

HARD LESSONS

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Chapter One

The camera panned across the room.

The office was spacious, well-appointed with antique brass fixtures, a polished oak desk and wide, bright windows that looked out over the town of Squamish, British Columbia, and the Pacific Ocean that glittered in the distance.

A man strode into view. Tall and lean, with chiseled features and thick black hair swept back off his face, he had an air of authority about him—a man who wore power as easily as he wielded it. He sat down in the high-back leather chair and drew up to the desk. He bent to read a file that lay there, but looked up at the sound of the door opening.

He frowned. “I thought I told you I wasn’t to be disturbed.”

The door clicked shut and a woman approached. She rounded the desk and stood beside his chair. Red hair was swept back off her face in a neat French twist. She wore small wire-framed glasses and a trim-fitting suit that showed off long legs and an enticing bit of cleavage.

She held out a clipboard. “You need to sign this, Mr. Carrone. It’s important.”

His eyes blazed. “So important it couldn’t wait ten minutes until I finished with this?” His finger stabbed at the file on his desk.

She swallowed, took a half-step back. “Well...”

He stood suddenly, shrugged out of his suit jacket and let it drop onto the chair. He stepped closer, towering over her, expression thunderous. “How often do we have to go through this, Cyndi? How many times do I have to say it before it finally sinks in?”

She licked a pair of full, gold-tinted lips. “Uh...I’m sorry, but—”

“Sorry? Sorry’s not good enough. You’ve said it a hundred times but obviously it means nothing to you. You have no idea how to follow instructions! I’m afraid you need to learn your lesson the hard way.”

The two weren’t even touching and yet the sexual tension rippled off the screen in almost-palpable waves.

“Wh-what does that mean?” asked Cyndi.

“Take off your jacket.”

She blinked, but hesitated only a moment before setting down her clipboard and obliging. The jacket fell to the floor revealing a simple, if somewhat snug-fitting, white blouse. Her nipples strained at the fabric, stiff and provocative.

He slipped a hand inside the neckline and she started, reaching reflexively for his wrist. “Mr. Carrone, I—”

He slapped her hand away, reaching deeply inside her blouse and obviously fondling her breast beneath the bra. "Stop it. You have to learn how to take orders, Cyndi." He lifted his other hand and gripped the lapels of the blouse. He ripped them apart, sending buttons scattering onto the desk and floor. "And this is the best way for you to learn."

Her chest heaved, breasts spilling out of the scanty cups of her white lace bra. "But—"

The bra came apart as easily as tissue paper in his hands. He tweaked a nipple hard enough to make her cry out. "Quiet," he commanded. "I don't want to hear your whining."

He tweaked the other nipple and she endured it, making only the slightest of gasps.

"Better." He pulled a pin from her hair allowing the thick waves to tumble to her shoulders. "Much better." He removed her glasses, set them on the desk. "Now remove your skirt."

She hesitated, licked her lips as if considering what to say, but then seemed to change her mind. She unzipped the back of her skirt and allowed it to fall to the floor. Only a thin triangle of lace covered her pussy.

He ripped it away.

She stood there, naked and quivering before him.

"Touch yourself."

She stared at him. "Please. I don't—"

He grabbed her, whirled her around, wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her back against him. He reached between her thighs, obviously thrusting a finger deeply inside her.

She arched her back and gasped.

"Fine," he growled, fingers working. "I'll take you as I like. It seems that's all you understand."

The camera zoomed in on her pussy, on his hand and the moisture that now coated his fingers and the insides of her thighs.

She groaned slightly, covered his hand with her own.

He abruptly withdrew and she whimpered in frustration. "No," he growled. "I have control here. That's what this is about." He presented his fingers to her mouth. "Suck me clean."

She closed her eyes and drew his fingers deeply into her mouth. "Do you want me to fuck you?" he asked as she licked and suckled.

She nodded.

"How? On this desk, with your legs wrapped around me as I shove my cock inside your pussy until you scream for more?"

His fingers were deep inside her mouth. "Mm hmm."

"I know you do." He withdrew his hand and pushed her forward until she was leaning over the desk, her breasts pressed against the wood, her ass exposed. "But this isn't about what *you* want, is it?"

She shook her head.

He kept one hand pressed against the small of her back as he undid his belt and fly with the other. "Right. It's about what I want, and how you can please me." His trousers and briefs fell to the floor revealing a thick and throbbing erection.

He opened a desk drawer and pulled out a tube of lubricant, coating his cock with it as he continued. "Do you know how you're going to do that, Cyndi?"

"No," she breathed. "Tell me."

He dropped the lubricant back in the drawer and slammed it shut. "You're going to grab your behind and spread those sweet little cheeks and let me fuck you in the ass." He bracketed his hands on her hips, holding her firm. "Right?"

She merely nodded and did as he had instructed, pulling her cheeks apart and closing her eyes as she waited.

He pressed his cock against her anus. "And you're going to enjoy it, right?"

"Yes!" She screamed the word as he rammed himself deeply inside her.

"Fuck," he groaned, his thrusts fierce and merciless. "Sweet God, you're tight."

Sweat broke out on his skin and trickled down his face. His grip on her hips tightened as his assault continued. At the key moment he reached between her thighs to push a finger inside her pussy and press his thumb against her clit.

They both came in a cacophony of grunts, screams and, finally, laughter.

"Damn," he said as he withdrew from her and reached for a tissue. "That was hot." He looked at the camera as Cyndi pushed herself off the desk and flopped back into his chair, legs splayed, chest heaving. He cast a glance at her over his shoulder. "You okay, babe?"

She just murmured, touching herself. "Mmm."

Chuckling, he looked at the camera. "Did you get it all, Vince?"

"Oh yeah, Mr. Carrone." The bodyguard's voice was thick. "It'll make a great addition to your collection."

"Do *you* want to fuck her? Now that would be interesting."

Cyndi's eyes flew open and she glared at him, her eyes shooting fire.

Rae Carrone laughed and grabbed her hand, tugging her to a standing position and pulling her in tight against him. "Don't worry, babe. I don't share." He sank his fingers into her hair and held her firm. "With anybody."

He thrust his tongue inside her mouth and the screen went blank.

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Kaley Carrone stood in front of the computer screen, the rage pulsing through her veins so hot she was surprised she didn't incinerate on the spot. Her fists were clenched so tightly that she had to make an effort to unfurl her fingers and was surprised to find that no blood had dripped onto the carpet of their three-hundred-square-foot bedroom.

Very slowly and deliberately she popped the disk out of the CD drive—the disk that she'd found slipped into the pocket of the suit her husband had asked her to have cleaned for him.

It was labeled "An Office Fuck" and the title had piqued her interest enough to investigate further. For just a moment she wished she'd ignored it, wished she could have gone on in blissful ignorance.

But only for a moment.

She snapped the disk in two, walked into the en suite bathroom and tossed the remnants into the garbage. She noticed a pair of scissors on the counter and on a whim, picked them up. She strode purposefully to his closet and glared at the rows of neatly pressed Armani suits and Gucci shoes.

She grasped a sleeve, held it up, poised the scissors—and stopped.

What would this get her? Sure she'd have the momentary satisfaction of seeing his face when he came home and found his precious designer clothes in shreds. She could take a sledge hammer to his car and that would feel good too. But for all that effort the satisfaction would be fleeting.

She could divorce him, but thanks to a carefully worded prenuptial agreement, she'd get barely a quarter of a million and Rae Carrone was worth twenty times that. It hadn't always been so.

They'd been married five years and his assets had quadrupled in that time, thanks in no small part to her efforts. The advertising campaign that had sent their sales through the roof had been her idea, her *baby*. She had conceived the idea, and with Ray's full approval, had supervised it every step of the way right through to completion.

Initially Ray had balked at the cash outlay required for the kind of media blitz she proposed, but she'd convinced him it would be worth it. And she had been right. Carrone Fitness Clubs and Health Products had become a household name, and the money had come rolling in.

She'd earned her position as head of Promotions and Marketing, and she had *not* earned it on her back. Sure, she'd been married to Ray when she got the promotion, but dammit, she'd deserved it. Just as she deserved a bigger chunk of the pie than a measly few hundred grand. She'd brought up the prenuptial agreement once or twice in the years since the business took off, but he'd always laughed it off, minimized its importance or said they'd change it *later*.

Maybe she should have pushed harder, but surely a judge would look at the facts, and their history together, and throw out the contract. Or would he? She would like to think so, but how could she be sure? It wouldn't help that she hadn't been a functioning

member of the staff for more than six months. She'd taken an indefinite leave of absence on the advice of her doctor, and eventually on Ray's insistence.

He wanted a child, and the doctor suspected that the stress levels she experienced with the amount of time she put in at the office were not helping their chances for conception.

She could still remember the conversation as clearly as if she were watching a video tape in her mind...

"This is ridiculous, Kaley," ranted Ray. I won't argue about it anymore. I don't see why you're having such a hard time with this. You get an indefinite holiday. You get to shop to your heart's content and have as many facials as you like. Most women would swoon at the thought."

She tamped down a rare spark of temper. "I enjoy my work, Ray. I'll be bored."

"Well, once you have a baby to look after you won't be."

"But what if it's not that simple?" Her temper got the better of her. "What if I'm not the problem? If you'd at least get tested then we could be sure."

She shouldn't have said it. The moment it was out of her mouth she regretted it, but there was no taking it back. They'd been over this ground before and she knew what his reaction would be. She wasn't disappointed.

His expression turned to ice. "So, you don't think I'm man enough for you, is that it? You think I'm incapable of fathering a child?"

"No, Ray. I'm sorry. I didn't mean –"

"I know exactly what you meant, and this discussion is over. If you don't want to be bothered with a baby, then tell me now, so I can find someone who does!"

He didn't mean it. She knew he said such things out of anger and an insecurity that few would have guessed he harbored, but still...it hurt. "Of course I want a baby. And I'll do whatever it takes."

"Good. Now let's not discuss this again until you can come back and tell me the rabbit died." He smiled as if he were making a joke, but she couldn't bring herself to smile. "And let's hope it's soon."

He pecked her on the cheek and walked out the door. "Yes," she whispered. "Let's hope it is."

But it hadn't happened "soon", and lately Ray had seemed even more restless than usual. His temper had been thin and his good humor thinner. He hardly seemed to notice her anymore, and if she admitted it to herself, when they made love it didn't feel like making love anymore.

It felt like he was performing a duty. It felt like procreation.

And now she wondered if he really was thinking of *procreating* with someone else. Well, she wasn't going to be discarded so easily. She'd given him her mind and her body, she'd made him a home and made sacrifices for him, and still it wasn't enough. And still he felt the need to look elsewhere.

Well, Kaley didn't intend to take that lying down. And she didn't intend to make his life easy by taking that prenuptial agreement at face value and paving the way to a nice, tidy – cheap – divorce.

She wanted more, dammit. She deserved more.

She just had to figure out a way to get it.

Chapter Two

Mason inserted the forged key into the lock and hoped. The dead bolt slid open, allowing the two men to slip inside without delay.

He closed the door behind them and sighed in relief as Dan, his friend and partner, crossed to the alarm panel and proceeded to work his techno-magic.

"I don't like this," muttered Dan as he fussed and fiddled, pushing buttons and making lights blink. "I don't like the whole thing."

The console light blinked green and Mason breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, for chrissake, Dan. Will you chill?" He pulled his ski-mask off to take a few deep breaths of unfiltered air. "You'll like it fine when we rake in all that cash."

Dan leaned in close and hissed, "Just so long as we don't have to spend it from a fucking *prison cell*!"

Mason raked his fingers through his mop of thick, blond hair and studied his friend.

Dan rubbed his temples. His short, chestnut hair stood out at a variety of angles and his eyes were shadowed with fear. Daniel was afraid of too many things and Mason had made it his life's work to cure his friend of his perpetual hesitation. From bungee jumping to sky-diving, Dan balked at everything, but always succumbed to Mason's unique persuasive abilities. All Mason had to do was challenge his friend to a bet or a contest and Dan's normally mild, subdued nature was transformed. He had a fierce sense of competition and once it was awakened there was no stopping him. Mason took advantage of that, and Dan had never once regretted it, always enjoying himself and eventually thanking Mason for pushing and challenging him.

Mason hoped he wasn't about to break a perfect record.

"Are you finished?" asked Mason, keeping his voice even. "Calm? Collected? Because if you're not tell me now. Both of us have to be in top form or this isn't going to work. Or else we *will* end up in a prison cell."

Dan looked down at his hands where his ski mask had been twisted into a knot. "Yeah. Sure. Sorry. I'm in." He turned his big brown puppy-dog eyes on Mason and smiled, baring dimples that had had girls swooning ever since grade school. If only Dan had known what to do with them once they'd dropped at his feet.

"I need this money as much as you do." Dan nodded again. "Yeah. I'm in."

"Okay, then. Put on your mask."

Both men donned their disguises and began to creep through the darkened house. The place was a monstrosity, easily six thousand square feet if it was an inch. What two people without kids or pets needed with that kind of space eluded him. But, then again,

everybody needed something to spend their money on. Perhaps Mr. Carrone could write off the ransom as just another household expense.

He grinned as he followed Dan up the solid oak staircase.

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Ray Carrone was cold. Halfway between the worlds of sleep and wakefulness, he became vaguely aware that he was uncovered. Silently cursing his wife who, despite the enormous bed, had a knack for hogging the covers, he gradually clawed his way toward consciousness. Without opening his eyes he reached out in search of the blanket but found, to his shock, that he couldn't move.

He tried harder but met with no success. His wrists were tied! When that realization hit, his eyes, at last, flew open.

"Finally," whispered a deep male voice. "Jesus man, you sleep like the dead."

Ray blinked, trying to bring the world into focus. He felt something cold against his temple and turned his head to try and make it out. He found himself looking into the barrel of a pistol that was the size of a small cannon.

"That's exactly what you'll be if you fuck with us, by the way. Dead."

He blinked, tried to speak and then realized his mouth was taped shut. He looked frantically around and realized the full extent of his predicament. Rope held him, spread-eagled, to the four posts of the bed. A man garbed in black, complete with ski mask, stood at his head with a gun, and another similarly clad stood at the foot of the bed with—he blinked again—with Kaley.

She was nude, tied and gagged, and held against the body of the second man. Her blond hair was a tousled froth, and despite her tall athletic frame and innately proud bearing, she looked vulnerable, helpless. Her blue eyes were wide and even in the dim pre-dawn light he could see the fear in them.

Despite the coolness of the room and his naked state, the heat of anger flushed his skin. No one threatened Ray Carrone, and no one treated his possessions that way.

"What do you want?" He tried to scream the words but of course, they came out as little more than a pathetic mumble.

The pistol nudged his cheek. "I don't really care what you're trying to say, *Mister Carrone*, I just need you to listen, and listen *good*."

His assailant motioned toward the foot of the bed. "You see that lady, there? The one with a gun to her head? You know...your *wife*?"

Ray merely glared his rage.

"She's a sweet little thing, isn't she? And very vulnerable. Well, it's your job to keep her safe, buddy, and it seems to me you're falling down on the job. A big, *fat* failure. Yup. That's how I see it."

Ray wrestled with his bindings but only succeeded in tightening the knots and making his captor laugh.

"You don't like that do you? Being a failure. Well, face it, *Mister Carrone*, we're going to steal your pretty little wife away and there's nothing you can do about it."

He motioned with the gun to the other man, who promptly dragged Kaley toward the door. She kicked and fought and tried to scream through the gag, but was no match for the six-foot thug who finally bent down and scooped her off her feet to carry her out of sight.

Ray turned fierce eyes on the man who remained beside him, waiting and watching.

"So now, the question is, how can you get her back? How can you redeem yourself and turn failure back into success?" A plain manila envelope landed on Ray's chest. "Read this and it will explain everything." He got up, moved to leave, but hesitated at the doorway. "It's all there, Carrone. The time and place for the next contact, how much we want, and when. But there's one thing I want to make sure you are absolutely clear on. No cops. You so much as make one phone call to the police and not only will we fuck your wife until she's bloody and sore, and then dump her body in the bay, but the police will get all the information they need to turn your little money-laundering business inside out."

Ray felt his balls contract. How could they know about that? How could they possibly –

"Good," said the man in the mask. "We understand each other." He glanced at his watch. "I figure the cleaning service will find you in about three hours. So until then..." He made a mocking salute and disappeared down the darkened hallway, leaving Ray to stew in his own juices of impotent fury and righteous indignation.

Chapter Three

Kaley flopped back on the bed and drew the lapels of the thick terry cloth robe in tightly about her. She closed her eyes and smiled. "Damn, I'm good."

"You?" laughed Mason. "I don't seem to recall you having much to do with it."

She opened her eyes and propped herself up on her elbows to better see her friend. He stood at the foot of the bed in this cheap little out-of-the-way motel that was going to be their home for the next three days. At least what little paint remained on the walls was mold-free and the sheets were clean. For now that was all that mattered. "I came up with the idea, didn't I? I planned the whole thing."

Mason stripped off his black turtleneck, revealing a rippling six-pack and shoulders that could give many a Greek god cause for insecurity. He dove onto the bed beside her, causing the ancient springs to groan and complain, and almost sending her sprawling onto the floor. He rolled onto his side and grinned as she scowled back at him.

"You had the *idea*," he said, "but we worked out all the nitty-gritty details. I'm the drive and the muscle and Dan's the technical-detail man. Right, Dan?" he yelled the last words loud enough to bring Dan running from the kitchenette. He had a half-eaten sandwich in his hand, and panic written all over his face.

"What? What's wrong? Why did you call me?"

Mason shook his head and laughed. "Dan, Dan the paranoid man."

"I'm not paranoid," said Dan, taking another bite and chewing. "Just cautious." He pointed the sandwich at Mason. "And you need me! If it weren't for me you'd go running off every cliff like some goddamn lemming looking for..." He shrugged. "Whatever the hell it is lemmings look for."

"I'm no lemming." Mason's tone was distinctly defensive. "I'm more of a..."

"Ferret?" offered Kaley.

He glared at her. "A what?"

"You know," said Dan, waving the sandwich vaguely in the air. "It's another word for weasel."

"I know what a fucking ferret is! I just—"

Both Kaley and Dan burst out laughing, and Mason's face flushed bright red.

Kaley was so lost in her good mood and her fit of the giggles that she was shocked to find Mason suddenly on top of her, pinning her wrists as his rock-hard cock nudged her pussy through the thick layers of terry-cloth. "Mason?" she breathed. "What the hell?"

"You know how I hate to be laughed at." His tone was harsh, but laughter twinkled in his eyes.

"We weren't laughing *at* you." She wriggled in a feeble effort to get away, but couldn't deny the effect of having Mason's well-formed pecs and rock-hard thighs pressed against her. "We were laughing with you." She turned her head. "Right, Dan?"

She blinked. "Where'd he go?"

Mason glanced at the door. "Dan's shy. Especially around beautiful women."

"Really?" she said, genuinely surprised. "That's too bad." Dan wasn't as broad or heavily muscled as Mason, and didn't have the same sort of chiseled jaw line, but he was fit and well-defined and his tousled hair and glasses gave him a warm, boy-next-door quality that many women found immensely appealing. Not her of course. She preferred rugged and dangerous, which was what had drawn her to Ray and, of course, to Mason.

She and Mason had hooked up in university after running into each other at numerous sporting events and finding that they shared a keen interest in athletics as well as an overdeveloped sense of competition and a love of adventure. They'd been friends and on-and-off lovers for a couple of years before she hooked up with Ray. It had been light and playful and fun.

Now she looked up at him, saw the lust in his eyes, and remembered exactly how much fun.

"Yeah," Mason was saying. "Dan sees himself as a sort of computer geek, I guess. Makes him skittish, especially around beautiful women."

"But you're not shy, are you Mason?" She shifted her hips in invitation. "Especially around beautiful women." Smiled coyly.

He arched one eyebrow, released her wrists and pushed back one lapel of her robe. "No. I'm not." He traced a circle around one sensitive nipple. "Your husband screwed around on you, eh? Man's a fool." He bent low to nip lightly at her skin.

She sucked in a breath. "Fool enough to fall for our scheme and give up the money he tried to cheat me out of with that damn prenup agreement."

His tongue traced the curve of her breast, sending shivers dancing over her skin. "He didn't know who he was dealing with." He laved her nipple, drew it into his mouth.

"No." She sank her fingers into his thick, dark hair and made her decision. Ray didn't deserve her fidelity, not anymore. In fact, it seemed he never had.

While she'd been designing killer ad campaigns and cooking romantic dinners for two... While she'd been dreaming up new and exciting ways to make her husband happy and make their marriage work—he'd been humping anything with tits and a shaved pussy.

After finding the CD in his pocket, she had sneaked into his office and, on a hunch, checked his private file cabinet. She'd found videos and CDs dating back years—dating

back to before they were married. And then, out of some twisted need to torture herself, she'd made herself watch some of them. Too many.

Ray hadn't limited himself to sexy secretaries or desperate housewives. Some of those girls had been just that—girls. Young girls. Girls that she suspected Ray had sprung from Algebra class for a session in the back of his limo. And the "Office Fuck" video had been tame in comparison to some of the twisted games he'd played with those young things who were so vulnerable, so eager to please a man in designer duds.

It made her shudder to realize she'd shared a bed with him as long as she had. She'd saved some of the CDs to submit to the authorities at a later date, but she had wanted first crack at emasculating him.

She'd been taken. And now it was his turn

She pulled Mason against her. "No, he didn't know who he was dealing with."

He responded eagerly, devouring her breast like a starving man.

She arched her back and pulled aside the lapels of the robe in blatant offering.

"Mmm." He shifted to the other breast, his broad hands bracketing her rib cage. "You taste as good as I remember." He nipped her with his teeth and raised his head to look at her, his eyes gleaming. "Better."

And then he took her mouth. He fisted his hands in her hair and ravished her mouth, plundering her as surely and completely as a Viking taking his first virgin. His body was heavy, his scent thick with musk and sex, and the ridge of his erection against her cleft was driving her slowly mad. She slipped her hands beneath the waistband of his jeans and gripped his ass as she arched her hips in search of fulfillment. Her desire and frustration mingled, culminating as a low growl in the back of her throat.

He surrendered her mouth and she caught a glimpse of an impudent grin before he slithered down her body and settled between her thighs.

He parted the lips of her sex with his fingers. "You anxious for it, babe? You in the market for a good fucking?"

"Yes." She squirmed beneath his touch, anxious for his fingers, his tongue, his cock—anything to fill her.

His tongue tickled her clit. "And you think I can deliver."

"Oh God. I know you can."

"Ah, but is it me you want?" He tasted her, sucked her hard enough to make her start. "Or revenge?"

She sucked in a deep breath, lifted her head and admitted the truth. "Both. But does it matter?"

He grinned at her, two fingers inserted deeply in her pussy. "Not really, but if it's revenge you're after..." He pumped her, palpated her, made her senses spin. "I've got an idea."

* * * * *

Ray paced the length of his home office. He glanced at the printouts on his desk and scowled. "Goddamn stupid fucking bastards!"

"Actually," said Cyndi from her position at the computer. "I don't think they're that stupid."

"I didn't ask you!" he bellowed.

She flinched, returning to her task of searching for the information he'd requested.

"So, what do you want to do, Mr. Carrone?" Vince was wedged into a large leather wingback chair. One of the only pieces of furniture in the office large enough to hold him.

Ray's fists clenched reflexively. "What do I *want* to do? I want to rip both of their goddamn heads off and piss down the hole!"

"So you really want her back?" asked Cyndi, her eyes never leaving the computer screen.

"Of course I do. What kind of stupid question is that?"

Now she looked at him, her eyes a question.

He laughed. "Oh Jesus, Cyndi. Did you think *you* had a shot at taking over this household? Of becoming *Mrs. Carrone*?"

Her eyes narrowed.

"You're a decent secretary, a whiz with computers and a pretty good lay and that's it. Kaley is all class and style and she's exactly the kind of woman I need to go with my image."

Her face had gone red, but to her credit she kept herself under control. "So you're willing to pay two million dollars to get her back?"

He snorted. "Of course not. I'll just make it look like I am." Ray admitted to himself what he had no intention of admitting to his underlings. This was all about power and control. Kaley was *his* and he had no intention of giving her up without a fight. But he wasn't stupid. Even *his* ego wasn't worth two million dollars, and Kaley was hardly irreplaceable. He could find another one just like her if he had to. If she disappeared somewhere along the way—got caught in the crossfire, so to speak—then it would be regrettable but hardly cause for loss of sleep. His image was paramount. Ray Carrone couldn't afford to be seen as weak or incapable of looking after his own affairs.

"So no police?" asked Vince.

"Right. We'll look after things ourselves." The kidnappers' warning had hardly been necessary. "We'll follow their instructions for now, but in the meantime come up with our own—" The ring of the phone cut him off.

Before Cyndi could reach for it he snatched it up.

"What do you want?"

But to his surprise it wasn't the kidnappers. "Hello. Mr. Carrone?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"This is Dr. Mello's office. Is Mrs. Carrone available?"

He tamped down his temper. "I'm afraid she's not here at the moment."

"Oh. Well..."

Jesus. "Can I take a message?"

"Well, normally we like to speak to the patient directly, but I happen to know she was excited and would have wanted you to know as soon as possible. And considering how long you've been trying..."

Ray felt a twinge of dread. "Know? Know what?"

"Your wife is pregnant, Mr. Carrone. Congratulations."

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"Thanks, Trina," said Kaley, the cell phone snug against her ear. "I really appreciate it."

"It was nothing, Mrs. Carrone. I mean, a hundred bucks to make one phone call? And I really appreciate the job. Now I can get that new pair of boots I've been wanting."

Kaley batted away Mason's hand that had sneaked beneath the hem of her robe and was creeping up her thigh. "Glad we could be of service to each other. Now don't forget to throw that cell phone away when you're done."

"Right, Mrs. Carrone. No probs."

Relentless, Mason pushed aside the robe and began to nibble on her inner thigh. "Uh...Well, thanks again Sally."

There was some hesitation on the other end. "It's Trina."

"Oh." His tongue teased the edge of her pussy. "Right. I—" The phone was torn from her hand, clicked off and cast aside. "Hey! What do you—"

"Stop stalling." He pulled her to her feet and slipped the robe from her shoulders. "Let's do this."

"I wasn't stalling and you're just horny."

"Definitely. All the more reason." He raked his eyes over her nude body once before glancing at Dan who had been fiddling with the video camera. "You ready?"

"Sure." Dan's expression was distinctly uncomfortable, and if he hadn't looked so darn cute, she might have felt sorry for him. "You sure *you* are?" He was addressing Kaley.

"Ready?" She smiled reassuringly. "Don't worry, Dan. I'm something of an exhibitionist at heart. And I'm highly motivated."

Mason pushed her playfully onto the bed and reached for the handcuffs. He proceeded to secure her spread-eagled to the bed. "Translation—she's hot for my bod."

She rolled her eyes. "That's hardly the motivation I'm talking about."

"Whatever." He grinned down at her. "But considering that mouth of yours I certainly don't regret doing *this*." He gently applied a strip of duct tape to her lips and she tried to glare her outrage, but doubted she pulled it off.

His chore complete, Mason picked up his ski-mask and a flogger that had been laid out. He turned to Dan. "Ready?"

"Ready."

He pulled the mask into place and snapped the flogger against his palm. "*Roll'em!*"

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Dan focused the camera on Mason, who stood off to the side, away from the bed.

"Greetings, Mr. Carrone." Mason's tone was light but with a distinct edge. "Well, we've had your wife for approximately twelve hours now, and our hope is that you've begun to sweat. The conditions of the exchange outlined in the packet we left haven't changed, but since the *big moment* is still more than thirty-six hours away, we thought you might need a little reminder as to our intentions. A little added...incentive, if you will. Don't fuck with us Carrone, because if you do, your wife will pay the price."

On cue Dan swung the camera to the bed and felt himself grow hard.

"Beautiful, isn't she?" said Mason.

At this angle her face was visible, as was the fear that she was so good at portraying in her eyes. Her blonde hair was spread out on the pillow like a golden halo and her skin was the color of buckwheat honey.

However, the camera also had a good view of her pussy, spread wide, moist, pink and inviting.

Dan's already heavy erection became almost painful. He envied Mason, yet knew the boundaries. Kaley was *Mason's* friend, and Dan had no business even fantasizing about being with her. And yet, he had. *God*, had he ever.

"And oh, so vulnerable," Mason was saying.

The snap of the flogger across her belly cut through the silence.

Kaley's head whipped around to face Mason and he laughed.

"So convincing. If I didn't know better I'd think you didn't like it." He raised the flogger and she shook her head vigorously. "Not that it matters one way or the other." He whipped her again, this time across her breasts and she moaned. She writhed on the bed, the movement ambiguous, conveying fear but stirring desire.

Dan knew the flogger was soft and not intended to cause pain. It was all part of the show, and both Mason and Kaley had voiced their intentions to enjoy every minute of it. Dan would make do with enjoying the performance.

The flogger fell again and again, across her breasts, ribs, belly, hips. Her skin became flushed and her nipples grew erect. She continued to writhe and moan, her body jerking with every blow, the scent of her arousal filling Dan's nostrils.

Mason snapped it across her thighs—and stopped. “Well now, ain’t this interesting.” He allowed the tails of the flogger to trail across her pussy. “Your wife is wet. Maybe she wants it more than she’s letting on.”

Again Kaley shook her head vigorously and again, Mason chuckled. “Why don’t I believe you?” He swished the tails slowly across her pussy and they came away damp. “Hmm.” He leaned down, used his fingers to spread the lips of her sex. “Let’s get a closeup here, shall we?”

Dan swallowed thickly as he zoomed in on her swollen pussy.

Mason smoothed his fingers over her clit and she writhed in what appeared to be an effort to get away. “You keep still.” He hopped onto the bed and straddled her hips, facing the camera. “That should do it.”

He used both hands to part her sex, and proceeded to massage her clit between two fingers. There was no mistaking the groan of pleasure that reverberated through that room, or the way her juices flowed onto the sheets.

Mason pushed two fingers inside her, all the while continuing to massage her clit with his thumb.

“Oh yeah.” Mason’s voice had grown thick. “You want it, don’t you?” He thrust his fingers into her again.

She groaned what was no doubt intended to be perceived as a protest, but it only served to enhance Dan’s already painful erection.

“Christ,” moaned Mason. “I’ll be you’re sweet.” Abruptly he hopped off her and crouched between her legs. He lifted his mask to expose his mouth and bent down to taste her.

It took Dan a second to adjust his position in order to get a decent view of what was happening. He was quite impressed with his ability to hold the camera steady in light of what he was observing.

Mason was lapping her up like a cat starved for fresh cream. His tongue dipped inside her and then he moved on to suckle her clit. “You want me to fuck you, baby?” he asked his lips against her sex.

Dan pulled back far enough to catch the shake of her head.

Mason’s tongue continued its assault. “Oh, so you want to come in my mouth?”

Another shake of the head, but her chest was heaving, her breasts gleamed with sweat.

“You’re gonna come whether you like it or not, babe.” He moved up her body until his eyes were level with hers. “Cock or tongue. Your choice.” He ripped the tape off her mouth.

She sucked in a huge lungful of air. “No, please,” she said at last, playing her role. “Please stop.”

He kissed her then, thrusting his tongue deeply into her mouth, forcing her to taste herself, even as he toyed with her already straining nipples.

She accepted the kiss this time, arching her back in what could have been either pleasure or protest. He laughed, ending the kiss and sitting up, straddling her hips. "Cock or tongue? How do you want your hubby to see you come for me?"

"Cock," she breathed, licking her lips that were coated with her own juices.

He reached for the button on his jeans. "You want me to fuck you?"

She closed her eyes, turned her head away.

His jeans pushed past his hips and his cock jutting out before him, Mason grabbed her chin and forced her to look at him. "Say it, babe or I'll flog you 'til you bleed."

"Fuck me," she said, her voice a rasping whisper. "Please."

And he did.

* * * * *

Kaley arched her hips to meet him as he thrust into her. His cock was as thick and strong as she remembered, but the excitement had never been so intense.

He didn't bother with gentility this time, but took her like a kidnapper would, like a man accustomed to violence. Like a man possessed. And that was exactly what she wanted.

She wanted to lose herself in the act, to be taken and be taken hard, but taken by someone who she knew loved her as a person rather than a possession. By someone who would make sacrifices for her, and take risks on her behalf. Why had it taken so many years to figure out that Ray was none of those things?

Damn it, but he hadn't even been that great of a lover. He was far too selfish for that. Well, his selfishness was coming back to haunt him. In spades.

When Mason's lips joined with hers again, she accepted his tongue eagerly, just as she accepted every thrust of his cock. She allowed it to fill her, allowed her body to respond as it was meant to.

His lips were hungry and exciting, his assault strong. The ache built low in her belly and spread to her clit until she thought she'd burst. And when she finally did, she turned her head away from the camera, but didn't bother to hold back the cry of satisfaction that was burning in her chest. Perhaps Ray would think it a cry of pain.

And perhaps she didn't really care what he thought.

Her pussy clenched and squeezed, draining every ounce of energy she possessed, and drawing Mason to his own explosive climax.

"Jesus," he said, collapsing on top of her. He turned to the camera. "Two million is a small price to pay for this, Carrone. As much as I'd like to keep her though, I *will* make the trade." His voice turned hard. "But if you choose to screw with us, and *not* do as we've instructed, rest assured next time I won't be nearly as gentle, and I'll be using a real whip. You'll barely recognize what they pull out of the bay." He leaned closer to the camera. "So *don't fail!* It's as simple as that."

She heard the camera cut out and allowed herself to relax

Chapter Four

Kaley pulled on her jeans and tucked in her T-shirt, but never once diverted her eyes from the window. The hotel may be cheap and in poor condition, but you couldn't beat the view, and tonight's sunset was spectacular. Bands of fuchsia and gold sliced across the sky, reflecting in the water and searing her eyes with their intensity.

"Do you want some tea?"

She turned to see Dan come into the room with a small tray and two mugs.

"Sure. Thanks." She plopped down on the bed and crossed her legs, watching him intently as he set down the tray. He wasn't as broad or muscular as Mason, and his hair was always sticking out in a half dozen directions, but his smile was sweet, his brown eyes sincere and — she sighed — his ass in those jeans could have a woman on her knees and begging in a heartbeat.

"Kaley?"

She blinked, noticed the mug hovering before her eyes. She chuckled and accepted it, warming her hands on the earthenware. "Oh, sorry. Guess I'm a little distracted."

"Understandable." He reached for a chair, pulled it out and noticed the seat was cracked.

Kaley patted the bed beside her, and after a moment's hesitation he complied. Although he sat perfectly still, Kaley had the distinct sense that he was squirming inside his skin.

She took a sip of her tea. "You're not terribly comfortable with all this, are you?"

His shoulders slumped. "Is it that obvious?" He looked up at her then, his eyes imploring.

She laughed. "Oh God, Dan, it's like watching a cat dip its feet into cold water."

He blew out a breath. "Yeah, and that's pretty much how it feels. The whole kidnapping thing is crazy. I don't know how the hell I let Mason talk me into it."

"I don't think it's so crazy," she said softly.

His eyes snapped to hers. "I-I'm sorry. I know you have your reasons, and I sure went into it with my eyes wide open, but being in the middle of it is..." He blew out a slow breath.

"Daunting?"

He stared into his mug. "Try terrifying." He took a sip and Kaley continued studying him.

"That's not the only thing you're uncomfortable with, though. Is it?"

He looked at her over the rim of his mug. "What do you mean?"

"Come on, Dan. It didn't take a psychic to see how uncomfortable you were with filming our little simulation."

He shrugged, tapped his mug with his index finger.

"I'll admit I'm surprised. I figured anyone who's hung around Mason as long as you have, would have been exposed to all kinds of sexual..." Dan looked at her and she tilted her head as she considered. "...misadventures."

She could tell he was working to suppress a grin. "I've always just heard about them after the fact. I've been lucky that way."

She covered her mouth in mock consternation. "You mean *my* Mason has been known to kiss and tell?"

Dan let out a loud guffaw. "Trust me. I'm sure I only hear *half* of what he's been up to."

"And what about you, Dan? Surely you've had a few misadventures of your own. Do you kiss and tell?"

The mood shifted as quickly as if she'd flipped a switch. He stood and motioned to her mug. "Do you want more tea?"

"No. I've barely touched what I have, thanks."

"Oh. Right." He stood there, apparently at a loss for how to proceed, and Kaley had a moment of regret.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable. I'm just so used to talking and joking about sex with Mason, and most of my friends for that matter, that I just take it for granted that everyone else feels the same way. Besides, it's none of my business."

"No, no. It's not that." He let out a nervous chuckle and sat down again. "It's not that I'm uncomfortable talking about sex. And I don't mind you asking."

"No? Then what is it?"

"I—it's just." He dropped his gaze. "You'll laugh."

"I won't laugh," she said sincerely, although her curiosity was piqued. "I promise."

He cleared his throat. "I...uh...God, I've never told this to anyone else before." He hung his head. "I think I feel sick."

"Dan!" She reached for his hand, and was relieved when he didn't pull away. "What is it? Nothing can be that bad. Whatever it is, surely —"

"I haven't slept with a woman in five years."

Kaley's next words died on her tongue. She blinked. And then blinked again. "But you're twenty-five years old."

Impossibly, his head hung lower. "Twenty-six."

"But I don't get it." She grasped his chin, lifting his face so she could see his wide brown eyes. "You're an intelligent, attractive man. How is it that you have trouble finding women who want to sleep with you?"

He shrugged.

"Are you waiting until you get married? Is that it?"

"No. It's not that." He shrugged. "Don't get me wrong. In college I went a little wild." His cheeks flushed a bit with the admission. "But I guess, since then—since I grew up—I just haven't met anyone that I really *wanted* to sleep with. I've dated some very attractive women, but there always seemed to be some reason not to." He squeezed her hand. "Please don't tell Mason."

Kaley was still reeling. "You mean he doesn't know?"

"Well, I think maybe he suspects. I think that's part of the reason he pushes me into all these extreme sports and things. He thinks I'm shy and introverted and that if he gets me to come out of my shell I'll be more confident with women."

"But that's not it."

"Well, maybe," he admitted. "Part of it."

Kaley suspected it was quite a bit more than "part" of it.

"Has Mason ever set you up with anyone?"

"Yeah. But it never worked out."

Why? She wondered, but didn't ask. She also wondered if being exposed to Mason who was so flamboyant and sure of himself, especially where women were concerned, could be a little intimidating. It could be an impossible image to live up to.

Kaley pulled her knees up and rested her chin on them, considering. "So how did watching us make you feel?"

He cleared his throat. "Uh...what do you mean?"

"Well, did you like it? Watching, I mean. Or was it a turn off?"

He laughed aloud. "No. Definitely not a turn off."

"But it did make you uncomfortable."

"Well, it's not like I don't watch a little porn now and then, but being so close to it..." He shifted in his seat. "Yeah, I guess it did. A little."

She set her feet on the floor and shifted closer. "Because it felt like an intrusion? Or was there some other reason?"

He licked his lips. "Maybe."

She had a hunch. "It made you uncomfortable because you wanted in on it, didn't you?" She shifted still closer, laid a hand on his knee.

He didn't move. He went very still, his gaze dropping to her hand and his throat working as he swallowed. "I...uh..."

She slid her hand a little further up his thigh. "Is that it, Dan? Did seeing that make you hot? Did it get you thinking about sleeping with *me*?" In an effort to emphasize her point her hand crept up to his waist and slipped beneath the hem of his shirt. His skin was warm and firm, and it quivered beneath her touch.

He stayed very still, but his breathing was choppy. "But I hardly know you."

"Does it matter?" She slid her hand a little higher, across ridges of abdominal muscle and ribs until her thumb stroked a straining nipple. "If it's love you want, I don't think I can help, but if it's friendship, trust, and simple sexual satisfaction then—"

He grabbed her wrist with enough force to startle her. "There's nothing simple about it."

She smiled. "Is that a yes or a no?"

He reached for her other hand and guided it beneath his shirt. She had her answer. And that pleased her.

She couldn't say why, exactly. Dan was nothing like the men she had dated in college, and he was certainly nothing like Ray. He had a sweetness about him, however, that she found oddly appealing, despite the fact that she had always steered clear of men like that. But then again, he also had an intensity, an...*earnestness* that captured her attention and held it. It radiated out from him, the effect subtle but unmistakable. Quiet yet powerful. Like the feeling in the air just before a storm.

She skimmed her hands over his skin and enjoyed the tiny shivers that accompanied her touch, and when she looked up at him, and met his gaze—felt the force of it—a little bolt of lightning zinged through her gut. The suddenness and forcefulness of his kiss stole her thoughts. His lips were firm and insistent, his tongue hot and eager. It startled her, but perhaps it shouldn't have.

He sank his fingers into her hair and held her there as he crushed her lips and ravished her mouth. She wrapped her arms around him and pulled him closer, digging her fingernails into the flesh of his back.

Abruptly he stopped, abandoning her mouth and leaving her breathless and wanting.

"Sorry," he whispered, her arms still latched around him. "I don't know where that came from."

"Does it matter?" She nibbled on his jaw, traced a line along it with her tongue, found trace of stubble "As long as you can find it again."

"You mean you didn't mind?"

In response she held him tight and flung herself back onto the bed, dragging him with her. He landed on top of her, his body between her splayed legs, his laughter echoing through her mind.

"You surprised me." He was still chuckling as he looked down on her.

"Ditto."

He continued gazing at her, the smile remained, but the nature of it changed. It took on a hungry edge that made her skin quiver. He drew a fingertip along the line of her T-shirt, over the curve of her breast. "What about Mason?"

She blinked, focusing on his words. "Mason? What about him?"

"I thought you two..." He shrugged.

"You mean because of what we did here?"

He said nothing, but the question in his eyes was clear.

"Mason's a very talented lover, and a good friend. But that's all he is, and all he'll ever be. That was a show for my slime-ball husband's benefit. Nothing more."

"You enjoyed it, though."

She traced a finger over his cheekbone. "Yes. Of course I did. I'm human. If that makes me easy, or a whore, then we can just —"

"No!" He covered her mouth with his hand and then said more softly. "No. That's not what I meant. I just wanted to make sure —"

"You weren't horning in on Mason's territory?" She chuckled. "Have no fear. Mason has no claim on me."

"Hey," called a voice from the doorway. "I take exception to that."

They both turned their heads to see Mason, a stack of Chinese takeout boxes in hand, as he stood, grinning, in the doorway.

"So what's going on, Dan? Movin' in on my woman?"

"Ah come on, Mason." Kaley wrapped her arms around Dan's waist and held on when he tried to slip away from her. She winked at Dan, grinned at Mason. "A little competition would do you good."

"Competition? Dan?" He snorted, stepped into the room and set the boxes on the table beside the bed. "Who're you tryin' to kid? I could blow him outta the water with both hands tied behind my back."

Kaley slipped her hands underneath Dan's shirt. "I don't know about that. I think you might be surprised."

Mason opened a carton and pulled out a chicken ball. "Yeah. Right." He popped it into his mouth.

Dan, finally getting into the spirit of things lifted Kaley's shirt and traced a tongue along the curve of her breast. He murmured against her skin. "Is that a challenge, Mason?"

Kaley watched Mason out of the corner of her eye, saw his left eyebrow arch with interest. "A challenge? What does that mean?"

Dan peppered kisses along Kaley's rib cage, drew a line down her belly with his tongue, suckled her navel. He murmured against her skin. "Exactly what it sounds like." He turned his head. "Are you up for it?"

Mason narrowed his eyes. "*Up* for it?" Abruptly he dropped the box of chicken balls onto the table and whipped his shirt off over his head. "You bet. I never pass up a challenge. You know that."

Kaley laughed. "Hey, hey. Hang on there a second. Don't I get a say in this?"

"Nope." Mason's jeans dropped to his ankles. "You're going to enjoy it whether you like it or not."

Dan climbed off her and began working at his own jeans. She propped herself up on her elbows. "So what is this? A threesome where you guys compete to see who can make me come the most?"

Dan and Mason stopped what they were doing, exchanged a look and grinned. "Works for me." Dan's jeans hit the floor. He looked at her. "Does it work for you?"

She lay back on the bed, gazed at the ceiling and considered. Maybe a little "contest" like this was exactly what Dan needed to boost his self-confidence. If he could match Mason, or possibly even outshine him in this kind of sexual forum, then maybe he'd get over his insecurities. She'd do it for Dan. Her motives were purely selfless.

Purely.

She grinned. "Sure. But I have one condition."

"Yeah?" Gloriously nude, Mason crawled onto the bed and knelt beside her. "And what would that be?"

Nude as well, and showing off a remarkably well-defined six-pack not to mention a startling hard-on, Dan knelt on the opposite side. She looked from one to the other. From light and sweet to dark and dangerous and back again. "Set up the video camera, boys. And I'll explain everything."

Chapter Five

Kaley leaned back against a rock hard chest, and dug her fingers into Mason's well-toned thighs. He was leaning against the headboard, with her nestled between his legs.

He nuzzled her neck, skimmed his hands down her arms. "For God's sake, Kaley, lose the bra."

She'd stripped as well, but only down to bra and panties. "Come on, Mase. You guys gotta work for it a little. Right Dan?"

"Definitely."

She glanced up and sighed.

Dan stood at the tripod, fiddling with the camera, his back to her affording her an unobstructed view of his well-developed *assets*.

Apparently finished, he turned to face her and she sighed again.

Dan puffed up visibly, standing there, soaking in her adoring gaze.

"Hey," complained Mason. "You're gonna give me a complex."

Kaley dug her nails into his thighs. "Are you kidding? You've got an ego the size of the Roman Empire."

Dan crossed the room and crawled onto the bed. "Didn't the Roman Empire fall centuries ago?"

"Exactly."

Mason made a low growling noise in the back of his throat, but Kaley took no notice. She was far too absorbed in the way Dan's fingers were working their way across the balls of her feet.

"Mmm." Her head lolled against Mason's shoulder. "A foot rub. I'm a foot-slut from way back."

"Hmm. How about this?" Mason countered by running his fingers through her hair and massaging her scalp. Her head rolled forward to allow him better access as his fingers worked out tensions she hadn't even realized were there.

But then she felt the soft, moist warmth of Dan's tongue. It circled her toes, drew them into his mouth, suckling each one in turn until her insides melted.

Mason's hands moved to her shoulders. He slipped the bra straps down her arms and pushed aside the cups of her bra. He caressed her breasts, tweaking her nipples until she arched her back in agonized pleasure.

Dan, however had abandoned her feet and moved on to her legs. Fingers and tongue cruised up her calves, massaging muscles and teasing senses. He nibbled on the inside of her knee and she giggled, but when his mouth moved on to the soft flesh of

her thigh the giggle turned to a moan. He pushed her thighs apart and she complied, making note that her bra clasp had been popped and the lingerie had joined the rest of their clothes on the floor.

Mason's hands coasted over her breasts and down her belly, stopping only when they reached the barrier of the top edge of her panties.

She felt his breath on her ear even as Dan's tongue tickled the lower edge of her underwear and traced the crease.

"Who do you want to touch you?" whispered Mason, his breath as hot and thick as his cock that nudged her ass.

She just shook her head, unable to form coherent thought, let alone words.

So when two sets of fingers slipped beneath the satin, she almost rocketed out of her skin.

Dan pushed aside the material and eased inside her. Deeply. "Damn, she's wet."

"Oh yeah?" asked Mason, working her clit between two fingers. "Let's see." His fingers joined Dan's, and together both men pushed so deep she cried out from the pressure of it. And the pleasure.

"Please," she breathed, arching her hips and seeking something she couldn't quite define.

"Please what?" asked Mason, the grin evident in his voice.

"I...I don't know."

"Fuck this thing," said Dan, and she felt him rip away her thong as if it were made of nothing more than spider silk.

She opened her eyes and looked down, marveled at seeing two different hands playing with her pussy.

"Damn," said Dan, pushing Mason's hand aside. "I want those lips." And, with two fingers still buried deeply inside her, he bent his head and tasted her.

"Hmmm. Not a bad idea." And with that, Mason eased out from behind her and shifted to the side. His lips had fused with hers, even before her head hit the pillow.

Dan's tongue was slow and languorous as it circled her clit and licked her juices. The pressure from his fingers was deep and exquisite, a pleasure that was so intense it verged on painful.

Mason's kiss was soft at first, teasing and sweet, but as the intensity built in her pussy his kiss grew more eager. Hungry. Voracious.

The climax built deep within her womb and she arched her hips against Dan's mouth, in search of what she needed to put her over the edge.

"That's it, babe," he said, his fingers working toward her G-spot. "Let it go."

Mason cupped a breast and squeezed, tweaking a nipple, even as Dan's mouth ravished her sanity.

His fingers were buried deep inside her when the orgasm struck, washing over her like a tidal wave of pleasure.

She tore her mouth away from Mason's and had to tamp down the scream that swelled in her chest. The climax pounded her, and she was just catching her breath when Dan gripped her ass, lifted her hips and thrust his cock inside her.

"Is this okay?" he asked, his voice low and breathless.

She wanted to smile at the little show of insecurity, but was far too caught up in the roller coaster these men were putting her body through. "Yeah," she breathed. "That's—"

His sudden, fierce thrust startled her and stole her next words. She let out a little yelp of surprise, which must have concerned Mason.

"Hey, babe. You okay?"

She reached out and wrapped her hand around his throbbing cock. "I. Want. You." She stroked the moist tip with her thumb.

Mason's grin was devilish. "Oh yeah? How?" And then he straddled her, offering himself to her mouth. "Like this?"

In response she parted her lips and took him into the moist heat of her mouth. He tasted at once salty and sweet, hot and wicked. He gently gripped her head, sinking his fingers into her hair and slowly fucking her mouth, even as Dan fucked her pussy.

Dan's cock filled her. Mason's excited her.

Such intense intimacy with two sculpted male specimens worked together to build her excitement again.

Dan's thrusts accelerated and she could sense his climax building, along with her own. She caressed Mason's balls and his groan of pleasure added to her excitement.

When Dan's hands crept around her ass and touched the sensitive skin around her anus, it was enough to send her spiraling out of control. A fresh orgasm racked her body and pulsed around Dan's cock, sending him crashing toward his own climax.

Unable to withhold her cry of pleasure and in desperate need of oxygen, she relinquished her mouth's hold on Mason's cock and collapsed back onto the pillows. It only took a few movements of her delicate fingers to bring him to his own devastating climax.

He cried out in ecstasy, his cum splashing over her chest and trickling around her neck, and at last all three collapsed in a collective heap on the mattress, Mason on one side, Dan on the other.

"Hey," said Mason, trailing a finger across her chest. "Don't say I never get you anything."

"Huh?" she asked.

Dan propped himself up on an elbow and grinned. "It's the famous pearl necklace."

"Oh. That." She waggled her eyebrows. "Actually, if it's from Mason, that would have to be *infamous*."

"Ha ha," chortled Mason. "Very funny. You're usually much wittier."

"I'm too hungry to be witty. Where the hell is that Chinese food, anyway?"

"Right here." Mason picked up a box and popped open the tab. "But it's cold."

"Hmm," said Dan as he plucked a chicken ball out of the box. "I think I have an idea about how to warm them up again."

* * * * *

Kaley felt silly and slightly ridiculous, but she couldn't remember ever having quite so much fun.

She was laid out on the bed, a row of sweet and sour chicken balls arranged on her chest and belly. Plum sauce had been drizzled over the delicacies, and now Mason and Dan were arranging bits of beef, broccoli and almonds over the remaining portions of unclaimed skin.

"Hey." She giggled. "That tickles."

"Just wait," muttered Mason. "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

"You're going to feed me, too, right?"

In answer to her question, Dan picked up a spare chicken ball, dipped it in sauce and held it between his teeth. He bent down and offered it to her.

"Oh Dan. You really are coming out of your shell."

Unable to speak, he merely waggled his eyebrows, coming close enough that her lips touched the morsel. She nibbled tentatively at first, savoring the flavors as well as the soft brush of Dan's lips against hers. "Mmm," she said when the last of the chicken found its way past her lips.

"Mmm," she groaned again when Dan's mouth joined with hers, the flavors of saucy sweetness mingling with her own juices that lingered on his lips.

His kiss was languorous and decadent, his tongue soft but insistent. For just a moment she lost herself in him, and wondered if she'd ever find her way out again.

"Hey, hey, you two," complained Mason. "I'm starting to feel left out here."

Dan pulled away, but held her gaze for a moment before turning his attention on his friend. "It's your own fault. This whole contest thing was your idea."

"Not much of a contest," said Mason, licking some plum sauce out of Kaley's navel and making her giggle. "More of a cooperative effort, I'd say."

"Right. I guess it was." Kaley plucked up a piece of beef and popped it into her mouth. "But that's better anyway. Just like this whole kidnapping scheme. A cooperative effort that will net us a nice profit and make Ray Carrone regret every time he screwed around on me or took advantage of some poor innocent girl."

"Speaking of which..." Dan licked some teriyaki sauce off her nipple. "You delivered the tape without any problems?"

"Uh huh." Mason's tongue swirled across a rib and picked up a piece of broccoli. "And the stage is set for tomorrow night."

"Good," said Kaley, accepting another chicken ball and another deep, lingering kiss from Dan. "I wish I could see his face when he realizes what he's lost."

"You'll just have to imagine, I guess," said Dan.

"Yeah." She sucked in her breath when Mason drizzled some extra sweet and sour sauce over her pussy and proceeded to lap it up. "I guess I will."

Chapter Six

Ray stood on the dock and gazed out toward the ocean. The sky was overcast, the clouds allowing absolutely no starlight to seep through and giving the illusion of looking out into a thick, black void. The warehouse behind him listed to the side, as if it might collapse and drop into the water at any moment. And the one lone street lamp cast the entire scene in eerie cartoon-like shadows.

The whole thing gave him the creeps. "Jesus H. Christ," he mumbled, glancing at his watch. On top of it all, the kidnappers were late. "I can't believe this."

His radio crackled. "Huh? What was that, boss?"

"Dammit." He'd forgotten about the two-way radio hidden in his suit. "Jesus, Vince, you idiot. Shut up already. Don't you remember the signal?"

"Oh." There was a moment's hesitation. "Sorry, boss. I forgot. What was that a—" Vince grunted something unintelligible.

Ray rolled his eyes and whispered into the microphone. "Dammit. Can you speak English?"

"Actually," whispered a voice in Ray's ear. "At the moment, he can't."

Ray would have whirled around and taken a swing at the man whose body was pressed up against his back, but the distinctive pressure of cold metal at the base of his neck acted as an effective deterrent. "Fuck. What did you do to him?"

"Have no fear. He's merely incapacitated, but you reneged on our deal, Mr. Carrone."

"I brought the money." He motioned to the briefcase at his fee. And I didn't talk to any cops."

"Perhaps. But you didn't come *alone*."

Ray felt a sharp prick in the flesh of his neck. His hand flew up to ward off whatever was piercing his skin, but too late. The syringe was already embedded deeply in his flesh, the plunger depressed.

He yanked it out and stumbled away, glaring at his attacker. "What the hell?"

The man stood there, his face bare, his expression smug. "Don't worry, Mr. Carrone. It's not lethal. Merely a paralytic. A bit of...insurance."

Ray swallowed, blinked, and dropped to his knees, all under the watchful eye of his attacker. "Where's Kaley?" was all he managed to say before he fell to the concrete, his lips unable to move, breathing the only movement he seemed capable of.

He watched the man pick up the briefcase and pop it open, giving the contents a quick once over. "Good." He snapped it closed. "I'll have to trust you that it's all here."

He turned to go, and Ray wanted to scream. Helpless rage clogged in his throat. He hated being helpless and out of control. He needed to control his destiny. That was why he was here, after all. He had to remember why he was here and what was important. He had a son to worry about, his name and his progeny to protect. He had to have someone to follow in his footsteps, to take over the business when Ray's interests turned to tropical women and exclusive golf clubs. A child validated him, made him a man. Hadn't his own father drummed that into him from the time he was old enough to walk? Until he had a son a man hadn't truly grown up, he hadn't "made his mark". And Ray *needed* to make his mark. It was worth his entire empire if necessary. For Ray it was worth everything.

But he couldn't verbalize any of that. All he could do was watch in mounting fear as the kidnapper turned to go.

And then, abruptly he stopped and turned around. "Oh yeah. I almost forgot. You wanted your wife back."

Ray tried to glare his hatred.

"Don't worry. She's right there." The man motioned with his hand, and Ray was able to move his eyes enough to see. She stood at the edge of the dock, looking pale and fragile, and very alone in the watery lamplight.

She wore tattered sweats, her hair hung limply around her face, and her hands and feet were bound.

He breathed a sigh of relief, but felt a fresh surge of fear when the kidnapper, briefcase in hand, crouched down beside him. "She's beautiful, isn't she? And, as I'm sure you noticed from that video, a damn good fuck."

Mention of the video that he'd received the night before kindled a fresh rage inside Ray. He managed to make a low growl in the back of his throat, but it only served to amuse the other man.

His smile was tainted, however. "I can understand why you want her back so badly, but what I can't understand is why you would jeopardize her with your stupid stunt." He shook his head. "Bringing along a bodyguard. Really, Mr. Carrone. How cliché is that?"

"Ray?" It was Kaley's soft voice from the far side of the dock. "Are you all right?"

Ray kept his gaze trained on his tormentor.

"You didn't listen," he continued. "You didn't follow *instructions*. And I'm afraid you'll have to learn your lesson the hard way."

Those words echoed in Ray's brain. They echoed inside his head, filling his heart with fear and reminding him of...something. He felt as if he should recognize those words, as if they held some significance.

"Right?" said the kidnapper, standing. "Right." And suddenly he turned, lifted the gun and fired.

Out of the corner of his eye, through a veil of horror he saw Kaley's body jolt, saw her face contort as she staggered backward. And then he saw her drop off the edge of the dock.

The scream inside Ray's throat was silent, but even if he'd been able to make a noise there would have been no one to hear it.

He was completely alone.

Chapter Seven

One year later

"Hello," said the voice at the other end of the phone. Thanks to the untraceable internet hookup, the voice was a little fuzzy, but it would have to do. "Ray Carrone's office."

Kaley giggled as Dan traced a finger down her thigh. The soft tropical breeze toyed with her hair, and in the background she could hear the clink of ice as Mason prepared a pitcher of Margaritas.

"Uh...could I speak to him, please?"

"Certainly. Whom shall I say is calling?"

"Actually, I'd rather not. I'd like to surprise him."

The hesitation was minimal and a moment later the phone in her slimeball husband's office rang.

"Ray Carrone." Was it her imagination or did he sound tired? She wondered if his lawyer was keeping him up late going over the defense for his statutory rape case. Correction: *cases*.

She grinned. "Ray, *dahling*." A chilled Margarita glass was pressed in her hand and Mason sat down beside her on the love seat, snuggling her in tightly between two warm, firm bodies.

The three of them had originally decided to just hang out together here in Bermuda for a while. It had seemed logical, safer and smarter. But they'd quickly realized what they should have already known. They were good together. Damn good. They made good friends and great partners.

The idea to pour some of their capital into starting a beach-side fitness facility for tourists had really taken off. They'd each slipped so naturally into their own niche in running the operation that they'd laughingly admitted they were destined to be together. The fact that they made even better lovers than they did partners merely cemented their decision.

She spoke to her ex-husband. "So, how are you?"

Silence. "What the hell is this?"

"This, my dear, is your long lost wife."

"What the fuck—"

"For once in your life, Ray, shut up and listen. If you want answers, you'll do as I say."

He cursed and ranted a few more minutes, but eventually heard enough to understand what was expected of him. Two minutes later the trio saw Ray Carrone's name flash on the computer that sat on the coffee table in front of them.

They turned on the speaker phone and webcam. And waved. "Hi Ray!" She lifted her glass in a mock salute. "So good to see you again. How've you been?"

"You're supposed to be dead, Kaley! And—hang on a second. Who are they? Isn't that—"

"Meet my kidnappers, my co-conspirators and..." The men leaned in and planted a kiss on each cheek. "...live-in lovers." She sipped from her glass and nodded to Dan, who hit a button on the computer. "If you watch the corner of your screen you can watch a tape of some of the...activities that transpired during my captivity." She grinned. "It was sheer hell, Ray, I don't mind telling you. Sheer hell."

"What the—You *bitch*! You set me up! Do you have any idea the shit I went through with the cops after you disappeared? For a while they thought I had something to do with it."

She tisked, pleased and not altogether surprised by this new information. Nor was she surprised to hear that he had expressed no sense of loss or relief that she was indeed alive.

"And you screwed around on me, Ray. You should know I don't take kindly to being used and lied to. You paid the price and learned the lesson." She shrugged and laid her head on Dan's shoulder. "And we both got what we deserved."

The silence on the line was thick and when he spoke his voice was low and measured. "What about the baby. I want my *son*!"

"Oh Ray, there was no baby. Never was. Never will be. It was all part of the sting. I had to make you suffer, after all. I had to—" The line went dead.

Dan leaned in and nibbled on her ear. "Well, I'd say that went pretty well."

"Better than well," agreed Mason. "He got exactly what—"

The wail of an infant cut through the moment.

"Wow." Mason blew out a breath. "That was close."

"Fuck!" exclaimed Dan, moving to get up. "She barely slept ten minutes! It took me three times that long just to get her to sleep. I thought all newborns did was sleep."

Kaley grabbed his hand and dragged him back down. "She's not a newborn anymore, hon. She's six weeks old."

The fact that she'd conceived so quickly with Dan and Mason had confirmed Kaley's suspicion that Ray was the source of their infertility problem. Whether it was Dan's or Mason's sperm that had actually done the job, however, was irrelevant. Jasmine had two fathers. It was that simple.

"Right," said Dan, his eyes misting up a little. He was such a softy when it came to their daughter. "I can't believe how much she's grown already."

"I'll get her. She might need to nurse." She squeezed his hand. "And you guys do too much already."

"That's impossible. We can't do enough for our ladies.," said Dan, his smile warm and his kiss whisper-light. "Right Mace?"

"Uh...I dunno. There's definitely such a thing as 'enough' dirty diapers."

Laughing, Kaley wrapped an arm around each of them and squeezed. Damn if they didn't make great parents, too. "Sorry guys. You share in the giggles and kisses, you gotta share in the crap."

"Are you talking about little Jasmine or yourself?" asked Dan with a twinkle.

"I think you know the answer to that already, babe." She kissed his cheek and winked. "I think you know already."

About the Author

Nikki lives in a small town in Ontario, Canada. In the midst of the chaos that comes with raising three small boys, working part-time as a lab tech in a hospital blood bank, and caring for her ever-adoring husband, she dreams up her stories. Nikki's work is an eclectic combination of romance, mystery, suspense and humor with characters that have plenty of room to grow. To learn more about her and her work visit her at www.nikkisoarde.com.

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