otherwise he’d just screw himself over. Again.

Chapter Ten

Shayne couldn't get his mind of Matt and the anger his lover had for him. After their fight, Matt left, saying he needed to clear his head. The damn man acted as if he wasn't a convict and could walk around the streets of New York like anyone else. Matt finally returned around midnight, taking the couch for a bed. Neither said a word to the other Monday morning either. They'd had fights before, fist fights even, when the tension between them exploded into unquenchable desire, but none was as bad as this one. Shayne had no idea how to make it better and prayed like hell that he and Danvers could find something for an appeal.

"Evil twin is at the front desk."

Shayne whipped around at Danvers' subtle comment, and he spotted Lindsay's tattoo. He turned to find Danvers heading to the main room with a file in his hand. *Please don't be Matt's file.*

Shayne stood and smoothed his jacket. It was nearly lunch and Shayne figured this was his one chance to talk with Lindsay before she met with her sister. He sidled over to the desk and gave her a charming smile.

"Can you give me the whereabouts of Detective Sanders?"

She stared at him for a moment before clicking away on her computer. "Uh, Sanders?"

He nodded. She clicked away at the computer, obviously clueless as to what she was doing or how to look for what he asked.

"Uh, he's heading back to the station." She stopped and looked up with a smile.

"Really?" Shayne glanced to his right. "Then how come I see him standing right there talking to Detective Danvers?"

Shayne pointed to the man standing with a coffee cup at hand chatting with Danvers. She glanced to her left. He watched her closely, waiting for her to make a move. A life full of crime made it natural instinct to flee. When she did, he stopped her, pressed her against the counter and restrained her with handcuffs. It all happened so quickly he didn't even see Danvers and Lieutenant Porter filling the doorway leading into the main room.

"I actually thought it would be harder to prove your identity, Lindsay, but you flubbed and made my job simple. To track an officer is quite easy. Obviously if you were Sarah, you would have known that." He hauled her towards a vacant interrogation room.

"I want my phone call." Her tone was calm. Shayne met her eyes and watched as they narrowed, her anger with him apparent. *If looks could kill.*

"Not yet." Shayne tossed her in the holding cage inside the interrogation room and locked the door. "I'll let you cool down a moment then we'll chat. I'm sure you have plenty you'd like to say to me."

Shayne stepped out and closed the door behind him. "I'm going to the restaurant to pick up Sarah," he said to Lou and Danvers.

"What is all this about?" Lou asked, his annoyance clearly showing.

"Lindsay Lofland is impersonating her sister, a government official, Sarah Lofland." Shayne grabbed a radio and headed for the door. "We have proof if you want to see it."

Lou met Shayne's eyes. "How can you prove it?"

"Show him the folder, Danvers."

After Danvers showed Lou the pictures and the priors for the sister, Lou nodded. "Go pick up Sarah."

He had a few minutes to get to the café before Sarah realised something was up. Danvers tagged along with him.

"This is my first arrest." Danvers was nearly bouncing in his seat.

Shayne glanced over at Danvers. "You've been working three years in narcs and you haven't arrested anyone?"

"Most of what I've done is investigate on the Big E drug lord case." He almost sounded pitiful.

Shayne ceased conversation. The café had plenty of business and Sarah sat at her usual table out front, waiting for her sister. Danvers walked beside Shayne, eagerness dripping off him as they approached Sarah.

"Sarah?" Shayne asked, gaining her attention.

She glanced up from her book, her gaze darting from Shayne to Danvers. "Yes?"

Shayne pulled out his badge. "Can you come with me please?"

She gathered up her belongings. "This is about my sister, Lindsay, isn't it?"

"What about Lindsay?"

"She's my sister. She threatened to have my son taken away from me if I didn't help her. She knows people with a lot of power and...I'm as good as dead without my son." She trembled a bit, her tone soft as she spoke.

Danvers reached for his handcuffs and Shayne shook his head. With a groan, he gripped her arm and led to the police department as tears fell to her cheeks. "I knew she'd get caught. No matter how many times I told her we weren't alike, she blew it off. We're not alike. I've never been in trouble with the law and... Please don't keep me from my son. I'm all he's got and—"

"Take a deep breath." Shayne opened the door and ushered inside, indicating that she sit in one of the provided chairs in the waiting area. Danvers sat beside her. "We have to take you into custody. If you cooperate with us and tell us everything, I'll talk to the A.D.A. and try to get a lesser sentence for you. I'm sorry, Sarah, but what you did is a serious offence, and we can't take it lightly."

He motioned for a uniformed officer to take her back to a holding cell. Sarah started to cry. Once she was out of sight, Shayne turned to Danvers who stared at him dumbfounded. "Why can't I ever get the ones that resist arrest?"

Shayne snorted. "Your day's coming. Give it some time."

* * * *

Lindsay was furious by the time they got to the station. Shayne unlocked the cage and sat her before him at the interrogation table.

"You didn't read me my rights, dickwad." She struggled with her hands cuffed behind her back. "I'm going to have your badge!"

"I don't have to read you your rights until I plan to question you." Shayne calmly recited the Miranda rights. "Do you understand these rights?"

"Yeah, I understand them." She struggled more with the handcuffs. "They don't mean shit though."

Shayne took out a notebook. "Do you understand why you're here?"

Her mouth clamped shut as she continued to tug at the handcuffs.

"You're only making things worse by pulling at them. They won't unlock."

"I want my phone call."

"Not until we get a few things straight. Do you understand why you are here?"

She clamped her lips together.

"I guess I didn't let you sit long enough." Shayne opened the cage and tossed her in.

"I want my phone call!"

He left her screaming at him and met up with Danvers and Yokely in another interrogation room.

"Lindsay's boyfriend is a big crime boss. I don't know his name, but she worships the ground he walks on. He controls her in a way that is scary. Somehow he found out about me. He told her to get inside the police department so she could get back what was his." Sarah cupped her coffee. "I didn't want to help them but she threatened my son's life."

Danvers leaned forward, hands on the table. "How long has this been going on?"

"Two years. The first time happened when Detective Vaughn was arrested and charged with stealing the drugs. She said that her boyfriend thought that it was ballsy of her to steal that much dope." Sarah paused. "It was her idea to pin it on Detective Vaughn. The guy wouldn't take the drugs right away, so she had to hide them."

"How did she get into Detective Vaughn's house?"

"He has a spare key in his garden around back." Sarah took a sip from her coffee, her hand shaking the entire time. "She made it look like his fault and has been stealing drugs from narcs ever since."

"Why help her?" Yokley asked. "You work for a department that prevents crime. Why didn't you come to one of us?"

Sarah sniffled as tears rolled down her cheeks. "It wasn't an option. She threatened me with my son's life and had the ability to carry out those threats. I couldn't let her take my son away from me."

By the time Shayne's shift ended, he still hadn't gotten anything out of Lindsay, who repeatedly requested her one phone call. When they finally gave it to her, she dialled her sister's number, threatened her again and told her not to say a word. He didn't bother confronting her anymore and shipped her to booking instead.

"Dude, this is Matt's big break, right?"

"Uh, could be." Shayne gathered his stuff at his desk.

"Come on. The girl admitted her sister set him up."

"But Lindsay hasn't confessed, and she won't. The crime boss has to be Big E, which is your territory. I'm not in narcs anymore."

"You should be. Big E's case has gone nowhere without you and Matt working on it."

Shayne didn't comment. "I'm leaving. Go home and get some sleep. I have a feeling Lou will have a busy day for us tomorrow."

* * * *

Matt stared at the television, annoyed with himself and with Shayne for leaving him here. *I didn't want to see you...* Anger flowed through his veins pumping his rage to the fullest of degrees. He couldn't wrap his mind around it. He couldn't imagine leaving Shayne to rot in a jail cell, cold and alone without communication from the outside world. He couldn't imagine not being there for him when he would need him the most. Matt understood Shayne's confusion. He even partially understood his reasons. But they were partners. They were friends. He thought Shayne loved him and cared for him. Why did it take so long for him to realise the truth?

Matt laid his head back against the sofa. He hated being trapped like an animal. He was innocent. He'd find someday to prove it.

The garage door opened and Matt grabbed his gun. He hid in Shayne's house like a thief, waiting to see the person that dared to walk through the door. This time it was Shayne.

He lowered the gun.

"I've got news." Shayne sat his briefcase down. "Sarah admitted to knowing Lindsay stole the drugs and set you up."

Matt's eyes widened. "Grounds for an appeal?"

"Pretty much. It's not a confession, but it does weaken the prosecutor's arguments that you were in the drug world and stole them for Big E or whoever." Shayne sat beside him. "Matt, I promise I'm going to get you out of this. I should have done it a long time ago and I'm sorry." Shayne paused. "I'm sorry I didn't come see you."

Matt saw the regret in Shayne's eyes. No matter what his reasons were back then, he was here now. That was what mattered. Shayne hadn't given up on him. Matt knew that. He hugged him, unable to speak.

"We need to talk about what we're going to do, though, Matt." Shayne pulled away. "You need to turn yourself in."

"Hell no." Matt jerked away and stood. "I'm not going back, Shayne. I'm not going."

"Matt, we can't do anything in your favour if you don't. Technically you did break the law by escaping. You are a convicted felon. I'm harbouring a convicted felon. We're both breaking the law even if you didn't do it. Our credibility is worth shit if you don't go back and let me handle this, *legally*."

Matt stared at his partner. "I can't believe you're asking me to do this."

"It's the only way."

"Appeals take time. Court takes time. Everything takes so much fucking time!" He turned away and ran his fingers through his hair. "How long will I have to be in there?"

"I don't know."

"Exactly. I'd probably get a few more years tacked on as an escape conviction."

Shayne blew out a breath. "You can't appeal unless you are in custody. Lawyers are not allowed to have contact with an escapee without breaking the law. You've got to go back, Matt. Maybe since you didn't do the crime, escaping jail will get out a bail hearing or something."

"Right. If I'm out on parole, I can't do my job. I'll be fired from the department and what next?" Matt rubbed his hands over his face.

"Willingness to go back shows the judge a lot. You didn't do anything thing wrong, yet. Staying away from prison is an offence. Do you really want to go to jail legally for escaping prison?"

"No, I don't want to go to jail for escaping prison."

"Then turn yourself in." Shayne licked his lips. "I promise you I'll get you out but you have to trust me."

"Trust the very guy that didn't come to visit me the first time to get me out of jail?" Matt turned and met his eyes.

"Yes. Trust me."

"I can't." Matt left the room, entering the comfort of Shayne's bedroom and crawling into bed.

He couldn't go back. It had been hell the first time, and even though bail sounded great and parole for the felony of escaping jail was better than living in that dungeon, he couldn't do his job. He couldn't be a police officer because his record was marked and he became a liability. He was screwed either way, so it really didn't matter.

"Matt, I understand the place you're at and I've thought about it a lot today. I know what I'm dealing with, and even though you don't trust me, I promise you I'm going to get you out." Shayne moved in behind him and laid his hand against Matt's arm. "And once you're out, you'll go back to work like normal."

"How?" Matt rolled to face him.

Shayne brushed a finger against his cheek. "I'll get the charges dropped." He leaned forward and kissed Matt's mouth. "Matt, we've got options. Go back to jail, I'll make the appeal, and we'll get you out of there."

Matt closed his eyes. What choice did he really have? He wanted to clear the bogus charges more than anyone.

Shayne rose over him, sliding his hands beneath the flimsy cotton shirt. He kissed Matt's neck, moving his hands upward. Matt lifted slightly to aid Shayne in pulling his shirt off. Shayne straddled Matt's hips and flicked his tongue over his nipples. No matter what was on Matt's mind, Shayne always had the ability to deter his thoughts even if it was only for a brief moment.

Matt reached down to cup his lover's face. Shayne's mouth opened to accept his kiss and Matt was lost. He wanted what they had back. He wanted the passion, the hope of a pleasant future—he wanted it all. Matt pulled back slightly to look into Shayne's eyes.

"I promise you, Matt. I'm not going to let anything happen to you." Shayne undid Matt's jeans and slid the zipper over his cock. "We're going to have all the things we planned. You're going to move in with me and become my life partner. We're going to go to family get-togethers and work on cases together at the department. You're going to walk free soon, and when you do, we're going to Eco Island for a tropical vacation. We'll lay on the beach naked and fuck each other blind."

It sounded nice. Matt couldn't remember the last vacation he'd gone on. He fell back onto the mattress, taking his partner for his word. He pictured a beach in his mind, sand beneath his body as Shayne rose above him gloriously tanned and perfect in every right. Shayne tugged the denim over his hips. Matt groaned when Shayne's lips wrapped around his cock and sank down around him, his hand fisting the base. Shayne pulled back slowly, lapping at the tip of his cock as he pumped his shaft.

"Shayne," Matt struggled to keep a logical thought in his mind.

He pulled back. "Matt, I love you. I'm not kidding when I say that and I know you think it sounds gay or whatever, but I do. I love you. There is nothing I wouldn't do for you. Stop objecting for a little while and simply feel. Let me make you feel good."

Matt laid his head back against the pillow and closed his eyes. Shayne's mouth was heaven. He knew exactly what Matt liked and gave it to him without question. Matt thrust into his mouth, pushing as much of his cock as Shayne could take inside. The sensations of the mouth around his dick, the teasing tongue swirling around the crown when he pulled back and the sheer pleasure of knowing it was Shayne that deep-throated him brought Matt dangerously close to the edge of climax within seconds.

Pleasure emanated throughout his body in quick, hot bursts. Shayne didn't ease his motions until the last wave receded, swallowing every drop of come that shot down his throat. When he finally pulled away, he moved his mouth slightly, kissing the underneath side of Matt's shaft until he reached the base, and lightly flicked his tongue against Matt's balls.

"You taste good." Shayne grinned to himself before meeting Matt's eyes. "I'm going to have a hard time keeping my hands – and mouth – off of you."

As high as Shayne took him with the intense pleasure of his orgasm, Matt dropped just as fast when the thought entered his mind about leaving him. "Do you really think I'll be set free?"

Shayne pushed up and poised himself above Matt's body. "I know you will, Matt."

Matt closed his eyes. He wasn't sure he could face the reality of his next question though he knew it had to be asked. "Are you going to come see me this time?"

"Matt," Shayne whispered.

Matt didn't want to go there. "I'll go." He pushed Shayne off of him and reached for the phone. "I'll turn myself in. Just promise me you'll try to make it as quick as possible. I don't want to live another two years behind bars."

Shayne brushed a hand along his back. "Hey. We've got a little time yet. Wait until morning."

Matt stared at him a moment before dropping the phone beside the bed. Shayne stood and removed his clothes, leaving them in a pile beside the bed. Matt tugged his jeans the rest of the way off and joined him on the bed, naked.

"I promise you, everything is going to be okay this time." Shayne pulled him to his body. Matt rested his head against Shayne's chest and wrapped his arms around him. "I'm not going to let anything happen to you, Matt. *Ever.*"

As comforting as Shayne meant his words to be, Matt only wished what he said was true.

Chapter Eleven

Shayne awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of the phone ringing. Matt jerked awake, startled by the noise and confused about where he was. Shayne reached for the phone and answered, grabbing Matt's hand next hoping to comfort.

"Lewis."

"Hey, buddy. It's Mike."

Shayne's brows furrowed. He glanced at the clock. "Who the fuck is Mike?"

"Danvers."

Shayne laughed upon realisation. "Sorry, dude. Do you know what time it is?"

"Yes but I figured you didn't want to wait for this news."

"What news?"

"I can't say over the phone. But a lot of shit has gone down since you left. You might want to come to the station."

Shayne glanced over at Matt. "Sure. Let me get dressed and I'll be there in a few." They disconnected and Shayne stared at the phone. "They've got news that involves the case."

"What?" Matt asked eagerly.

"I don't know. Danvers said I should probably go to the station, that I probably didn't want to wait until morning to hear about it."

"Should I go? Turn myself in."

"No." Shayne stood and grabbed some clothes from the dresser. "If there is more evidence, I want to know about it first."

"Come on. I've got to go back eventually. Might as well make my way there now."

"Matt, I don't know what it is. Please just stay put." Matt stared at him and Shayne felt like an ass. "Don't give me that look. You're an escaped convict."

After Shayne dressed, he left a pissed off Matt in bed. It didn't matter. He could stay pissed off at him all he wanted.

The station was packed with several detectives, mainly ones from the narcotics division. Danvers smiled at him as he strapped his bulletproof vest on. "We got a little phone call from Lindsay's lover, Big E, himself."

Shayne glanced around at the crowd. "What did it say?"

"Enough to incriminate him. He is expecting Lindsay to drop off the drugs she stole today and we're going to catch his ass in the process." Danvers was a few seconds away from jumping up and down like an excited kid at Christmas. "This is so much fun. No wonder you worked in here as long as you did. It's such an adrenaline high."

Shayne propped his hands on his hips. "How did this come about?"

He grinned. "Lindsay's cell phone was in custody, right? Well, Big E, himself, called to give her the location of the drop off from her recent adventures. And he totally fucking incriminated himself," Danvers said, his grin growing wider. "He said he wanted his property, that they had customers coming in to get the good stuff. She's been receiving a portion of the proceeds in drugs, money and sex. She's like his little drug whore. It's great!"

Shayne snorted. "You are such a dork, rookie."

Danvers scoffed. Shayne grabbed a vest and fastened it on his body. After he situated it over his clothing, he took the extra magazine Danvers handed him and pocketed it. They were really putting an end to all of this. It was almost surreal. The door behind him opened and loud gasps sounded from all around. Shayne turned to see Matt standing there completely defenceless, and looking sexy as hell in plain clothes of a white baggy T-shirt and equally baggy jeans.

He hadn't bothered combing his hair and his eyes showed his fatigue. He pursed his lips as he took in all the people in the main processing room. Lieutenant Porter stepped forward out of the group. Shayne moved closer to Matt instinctively, hoping they wouldn't create a big scene.

"I came here willingly. I know protocol is to detain me and throw away the key but I didn't do it. You know I didn't do it and I'm possibly the best person to help wrap this case. I know these people. Right before I was arrested, I spent several months undercover in Big E's massive drug operation. I know the way they work and can help you if you'd let me." Matt fidgeted, his expression hopeful. Everyone stood around, waiting for the lieutenant's response.

"Yeah, I bet you know," someone said in the back. "Of course you know. You're one of them."

"Actually in his defence, Lou," Danvers moved to his desk and pulled the file on Sarah Lofland, "Sarah admitted that Big E set him up. Lindsay has been stealing drugs from the department, and in the event that got Matt arrested, she obtained a key stored at the back of his house to enter and plant the drugs in his possession. She even claims Big E told her he couldn't take them because the cops would be on to him and he didn't want them coming around."

Lou looked at the written statement. "Did you get a confession from the sister?"

Danvers met Shayne's eyes. "No, but we got a phone call from Big E. That's how we knew about the drug deal going down tonight."

"Not enough." Lou shoved the sheet at Danvers. "Get me a confession, I'll let him go. Otherwise, he's an escaped convict and he needs to be detained."

The uniformed officer standing up front reached for his handcuffs and Matt's body stiffened.

"You've got to be kidding me." Shayne met Lieutenant Porter's eyes. "You'd rather have him behind bars than out there ending a case that has gone on for nearly six years? You and I both know this scumbag we're going after is the one responsible for setting Matt up. Why are you punishing the one person that knows them like the back of his hand when he isn't the one that's at fault?"

"It's out of my hands."

"It always has been, hasn't it? You didn't for one second have faith in the possibility that Matt could be innocent. You and I both know his track record and it's not tainted in any way. He's not stupid and you're sitting there saying it's out of your hands." Shayne shook his head, pent up anger rolling off him in waves. "Fuck that."

"I understand your loyalty to your partner, but a judge must clear all charges before I can reinstate him."

"And if this case is fucked up because he's behind bars, whose fault is that?"

"It's out of my hands." Lou glanced away briefly. "And as your commanding officer, I will not tolerate you speaking to me in that tone. Get your head in the game and out of your ass if you expect to be a part of this team."

Danvers stared at Shayne for a moment before he followed in behind Lou. Shayne glanced back at where Matt stood. He looked so pitiful in the handcuffs, detained by an officer half his size.

"Go." Matt motioned with his head. "If they can't have me at least they can have you."

Shayne turned and got his head in the game. They wouldn't fuck this case up because of him.

"Okay." The uniformed officer stopped in front of the holding cell and unlocked the iron door. "Looks like this is your home for tonight. Or at least until they come to pick you up."

Matt didn't bother saying anything. He walked inside the small cell and waited for the officer to undo the handcuffs. Afterward, he sat on the small metal bed, hands folded on his lap. He stared at the wall, taking in the markings. Even though he'd known what he was walking back into, the reality of it was so much different than what he'd planned in his head. It was as if he'd never left.

"You didn't do it, did you?" The officer stuck the cuffs and key in the pocket designed for such on his belt.

"Nope."

"Then why did you come back willingly? You had freedom. You knew the case would be solved when they catch this guy. Why did you come back?"

Matt leaned forward, propping his elbows on his knees. "I'm an officer that is supposed to uphold the law. Even though people wrong me, I have no right to wrong them. I had no right to break out and that's enough for me."

"How'd you break out?"

Matt held a poker face though he smiled inside. "I walked out the front doors."

The uniformed officer narrowed his eyes before deciding it was better to leave well enough alone. He turned to leave, the clash of the metal door bringing a finale to the circumstances. Matt stared at the pale grey walls, reading the writing and deciphering the markings that those before him left behind. Some he could match with those he arrested personally. He had to trust Shayne now. And he hoped like hell his partner knew what he was doing.

"Vaughn!" Lieutenant Porter rapped his knuckles on the main desk. "Open his cell."

The officer who arrested him scrambled to the cell and unlocked it. The lieutenant rushed in. "You're on the case."

"What?" Matt stood.

"You will sit at that desk and obtain radio communication with myself, Lewis and Detective Martin from the DEA's office. Officers Swan, Ritchie and Garwood will surround you at all times so therefore you remain completely in police custody. You will have access to the computer at my discretion. If anything needs to be done, it's run by me first."

Matt nodded.

"Good. Let's take this son of a bitch out."

Matt walked out the jail cell and felt a sense of freedom being given to him. He wasn't about to fuck it up. "Where is the raid going to be, lieutenant?"

"His house, we think. The code name was Fishing Lane. And that's his street address." Lou stopped. "That is his house, right?"

Matt shook his head. "His boat."

Chapter Twelve

The raid was almost in slow motion as the narcotics team and DEA barged inside, with Shayne right there with them. Matt led them to the right place at the right time, and they busted Big E's drug emporium. He knew where the dope master hid all the goods and the DEA couldn't stop thanking him for his help. Big E couldn't have looked guiltier as he stood over a pile of heroin, checking for quality. Forty different illegal drugs were confiscated and over twelve people were arrested, including the 'customers' who came to purchase the dope. Two million dollars in cash was bound and marked, and the longer the DEA stayed the more money they found.

"Vaughn?" The word crackled to life on Shayne's radio, drawing his attention for a moment.

"Yes, sir?"

"Good work." Lou's voice was almost that of a friend instead of a superior.

"Thank you, sir."

Shayne packed up his guns in the back of the unmarked police car he'd arrived in. Against his better judgment, he pushed the talk button on his radio. "Matt?"

He waited a minute before Matt responded, "Yes?"

"Danvers talked to Sarah. She said she'd testify at the arraignment." He paused a minute. "You know I will too."

He didn't know why the defence hadn't called him to the witness stand in the beginning since he was Matt's partner but he'd be called this time. Lou might even testify. Shayne made a mental note to talk with him about it.

"I know. Thank you."

That was the end of their radio conversation. Shayne drove back to the station to process the night even though Lou told him to go home. He didn't want to go home. Matt sat at the main desk talking with the officers on duty. Shayne stood back and watched him a moment. It was like nothing had ever happened.

"We're back." Shayne pulled at the Velcro of his vest and relieved himself of the extra five pounds of weight. "He's finally caught and going away for a long time."

Matt met his eyes and smiled. "Well, how does it feel to be a hero? I hear you're the one that personally arrested Big E. That had to be pretty awesome."

Shayne shrugged even though a smile tilted his lips. "Danvers wanted to, but Big E and I had a little unfinished business. I swear that kid is too hyper."

Matt laughed. "I heard your conversation."

Shayne glanced towards Officer Ritchie who stared a hole through him as she stood with the other officers. "So are you meeting with the lawyer tomorrow?"

Matt moved around the counter. "Yeah. Today actually." He smiled. "I woke his ass up, told him what happened and he's meeting me here bright and early at eight o'clock. Judge gets in at nine, and with hope, I'll be out of here by ten."

"Are they supposed to transport you?"

"Not right now. Lou said he'd take care of it when he put in the message to call off the APB. Once they get Big E processed, then my case will come undone and I'll be free." Matt pressed his lips together. "Uh, I'll still have to spend the night though."

"Vaughn!" Lou's powerful voice drew Matt's attention to the entryway. "Don't get too comfortable in that cell. You won't be there very long." He walked over and slapped Matt on the back. "You know I'd let you go home if I could, right?"

He nodded. "I'm still a convict. I know."

"You meeting with the lawyer in the morning?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Hopefully we'll have some statements to take to the judge."

Matt smiled. "That would be nice."

Lou squeezed his shoulder. "I'm sorry it took this long to figure everything out."

He nodded without saying anything. Shayne could see the hurt cross Matt's face for a brief moment. Lou left them shortly after, heading home to catch a few z's. Shayne shifted slightly, lost for conversation yet unable to walk away.

"Shouldn't you be heading home too?"

Shayne swallowed and met his eyes. "You gonna be okay?"

Matt snorted. "Let's put it this way. Prison is a lot easier this time now that people know I'm innocent than it was when everyone thought I was guilty."

Shayne reached out for Matt's hand. It was a brief touch but one that hopefully conveyed all the things that Shayne couldn't say. "I'll see you around eight."

Matt smiled. "I'll be here."

* * * *

Matt was locked in the cell around three. They gave him a mattress for the metal bed, two pillows and a blanket that was significantly longer than the one he'd had in the last prison he was at. He tried to sleep but it never came.

He knew Shayne would have bunked with him in the cell if they allowed it. He could tell by the look in his eyes. He truly regretted not coming to see Matt, and Matt felt like an ass for holding a grudge against him. It was all coming to an end. He had to believe it. Life would get back to normal and they could move on.

He closed his eyes again and tried not to think about anything but what he wanted to do with Shayne. While the sex on the beach fantasy was nice, he had two years to make up for. Two years of his life to get back.

He pictured Shayne lying before him naked except for sunglasses. His body was oiled down with sunscreen that smelt like coconut. His beautiful cock was hard and long ready with a drop of pre-come glistening on the tip. He looked good enough to eat and Matt's body responded to the image.

He wanted to taste Shayne's lips. He wanted to slide inside his body and drive them both to the brink of pleasure again and again. Matt opened his eyes at the sound of another prisoner's holler and stared at the empty cell walls. He couldn't do this again. He thought he could but the same feelings of being a caged rat crept through him, and it was enough to drive a sane man mad. He tossed the blanket aside and went to the bars, sticking his arms through them for some sort of freedom.

"You okay, detective?" Officer Ritchie asked.

He took a deep breath. "Just a little claustrophobic."

Sweat dripped into his eyes. No matter how much he wanted to focus on the good, the bad crept in and tore him away from it.

"Can I get you anything?" the officer asked.

"Water please." His heart raced. He took another deep breath.

The lady officer brought him a Dixie cup full of water. "You don't look very good. Should I call the nurse to come see you?"

He tipped the cup back and swallowed the contents. "No. I'll be okay."

He wanted his bed, his partner and the comfort of his things surrounding him. That was something a nurse couldn't give him.

"I need the booking information on Eddie Adair aka Big E." It was Shayne's voice. Matt peeked out of the cell and saw his lover standing there waiting for the information he requested. Shayne's back was to him and he looked every bit as tired as Matt felt.

Shayne glanced at him, his eyes softening when he met Matt's. "You're still up?" He walked towards him and stopped when he saw Matt's condition. "What's wrong?"

Matt gripped the bars. "I'm freaking out a little bit."

"Emily, open the door." Shayne waited for the woman to unlock the cell and step out of the way before he moved forward. "Sit down, Matt. You look like you're going to pass out."

"Do you want me to call the nurse, Shayne?" She stepped inside and stopped when Shayne held up his hand.

"No. I think he'll be okay." He turned towards her. "Can I talk with him alone?"

She frowned before nodding and left the cell, locking the door behind her. "Let me know when you're through and I'll unlock the door."

Matt's stomach knotted into a tight ball. "I thought I could do it. I thought I could go through it again but I can't."

Not caring what the guards thought, Shayne wrapped his arms around Matt's sweaty body. "Only good thoughts. Remember."

Matt took another deep breath. "I'm claustrophobic. I can't breathe in here."

"Shh. I'll sit with you." Shayne sat back. "Think about something else. You remember our first case together? God, we were polar opposites of each other. I was a brand new baby detective and you were the bad ass no one messed with."

Matt leaned back against the wall, his fingers linked with Shayne's discreetly between their bodies. He focused on his breathing, which was still a bit uneven. "You asked a million questions the first day and even brought flash cards with pictures of drugs with all the information about them on the back. I wanted to slap you."

"I like getting the facts right." Shayne smiled. "Damn. You were this impulsive hot-headed cop that pushed every button. I had to see what kind of reaction I'd give you. How in the world did we ever survive that first week working together? I'm pretty sure if there wasn't a law against shooting fellow officers, one of us would have had a bullet wound."

Matt's fear calmed as Shayne took his mind off the situation and he closed his eyes. "My gun was bigger. It would have done more damage."

Shayne chuckled and squeezed his hand. "If you say so."

"I know so." Matt smiled in the dark.

A few moments of silence passed between them. Matt inhaled the stale air that surrounded him, squeezing Shayne's hand for comfort. Shayne squeezed back. *He's still here.*

"Lay down, Matt." Shayne moved away, breaking contact with him. "I'm not going anywhere so you can get some sleep."

Matt stared at Shayne for a moment. He looked like he was a few seconds away from pushing him against the mattress and tucking him in like a child. Matt moved, reclining on the makeshift mattress and covered his body with the wool blanket.

He truly felt like a baby. He lived behind bars for two years, not once freaking out in the same fashion as earlier. Sure, there were moments when incarceration had gotten the best of him but he'd never had a full-fledged panic attack before. Shayne took a seat opposite him on the other metal bed across the room and watched him. They didn't say anything to one another, and Matt found himself comforted by Shayne's presence alone. He wanted to say he didn't need him there when, in fact, the truth was opposite. He wanted him there more than anything.

"You're coming to my arraignment, right?"

"Yes." Shayne crossed his arms over his chest. He couldn't possibly be comfortable, but he didn't complain. "In a few hours, your lawyer will meet with the judge and this will all come to an end."

Matt tucked his pillow beneath his head. "Weren't you supposed to get Big E's file?"

"Ah, shit." Shayne stood. "I'll be right back."

Matt closed his eyes long enough to drift off into a light sleep.

* * * *

"The judge wiped the slate clean." Shayne burst into Matt's cell. "You're free to go, detective."

Matt stood, eyes wide with uncertainty. "Really?"

Shayne smiled. "Yep."

Lieutenant Porter waited for him outside the cell with a gun and badge at hand.

"Welcome back, Detective Vaughn. I hope you still want to work in narcs. They sure do miss you."

Matt walked out and hugged Lou, clearly startling him. "Yes. Thank you."

"Yeah, yeah." Lou smiled. For the first time ever, Shayne noted their commanding officer could smile. "Go home, get some sleep and report to work Monday. I'm giving you some time off."

Matt nodded. "Thank you again, sir."

Lou left them standing in the cell block. Shayne couldn't remember a time when he'd felt happier. Matt stared at his badge for a moment before pocketing it and stuffing the gun in his pants.

Shayne reached into his pocket for his keys. "You can take my car as long as you promise to come back and pick me up."

"I don't have my licence." Matt smiled. "You didn't get any sleep. How on earth do you expect to work?"

Shayne shrugged. "Scarfig down all the coffee and doughnuts I can find?"

"You hate doughnuts." They walked to the front of the department together. "And you only drink decaffeinated coffee."

Shayne laughed. "I don't know then."

Matt stopped with Shayne's keys in hand and whispered, "Come with me."

He didn't have to ask twice. "Mike, tell Lou I'm taking Matt home."

Once they arrived at Matt's house, Matt sprang from the car and ran to the front door. Shayne lagged behind, tossing him his keys so he could get in. After finding his house key on Shayne's keychain, Matt pulled him inside and pressed him against the closed door, taking his mouth in a long awaited kiss. He pulled back long enough to rid himself of his shirt, gun and shoes. He kissed Shayne again, softer this time, though not by much.

"Come to bed." Matt grabbed his hand and tugged him toward the steps.

The master bedroom was practical, much like Shayne's bedroom. A bed, a dresser and a chair were the only pieces of furniture. The bed looked soft with white sheets and invited his tired frame.

Shayne began to strip from his dirty clothes. "Are you planning on us sleeping or fucking?"

"Both?" Matt asked it as a question, his hands going to his zipper.

Shayne didn't object. The last twenty-four hours felt like another two years apart. *How did we ever survive the first two?* He crawled onto the bed, staying on his hands and knees while Matt grabbed the condoms and lube. Tossing the items to the side, Matt pulled Shayne's cheeks apart and licked his hole.

"Oh, god."

Matt's fingers slipped inside while his lips moved to the right, lightly kissing Shayne's taut cheek. Shayne's mind went on complete shutdown as he pressed his face into the pillows, allowing his lover to take complete control of their pleasure. Matt moved his lips to the small of Shayne's back and pressed a hot opened mouth kiss there. Shayne shivered in response.

"You want to know something?" Matt withdrew and motioned for Shayne to roll to his back. "I thought about my release day every single hour I was incarcerated." He met Shayne's eyes. "And for so long I wasn't sure this would ever happen again."

Shayne reached up and cupped Matt's cheeks. It was a hot kiss with lots of tongue, one that Shayne dominated simply because Matt allowed him to. He may not understand everything that went on inside Matt's head but he did know his heart. He'd been scared to death last night when Shayne entered the cell. He wasn't sure exactly what of, but it didn't matter. The moment Shayne had entered the caged room, he'd seen Matt's fears ease.

"It's going to happen," Shayne said, pulling back to stare into his lover's eyes. "Time and again, it's going to happen, and we're both going to be so tired and worn out it'd be a struggle to even make it out of the bed when we're done."

Matt's smile tilted his lips. "Is that so?"

Shayne nodded. "And we're still going on that fucking vacation. A whole week together on a remote island sounds like paradise. I need paradise."

Matt leaned back on his heels and picked up a condom. "You want to make it official? We could have a little marriage ceremony in front of our family and friends. What do you say?"

Shayne's eyes wandered to his partner's cock as he donned the rubber. "I don't know. Will the department let us work together if we're married? Because I can't work without you. I've tried and I suck at it. I don't want to ever again."

Matt grabbed the bottle of lube and squirted a generous amount onto his shaft. "Marriage between partners is prohibited. We'd have to work in different departments."

"Then I don't want to get married. Being together is enough for us, isn't it?"

Matt met Shayne's eyes. "Yes...For now." He raised Shayne's legs to his shoulders and pressed his cock against Shayne's puckered hole. "For now, fucking you, living with you, loving you... That's enough for me."

He gripped Shayne's ass and spread him wide as he pressed inside, controlling how much and how fast he penetrated. He shook slightly with strained control as he seated himself inside Shayne's body.

Shayne lifted his lashes and stared into Matt's eyes. He pulled out and thrust in, keeping eye contact as he thrust several times into Shayne's body before he finally leaned down to kiss him. His tongue fucked Shayne's mouth with the same rhythm his cock fucked his ass. The mattress squeaked from the effort of their movements. Shayne reached for his own cock and Matt batted his hand away. He didn't ask questions.

Matt's eyes closed as his face contorted in a mixture of pain and pleasure as he came, shouting into the otherwise silent room. Shayne watched him fly over the crest and contracted his muscles around him continuously until the very last wave receded. Matt didn't even pause for a break.

He pulled out and tossed the used condom in the bedside trashcan and bent over Shayne, taking his aching cock between his lips and sucking hard. Shayne arched towards him, feeling the first tremble of pleasure course through his body. Matt swirled his tongue around the crown of his cock, hitting the sensitive spot underneath repeatedly. Shayne closed his eyes as the first splash of come landed on Matt's tongue, his lover's moan of approval sending shivers up his spine. Shayne shook with the intensity.

Afterward, Matt rolled to the side, smiling as he propped his head on his fist. "You sure you still want to go back to work and put in a full eight hours?"

Shayne draped his arm over his eyes. "I don't think I can move."

Matt chuckled and kissed his lover's arm. "Tell Lou you need some time to sleep and that you'll be back on the job first thing in the morning."

"Hand me my phone."

Matt moved from the bed and dug into Shayne's jean pocket for his cell. After finding it, he resumed his place and laid the phone on his lover's stomach. Shayne made the call and tossed the electronic device to the floor, forgotten until morning when he actually *had* to get out of Matt's bed.

He curled on his side while Matt pulled the blankets over them. They laid there for a while, silent and comfortable with one another. As tired as Shayne was he couldn't go to sleep just yet. He reached for Matt's hand, keeping his eyes closed, and said, "I told you I wouldn't leave you."

"Do you think you broke a rule by staying in the cell with me last night?"

"Ah, probably, but who cares right? You are innocent. You didn't deserve to be there and you didn't deserve all the shit everyone put you through, including me."

"Stop talking about it." Matt moved slightly to face Shayne with each breath he exhaled puffing lightly against his face. "I love you no matter what. Now go to sleep."

Shayne drifted into a sound sleep, dreaming the most wonderful dream. His partner was finally free.

About the Author

Lexie's love for writing began when she wrote her first play in fourth grade. With a big imagination and love for creating worlds, she wrote several more scripts that have placed first in contests. She loves to read but didn't pick up a romance novel until high school and fell in love with the genre. Now she writes steamy stories, with heartfelt characters, letting her imagination take her where it may go.

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