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CINDERELLA UNDERCOVER

KyAnn Waters

EROTIC ROMANCE



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

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CINDERELLA UNDERCOVER

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Letter from KyAnn Waters
Regarding Ebook Piracy

Dear Readers,

Writing books is my pleasure and publishing them is my business. This is my career and I thank you for your continued financial support by purchasing my books and not making them available through unauthorized distribution. Piracy isn't just illegal, but it impedes me from making money for my work.

With deep gratitude,

KyAnn Waters

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KYANN WATERS

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Chapter One

The hollow click of Victoria Rosso's three-inch heels echoed through the stark, sterile hall leading to Director Amine's office. With each footfall, her anticipation increased. Flutters swirled deep in her center. The sensation traveled up her spine until her heart raced and adrenaline surged through her system. There was only one reason for the summons. She had an assignment.

Three weeks ago, she'd returned from the Mediterranean after a four-month operation. Posing as a wealthy Eastern European, she'd infiltrated a smuggling organization trafficking young women who were unknowingly lured into sexual slavery.

Victoria wasn't ex-Navy SEAL or ex-Delta Force like most of her male counterparts at Echelon Shield. While she spoke several languages, had a black belt in Aikido, and could break complex computer codes, her skills weren't on par with her fellow agents.

What made her valuable to Director Amine and the elite forces of ES was her beauty. Given her long legs, small waist, and high breasts, she couldn't possibly pose a threat to a corrupt male-driven empire. Victoria's looks made everyone think she was nothing more than a buxom blonde bombshell. That's why they sent her in.

Victoria gave a gentle knock. When Amine's voice bellowed to enter, she opened the door and walked inside.

Amine cradled the phone to his ear and pointed to the over-stuffed leather chair across from his cluttered desk. She crossed the room and sat on the edge of the cushion. Her fitted knee-length skirt rode up her thigh. Not that it mattered at this meeting. Director Amine would be the last person affected by her sexual nature. Sex appeal was part of her professional persona. Unless she was in her quiet beach house on the coast of Maine and off the ES circuit, she dressed for the job.

This last stint of rest and relaxation hadn't lasted long. Three weeks to be precise, but that was long enough. She was ready to work.

Amine hung up the phone and picked up a file. "We have a situation that requires immediate attention."

Those terms sparked her excitement. Amine was a man of few words—retired military, kind-hearted to those deserving, and intimidating as hell to any who endeavored to thwart American ideals. When the government couldn't act, he did. Swift, concise, and deadly. Not only did he have the finances, but he had the connections. Amine wasn't a man to cross. Those he brought into Echelon Shield were the best. And she knew where she ranked with him. "I'm ready."

He dropped the file on his desk and rubbed his eyes. Then he laughed. "I'm glad you feel that way. This is a bit different from your usual assignments. There is already an operative involved."

Victoria silently sighed. Calling another operative in meant something had gone wrong. Either the agent's cover had been blown, or whatever plan they were operating under had fallen apart. Either way, the risks increased. "Before I give you the details, I want to make sure you're up for this."

"Absolutely. I've been home three weeks and I'm ready for some excitement."

One bushy gray brow rose above his shrewd gaze. "We haven't heard from our agent and he missed his extraction deadline. He's the guest of Maxwell Evenson while he's upgrading his internal computer network. We believe Evenson keeps a separate accounting of his

illegal activities on the premises of his Louisiana compound. The man is paranoid, so our agent has had no outside communication. He's too deep. I need to send in someone he trusts to make physical contact."

Victoria heard what Amine didn't say—what they didn't know. Until ES ascertained the exact condition of their operative, policy dictated that they proceed as if the cover was blown and that the operative was working on a contingency plan.

"I need someone I can trust. I need you." He raked his fingers through his full head of silver hair. "Sweetheart, this isn't going to be easy."

Victoria released a slow, steady exhale. With the simple endearment, she realized that this was more than an assignment. This was personal. "Who?" she asked, but wasn't sure she wanted to hear the answer.

"Jaron Quinn."

Oh God, no. She blinked a few times, lying to herself that this was just another operative and not the more than six feet of solid muscle with brown hair and piercing blue eyes. Jaron made her thighs tremble and her heart flutter. She crossed her legs and squeezed, refusing the flash of arousal. It was simply warm in the office because six months had dulled any affection she might have once believed she felt for Special Op. Quinn.

"I know this won't be easy for you." He sighed and the tired lines at the corners of his eyes deepened.

No surprise. Nothing about Jaron Quinn could be easy. He thrived on difficult situations. A good portion of the time he created his own trouble. Like when he fucked her over. Actually, he was pretty good at fucking her over, which happened to be the reason she was upset. Damn the great lovers of the world. "I can handle the assignment."

But could she handle seeing Jaron again? She was screwed, or inevitably, she would be if she took the assignment and spent time with the man who gave amazing oral. She still had wet dreams where his wicked tongue worked miracles on her pussy. She'd wake, need

an orgasm more than her next breath, and have to imagine her dildo was his big, beautiful cock.

Jaron Quinn had just one major problem. He had an unmatched talent for pissing her off.

Their relationship had been a whirlwind romance. She'd known him from Echelon Shield for several months. A drink after an ES briefing had led to his apartment, to six months of incredible sex, and the feeling of being in a relationship. Only apparently, they hadn't had a relationship, just great sex.

"Good. You leave this afternoon."

"That's fast." There wouldn't be time to prepare to see Jaron. That was probably best. Less opportunity to change her mind and let the selfish, arrogant—she sighed—highly skilled, deliciously dangerous special op figure out a way to save his own ass. God, don't even get her thinking about his ass.

"Can't be helped. We have an opportunity to get you in. Evenson is having a party. You're invited. You won't be on the guest list. You're private entertainment."

"And Jaron?"

"He'll be at the party. Evenson has kept him close. He's going by the name Jaron Whitt."

"I need details. What was his exact assignment?"

"We sent him in to plant spyware that will enable ES to track Evenson's financial interests." Amine's chair squeaked and groaned as he adjusted his girth. "Intel thus far is alarming. We believe Evenson Enterprises is transferring corporate money to terrorist organizations working within the United States."

Victoria tapped her manicured fingernails on the edge of the armrest. "Where is Homeland Security on this?"

Amine shook his head. "Investigating Evenson is like investigating the President. Evenson is one of the untouchables."

Victoria nodded. Untouchable, but not for Echelon Shield. Amine had inside contacts at the highest government levels. Yet, Amine accepted that any consequences would fall on him alone.

Amine finished the briefing. "Bring him home."

"I will."

Amine smiled and kissed her cheek. "And watch your own ass, too. I don't want to have to send Reynolds in for you." With that, he sent her out of his office. That was just his way. She didn't doubt his affection for her.

Frank Amine had served with her father in the military. They'd been close, fought in the same war-torn countries, walked through hell, and hated when they lost a member of their team. Nothing had been harder for Frank than coming home without Scott Rosso. Because her mother was dead too, Frank had claimed guardianship of a scared eight-year-old child. From that day on, Victoria had traveled the world as his daughter, received an amazing education, and learned hard lessons about the rest of the world.

And now she worked for him as an operative for Echelon Shield. And her next assignment involved the one man who'd ever gotten under her skin. The one who had left her six months ago without an explanation.

* * * *

Victoria carried a small bag when she boarded a prop plane and settled in for the flight from D.C. to the Louisiana coast. Amine hadn't divulged how he'd garnered the invitation to Evenson's soiree. However, when investigating a potential threat, every conceivable connection was explored. In this case, Evenson and his friends had a taste for decadence—high priced decadence. Her cover was simple—an American escort sent to entertain a group of influential men. Victoria knew where they applied their influence. Government contracts, Wall Street, world financial markets. Men with

unscrupulous morals allowed American investors to provide funding and technology for the right price.

Maxwell Evenson was above suspicion. Elite Washington insiders, governors, and billionaire tycoons considered him a friend. The intel from Echelon Shield had information that showed otherwise. Maxwell Evenson was only loyal to himself. Frank Amine knew the mogul was corrupt and he'd sent in an operative to gather the hard evidence.

Taking a deep breath, Victoria rolled over the agenda in her mind. Ascertain Jaron's condition, determine if the mission was salvageable, and if so, she was to assist Jaron in any way possible. The devil lay in the details. Jaron, with his sexy southern drawl, hard disciplined body, and mind like a steel trap would take those orders and exploit them. Victoria simply needed to keep her mind open and, when it came to Jaron, her legs closed.

From the moment the plane touched down at the small airstrip, Victoria was in character. The plane door opened to the heavy, muggy Louisiana humidity. Tory, as she'd think of herself from this point forward, tucked her hair behind her ear and pushed her sunglasses higher on the bridge of her nose.

With a definite swing to her step, she disembarked and crossed the tarmac to the waiting limousine. *Deep easy breaths. Relax.* This was no different from the dozens of other assignments she'd taken over the years.

Normally, she was very sure of herself and her abilities. Normal didn't include Jaron. The only difference was that Jaron's life might be in her hands. She just hoped her hand didn't tremble when she met Maxwell Evenson.

An intimidating man with a military flattop, thick neck, and large hands took her bag. He handed the bag to another gentleman, who didn't appear quite as friendly. "Search it, Ray." Ray set her bag on the hood of the stretch and rummaged through her belongings. She wasn't stupid. He wouldn't find anything.

“Remove your sunglasses.” Security for Maxwell Evenson obviously didn’t waste words.

Tory brought her hand up with deliberate slowness to keep his eyes tracking her movements. She grazed her breast then higher until she took the tortoise shell frames from her face, letting them dangle from her fingers. Blinking against the bright sunshine, she let a provocative smile tilt her lips as she bit on the edge of the sunglasses. A coy play of seduction she’d mastered.

The man’s posture eased. “Sorry, Miss Tory, but I need to search you.”

Tory put her hands akimbo and jutted her hips to the left. “Make it good and I’ll add my fee to Mr. Evenson’s bill.” She winked as he ran his hands over her figure. “Not too fast.” Wearing tight clothing, anyone else might have had a hard time hiding a weapon, but she wasn’t an average escort and she never went into an unknown situation unarmed.

The man took his job seriously. Starting at her shoulders and slowly working his way down her body, he touched every curve of her figure. He cupped her breasts, running his fingers along the underside, and then trailed his hands lower. While staring into her face, he placed his palm over the mound of her pussy. “Since we’re getting acquainted, what’s your name?”

“Rick.” He reached around, grabbed her ass, and finally ran his hands between her thighs. Then he opened the door for her.

“It was a pleasure, Rick.”

He grinned. “For me, too.”

“Maybe during the festivities we’ll find time to get reacquainted.”

“I’m afraid I won’t be a guest this evening. I’ll be working.” He shut the door, and a moment later, the limousine was in route.

The blackened windows kept anyone from seeing in, and she was unsettled that she couldn’t see out. Since she couldn’t determine their direction, she leaned back and steeled her nerves. Not only did she have concerns about the mission, she had serious reservations about

Jaron. To say he'd be excited to see her would be a gross miscalculation. She only hoped he didn't break cover. Hers or his.

After twenty minutes, the vehicle came to a stop, and Rick opened the door for her. She held his hand as she slipped from the car.

Maxwell Evenson lived in an impenetrable fortress, bordered by miles of marshy thickets and swamp, security cameras, and armed guards. Getting in wouldn't be difficult. After all, she was invited. The trouble would come when it was time to get out.

Acres of manicured lawns and gardens surrounded a sprawling three-story structure. An armed guard stood on each of the front facing balconies. Ornate security bars crossed over every window.

She followed Rick into the complex. "I'll have someone show you to your room. As you know, Mr. Evenson has a special dinner planned for this evening." Yes, that was how she was able to get in, undercover and under the radar. She was one of a dozen escorts hired to entertain. "Mr. Evenson will send for you when your services are required."

"Excellent." Perhaps she'd have time to wander about and get the layout of the house. Once she made contact with Jaron, she'd have full scope of their situation.

However, she didn't have to wait to ascertain his condition. He appeared in the corridor and approached. Her pulse jumped then hammered against her ribs.

"Whitt, I was just about to show Miss Tory to her room."

Tory cocked an eyebrow. Her mouth was dry, and her palms were damp, but she didn't show any outward sign of the riot of emotions swirling in her tummy. Not only was he alive, he was breathtaking.

"I'll show her." Jaron was ex-Navy SEAL. His physique still carried the hard lines of a disciplined life. However, in the six months since she'd seen him, he'd lost some of his mass. More about his appearance had changed. He'd altered his striking blue eyes with brown contacts, but he couldn't do anything about the fringe of long, dark lashes. And while still black as night, he'd grown his hair longer

in the back. Soft curls framed his masculine features—strong square jaw, nearly straight nose, and high forehead.

Tory knew he'd been on this assignment for a few months. The Louisiana sun had turned him into an exotic bronzed god. Had she not known every inch of his magnificent body, she might not have recognized him. But then, that was what Echelon Shield ops were trained to do. Blend in and disappear.

Yet, when she looked beneath the dangerous veneer, Jaron looked tired. Dark circles marred the flesh under his cunning eyes. Hollow cheeks were shadowed with a day's worth of whiskers. His mouth didn't smile, and he didn't look pleased. He narrowed his gaze and extended his hand. "Miss Tory."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Whitt."

Rick laughed. "Not likely, but he'll be civil."

"Because there's a lady present," Jaron said, "I won't tell you to fuck off."

Jaron grabbed her bag and placed his hand on her elbow. The warmth from his palm seeped into her skin, yet his strong fingers brooked no doubts to his displeasure. Tory didn't flinch, but stepped closer to Jaron, easing the pressure of his grip.

Jaron propelled her toward the grand staircase leading to the second floor. The over-abundance of wealth was evident in the thick, decorative rug covering the mosaic tile. She placed her hand on the carved hardwood banister. They climbed the stairs and turned to the left.

Jaron didn't speak as he led her down the wide corridor. Her steps were whisper quiet on the plush carpeting. They passed several large mahogany doors, which, she assumed, led to guest rooms. A security camera mounted to the wall monitored the doors and hall. Like a gallery, original, large, framed oil paintings hung on the walls between the doors. Fresh flower arrangements sat on narrow marble-topped tables.

“This hall almost looks like a hotel. Does Mr. Evenson have many visitors?”

“The house is always active. Staff, guests.” He was quiet a moment as they passed another door. “And others.” He met her stare. “Even when you think you’re alone...you aren’t.”

She’d deceived herself into thinking his presence wouldn’t influence her performance. Just as he had eighteen months ago when she’d met him, and during the six months they were lovers, she heated with the thought of him and with a touch, flames streaked across her flesh. Sex between them had been incredible, but it wasn’t the end of their affair that stung. It was how he had left—stealing away in the early morning hours, taking an assignment, and never offering an explanation.

“Mr. Evenson has asked me to entertain his guests. I don’t suppose I’m lucky enough that you might be one of those guests.” She raised an eyebrow and trailed her fingers up his corded forearm, nails combing through the dusting of dark, silken hairs. The muscle twitched and his fist clenched. If the closeness of their proximity was affecting him, good. Because she felt like kissing him senseless, then using her Aikido skills to kick his ass for making her worry...for forcing her to acknowledge she cared.

“Perhaps not his favorite guest, but I’m certain you could entertain me.” Realizing the roll she played, he slipped his hand to her hip.

Tory’s heart jumped at the familiar feel of his palm on her body. An answering warmth simmered in her pussy and traveled into her nipples. She didn’t want this molten heat consuming her. They were playing a game of sorts—a deadly game. She had to be flirtatious.

The problem was her body responded to a craving she’d had for Jaron since she’d first met him. A fierce sexual connection and the thrilling excitement of a man who lived on the edge had made it so easy to fall in love with him. And that made him dangerous.

Tory slammed the door closed on her memories. She wasn't desperate enough to expose her heart to hurt again—even if it meant having an incredible orgasm...or two.

They stopped at the second to the last door in the hall. “Could you show me around my room?”

Jaron opened the door. Waves of tension rolled off him, giving her a strange sense of power. The tight line of his mouth, the stiffness of his broad shoulders, and his brusque movements revealed just how tightly coiled his grasp on the situation was.

Tory entered the room, and Jaron followed. The door shut with a soft thud and then the lock clicked. She moved around the room, running her fingers over the white duvet on the large king-sized bed. Late afternoon sunlight streamed through the barred window.

Because she suspected the room was under surveillance, she couldn't scrutinize the walls or the ceiling, searching for potential complications. However, she could guess where the sound and video cameras were hidden. Assessing the setup or doing anything about it would have to wait until nightfall.

She strode across the room. Jaron smiled before she reached him. What in the hell did he have to smile about? She'd say he was up to his eyeballs in shit, but she couldn't. Until they were in a secure room, they'd discuss nothing of the operation. Tory just wanted to get the facts, execute Jaron's plans for planting the undetectable computer spyware in Maxwell Evenson's network and get the hell out. She intended to spend as little time as possible with Jaron Quinn.

“So is there a way we could pass the time while waiting for dinner? Perhaps you could give me a tour of the property. We could find a quiet spot—a place where we could be alone and get to know each other better.”

* * * *

Christ, if ES questioned whether he could complete his mission, why in the hell had Amine sent Victoria, the one woman who could distract him and blow the whole fucking assignment? He'd been behind schedule before, missed extraction deadlines, and still managed to finish the mission.

He stared hard into her eyes...

Unless she wasn't here to help him.

He took a step closer. Tory retreated until her back pressed against the wall. He put an arm on each side of her head. Not even her smoky violet eyes, long blonde hair, or sinful body would distract him from his target. This wasn't a game. He leaned in close.

"Are you here for me?" he whispered, knowing Maxwell's security team would be listening through the devices placed throughout the room. The house was wired, but there were a few safe locations. The most sophisticated equipment wasn't failsafe. ES's intel had been detailed and extensive but hadn't sufficiently profiled what Jaron would encounter.

"Not you, specifically." The breathy words whispered near his ear. The seductive scent of her perfume lingered close to her skin. He breathed deeply. "But I'm sure I could be of service to you."

"Maybe I'm not interested." A slow surging of blood to his dick made a liar of him.

Inhaling, she brushed her breasts against his chest. Then she released a shuddering exhale. The angle of her hips rubbed her against the hard bulge of his cock swelling against the zipper of his jeans. "I assure you." She rocked against him, playing her role perfectly. "I can assist you with your not-so-small problem."

He growled, gripped her hips, and let her feel the full measure of his arousal. "Are you sure you know what you're asking for? I like to play rough, dirty."

"Then you think it's dangerous for me to play with you?"

"Damn straight. A smart, beautiful woman should know when she's in over her head."

“Hmm. Maybe I like to play with fire.” She nipped his chin. “But I’m afraid you’ll have to wait until after I speak with Mr. Evenson. I believe he has plans for me this evening.”

Rage, white and hot, flashed through him. Six months ago, his future was too uncertain to continue his involvement with Victoria. But if she thought for a minute he’d be able to stand by and watch her flirt or anything else with a brutal man like Maxwell Evenson, she was out of her beautiful mind.

Jaron didn’t give a damn why Amine thought he needed to send her in. He could handle Evenson. No way was he letting *Tory* involve herself.

He leaned in, pinning her to the wall. “You should know we’re under surveillance.”

“I like an audience.” She cocked her head coyly to the side. “Do you want to watch?”

He released a breath. “What do you think?” She knew he did. The last time they were together, Victoria draped across the bed, her thighs open while she fingered her clit. Small gentle circles at first built pressure until she bit hard on her lower lip and cream trickled from her center. He’d delved between her thighs, lapped her honey until they’d both been drunk with lust.

Jaron convinced himself what he’d felt for her couldn’t be love, because he’d had to protect her—by leaving her. Staying together put her at too much risk. Frank had shown him that. Shown him that a man who lived on the edge and risked his life for the cause couldn’t love a woman like Victoria. Yes, she was part of ES, but she would never infiltrate cave camps in Afghanistan, or become part of a Central American drug cartel to stop the flow of cocaine over the border. Amine had pointed out the hard truths. Jaron might not come home one day. They both loved Victoria enough not to put her through the loss of another person she loved.

Jaron brought their faces close together. “If you push me, princess, I’m going to give you exactly what you want.”

“Princess? Perhaps you should be on your knees.”

He chuckled. Breath mingled. “A tempting offer.” One he remembered sampling often. He recalled her swollen pink lips, parting her silken inner folds with his thumbs, and tonguing the pearl of her pussy, making her cream against his mouth. Swallowing hard, he salivated with want for a taste.

“I was given the impression that my services were needed.” Her pulse fluttered in the long column of her neck. She trembled at his nearness.

“You have no idea.” His hand molded to her hip. “But not here. Not now.” He spoke close to her lips. All he had to do was close the space between them. Their lips would touch, but that would compromise an already-delicate situation.

Eventually, any new connection between them would complicate their precarious situation. Whatever they once had, and as bitter as the notion was, this was a connection they shouldn’t have again. He wasn’t good for her, and she was too good for him.

Tell that to his cock.

Memories of her throaty laugh when she reached orgasm came rushing through his mind with the force of a tidal wave. He’d thought incessantly of her since the night he’d left her bed...her life. Yet here she was and he felt the same carnal desires jack hammering through his body.

He hesitated less than a minute. “Fuck.” He had to kiss her. “I can’t believe you’re here. God, but I wish you weren’t.” His mouth descended, hot, demanding, thoroughly kissing her. He pinned her to the wall, crushing her soft curves to his hard lines.

“Liar.” She moaned, melted against him as her arms circled his shoulders, gripping him. He wasn’t sure if she pushed him to get away, or clawed at him to move closer. He only knew he couldn’t stop the onslaught of need and desire. Applying pressure, he urged her mouth open, slipped his tongue past her teeth and exerted mild suction. Fuck. She tasted better than he remembered. Warm and soft

lips pressed more firmly against his. Not light, tentative, or cautious. Deepening the heated kiss, he coaxed her tongue to dance with his.

He wanted more. He wanted her. But they were being watched. He already risked revealing their familiarity in their whispered words. Therefore, he wrenched his mouth from hers. His chest heaved as he regained his control. Yeah, right. With Victoria, he never felt in control.

While touching her lips with her fingertips, she slipped out from between him and the wall. Jaron made a fist then spun toward the door. "I will be seeing you later."

A lot more if she was determined to play out her role. And if Jaron knew anything about the tenacious Victoria Rosso, it was that she always finished a job.

Chapter Two

Tory dressed to tease and tempt the senses. An enticing amount of thigh peeked from the slit in the simple black dress. The neckline plunged, the back was bare, and the waist tapered to accent the curve of her hips. The light, airy fabric swished around her thighs. Ample cleavage revealed an abundance of milky smooth flesh. She'd powdered, spritzed, and then slipped on killer high heels. Her final touch was a teardrop diamond necklace and matching earrings.

After Jaron had left, she'd wanted to explore the mansion, but when she'd opened the door, there had been an armed guard in the hall. Hopefully tonight she'd be able to slip away without being missed. Until she knew how many guests were attending the dinner, and until she had a read on Jaron's agenda, she would have to bide her time. Admittedly, she'd have more confidence in the mission if she had Jaron's support.

A rap on the door made her jump. After checking her reflection a final time in the full mirror, she crossed the room and opened the door.

Speak of the devil. He looked like sin personified. Surely she'd burn for the flash of desire blazing through her. Jaron looked like an ad in *GQ* magazine. He wore a black tuxedo, was clean-shaven, and smelled of cloves and spice. Her breath caught, and her pussy clenched. Damn him. After six months, he had no business turning her on. He had a job to do and so did she. Once they'd successfully completed the assignment, she could ask him what in the hell happened between them that would make him run off in the night like

a snake. Not that she needed to know. Not that she cared. Their affair was over.

So why did her heart hurt?

“You look amazing. You’ll be a distraction to everyone around you.”

“Will I distract you?” She tilted her head, glancing at the small smile on his lips. “Maybe I could slip away, and we can meet. We could get to know each other better.”

“We know each other well enough.” He stepped into the room and closed the door. “Mr. Evenson has arrangements for his special guests tonight. You’ll want to stay at the party and enjoy the festivities.”

“But I don’t like crowds. I prefer one-on-one.”

“I’ll come for you later.”

“Mmm. That sounds like an offer. But will I be *coming* for you?”

“That all depends on if you do what you’re told. Wait for me.”

“We’ll have to see.” She turned away from him and walked to the mirror. Their eyes met in the reflection. “I might not be around later.”

His smile tightened, and he developed a tick in his jaw. “I insist you stay at the party.”

She fluffed her hair and strode toward the door. “Well, since I’m a guest of Mr. Evenson and make my own decisions, I’ll do whatever I please.”

He stretched out his arm stopping her progress. “Tory,” he whispered. “I—”

“I’ll make you a deal.” Not that she wanted to make a deal with the devil, but she could foresee complications. One of them had to bend and compromise and that had never been one of Jaron’s strengths. “Tell me where I can find you.”

“Stay away from Maxwell. He plays rough.”

“Jaron.” She nearly barked the word, and then she softened her tone. “So do you.” She knew she pushed him and didn’t care.

“I’m flattered.”

“You’re failing to realize that I’m here for you.”

“Damn it.” A vision of strength, with the quick movements of a panther, Jaron pushed her against the wall and tasted the skin of her neck. He lifted her dress and cupped her mound. Now he’d know how wet he made her. Yanking down the slip of silk thong, he curled his middle finger into her drenched folds.

“Jaron,” she said on a moan.

“That’s it, baby, moan for me.” Whispering against her ear, he spoke fast. “Someone will always be watching.”

Listening to him relate the assignment was difficult with him pumping his fingers into her quivering channel. “There were problems with the initial programming.”

Oh god, he was going to make her come. Lifting her leg, she wrapped her foot around his calf and arched her pelvis into his hand.

“I’ve made adjustments.” With his touch, she was liquid for him. Cream trickled onto her thigh. “But I need to access the primary server.”

Tension built higher and hotter, reaching for release. Without warning, her body jerked and she cried out as she rushed into a scorching, red-hot orgasm.

Spasms rocked her core. Waves of sensations convulsed around his fingers.

“I’ve created a backdoor into his Intranet.”

What was he saying? Jaron Quinn had single-minded determination. Her mind was slowly becoming mush. Bending his knees, he finger fucked her harder. A second finger slid into her slick heat. Breath ripped from her lungs with the erotic ecstasy of having his hands on her and inside her. Beats of her heart hammered in her chest. He had her trembling, coming in his hands, and he still managed to focus on the mission. “But I haven’t had the opportunity to execute the files until tonight.”

She sucked in deep breaths and willed her racing pulse to slow. Part of her hated that he had such command over her and the other

side of her found him a powerful aphrodisiac. He excited her like no one else.

“So now you know what I want from you,” he said loud enough for anyone listening. Then he licked her cream from his hand.

Struggling to catch her breath, she couldn’t tear her gaze away as his tongue traced the length of his long, thick finger. Then he opened his mouth, sucked one finger, then the other.

Finally, she found her voice. “I’ve got you covered.”

In other words, she’d need to keep track of everyone in the room. Maxwell Evenson, security, guests, and the escorts would all be her responsibility. She’d be the eyes and ears at the party while Jaron penetrated the inner workings of Evenson Enterprises.

“Then you’re ready?”

As ready as she could be on shaky legs. “Yes.” She adjusted her panties and dress. After she grabbed her small clutch purse from the bed, she took his arm. Jaron opened the door and escorted her down the hall.

Laughing chatter drifted from the foyer. Tory held Jaron’s elbow as they descended the grand staircase. Above them, the crystal chandelier sparkled, and from the great room to the left, the hum of voices mellowed with the accompaniment of a small chamber orchestra.

“Are you ready?” Jaron asked, pausing at the threshold and surveying the room. Catering tables stretched along the left wall and white linen covered several round tables with seating for twelve. Uniformed servers circled the room with crystal flutes of champagne.

Elegantly dressed women—escorts—engaged distinguished gentlemen in conversations. During her briefing, she’d learned she wouldn’t be the only escort arriving for the special dinner. Seems Mr. Evenson regularly provided high priced entertainment for his elite parties.

Tory had only hours to study the dossier of Mr. Evenson’s associates. Tonight the men in attendance weren’t common street

thugs, but high-level government officials—senators and congressional representatives. It was even rumored she would entertain executive level CIA.

“You look gorgeous. Go mingle.”

“The deal.” Where would he be?

He put his hand on her lower back. “Third floor. West wing.”

They crossed the room. Tory’s knees trembled as they approached a tall thin man. Surrounded by beautiful women and powerful men, she recognized—and was about to meet—the revered Maxwell Evenson. He was rich, powerful, and suspected of building his empire by manipulating Wall Street, engaging in backdoor dealings that circumvented U.S. laws. Those connections eventually allowed him to funnel resources to Middle East sympathizers.

ES skirted the spirit of the law without breaking it to gain information. Once allegations were confirmed, the government would take over the investigation. As long as entities such as Evenson Enterprises threatened American freedoms, Echelon Shield would continue to place operatives in dangerous situations.

Tory had never felt a flash of adrenaline as acutely as standing next to Maxwell Evenson. He dined with presidents, yet operated beyond the pale.

“Mr. Evenson,” Jaron said. “The lovely Miss Tory.”

“Thank you for having me.” She extended her hand.

“The pleasure is mine.” There was no mistaking the gleam in his eye. “I assure you.” He lifted her fingers to his lips. “Champagne?” He spoke the word, and a server was immediately at his side. He handed her a flute of sparkling amber liquid.

She sipped, but didn’t intend to dull her instincts with alcohol. Shifting her gaze around the room, she realized Jaron had already made his departure. Perhaps he assumed he’d have less chance of interruption if he acted swiftly. He could be back before the guests sat down to dinner. It’s what she would have done.

“You have a beautiful home. I’d love a personal tour.” If she could isolate Maxwell, she could ensure Jaron had the time to complete the mission.

A deep baritone chuckle grated against her flesh. “I’m afraid not.” Obviously she had misread the twinkle in his eyes since he slipped his arm around a striking redhead on his left. “Rick will show you around.” She spotted Rick as he made his way across the room. Jaron hadn’t underestimated the surveillance. Seems his associates were well tuned to his needs. Maxwell gave a slight nod, and a hint of a smile bowed his lips.

Damn it. With each passing moment, she felt more uncomfortable. Yet, she was unable to say exactly why. There was always a level of anxiety on a mission. All the same, she wanted Jaron to finish his work so they could get the hell out.

Tory spun toward the orchestra. People milled about, and some danced. Everyone appeared to be engrossed in the decadence of the party. This was the opportunity, before everyone sat down to eat and noticed empty place settings. She had to make a move.

“Rick,” she said on a breathy exhale as she latched onto his arm. She pressed close, letting him feel the plump fullness of her breast pressing into him. “Mr. Evenson has given you to me.”

Rick grinned and put a beefy hand on her shoulder. She tamped the need to shudder and flirted instead.

“First, I need to use the restroom.” Tory wrapped fingers around his forearm. Jaron had told her to stay at the party. Now, knowing the look in Maxwell’s eyes hadn’t expressed interest, she was at a disadvantage. Recognizing confidence, she realized his demeanor suggested more than a man dominating his surroundings. She might have an overactive imagination, but she trusted her instincts as an ES op. Just as she trusted Jaron to access the Intranet and complete his assignment.

With swift decisiveness, she determined she’d be of better use to him if she were closer to his location and if she had Rick otherwise

occupied. She had a vague understanding of the house layout, but she wanted a better feel for their surroundings. All she needed were a few minutes. Then she'd find away to occupy Rick.

However, instead of allowing her to go by herself, Rick led her past the foyer and down another hall to a main floor restroom. "I'll rejoin you in a moment," she said.

"I'll wait." He leaned against the wall, and Tory closed and locked the door.

How she could help Jaron if she couldn't complete even the simplest tasks he asked of her? She was supposed to stay at the party. She flushed the toilet and turned on the sink tap. Glancing into the mirror, a plan formulated in her mind. She knew the consequences when she accepted the assignment. She'd posed as an escort. There was no misconception about what that particular occupation might require from her.

She twisted off the faucet, flicked the light switch, and opened the door. She expected to see Rick, but the corridor was empty. She walked toward the foyer, careful to keep her heels from clicking on the marble tile.

Rick stood in the foyer, speaking in hushed tones. She strained to hear the muffled conversation. She quieted her breathing, focused, and listened.

"Are you sure?"

"Not yet," Rick said. "But I'll know soon enough if she's working with Quinn. And if she is, I'll make sure she suffers with him."

"And how are the plans coming with Quinn?"

"After tonight, he'll wish he were dead."

Tory's tummy plummeted to her feet then ricocheted into her throat. She tried to swallow over the lump. Jaron's cover was blown, and they already suspected her involvement.

She backtracked a few feet, and this time when she approached, her heels clicked loudly down the hall. The assignment no longer

called for caution. She needed to glean as much information as she could—fast.

Tory pasted on a smile. “I’d like to dance.” She took Rick’s hand, crossed the foyer, entered the grand room, and led him to the dance floor. She stepped into his arms. His hands held her tight, but she didn’t object. She was there for his and the other men’s pleasures. She reached her arms around his neck and stared into his eyes. “So have you worked for Mr. Evenson long?”

“Yes.”

Hmm, she’d forgotten he wasn’t one for many words. “What do you do? I mean, besides pick up women like me from the airstrip.” She gently kneaded the sweaty flesh at the base of his thick neck.

“I do a little of everything.” His hands caressed the bare skin of her back. “I’m loyal to Mr. Evenson. You could say I protect his interests.”

She aligned her body with his. “Would I qualify as one of his interests?”

“I can assure you, Miss Tory, he’s most definitely interested in you.”

A shiver raced up her spine. “I have a confession,” she whispered.

Rick slowed their steps. They nearly stood still in the middle of dancers.

“I’d prefer to be of interest to you. Mr. Evenson thought that perhaps you could show me around. I’ve heard there are private rooms on the second and third floors. Would you be interested in showing me one?”

Rick’s stare traveled over her breasts, focusing on the diamond pendant nestled in her cleavage. “We shouldn’t. It’s nearly time for dinner.”

“I’m not hungry for food.”

He glanced left then right. “Let’s go.”

Rick led her up the staircase, passed the second floor. “My room is on the third floor.”

Without drawing attention to her actions, she noted details. Security cameras monitored all areas, but several focused on the second door on the left.

“Will we be disturbed?” She squeezed his arm.

“I can ensure we won’t be.”

Rick led her passed the security cameras to the middle of the hall and opened one of the doors. His suite. A large bed was positioned against one wall, and a cluster of chairs and a table made a small social area. The bathroom was just to the left of the main door. She was in Rick’s bedroom, under the guise of sex. She might just have to fuck Rick to save Jaron.

Rick stood near the bed and slipped his tuxedo jacket from his massive shoulders.

“I like a man with a big weapon.”

Rick grinned, slipping off his harness. “Believe me, I know how best to use my weapon.” He grabbed his crotch. “The only weapon we’ll need.”

“I expect you to give it to me.”

He laughed and slipped opened the button at his neck, then another and another. Once undone, he tossed his starched white shirt over the back of one of the chairs. He yanked open the fly of his trousers. She followed the line of the zipper, noting the enormous bulge of Rick’s cock. She lifted her eyes and licked her lips. Time to work.

Tory walked to the wall and turned off the lights. Then she crossed to the windows, revealing her silhouette in the glow from the outdoor lighting. She slipped the dress from her shoulders, letting the material fall to the floor. Caressing her tummy, she danced her fingers higher until she cupped her breasts, lifting and massaging them. She pinched and rolled her nipples until they tightened. However, the sensations overwhelming her body were not wanton or aroused. She was terrified she wouldn’t find Jaron before it was too late.

Rick growled, sat on the bed and rubbed his cock through the fabric of his briefs. "Come here," he gruffly demanded.

"Not yet." Tory swiveled her hips, running her hands over her breasts, down her tummy and thighs.

"Now."

"I could use some help." She crossed to the bed and lifted one leg to the mattress. Tory swiped a condom from the elastic top of her thigh-high stockings, then spread her thighs for him and slowly began to roll her stocking down.

Rick grasped her at the hips and yanked her hard into his lap. She straddled his wide thighs, positioning the heat between her legs against his rod. She arched her back, steeling her nerves. The job. All she had to do was give Jaron time.

Rick opened his mouth, skimming kisses along her neck. His hand firmly gripped her breast, and he ground his cock against her pussy. She wasn't turned on. She felt only revulsion, but she would do this... to protect Jaron. To finish the damn assignment and get the hell out.

"Enough foreplay." Rick flipped her to her back and spread her thighs wide.

Tory closed her eyes, moaned as if she enjoyed his touch, and begged for more. "Yes, Rick. Give it to me."

Only a moment longer. Let him relax his guard. She could do this. His hands were on her flesh, his calloused touch slipping lower, until his fingers brushed the edge of her panties. "Baby, you're so hot."

Wham! Oomph! With lightning swiftness, she struck a blow to his neck. Her knee slammed into his groin. Rick's dead weight fell against her, knocking the breath from her lungs. He was out cold, but she didn't know how long he'd stay that way. She pushed him over and scrambled off the bed. She had to hurry. Training told her the door with the security cameras was her best choice.

"Oh my god!" She started as a male form materialized in the bathroom. "What are you doing?" She recognized Jaron, even when cast in shadow.

“Shh.” He was on her in a flash, covering her mouth with his hand. They didn’t need to worry about a camera in the darkened room, but audio was still a problem.

“What—” Then she couldn’t speak. His lips were on hers. His mouth opened, and he curled his tongue around hers. Velvet heat slid together, tasting, savoring, causing a tingle in her nipples. She gripped him tight, fisting her hands in his clothing.

Regardless of what might happen with the mission, she wanted him. Timing was never right with them, but then it never would be. This was careless, dangerous. Nothing mattered. She wanted his lips on hers, his tongue meeting, tasting, and demanding. She wanted his hard body hovering above her.

He slanted his mouth and pressed harder against her lips. The rough fabric of his trousers rasped against the bare skin of her legs. His kisses claimed her, gave her strength yet left her weak. She widened her stance, bringing her dampened panties against his swelling erection. A silver thread between her nipple and clit tightened. He made love to her mouth...she needed him between her legs.

Hot cream soaked her folds, making him wet where she rubbed against his groin.

“Where’s Rick?”

She moaned. “He’s on the bed.” She smiled against his lips. “Sorry.” She gently bit his earlobe. Flicking her tongue against his neck, she tasted salt and male. Intoxicating scents of his cologne and natural pheromones weaved through her senses. She wanted him—now—just as she always had. “They know, and not just about you. They suspect me.”

“I know. I wasn’t the only one who noticed our absence.” He pressed his lips to her ear. “Tory, this room is about to get crowded.”

She didn’t understand what he meant. Passion clouded her mind. Then he ripped open his shirt. Buttons pinged off the wall and clattered onto the nearby bathroom floor.

“I don’t—”

He briefly kissed her again. Then he shook his head and put a finger to his lips. Jaron rushed to the bed. He rolled Rick over. “Help me.” Together, they stripped the unconscious man.

Jaron jerked the covers, pulling the bedspread out from under Rick.

“I’m sorry, Tory, but you’re going to have to share. Take off your thong.”

Oh, hell, he wanted her to give the appearance that she was doing both of them.

Voices sounded in the hall. “We’re out of time.” In the back of her mind, she recognized the sound of the tearing condom wrapper.

Tory didn’t think. She slipped her panties past her hips and stepped out of them. Then she crawled onto the bed, positioned on her hands and knees and leaned over Rick’s abdomen. “Oh, yes,” she moaned, kissing Rick’s stomach.

“That’s it, baby. Suck his cock.”

She snapped her head around and glared. Jaron knelt behind her.

He furrowed his brows. “Pretend,” he mouthed. “Do it!” The slap of his hand on her ass echoed in the room.

Rapid beats of her heart made her chest ache. Jaron knelt behind her, stroking her flesh, running his rough hand into the arch of her back. She was hot. Too hot for the situation. She had to pretend to give another man a blowjob. All she wanted was Jaron. He was tempting beyond reason with his lean muscled torso and raging erection. The line between assignment and need blurred.

Knock. Knock.

Tory’s head snapped up. The handle turned. Light from the hall spilled into the room, and Jaron thrust forward, filling her with his cock. Holy shit!

Tory screamed. Her body, tight with fear and adrenaline, gloved to his shaft.

“Get the fuck out!” Jaron gripped her and pistoned his hips.

“We’re looking for Miss Tory and Rick.”

“As you can see she’s busy. I’m fucking her.”

Tory bobbed her head as if she were going after Rick like the paid escort she pretended to be. Her mind screamed, and her body melted from such exquisite rapture—of feeling him deep inside of her again.

“Mr. Evenson is looking for her.”

She lifted her head. “As soon as I’m done here, I’ll come find him.”

“Rick?”

Tory squeezed and twisted Rick’s balls—hard—waking him just enough from his forced slumber. He moaned, lifting his head.

“That means get the fuck out,” Jaron said.

The two men stood in the doorway, unwilling to leave.

“We’ll let you know when we’re done,” Jaron said. “You can have her next.”

“We’ll be outside the door.”

Tory closed her eyes. Fear and desire warred within. Surviving the assignment should’ve been the only thing driving her actions. Instead, she arched her back, giving Jaron deeper penetration. A moan of need rent the air.

“Go,” she said on a breathy exhale, “Or get in line.” She flipped her hair, glancing over her shoulder. “Fuck me,” she said huskily.

Jaron chuckled, pulled back, and drove deep again. She cried out with each plunge of his cock into her slick channel. Pressure built in her clit. She reached between her legs and gently touched the swollen bundle of nerves.

She closed her eyes, tuned out everything but the man behind her, ignored that there was an unconscious man in front of her, and savored the sensation of Jaron stretching her, sliding hotly into her core. She whimpered when he retracted, but the loss was fleeting as he plunged hard again.

And then, when she wouldn’t have thought it possible under the circumstances, her body began to quake. “Oh, god! Oh, yes. More!”

Her heart raced, and her head swam in a frenzied delirium. She breathed fast and shallow. Almost there. And then she came. White light sparked behind her eyelids. Quivers started in her core, fluttering out until her entire body trembled. She gripped the sheets in her fists. Sweat trickled along her hairline.

Jaron's fingers dug into her hips. Harder. Faster. And with a shout, he erupted. Pulsing deep in her channel brought on another wave of vibrations. Tory creamed around his shaft, and her juices trickled down her thighs. The wet sounds of their sweat-slicked bodies eased, and their mingled breaths slowed, returning to normal.

For the first time in long minutes, she opened her eyes. The room was dark. Whoever had come to the door had left them alone. She doubted they'd gone far.

Jaron slipped from her body. He placed gentle kisses to the divots above her buttocks. He sat back and scooted from the bed. Clothing rustled, and then he returned to her side.

He handed her a thin, sticky strip. He pointed to Rick and indicated she should place the strip beneath his nose.

Tory slid from the bed and snatched Rick's gun from the dresser. "I told you that you'd give your weapon to me," she whispered, feeling safer with the heavy weight of the Beretta in her hand. She followed Jaron into the bathroom. Flushing the toilet, he covered their lowered voices. "I need to finish the computer programming," he whispered. "The nasal strip will keep Rick asleep and make him snore. I need you to come with me." She nodded. "I'll get your dress. Wait here."

"I need my shoes."

"You can always get another pair of black sexy-as-hell heels."

"Not like these. They brought you running."

Jaron grunted.

Uncertainty clawed at her mind, and a ribbon of fear snaked around her heart. Had she and Jaron fucked, made love, or was it just part of the assignment for him? An ache throbbed in her core at the

familiar scent of him. Six months ago, she'd loved him. Until this moment, she'd been sure she hated him. Now she just wanted him, reckless and wanton. Her nipples hardened, and her pussy clenched, desperate to be stretched and filled again.

Tory gave herself a mental shake. This wasn't the time to get maudlin over their past or try to surmise what might be in their future. Staying focused ensured they could figure out if they had anything, a future, friendship, or at least a working relationship beyond tonight. Alas, there would be no conversation if they didn't get the hell out before Maxwell took them out.

At least now she knew how he'd come into the room. The bathroom window was gone. Not just the bars, but the glass. She poked her head out into the slightly less muggy night air. The air helped to clear her thoughts. Just this morning, she'd drilled into her head that she'd needed to keep her mind alert and her legs closed. Once again, Jaron Quinn had muddled her brain and her agenda.

Chapter Three

“What the fuck were you doing?”

“Trying to help,” she snapped.

“Brilliant plan. You should’ve stuck to the one we had.” Jaron cursed, watching her cling to the edge of the building. With Tory in front of Jaron, they moved from one balcony to the next by way of a narrow ledge. They encroached on the internal heart of Maxwell’s organization.

“Circumstances changed, and I became aware of new information.” As Tory inched along, she curled her bare toes around the ledge. “You shouldn’t be upset with me, but with yourself. Your cover is blown. So rather than chewing my ass, maybe you ought to think about kissing my ass.”

“Believe me, I have.” Her head snapped in his direction, and he smiled. “I’m surprised I wasn’t made sooner. This assignment was fucked from the beginning.”

“Sabotage?”

“Can’t be sure. I’ll leave that up to Amine to figure out. But he needs to check into whoever supplied the intel on Evenson’s system. Whether you showed up or not, I had planned to upload the spyware tonight. I can’t be certain yet if your diversions are a help or a hindrance. Guess we’ll find out.”

“Well, if you’re convinced you have the programming figured out, then plant the spyware, and let’s get out of here. I still can’t believe the ruse in the bedroom garnered us this time we need.” She huffed out a breath. “Although I can’t say it was a total ruse.”

“Felt real to me.”

“I suppose you didn’t feel like you could trust your acting abilities?”

“Under the circumstances, I felt it appropriate to put my all into...our ruse.”

“It’s a good thing I’m a better actress, or I might have actually have had to suck Rick’s cock.”

Jaron swallowed hard. “I’ll concede you’re a better actress.” And he was glad. He’d have killed Rick before he allowed that asshole to touch Victoria.

Jaron redirected the conversation back to their task. “I figure we have fifteen minutes to get back to the room and back into bed with Sleeping Beauty.”

Tory gave a snort. He glanced at her and she smiled. He had to give her credit. Circumstances had become dangerous, but she held her own.

Her dress fluttered in the breeze. Her legs and feet were bare. He clenched his jaw. She couldn’t wear her shoes and climb along the side of the building, and she’d been unwilling to leave the hooker heels behind. Jaron had the high heels fastened by the ankle strap to the belt loops in his tuxedo trousers.

Tory pushed her hair from her face and glanced to the ground below. “It’s a long way down.”

And it would be a painful landing. Their eyes met. “We need to be quick, but careful.”

She nodded and continued to the next balcony. “Watch where you step. Find your balance,” he said as he helped her to stand on the railing. “It would be a hell of a fall.” Exactly three floors.

Wrought iron bars framed each balcony and wrapped around the underside. The ornate metalwork extended out about a foot in all directions. Tory didn’t have the leg span and had to jump. He followed. “You okay?” he asked, joining her on the last balcony. He’d already set the security camera to recycle an uneventful sequence of

time lapse. Unless someone looked closely, he and Victoria would avoid detection. “Ready?”

She nodded. “Please hurry. This feels wrong. I don’t like it.”

He didn’t either. When he’d been in the office earlier, he’d seen her go into Rick’s room from one of the monitors. He hadn’t thought, just reacted. Before he’d bailed out the window, he’d left his flash drive in the USB port. He hoped all the files had been extracted so he could just run the program, embed the spyware, and finally erase his footprints in the system.

Standing outside the door, they listened for a moment then entered the darkened interior.

Jaron hurried behind the desk and turned on the monitor. A series of numbers, letters, and symbols filled the screen. So far, so good.

Movement to the left caught his eye. Tory checked the lock on the office door. “I don’t want surprises.”

He twitched his lips. “Too late. This whole assignment has been one surprise after the next.”

Jaron turned his attention back to the computer. A bank of surveillance monitors blinked, rotating images from around the property. Beyond big brother. Maxwell monitored every room, every corridor, and the grounds surrounding the complex.

Two guards slumped against each other, propped up in the corner of the room. “You did this?”

He nodded but didn’t stop working. Time was running out. “Keep your eyes on the monitors. Watch Sleeping Beauty and track the activity in the grand room. As long as the party is going strong and the women are distracting the men, there’s less chance we’ll have company.”

“You’ve got Rick’s gun. You might just have to shoot them.”

“Not this time, princess. We’ll be neck deep in shit if this goes bad and we’re caught. You don’t fuck with Maxwell Evenson and shooting his friends or his security detail is out of the question.”

“You didn’t hear Rick and his crony talking earlier. They have a party planned for you tonight.”

“That’s why we’re not sticking around for the social hour. We’re getting the hell out of here. Besides, we can’t do anything that has the possibility of coming back on ES.”

“So what went wrong?” she asked, keeping her eyes on the monitors.

“This is the only safe room, and it’s always manned with two guards. The programs weren’t compatible. The configuration wouldn’t let me install the spyware.”

“Are you sure the new program will work?” She moved in behind him.

“No, but it’s the best I could do.” He cursed and tapped a few more keystrokes.

Tory put her hand on his shoulder. “Let me in.”

His fingers paused in their typing. Although Jaron considered himself one of the best at his business of infiltrating drug cartels and kicking the bad guys’ asses, he couldn’t argue. Tory possessed superior computer skills. Standing from the chair, he offered it to her. She smiled and immediately started going over the code line by line.

“This is good. If we embed your code in a rarely-used program, it’s doubtful they’d discover the backdoor.” She unraveled the nuances in the system.

“I’ve already installed a wireless router into their monitoring system. Remote access won’t be a problem.” Maxwell used a secure internal intranet for his business dealings. With the newly-installed program, ES would be able to access secure files and monitor financial records.

Tory clicked through the system, embedding code and working her magic. Jaron understood why Amine sent her in to help. In fact, she probably was better suited for the job. Had she not been on assignment in the Mediterranean, perhaps they would’ve worked together from the beginning on this operation.

“Done.” She pulled the flash drive from the USB port and rebooted the system.

“Good, let’s get the hell out of here.”

“What about the men?”

Jaron turned to the guards. “We’re not going to be around long enough to worry about the fallout. Thanks to you, I have no concerns about the programming. ES should be able to access the system now.” He met her stare. “Thank you.”

“I’ll thank you if you tell me the hall is clear and we won’t have to play Tarzan and leap from balcony to balcony.”

He chuckled. “Sorry, Jane. It’s too risky to walk out the front door.”

“Where’s your sense of adventure?” She walked to the bank of monitors. “Jaron, look!” A flurry of activity on each screen left no doubt they’d been detected. “We’re out of time, and we need to cut our losses. We can’t go back to Rick’s room. They’re waiting for us.” She glanced over her shoulder. “What do we do? Where’s our out?” Assignment details involved addressing all possible scenarios. Best points of entry, evacuation contingencies, internal security, and external surveillance all had to be studied. Timing was critical when faced with armed guards and watchdogs.

“My room is on the second floor. Doesn’t look like that’s an option.” Security teams crawled all over the property. “Shit!”

Returning to Rick’s suite was no longer an option. Light flooded the room, and security roused Rick from sleep. Jaron snapped his gaze across the monitors. Security was in the corridors. The grounds buzzed with activity. One small consolation—because of the guests, the Dobermans were still kenneled.

“Jaron!” She pointed to a screen. “They’re coming down the hall.”

“Fuck! Go!” He scrambled across the room, threw open the balcony door and peered over the edge. Three stories. They couldn’t jump. They only had moments to make a decision.

“Over,” she screamed.

Decision made. Tory straddled the balcony and inched her way to the edge.

“Careful.”

“No shit!” She maneuvered her body until she hung by her fingertips from the wrought iron. “Get your ass over the railing, Tarzan.”

“I’ve always admired your cool demeanor when under pressure.”

“This is no time to be a smartass.”

Jaron jumped the railing at the same time the office door crashed open. Tory was right. The jig was up.

“You’re going to have to drop.” She dangled about a foot above the lower railing.

“I can’t. It’ll break my legs.” One hand over the other, she worked her way closer to the building. Her toes barely touched the upper rung of a barred window. Letting go of the balcony with one hand, she reached behind and grasped the brick edge.

Jaron marveled at her ability to think clearly when faced with an unacceptable situation. “Some contractor’s head is going to roll.” She used the bars securing the windows as a ladder. Hanging from the bottom of the window, she was able to step on the lower balcony. Jaron followed close behind. From the bottom window, she dropped eight feet to the soft ground below.

Jaron followed, and then crouched beside her.

“Where do we go?”

He glanced right, then left. “We need to get off the property.” But that meant going into the miles of dense thicket surrounding the property without basic survival supplies and without communication.

He’d done his homework and studied the layout of the property. This was the worst possible situation, but if they could skirt the swamps and stay in the shelter of the trees, he could get them out. “Stay low. Security is weakest on the southeast corner of the property.”

She took his hand. “Jaron, if we get out of here...”

“We will.”

“When we do, we need to talk. You owe me an explanation.”

He squeezed her fingers. “We’ll talk about everything as soon as we’re safe. But in case we aren’t—” He yanked her close, wrapped his arms around her narrow shoulders and kissed her.

She didn’t hesitate. She demanded. Her mouth opened, inviting his tongue to tangle with hers. Gentle suction sealed their mouths, and he savored the familiar and erotic taste of her hot, moist treasure.

Soft lips met firm pressure. He groaned, cupping her breast in his palm and rasping his thumb against her beaded nipple beneath the thin dress. He gentled the kiss, flicking softly against her mouth with his tongue. He sucked her upper lip while she nibbled his lower. God, she was a good kisser. Aggressive, yet so sweet. Her tongue played in his mouth, curling around his and coaxing him into her mouth. A sensuous slide of taste and retreat that made him momentarily forget they were running for their lives.

“Ready?”

She nodded.

“Okay, stay close, stay low, and regardless of what happens, you run like hell.”

“Like hell. We stay together. You’re special forces. Unless there’s a guy on the corner giving directions on how to get to civilization, you better make sure your ass is on mine and we both make it out.”

That’s when he heard the dogs. “Fuck, run!”

Like a horse at the gate, she bolted at his strong command. He followed, grateful for the grass beneath their bare feet. A better contingency plan would’ve been shoes, but they’d been blown before Tory arrived.

Tory was fast. He stayed at her heels, jumping over flowerbeds, and ducking under branches. “Go. Go. Go.” A bullet whizzed past his head. More shots were fired. Wood splintered as they missed. The foliage grew denser, and they had to slow their escape.

“Is there a fence?”

“Yes, about fifty yards ahead.” They’d make it if the dogs didn’t get to them first. “Wrought iron and the top is electrified.”

“What? How in the hell are we supposed to get over an electric fence?”

Yeah, for the ninety seconds they’d sprinted across the property, he’d wondered the same thing. This hadn’t been his plan for extraction.

They broke through the trees and stopped. Tory bent forward, gasping for breath. “Now what?”

Jaron surveyed the fence, trying to find a way to cut power. A three-foot wall of concrete supported the twelve-foot metal and wire fence. Sections were roughly twelve feet across. Bolted to the concrete was a High Voltage sign.

The barking dogs were getting close. Jaron reached forward and gripped the edge of the sign. “This is metal. We can short out one section. Help me pry it loose.”

“They’ll know which way we’ve gone.”

“They already know.” Muscles strained in his arms. He pulled with all his strength, but the sign wouldn’t budge.

“Jaron, we’re out of time.”

He pulled Rick’s gun from his back pocket.

“Why don’t you just shoot them?”

“I’ve got five shots. I can take out the dogs.”

“Hand me my shoes.”

“What? Do you need to be in heels to fight with your Aikido skills?”

He gripped the heels, tugged, and then tossed them in her direction.

“I can defend myself against the dogs. Do what you can with the guards.” Their eyes locked and fear punched Jaron in the gut.

Six months ago, he’d had a conversation with Amine. At the time, he hadn’t understood the significance of what the director had been

trying to tell him. Now he did. Amine had sent her into a difficult dangerous situation and Jaron had put her very life at risk.

Tory grabbed the rubber end-point of the heel, twisted, and pulled out a three-inch metal spike. She extracted the spike from the other shoe. Obviously comfortable with the weapon she clutched in each fist, she took a defensive posture—legs shoulder width apart, her body at a slight angle.

“Victoria, I could kiss you. Trade me.” He handed her the gun and took the spike from her fist.

“You *have* kissed me.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “Not where I wanted to.” Holding the spike by the rubber-tipped end, he shoved the metal point into the circuitry joint of the electrical fence.

Sparks exploded into the night. Wires hissed, sizzled, and snapped. Electrical current arced over the fence. Fire ignited like sulfur tracing the live wires, and then burned out.

Acrid smoke filled the air. Parts close to the circuit posts glowed.

“Very MacGyver-esque,” she said.

“Climb. In the middle.” He grasped her waist and lifted her onto the concrete.

Tory handed back the gun, then she grabbed the blackened wires. Her bare toes gripped the fencing, and her fingers curled through the rungs. “The wires are hot.”

“Tough. Climb!”

Quick yet carefully, she scrambled to the top of the fence.

Jaron tucked the gun in his waistband and followed. The wires were hot, but they were dead...just like he and Tory would’ve been without her shoes. That would be the last time he’d ever give her an argument over how many shoes she owned. This particular pair saved their asses.

The dogs were at the fence before they reached the ground on the other side. Vicious, barking, salivating beasts charged the deadened

section of fence. Tory didn't flinch. The moment her feet touched the ground, she sprinted into the thicket.

"Move your ass!" he hollered from behind her. "Don't stop."

Both were trained and in top physical health, but they couldn't run fast barefoot. Not only was it dark, but debris littered the ground. Sticks and rocks cut into the soles of his feet. Jaron knew he pushed her, but they needed to get into the denser section of the woods. They didn't have a chance of evading Evenson's henchmen unless they could cover their tracks by moving into the marsh.

A quarter of a mile into their run, the ground became softer. Dirt clods crumbled beneath his feet. Another step and moist mud of the peat bog squished between his toes.

"Are you okay?" he asked when he couldn't hear the dogs barking anymore.

She stopped running and turned toward him. "Yes, but where are we going?"

"Southeast." They needed to continue moving away from the Evenson compound. "We're about twenty miles from the coast. I think we should stay in the shelter of the trees until first light, and then make our way out. Once in the open, we're going to need to stay low. It doesn't take an Einstein to figure out where we're going."

"Then why not hurry, get the hell out of here, and hide in the nearest beach community until Frank can send someone for us?"

"Because I think our best option is to seek shelter out here."

Tory put her hands on her hips and cocked her head. "Well, this isn't a dictatorship. I'm heading for the coast. I think using the canopy of night as cover makes more sense."

"Look, I know you're scared."

She snorted and clawed her hair from her face. "I was scared in the house, and when we were being chased by dogs and bad guys across the yard. I don't hear dogs barking now. Whoever was shooting at us, for now, is not on our tail. I'm not scared. I'm planning. We should use the few tools we have at our disposal. The gun and my

shoe spikes aren't going to protect us from the creepy, crawling things out here. This is Louisiana, Quinn. They have alligators in Louisiana." She narrowed her eyes. "And don't call me princess. It's hot and humid. I'm dirty, tired, and pissed. Yesterday I was at my beach house, and today, I'm in a marsh."

"Cinderella undercover."

She choked and spit a bug from her mouth. "Keep up if you can, but I'm getting the hell out of here."

* * * *

She didn't know if he would follow her. God, she hoped he followed her as she stumbled along. The quarter moon peeked between the trees, but certainly didn't light her way. She simply took direction from the night sky.

A screech echoed through the scrub. *Whack!* She smacked her arm, squishing a mosquito. Stay in the thicket? Because of all the bugs, she was ready to run to the coast. She tracked through the pungent-smelling peat.

"That jump from the balcony was impressive."

Enough minutes had passed that she startled at the sound of his voice. "The motivation was strong. I'm glad the mission was successful." She watched her step as she walked along dryer, mossy ground.

He snorted. "We'll see when we get back to D.C."

She nodded and stepped over a branch. "It was harried there for a minute." Would he comment about what had happened between them? She desperately wanted to know if she meant anything to him. At the same time, she didn't want to hear she was just part of the assignment.

And if he still had feelings for her, how come he'd left?

"What are you thinking about?" The deep timbre of his voice seeped into her psyche and sought the part of her heart that she

thought she'd hardened to him. But like the soft peat beneath her feet, she could feel herself sinking deeper.

"I'm wondering why you left me. I know you weren't happy to see me today. I wonder what I did to chase you away, and if you couldn't get away from me fast enough, why didn't you pretend in Rick's bedroom? You didn't have to fuck me to make the scene believable." She couldn't look at him, couldn't lie to his face, but she'd wanted their encounter to be more than part of the assignment. "I didn't enjoy being your escort." It was the closest she could go to the truth. She enjoyed being his partner...his lover.

He didn't answer, so she stopped walking and turned to him.

"I'm an ass. I never should've left the way I did." He closed the space between them. "I swear, when I left that morning, I had every intention of returning."

Her heart pounded. Not just because of his proximity, which always caused a flutter in her chest, but because she was finally hearing an explanation as to why he'd broken her heart.

He growled and ran his hands through his hair. A muscle in his jaw twitched. "I don't want to do this."

"Man up, Quinn. You're Echelon Shield elite. You're always called to do the unpleasant."

"Nothing about *us* has ever come close to unpleasant." He was on her in a flash, his hands in her hair, mouth on hers. His kiss was punishing in intensity, and his desire sucked the air from her lungs. He pushed her back against the thick, moist bark of a tree and thrust his hand into the plunging neckline of her dress. His rough palm rasped against her nipple.

"Is this what you want?" His heated breath warmed her skin. Then his hot tongue licked her neck, sucked her flesh, and gently bit.

"Yes, damn you." She yanked his hair, forcing his mouth back to hers as she cupped his stiffening cock with her other hand. She kissed him wildly, forcing her tongue into Jaron's mouth, demanding an answering response just as heated as hers.

Jaron moaned, delving between her lips.

“I want you to want me as much as I want you.” She lowered the zipper on his trousers and slipped her hand between the stiff material and his velvet skin. Then she inched lower, tunneling her fingers into the silken hairs around his cock until she grasped his thick shaft in her fist.

Jaron ripped his mouth from hers and drew a ragged breath, hissing through clenched teeth as he exhaled. The fly of his trousers gaped, freeing his erection. Smooth skin stretched tight over a solid iron rod. Moisture seeped from the broad, swollen crown. She dragged her thumb over the slit, spreading his hot juices around the pulsing, gleaming head.

Grasping the hem of her dress, he yanked it up. His fingers delved into the front of her panties. He cupped her mound, parted her soaked inner folds with the blunt edge of his finger, and then slid deep into her weeping pussy.

“Never question how much I want you. Fuck, Victoria, all I think about is you.” He thrust a second finger inside her and scissored them, stretching her channel. A gush of cream flooded his hand. She couldn’t help responding to him. He knew her too well, knew how to touch her, and how to fuck her. He pulled his fingers from her body. She tugged on the edge of her panties and pushed them to the side. Once exposed, she wrapped one foot around Jaron’s calf. Arching her hips, she rubbed her pussy against his shaft.

Jaron placed his hands under her thighs and lifted. She locked her ankles behind his back. Bracing her against the tree, he grabbed his cock and poised the head at the entrance of her channel. “I haven’t been with anyone else.”

She widened her eyes and stared into the darkened depths of his. “Why?”

“I fucked up.”

“Echelon ops don’t fuck up.”

“I never should have left that morning.” He drove home, stuffing her full of his shaft. “Never should have left you.” He retracted, and then plunged again. “I should have told Amine I loved you.”

Her nails dug into his shoulders, leaving half moons in his bronzed flesh. She didn’t understand. What did Amine have to do with them? Tears burned behind her eyes. She snapped them closed. Jaron had loved her. The question was how did he feel now?

Leaning forward, she pressed her lips to his. Parting them, she filled his mouth with her tongue, mimicking the thrust of his cock as he stretched her channel. Expressing all she felt for him, she poured her soul into the kiss.

Cupping her buttocks, his fingers kneaded her flesh, sliding under the string of her thong, lifting her higher and bringing her down on his rod. Muscles bunched in his corded arms. His trousers hung loose around his thighs as he squatted and arched higher. His cock slammed unbelievably deeper. Again and again. Veins popped on Jaron’s forehead and on his arms. His shoulders stiffened beneath her fingers. However, his strength didn’t wane. He held her steady and pounded into her in fast, full strokes.

Small tremors built. Walls rippled, and her orgasm washed over her. She cried out. “Yes. Oh, you feel so good. Fuck me, Jaron. Just fuck me.” Waves of pleasure contracted her core, clamoring for Jaron, and holding him tight.

His neck stretched, jaw clenched, and he came. Slick pressure gripped him in her sheath and sucked him deeper. He’d always been an amazing lover. His body fit hers perfectly. After their night of espionage and danger, the heightened awareness of what she held in her arms crashed through her mind. He’d walked away once. She wouldn’t lose him again.

The storm of their joining ebbed. He leaned his forehead against hers. “I’ve missed you.” He dipped his head and caught her small sigh of pleasure with his lips.

Victoria curled her fingers into his hair and held him close. She placed tender kisses on his lips, the tip of his nose, and his closed eyes. “You can put me down now.” She smiled and slid down his body until her feet touched the ground. “We should get going if we want to make the coast before first light.”

Jaron chuckled and swatted her buttocks. “As always, the tenacious Victoria Rosso is determined to have her way.”

She groaned, righted her panties, and tugged down her dress. “Mosquito bites on the butt would be a real pain in the ass.” She laughed at her joke.

Jaron shook his head. “Let’s go.”

Energized from the crazy sex against the tree, Victoria nearly jogged in a southeast direction. With every step, the comforting sounds of Jaron running alongside her eased her concerns. Lowlands were nesting grounds for alligators, snakes, spiders, and a dozen other creatures. It seemed they’d avoided the dangers of Maxwell Evenson, but traded up for the dark and dangerous marsh.

“How’re you doing?” he asked.

“Good. How far do you think we’ve gone?”

Jaron glanced at his watch. “We’ve been moving steadily for about ninety minutes.” She knew he could’ve covered twice the distance if he were on his own. His SEAL training prepared him for just this scenario. Victoria, on the other hand, worked in high heels and lipstick. “Five miles, maybe a little farther.”

She groaned. “And you said we’re twenty miles from the coast.”

He winked. “Now I’d say less than fifteen.”

She set a better pace for endurance. “We should’ve eaten dinner before we moved on the plan.”

“We didn’t have a plan.”

She pushed a vine out of the way and ducked under a branch. “That, too, wouldn’t be my fault.”

Jaron followed behind her. “Of course not. I specifically said to stay at the party and mingle.”

Okay, so he had a point on that. But the end result was the same. They'd accomplished the assignment. Her stomach growled, and Jaron laughed.

Chapter Four

Jaron and Victoria walked for hours, listening to the night sounds, with, thankfully, the light of a full moon and without company from Evenson's security team. Jaron had to give Victoria credit. At this point, she had the better plan. They'd left the darkest part of the thicket about fifteen minutes before. The ground was rocky, and the cooler breeze of the ocean stirred the fronds of the tall palm trees.

Coastal communities dotted the Louisiana shoreline. However, he hadn't seen any indication they were nearing a populated area. Then the tree line parted. In the distance, the roar of surf crashed against the shore. Under the cover of darkness, he hadn't realized how close they were to the beach.

"Jaron, there's no one around."

Shells bit into the bottom of his sore feet. High tide had receded into the ocean, leaving piles of kelp and splinters of woods. No lights were visible up or down the bay's shoreline.

"We need to keep moving. We'll stay in the shelter of the trees." Maxwell would have his helicopter searching up and down the coastal inlets. While they had the night, they'd be safe. An hour from now, predawn glow would reflect off the water and they'd be open targets. He couldn't let that happen.

His throat was parched, and his stomach rumbled. He appreciated that Victoria hadn't complained. She'd stayed focused. They hadn't made record time. But under the circumstances—barefoot, hungry, dirty, and scared as hell—she was amazing.

"We need to find a phone."

"Agreed." He fell into step beside her.

“Really? Wow, I think this is a first. No argument.” She laughed and skipped ahead a few paces. The moist ocean air and the pounding surf lightened his mood and, obviously, Victoria’s, too.

“Won’t happen often, so enjoy it.”

Her mouth dropped. “Are you saying I only have moments of brilliance?”

“Never.” He caught up with her and pulled her into his arms. “I think you are brilliant. Just don’t let it go to your head.”

She averted his eyes and plucked at the filthy fabric of his shirt. “You’re messing with my head.” She lifted her face. “I can’t do this again.”

He smirked and trailed his hands to her heart-shaped ass. “Not do me again?”

She swatted his hands and stepped out of his arms. “When I said I can’t do this again, I wasn’t implying sex.”

He huffed.

“Apparently I’m unable to say no to you. This time I am implying sex.” She wiped a damp tendril of hair from her cheek. “I can’t believe in us and then too late, discover it’s just me.”

“Victoria—”

“No, I think we’ve said enough for now. We need to get the hell out of here and finish this mission. A lot has happened in the last twenty-four hours. We both need time to think.”

“I don’t.”

“Yes, you do. Trust me. This is another one of my moments of brilliance. Right now, until we get back to D.C—to ES—we’re still on assignment.”

This was his fault. He’d fucked up when he’d left. Amine had been worried about her future, about Jaron’s commitment to a relationship when contentment had never been easy for him. Echelon Shield gave him an outlet. He didn’t exist within the conformity of acceptable society, although he didn’t fit the definition of mercenary, either.

The months he'd been Victoria's lover were the most normal months of his life. Normal for him was undercover assignments infiltrating the lairs of the scourge of society—drugs and gun runners, terrorists, and assassins. She was the only beauty in his life. And he'd been able to share the ugly parts of his life with her. She understood him, understood his work with ES because she followed the same path.

He slipped his hand into hers and started walking. "That morning Frank called me in. He had the helicopter standing by. Said I'd be home before you woke."

Chances were that Victoria would feel betrayed by Frank's interference. Frank hadn't been trying to hurt her, but protect her from a life that would mimic the nightmare she'd experienced as a child. Her mother died in a car accident when she was an infant, and her father had been career military...until he and Frank had decided there was a time for vigilantly justice and the military didn't provide the means for them to run their own operations.

"Then why didn't you come back?"

He squeezed her hand. "Because Frank painted a picture of us that I wasn't ready for."

"Damn you! That's bullshit, and I don't buy it. You're the elite, Jaron Quinn. You're supposed to be ready for anything. I'm a grown woman, an Echelon op, and capable of deciding whom I sleep with. And if there was any future picture—and that's a big if—why would Frank interfere?" She tucked her hair behind her ears. "I'm sure in your brilliant reasoning, you can think of something."

"Because he loves you."

"No shit. I'm practically his daughter."

"But I never told him that I love you!"

A puff of sand exploded near Victoria's foot. "What the hell was that?"

“Get down!” Jaron plowed into her, taking her to the ground and rolling several feet. “Gunfire.” He yanked his weapon from his pocket and clicked off the safety.

Digging his elbows into the ground, keeping his body as flat as possible, he clambered to gain a better visual. Another bullet exploded into the sand. *Shit, that was close—too close.*

He couldn’t get a shot off. In the distance, the target moved from tree to tree.

“I see only one.” Victoria took position beside him.

“The odds won’t be in our favor for long. I can’t get a good shot off from here, and I don’t have enough ammo to risk a miss.”

“Then we run.” Victoria backed away from their position, moving deeper into the trees.

Jaron waited until the target exposed himself, then he squeezed off a shot. The man dodged behind a tree, and Jaron took off like the hounds off hell were at his heels.

Twigs snapped beneath his feet. Like Victoria, he ran as if his life depended upon it—because it did, and so did hers.

They rounded a bend, and Victoria gasped. A small cottage sat nestled in the trees, overlooking the gulf waters.

“We can’t go in.”

ES policy stated to never risk civilians. Dim light filtered through the curtains, and bright-colored beach towels hung over the porch railing.

“Look.” Jaron pointed to the water’s edge. A small sailboat was tethered to a private dock. He could sail them to safety if they made the fifty-yard sprint to the moorings. They’d be easy targets in the open. Not to mention gunfire would bring the civilians out of the house.

Victoria bent at the waist and gulped air. “I don’t see an alternative.”

Jaron crouched close to the ground. “We wait here. We’re dead out in the open.” He checked the clip in his gun. “We’ve got one chance. I’ll take out the target. We run like hell to the boat.”

With Evenson’s henchman, they’d be lucky to reach the dock.

Adrenaline pumped through his veins. Sweat beaded on his brow and upper lip. The gun was steady in his hand, his finger on the trigger. He focused and became one with his surroundings. The breeze off the ocean whispered through the grass. Gulls squawked as they hovered above the roaring surf rolling in and crashing against the spongy shore. Moonlight rippled off the dark blue waters. *Inhale through the nose, exhale.* He relaxed and allowed his eyes to adjust to the natural movement around him, waiting for the target to reveal himself.

Victoria crouched beside him. Her even breathing matched his. She put her hand on the tree, leaned forward, and narrowed her eyes. He followed her gaze. *Gotcha!*

Jaron raised his weapon and took aim. Victoria put her hand on his shoulder, reminding him to wait for the perfect shot. He couldn’t afford to miss.

Bang!

One loud shot rang through the air. Victoria jumped to her feet and sprinted to the boat. Jaron was faster. They raced onto the wooden dock. She dropped to the mooring and loosened the knots as he jumped on board the small twenty-eight foot sailing sloop and rushed to stern.

Voices called from the little cottage. Jaron didn’t pause. Twelve years at sea with the military had honed his swift Navy skills. Sailing them to safe harbor would be the easiest part of this damn assignment.

“Hurry, princess.” The boat eased away from the dock. In the distance, a man jumped from his porch, screamed at a woman standing in the doorway to call the police, and then he ran back into his house. Jaron hoped the man wasn’t running for a shotgun, but

rather, helping his wife to call the authorities. ES would be monitoring all police chatter in the area.

Victoria leapt onto the hull. "Tell me what to do!"

Wind direction was in their favor. "Steer us out to sea." He scrambled from port to starboard and bow to stern. His hands shook as he raised the rigging. The canvas sails unfurled, popped, and filled with air. The boat pitched and rolled, cutting through the darkened gulf waters. Wind whipped his face and briny spray tingled against his lips. The beach quickly shrank behind them, the little beach house becoming a pinprick of light. He inhaled deeply, and for the first time in the two months he'd been on assignment, he released a breath and felt his stress level lower.

He walked the edge of the fiberglass sloop until he jumped down next to Victoria. She stepped aside.

"That was close."

He nodded and adjusted their course. "Too close."

"The man." She glanced over her shoulder at the now far distant shoreline. "Did you kill him?"

"I only wanted to stop his pursuit. It was a leg shot."

During this assignment, he hadn't been given permission to kill unless absolutely necessary. With a shot to the leg, he'd ensured the man wouldn't be able to follow them.

"Go below deck. We need fresh water."

She smiled, her mind instantly off the injured gunman and the mission. "And food." She stepped around the wheel and disappeared below deck. Her voice drifted from below. "I'll feel bad about taking their boat later. Right now I need to pee, have something to drink and eat, and clean up. In that order."

Jaron laughed and locked the wheel. He pulled the gun from his waistband and set it on the console next to the Captain's chair. Then he stripped off his shirt and wiped his face with a relatively clean corner. He grabbed the beach towel draped over the back of the captain's chair, wet it with ocean water, wiped his torso, and scrubbed

his scalp. Wind off the gulf water was cool on his damp flesh, leaving him feeling a little refreshed.

Before long, they'd sailed several miles out to sea. The calm sounds of the waves slapping the hull lulled his mind. It had been a long night. Fingers of dawn clawed the morning horizon in ribbons of orange, purple, and blue.

He sat in the captain's chair and closed his eyes. When he opened them, Victoria stood before him with a plate of food.

"Hungry?" Her mouth was soft, and her eyes sleepy. While she'd been below, she'd stripped off her dingy dress. A loose oriental print robe revealed a bit of cleavage and a lot of leg. The satiny texture didn't do enough to cover her pebbled rosy nipples. Dark areolas prodded against the thin material.

"Come here."

She stepped between his thighs and set the plate of fruit—bananas, oranges, strawberries, and grapes—and crackers next to his gun. Jaron fingered the fabric then tugged the belt of the robe, letting the material part. He placed his palm over her heart, feeling the rapid beat. She shivered, and her nipples tightened.

"Are you cold?"

She shook her head, covered his hand with hers, and cupped her breast. Warmth seeped into his palm.

"I thought you were hungry."

"Food can wait." Keeping her hand over his, she trailed lower until their joined fingers brushed her damp nest of curls. "But I can't."

Jaron wrapped his other hand around the nape of her neck, pulling her closer. Lips touched, and her mouth opened for him. He hummed in the back of his throat and deepened the kiss, tasting strawberries, along with the beautiful woman. She straddled his thigh, rubbing her swollen clit against him.

"I need you," she said.

"Tell me what you want." His stomach tightened, and his cock pulsed against the fly of his trousers, biting into the zipper.

“Make me feel safe.” She twined her arms around his neck. Jaron stood, lifted her, and carried her to the bench seat on the port side of the sloop.

“You are safe,” he whispered, kissing the soft tangy skin of her neck. “And I’ll keep you safe.”

She threaded her fingers through his hair. “I don’t want you to make me promises, Jaron. I’ll take this moment. Make love to me.”

He growled and sealed their mouths. He’d show her his promise until she believed his words. He lowered her until her feet touched the deck. Then grabbing a blanket from the cargo netting along the side of the hull, he covered the vinyl bench. When he finished, Victoria sat and spread her legs. He focused on her pussy. Moisture glistened on her plump labia. Saliva filled his mouth, and his tongue swelled.

Jaron unzipped his trousers, and his cock sprang free, thrusting hard and dripping pre-cum. After pushing his pants past his hips, he stepped out of them and moved closer to her.

Victoria’s eyes widened as her stare went from his shaft—the veins bulging with blood and desperate for her touch—to his face. She licked her lips, placed her hand on the back of his thighs, and urged him closer. Positioned between her legs, Victoria placed her mouth over the crown of his dick. Soft, wet heat encased him.

“Christ.” Muscles in his arms bunched as he gripped her head. Smooth, full lips slid down the shaft. A sharp stab pierced his mind. He remembered her painted lips circling his cock. He hadn’t allowed himself the memories, the pain of his mistake and his loss too acute. Yet, here she was. He had a second chance to be the man she needed.

Her tongue traced the ridge, pressed against the thick vein pulsing along the shaft. She hummed, and the vibration traveled into his sac. His body tensed. Victoria’s mouth was heaven. She cupped his balls, and they tightened in her palm. Using her other hand, she fisted his shaft and milked him slowly. Mouth and fingers met in the middle. Squeezing him harder, she pumped faster, fucking him with her fist

and mouth. She took him unbelievably deeper. Every nerve heated and sizzled.

“Princess, I’m going to come.”

She refused to release her grip or slow her assault. Pleasure increased. He felt her ministrations from the tip of his dick, tingling up his spine and into his mind where she had the most power over him. He grew dizzy, and she continued to suck him. Her tongue licked, curling around the head.

He gave himself up to his release. His eyes closed as he spiraled into a maelstrom of carnal sensations. Centered in the storm was Victoria. He shouted, erupting in pulsing jets of cum. Her frenzied sucking took him beyond release. Blood roared through his head. Thoughts clouded. When he opened his eyes, she smiled and kissed his cock.

First morning light shimmered off the water and sparkled in her eyes. Soft peach color tinted her cheeks. They were dirty, tired, and starving. But they were alive and together.

Jaron knelt in front of her. With a gentle touch, he trailed his finger over the satin skin of her calf. He lifted her foot and positioned her leg over his shoulder. Juices saturated her drenched folds. His hands trembled as he cupped her buttocks. Jaron kissed her flesh, tasting the essence of her arousal. She was his. Whether she wanted to admit her feelings or not, she couldn’t hide the truth. He burrowed his nose into her blonde strip of curls and breathed deeply.

Victoria sighed and relaxed her legs. Her thighs fell open, and Jaron speared his tongue between her hot folds. Wild spicy flavors exploded on his tongue. He delved into her cream, licking, sucking, and reveling in the exotic tastes.

Jaron made the moments count. Sailing to nowhere, they were stealing a few precious hours to reaffirm what he’d almost lost—what he’d been sure he’d never have again. He feasted like a starving man, curling his tongue around her swollen clit and nibbling until she bucked against his mouth.

Her head thrashed on the seat, eyes tightly closed. Her breathy pants told him she was close. Reaching an arm around each of her thighs, he yanked her to the edge of the seat. Then he spread her pussy open, rasping his tongue from rosette to clit.

“Jaron, please.”

“Talk to me.”

“Don’t want to talk, want to come.”

He chuckled and pleased her clit with his tongue in quick, fluttering flicks. “Tell me I’m forgiven.”

Her eyes snapped open. She leaned up and stared hard at him. “Forgiven for what?”

“For leaving.” He slid two fingers into her channel, searching out the sweet spot to make her come apart. Quivering hot flesh tightened on his fingers.

Victoria cried out as violent spasms rocked her walls. “Just don’t leave me now.”

Jaron gripped her shoulders, lifted, and turned her around. Bending forward, she braced her hands on the seat. Jaron grasped his cock, lubricated the tip with her juices, and then thrust into her from behind.

She moaned as his cock banged against the top of her channel. Hot, wet heat surrounded his shaft in a vise-like grip. Each deep slide sent a rippling wave of pleasure into his sac. Terrifying intensity propelled his powerful movements, terrifying because of his primal and complete feelings for her.

Victoria straightened, bumping her back to his chest. Jaron wrapped his fingers around the front of her warm neck and opened his mouth over her pulse point, sucking, tasting the spicy dampness of sweat and woman.

“Right here, right now,” he whispered. “We leave the past behind.” His thrusts became less frenzied, building to a slow crescendo. “We forget everything but right now.”

“Jaron, we can’t.” She angled her head, giving him better access to kiss her neck. “We have too much history.” She bit into her bottom lip and whimpered. He pressed deep and gyrated his hips. “We both have scars.”

He agreed, but in his entire life, she’d been the only one he’d let close enough to see his. He dropped his palm from her neck, trailing his fingertips across her collarbone until he cupped her full, smooth breast. Her chest heaved as she drew in a breath. He curved his other arm around her hip, brushing his fingers against her curls, then lower. He reached between her legs where their bodies joined. Cream soaked his hand, and he touched his cock as he slid between her pussy lips, feeling them stretch to accommodate his girth.

She sobbed, breaking into shivering convulsions, and crumpled in his arms.

“Hold on, princess.” Sliding his middle finger between her folds, he grazed her clitoris. “We’ll come together.”

“Can’t stop,” she panted. “Oh god, I’m coming again. Yes! Together.” Her pelvis tilted, and she rose onto her tiptoes. She trembled for him.

Wet sounds of their slapping bodies matched the rhythm of his pounding heart. Faster, short strokes kept him inside of her. He circled her clit, keeping her upright with his arm, and held her close. His balls tightened. His mind numbed to everything but the incredible sensations surrounding his dick and traveling through his body. Muscles flexed, and he ground his teeth.

A string of curses flew from her mouth. Her knuckles whitened as she gripped his forearm, her nails digging into his flesh. Convulsions clamped his cock in her quivering core. He locked his jaw and came. He felt each hot spurt of shooting cum. He groaned, pulled her tighter, and showed her with his body, his kiss, and his cock how much he wanted back into her life.

Chapter Five

Victoria pulled her knees to her chest, wrapping her arms around her shins and simmered in the warm afterglow of sex. She listened to Jaron speak into the satellite phone he'd found below deck. He'd planned to use the radio, but the phone was faster and easier. After dialing into a secure relay, he'd finally contacted ES headquarters.

"ETA?" he asked. He gave her a reassuring smile, but she wasn't at all reassured. She didn't like the somber tone of voice.

"Yes, we'll be ready," he continued. "You can tell him she's fine, if not a bit cranky."

Victoria furrowed her brows. Under present conditions and the events of the last twenty-four hours, he was lucky to get cranky. She'd come into headquarters after a three-week rest. After a day with Jaron, she'd need six months. Her thoughts sobered. She'd just had six months away from him and here she was getting involved again.

He disconnected and wiped down the phone. "HQ was able to pinpoint our location through the satellite connection. We need to drop anchor."

"How long?" She still wore the silk robe and would need to change back into her grubby dress before the extraction team arrived.

"ETA thirty minutes." He sat next to her and rubbed a smudge of dirt from her cheek. "I couldn't get details, but something is wrong."

"Do you think it's the assignment? Maybe the computer feed isn't working the way you had hoped."

He shrugged, stood, and began to lower the sails. "That would be my guess. Someone will have to go back in. But it won't be us."

She chuckled. "I think that's a given."

“Maybe, but I’m not talking about the assignment. I’m talking about you and me.”

You and me. Her pulse jumped, and her chest hurt. Twenty-four hours couldn’t erase the pain and betrayal of his leaving. However, she also knew she loved the stupid jerk. As long as they both stayed busy within Echelon Shield, perhaps they could find time to explore whether they had anything more than great sex. ES could tear them apart, but they’d just proven they could also work together.

Assignments could take from a day to several months. During downtime, if they agreed to give each other space, with no expectations, she’d be willing to give them another chance. This time, she’d be the one to set the terms. He’d have just as much to lose, because she never wanted to wake, thinking she was safe in his arms, and find him gone again.

“I’ll get ready.”

“Great,” he said. “I’ll keep watch.”

A few minutes later, she’d changed and was back on deck. She spotted a ship off the stern. “Jaron.”

He shielded his eyes with his hand. “They’re coming fast. It’s got to be our contact.”

“Good. I want a hot bath and a cinnamon latte.”

He turned toward her and smiled. “That’s my princess.”

His princess. The words both thrilled and terrified her. Choking on her emotions, she swallowed hard and pushed her happily-ever-after thoughts from her mind. Jaron’s idea of a relationship and hers differed greatly. Until they were safely ensconced in the privacy of her house or his apartment, she wouldn’t attach flowery words to the riot of uncertainties she faced with Jaron.

The large yacht dwarfed the small sloop. Jaron waved to ES operative Simon Steel, waiting on deck.

A ladder dropped over the rail, and Victoria climbed to the edge of the bobbing sailboat and reached for the rung. Jaron put his hand on her ass as she leapt to the ladder and climbed to the deck.

“Welcome aboard,” Simon said with a laugh.

She breathed a sigh of relief. They were safe.

Jaron followed her up. “Glad you were in the neighborhood,” he said, pumping Simon’s hand.

“Happy to be of service.” He grinned at Victoria. “I don’t believe I’ve ever seen you this dirty.”

“And, if I have my way, you never will again.”

“We don’t have much time, but I can at least offer you a shower. You should be able to find a change of clothes below deck, as well.”

“I could kiss you.”

Jaron stepped close behind her.

“I think I’ll save this pretty face,” he scratched his stubble, “and settle for a thanks.”

Victoria jabbed her elbow back, catching Jaron in the gut. He groaned, but she doubted she caused any discomfort. The man had abs chiseled from granite.

“Kent Reynolds is going to sail the sloop back to the shore.” This was standard in situations where the operative risked recognition. An anonymous tipster would alert the authorities, and the owners would get back their stolen property in the same condition it was taken.

* * * *

As soon as Victoria went below deck to the cabins, Jaron turned to Simon. “What’s up?” he asked. “I couldn’t get details on the satellite phone.”

“Shit hit the fan, and you’re at the center of it.”

Jaron rolled his shoulders and tried not to think about the worst-case scenario. “Is the computer program bunk?”

“I wish it were that simple.” Simon gave a nod to Kent as he took possession of the little sloop. Simon and Jaron walked to the bow of the yacht. “Amine wants you at HQ ASAP. He’s sent a helicopter to

pick up you and Victoria.” Simon cocked an eyebrow. “Speaking of our resident princess, last I heard, you two weren’t speaking.”

“In the past twenty-four hours, we still haven’t had much verbal communication.” He didn’t intend to fill Simon in on the erotic details. But keeping their association a secret in a close-knit organization like Echelon would be impossible.

“So it’s like that, my friend.”

“Yeah, something like that. I just need to convince Victoria. You know how opinionated and stubborn she can be.”

“Tenacious.”

“Exactly.”

“She’s going to make sure you know you fucked up before she forgives you.” Simon laughed and put his hand on Jaron’s shoulder. “You’re going to need back up when Amine finds out.”

“Tell me something I don’t know.” Whether Frank agreed mattered little. Jaron went after what he wanted. A small thing like the toughest, bravest, scariest Green Beret he’d ever had the good fortune of meeting wasn’t going to stop him. Jaron owed Frank Amine his life—a life he wanted to share with Victoria.

“We have about an hour. Are you hungry? There’s lunch in the galley.”

“Don’t fuck with me. Lead the way.”

“As soon as Victoria’s done with the shower, you could use one, too.” Simon laughed.

* * * *

An hour later, Victoria sat next to him as the helicopter lifted off a stretch of remote beach and took them to an airstrip. Then they boarded a private jet.

“We’ll be in D.C. in a few hours.” He slid his hand into hers. She’d been quiet since she’d taken her shower. Her somber expression made him nervous. Simon was right. Victoria had pride,

and she had her limits. His upbringing and then his military training kept him from showing fear or emotion. Doing so revealed weakness and left a soldier vulnerable.

Somehow, in his fucked up thinking, he'd also neglected to show her love. Hell, he hadn't been able to admit it to himself. In fact, he'd run from her. She'd become too important too quick. Rather than accept what she'd offered him with words and actions, he'd tossed her affection away and taken another assignment.

Frank hadn't minced words. Jaron had two choices—leave Victoria or leave the only lifestyle he knew. He didn't think he could be anything but a gun for hire. Seeing Victoria again brought home how wrong he'd been. She'd risked her life to save him. And from this moment forward, he'd spend his life loving her.

Exhaustion weighed heavily on them both. Victoria sighed and leaned her head on his shoulder. "I just want to go home and sleep for a week."

"Sounds good to me."

"Did Simon say anything about the mission?"

"Don't change the subject." He rubbed his thumb over her knuckles. "Victoria, tell me you'll give us another chance."

She stared at their joined hands. "You said when you looked to the future you couldn't see us wanting the same things."

"I think we do."

"What changed your mind?"

He glanced out the cabin window and the patchwork topography stretched below him as far as he could see. "I didn't change my mind. I finally understand what Frank wanted me to acknowledge." Dangerous professions made widows.

Frank didn't want to see Victoria waiting at home for Jaron's return, only to discover he'd been killed in a remote cave by an Afghani terrorist cell. She'd lost her parents, and if Jaron intended to continue with the relationship, he had to be ready to dedicate himself to her. ES would need to come second.

Six months ago, he hadn't been sure. Today he was. "I feel it. You and me." He cupped her cheek, and then ran his fingers through her hair, soft like spun silk. "We have something special and not just in the sack, which is pretty fucking incredible."

"So, what are you asking for?"

He wanted everything. "A partnership, at work and at home."

She furrowed her brows. "Work? Our fields are nothing alike."

"I'll change."

She gave a snort. "Give up your beer for champagne? You'd be miserable." She pursed her lips. "You like it in the dirt and marsh."

"Only if you're with me." He tugged her hair. "And I think you like getting a little dirty."

She traced a circle eight pattern on his thigh. "I'm scared."

He covered her hand and inched it higher on his leg. "No, you're Cinderella undercover, and you're still pissed." He leaned forward and sipped her lips. "You'll never know how much I regret getting out of bed that morning. I made a mistake."

"Ex-SEAL, ES elite operative...you don't make mistakes."

"I swear to always admit my mistakes. You were clear and effective during the assignment. You made the right decision to leave the shelter of the trees and are absolutely brilliant."

"Brilliant? That's twice."

"Of course brilliant. You love me."

"Careful, you're coming off an awful lot like Prince Charming."

"You wouldn't think that if you could feel my erection cutting into the zipper of my jeans. I'm trying to concentrate, but with your hand on my leg, all I want to do is strip you down and cram you full of my cock."

She burst into laughter. "Prince Charming gone... and I suppose that is why I love you." She cupped his cock, and Jaron groaned. "And I hate to see you suffering."

"Then put me out of my misery. Kill me or fuck me."

* * * *

Victoria swallowed the lump in her throat. After learning how Frank had interfered with her relationship with Jaron, she wasn't sure she was ready to face the man she considered her dad. She didn't have a choice. She and Jaron had come straight from the airstrip to Echelon Shield headquarters for their debriefing. Apparently, for the last few hours, ES had been a whirlwind of activity. Jaron was at the center of it.

Walking down the familiar white corridor didn't give her the hum of anticipation she normally expected. Going to the director's office usually meant an assignment or a homecoming, like now. "I think we should keep recent developments just between us."

He didn't respond. She cast a quick glance in his direction. He stood several inches taller, his shoulders were stiff, and his eyes were unreadable. His ability to bank his emotions stemmed from his military training. She could never guess what went on his mind.

"Do you have a problem with that? I would think under the circumstances you'd agree. Twenty-four hours ago, I swore I hated you. I want to make sure it's not PTSD making me want to rip your clothes off and tackle you to the floor."

He gave a snort. "You don't have posttraumatic stress disorder, but if you did, sex is an excellent treatment."

"I'll wait for a medical diagnosis."

They approached the director's door. "We can play doctor," he stated as he rapped on the door.

Victoria sank her teeth into her lower lip to keep from laughing. Serious meetings required a serious expression. "Behave."

"Of course." Jaron winked and opened the door.

He was incorrigible, she thought as she preceded him into the office.

Frank stood from behind his desk. The past twenty-four hours showed on his face. Dark circles shadowed the wrinkled skin under

his hooded eyes. Gray whiskers covered his weathered face. When he saw her, the tight line of his mouth softened. “Sweetheart.” His eyes sparkled with moisture. She stepped into his arms, and he held her as if he hadn’t just seen her yesterday—or that he might never see her again.

“I’m fine,” she said, closing her eyes and breathing deeply of the familiar woodsy scents that clung to his wrinkled linen dress shirt and long wide tie. Emotions swelled in her chest. Moments like this reminded her how much he meant to her and how much he loved her.

He pulled back. “I can see that.” Pointing to the chairs, he said, “Have a seat. We need to talk.”

“Is it the assignment?” Jaron asked. “There were bugs in the programming.”

Frank returned to his seat and rested his forearms on the desk. “That is one part of the assignment that seems to be working perfectly. We’ve been able to access Evenson’s inner network. Hopefully, it won’t take long to gather the information we need. We’ll get you out of this as soon as we can.” He sighed and leaned back. “I want you to watch each other’s back until we work this out. The alternative is unacceptable. So just stay low.”

Jaron leaned forward, his elbows braced on his wide spread knees. “I don’t follow.”

Frank glanced from Jaron to Victoria. “No one told you.”

“Told us what?” she asked.

“Oh, shit.” Frank raked his aged hands through his tufts of silver hair. “We’ve got problems. Federal problems. Seems that security guard you shot on the beach was FBI...dirty FBI. He is—was—in Evenson’s pocket. He’s dead. *Whitt*, you and *Tory* are at the top of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s top ten most wanted.”

Jaron bolted from the chair. “Fuck me!”

“No, fuck us.” Victoria stood and put her hand on his shoulder. “Calm down. Let’s figure this out.” She turned to Frank. “What do we do now?”

Jaron paced the room. "Tell me you have a plan," He said to Amine as he punched his right fist into his left palm and swore. "Damn it."

"Jaron, it's not your fault." She stepped in his path and put her hand on his sternum. "You couldn't have known."

"It wasn't a kill shot."

"Shit," Frank stated. "I know that."

"Then what's the problem?" she demanded.

"A man's dead," Jaron barked. "I shot him." He thumbed his chest. Then he turned to Frank. "I took him out, but I didn't kill him. They've set me up."

"They've set *us* up." Damn the consequences of Frank discovering she loved this man. Jaron needed her. She stepped into his arms and hugged him around the waist. "We'll work it out together."

Frank coughed. "You don't know how glad I am to see you getting along."

Victoria looked over her shoulder. "Why?"

"Because I need you two to lay low. Might take a few weeks, maybe longer to gather the information we need to shut down Evenson. But with the work you two did, we will get the information. It's just a matter of time. And as soon as we have the evidence, we can bring you back in."

"Back in from where?" Jaron took a step away from her but kept his arm around her shoulders.

Frank took a deep breath and released it slowly. "I need you to watch out for each other. You're going deep undercover. I can't lose either one of you." He sniffed, moisture welling in his eyes and blinked several times. Then he picked up a file and flipped it open.

"What are you saying?" Victoria crossed to the desk. "What is this?" In her gut, she didn't need him to acknowledge what was clear. On top of the file, there was a passport with her picture and another with Jaron's. There were also birth certificates and driver's licenses. Pressure tightened her throat. She couldn't drag in a breath. "Are you

out of your mind?” Her head snapped up, and her gaze locked with Frank’s. “You’re joking.”

“Never about your safety, sweetheart.”

Jaron picked up his passport and laughed. “You old fox.” He beamed at Frank.

“This isn’t funny,” she stammered.

“If there was a silver lining to this whole fucking nightmare, this is it.”

“I’m trusting you to take care of her.”

Jaron nodded. “You have my word.”

Victoria ran her finger over the name on the passport. She and Jaron were now Mr. and Mrs. Parker. So much for taking their relationship slow. Granted, she’d never hated him. She’d just hated that he’d left her. But in her wildest fantasies she’d never imagined this. Living together, eating together, sleeping together, working together—*marriage*? They’d be playing at more than being married. They’d be joined at the hip. She worked behind enemy lines and spoke foreign languages fluently. This assignment went beyond her skill level. She didn’t have a drop of domestic blood in her veins. She used sex appeal as a means to the end. Little woman—she gave a snort—not!

But maybe not everything about the new assignment had to be problematic. A small smile played on her lips. They would be spending every waking moment together until ES cleared their names. It might take days, weeks, maybe months to get back to where they once were—well, where she was. In love and totally committed to Jaron. And they’d have the benefits of a great sex.

“Neither of you can go home,” Frank continued. “You now have a nice condo in Las Vegas. Stay through the winter, get in some golfing, and we’ll see where we stand after the holidays. But don’t get too comfy. You’ll still be working.” He winked at Jaron. “You’ll need a tux for those high roller functions in your future.”

“Speaking of wardrobe,” she said. “I’m going to need new shoes.”

Jaron groaned. “I wouldn’t mind seeing you in some black thigh-high boots.”

“Get outta here, you two. I don’t want to hear shit like that.”

Once outside the office, Jaron pivoted to Victoria. “Are you really okay? I know this isn’t what you wanted.”

She touched his cheek. “For an intelligent, highly resourceful, ex-Navy SEAL, this isn’t one of your moments of brilliance. You, my arrogant, handsome, stubborn, yet sexy man are exactly what I want.”

“Ever the tenacious Victoria Rosso.”

“Excuse me, husband. My name is Mrs. Brian Parker.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KyAnn Waters lives in Utah with her husband, two children, and two dogs. She spends her days writing and her evenings with her family. She enjoys sporting events on the television, thrillers on the big screen, and hot scenes between the pages of her books.



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