



Loose Id
**STICK
SHIFT**

LISSA MATTHEWS

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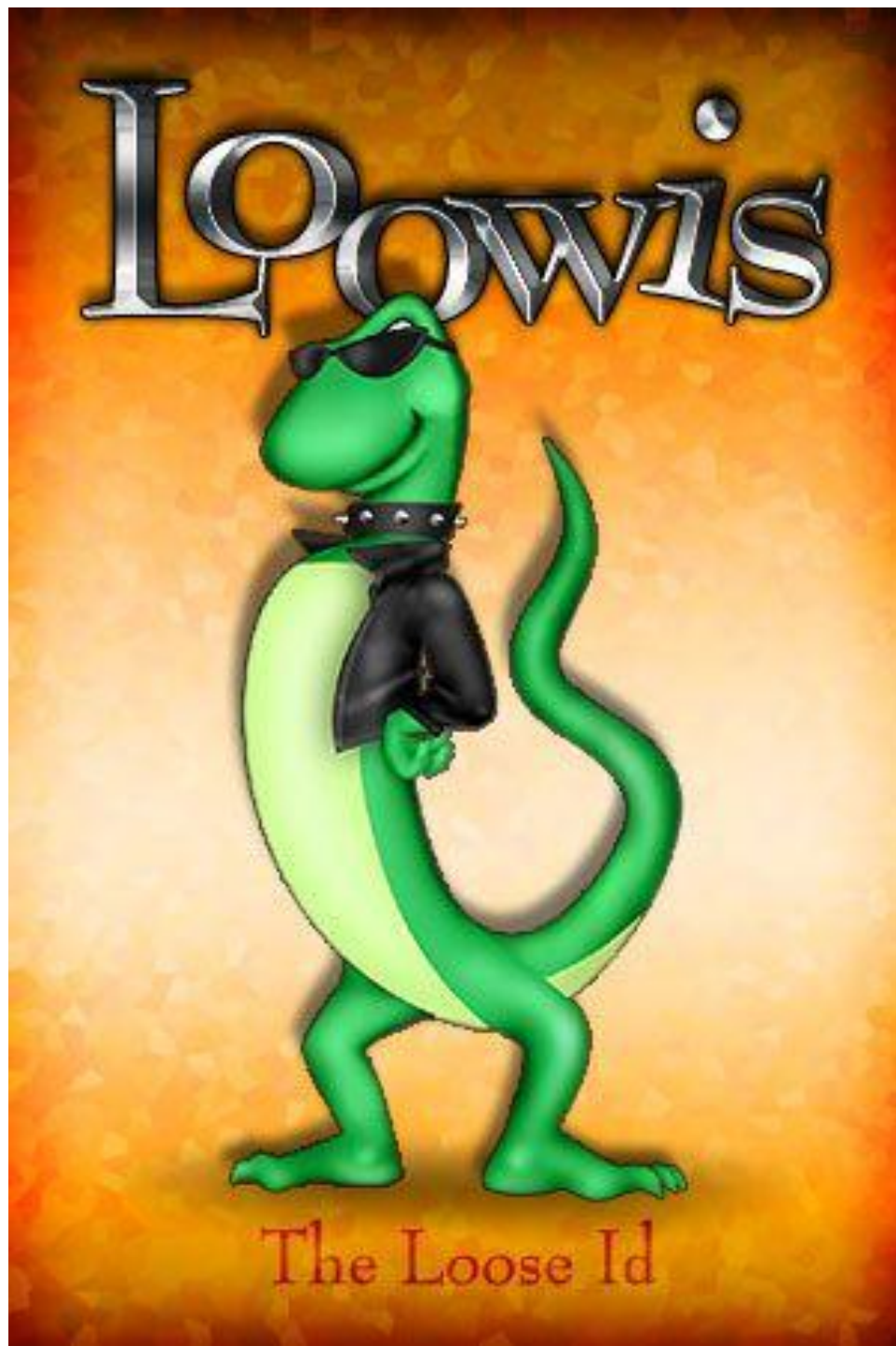
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Chapter One

“So what are you doing next month?”

Lillian 'Lily' Jackson smiled at her friend's excited tone. Candi was up to something, but then, Candi was *always* up to something. She never slowed down for anything. “Nothing out of the ordinary, why?”

“What do you say you come up to my place in North Carolina? I know money's been tight, and you won't take a vacation because of it.”

Candi was right about that. Money was tight. For a self-employed woman in an average to below-average moneymaking field, money was as tight as it could be. She loved her work, otherwise she'd have sought out higher-paying employment, but at least her three little jobs made her smile, kept a roof over her head, food in the pantry, and gas in the car. She didn't need much else, and she'd never really been a frivolous person. She wasn't cheap or even frugal, just simple. Simple was the way she liked things, and simple was the way she lived.

Candi was also right in that Lily hadn't been up to visit her friends in at least nine months, maybe more.

“If it will make it more enticing to you, I've got race tickets.”

Oh man. Candi was pulling out the big guns. Her friend knew the one thing Lily wouldn't be able to resist was a chance to go to the stock car races. She loved them, watched them every weekend, and whenever she could afford it, she made the trip from Tallahassee to Daytona for them. She'd not been to a race outside Daytona yet, so... “I'll be staying with you if I come up there?”

“Well, actually yes and no.”

“Yes and no? What aren't you telling me?” Lily looked out the kitchen window into her small backyard. Her herb garden was beautiful this time of year, so bright and green. Spring flowers were in full bloom, and the small pond she'd had installed after her tax refund in March sparkled in the sunshine. She loved her little house, this small haven she'd created for herself. It was quiet, peaceful, just like her.

Well, except when it came to stock car racing. Then she got loud. And rowdy.

“I'm not going to be here, Lil.”

“Where are you going to be if not at home?”

“Italy.”

Lily could see the shocked on her face reflected in the window. “Italy? Why?”

“Remember I told you and Alli back at Thanksgiving that I wanted to take a cooking tour of Italy?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Well, I'm doing it.” She squealed. “I've taken the month off, cashed in part of my 401(k), and I'm going to Italy. Please say you'll come and stay at the house, Lil. I know I can have Alli come over and make sure everything is okay, but since I know you won't take a vacation and get away otherwise... Please? You and Alli can go to the races, I'll know my house is safe, and you'll get some time away to relax.”

“You've really thought this out, haven't you?”

“I have. I've been planning this for months. I leave in five days. What do you say?”

As if she could deny Candi anything.

They, along with Alli, had been friends since grade school. They lived such different lives, but that hadn't changed them or their friendship. They would do anything for her, and she would do anything for them. Besides, what could it hurt going to stay at Candi's house, using her race tickets and hanging out with Alli?

“Okay. I'm in. I'll be there in a couple of days.”

* * *

“Oh my God! He's signing autographs today!”

Lily turned and was nearly run over by Alli, who was on her way to the front of the gift shop. “Who?”

“Cam Carter,” Alli gushed, grabbing Lily's hand and pulling her toward the gathering crowd. “C'mon. If we hurry, we can get in at the end of the line.”

Lily froze. She'd never been one for celebrity crushes, but she had one on the twenty-five-year-old race car driver. She was certain to make a complete fool of herself if she went anywhere near him, though she was dying to get up close and personal to look into those serious eyes. “You go on. I'll wait out in the car for you.”

“The hell you will! You're coming with me. I dragged you out of bed to give you the grand tour of race shops, and believe me, this is way better than anything I had planned.”

“Seriously, Alli? I've seen the race shops dozens of times, so you didn't have to drag me out of bed.”

“Seriously, Lily. If not for yourself, then for me. Please? You need to come with me and make sure I don't end up making a complete ass out of myself by jumping across the table at him or something.” Alli continued talking a mile a minute, and pulling her toward the line on the far side of the lobby, which was lined from one end to the other with glass trophy cases on one side and floor-to-ceiling windows on the other. They had to do some fancy maneuvering around the two race cars on display but finally found their way to the tail end of the line. “Besides, you know you want to meet him too. And Candi will be so jealous when she finds out.”

Alli had a point. Candi was big Cam Carter fan and would be green with envy when she found out she hadn't gotten to meet him and they had. At the same time, she might get over it more quickly, given that she was in Italy tasting fabulous food and wine while they were stuck stateside.

“He's just a guy, Alli. And you don't even like him all that much. I've been here since mid-April, and you've heckled him during every race we've watched.”

“Oh please, Lil. I do like him. I just...you know, play devil's advocate when he's on the track. He's an in-your-face and up-your-ass, 'get the hell out of my way' driver. Besides, I don't really have a favorite. I like 'em all. Especially the single ones.”

She had a point. “That's true. There's never been a man you haven't liked. But he's still just a guy. Yeah, sure, he drives a race car...” Lily shrugged. “What's the big deal?”

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Lily looked away from Alli. She knew exactly what the big deal was about Cam Carter. Currently the hottest race-car driver on the circuit, Cam was young, aggressive, and winning. A lot. The fans loved to hate him, and from the crowd gathered in the lobby of the race shop, they loved to love him too. He had it all: fame, fortune, boy-next-door good looks, smarts that rivaled men's twice his age, and the kind of cocky confidence that most women loved. Including her.

Damn, what a package.

“Just a man? Just a driver? You're telling me that if he offered himself to you on a silver platter, you'd look at him and think of him as 'just a guy'? The heckling is all in good fun, and you know I don't mean anything by it. And he's just so yummy, Lil.”

“Yeah, sure, yummy in a robbing-the-cradle kinda way.”

“He's not *that* young,” Alli said, slanting Lily a sideways glance.

“He's twenty-five. You're thirty-two.”

“That's not a bad age difference. Just because you only date men our age, *when* you decide to date, that is, doesn't mean the rest of us have limited ourselves.”

“Oh shut up and get over there before you miss your chance.”

Alli grinned. “Right. Come on.”

Lily sighed. Watching Cam as he smiled and laughed and chatted with the people gathered around, she smiled to herself. The truth was, she found him

incredibly cute, and his charisma was just plain hard to resist. She was a fan, a huge fan, but would only dare admit it to herself, unless she was at a race, and then she kept it purely race related, grinning at the gibes thrown out at him from those around her. How would it look for a woman her age to be openly lusting after a man so much younger? It wasn't Alli she needed to be worried about. It was herself. Looking at him did funny things to her, and she wouldn't even think about the fantasies he'd inspired. Her insides were having a freakin' parade. She'd never met any celebrity before, and though most people outside the racing community didn't know his name, race fans—hundreds of thousands of race fans—knew exactly who he was.

Before she knew it, she and Alli were up next, and Lily's heart kicked up speed. Damn, but the man had great eyes, and his smile... Her belly flipped, then flopped to be so near to that smile.

“Hi, Cam! Oh my God. I can't believe I'm meeting you. Can you sign this T-shirt?” Alli held up a brand-new shirt she'd just bought, and beamed at him, while Lily stood slightly behind her, trying not to stare. Cam winked and smiled brightly at Alli. Why wouldn't he? While she was thirty-two, she didn't look a day over Cam's twenty-five and had the bubbly personality that he seemed to go for, if his on-camera girlfriends were any indication.

He reached for the shirt, but Alli held it against her body. “Sure.” Seeing his long, slender fingers lying flat against the shirt, holding it down against Alli's chest while he signed his name, Lily had visions of being naked on the hood of his race car, those fingers inside her, that hand holding her down, that mouth...

“Lil? Earth to Lillian.”

Lily shook herself out of her erotic thoughts with a guilty smile and looked at Alli, who was now bouncing up and down and holding up the T-shirt with Cam's signature against her jiggling boobs. Lovely.

“You okay?”

“Yeah, fine. Sorry. Let's go.” She tried to nudge her friend, but Alli wouldn't budge. She was staring at Lily oddly, and it made Lily feel uncomfortable, as though her friend and Cam and everyone else in line knew what she'd been thinking.

Alli shrugged then and looked back at Cam with a wink. She blew him a kiss. “Thanks.”

“Not a problem.”

Lily watched his smile and started to follow Alli past the table, but he stopped her by reaching out and tugging the sleeve of her shirt. Startled, she looked over at him.

“What about you?”

Crap. “Oh, uh...no, thanks. I didn't bring anything with me for you to sign,” she said, her voice soft, her gaze darting away from his face, and heat creeping into her cheeks.

“Why not? Don't like me?”

There was humor in his tone, and she made the mistake of quickly returning her gaze to his. The crowd laughed at his always present sarcasm, but Lily was beginning to tune them out. Dark sapphire eyes danced with merriment, and she couldn't help but return the smile. “I like you just fine.”

“Embarrassed by it? As you know, I am the favorite of fans everywhere.”

More sarcasm and more laughter accompanied an “open arms” gesture, but the look between Lily and Cam was changing. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Alli glancing back and forth between them and scolded herself for making a spectacle. She didn't like to be the focus of attention in groups of people. She preferred to just blend in, stand on the outside, observe. The way people were staring at them made her uncomfortable. The way Cam was staring at her made her uncomfortable in a completely different way.

She and Alli needed to get out of there.

“No, I'm not embarrassed. I just...”

She could see in his face that he was waiting for her to continue. When she simply shook her head and didn't say anything else, he smiled a softer, more personal smile and took a picture from a nearby stack of promotional photos. He signed his name, then flipped it over and quickly scribbled something else.

“Your name?”

“Oh, um, Lily.” Heat touched her cheeks and slid through her body to pool between her legs. He had such young features, like those of a guy just entering his freshman year at college, and his antics were less than grown-up most times in his dealings with the press, but his eyes—his eyes belied a maturity that tugged at her. He'd found balance for both sides of himself, a balance that had seemed to escape her. She'd seen what his combined focus on fun and maturity had done for him on the race track, and she wondered about that same focus being trained on a woman.

“Lily. Just Lily?”

“Short for Lillian,” Alli supplied.

“Pretty name. Here you go, Lily, short for Lillian.”

“Th-thank you.” She took the picture and was careful not to touch him. If she did, she might do exactly what Alli had warned she would have done if Lily weren't with her.

His cocky smile returned for the benefit of the crowd, but the look in his eyes was still all for her.

* * *

“I can't believe the way he was looking at you!”

She didn't want to have this conversation. She wanted to go back to Candi's house and curl up on the bed with Cam's picture pressed to her chest. She wanted to be in private where she could squeal like a teenager who had just met her favorite heartthrob. “How was he looking at me?”

“Oh my God! Lily! Are you serious? He was undressing you with his eyes in front of *everyone*! He was flirting with you, trying to get you to talk, and you...you looked like you were ready to strip naked right there or run.”

“Oh please, Alli. It wasn't at all like that.” The little she-devil in her head was dancing the jig knowing all too well it had been exactly like that.

“Oh yes, it was! I bet if he'd stood up, he'd have been rock hard. He wanted you, Lil. He wanted you on that table, and you, my sweet and not-at-all-innocent friend, wanted him on the table too.”

“Yeah, well, it was just a show, an act he was performing for his fans.” Lily took the latte off the counter and walked outside to the patio of the coffee bar. Sitting at a small table under the tan umbrella, she thought back to her brief encounter with Cam and how aroused she'd gotten just looking at his hands. She never got aroused like that without actual touching going on. She wasn't sure she'd ever been that aroused even *with* touching.

But aroused she'd been, and aroused she still was every time she thought about his smile, his eyes, his laugh, his voice.

“Wanting to throw down in the middle of the race shop was not a show for his fans.”

Lily just shook her head and looked everywhere but at her friend. Alli was right. Lily had wanted him, but she didn't know how to flirt like that. She didn't know how to be so casual about such things. He was a man way out of her league, and whether it was or wasn't a show for his fans, she was sure he got the picture loud and clear.

“You're off in space again.”

“I don't know why I keep doing that,” Lily muttered, then took a sip of her drink.

“Uh-huh. Well, what did he write on the back of the picture?”

“A phone number.”

“What! Whose phone number? His? Oh my God! You have to call him. Anything else?”

“A time and a date and a place to meet him if I'm interested.”

“He wants to see you again? Oh this is fabulous, Lily! When? Where? You're going to go, right? What are you going to wear? We have to go shopping. We have to get you something new to wear, something hot that will knock his firesuit off.”

“No, I don't think so,” Lily interjected into Alli's monologue.

“What? Why not? He wants to see you. You have to go.”

“It's not my thing to chase people, and I'm most certainly not going to chase him. Alli, he's a race car driver. He's famous. He's got women hanging on him all the time. I'm not his type. He was just giving the people there a little show. Nothing more.”

“I think it's him doing the chasing. And if it were just a show, which we've already established that it wasn't, why did he give you his phone number?” Alli asked smugly.

“We don't know that it's his number.” That sounded lame even to her own ears. Whose phone number would he have given her? Lily didn't have an answer for why. She had no doubt the number was real and really his. Would he show up at the date and time he had given her? Would she?

“You're thinking about it. I can see it in your eyes. You're going. You know that, don't you? You're going, and I don't care what you say. Even if I have to drop you off myself.”

“He's too young. I'm thirty-five.” Of the three of them—Alli, Candi, and herself—Lily was the oldest. She was also the most conservative, the most levelheaded, the most boring. Candi was only a year younger than Lily, and they had met Alli because she'd lived next door to Candi growing up. They all became thick as thieves and had remained so through the years.

“Age? That's the best you can come up with?”

No, it wasn't. Well, actually, yes, it was, but her friend didn't need to know that. "Allison..." Lily only called her by her full name when she was admonishing her or warning her, and evidently the other woman got the message.

Alli got up from the table and headed toward the car, effectively tuning out any other objections Lily had. She knew her reasons were weak excuses at best, but she really had no business going to see Cam Carter. She hadn't been with a man sexually in more than a year. Not that that was going to matter. She wasn't sure why the random thought had even popped into her brain. They weren't going to become lovers or fuck buddies or anything else that involved sex.

Suddenly the idea of staying at Candi's for the next month didn't seem like such a good idea, even if it was the only chance she had at a vacation this year.

The twinge of heat in her pussy told her differently though, and as much as she tried to ignore it, tried to deny it, she couldn't. Her body responded to thoughts of him now that she'd met him, ten-year age difference or not.

* * *

"What's up?"

Cam looked up at Ronnie, his crew chief and best friend. "What do you mean?"

"You kept checking your watch and your phone all through that meeting. I'm not sure you heard a thing that was said. You got a hot date or something?"

"I hope so."

"Oh yeah? Who?"

Cam wasn't sure he wanted to tell anyone about it, about her. It wasn't like him to try and pick up women in the autograph line—or any line at all, for that matter—but something about the woman named Lily had intrigued him. He wanted her. Plain and simple. "Just someone I met."

"I gathered that. Where did you meet her? Does she have a name?"

"Lillian, but she goes by Lily."

"Lillian? Sounds like a grandma name."

Cam rolled his eyes and kept walking. Grandmother, indeed. She might be older than him, but grandmother was so not it. Just one look at her flawless skin, her bright green eyes that sparkled when she smiled, and he had ached all over. “Look, she's—I don't know how to describe what it is about her, but damn, Ronnie...”

“Okay, okay. Where did you meet her? Was it here locally? Did you meet her at the grocery store or something? And when? How long ago? Did she say she would call? Di—”

Cam stopped in the middle of the hallway and turned to his friend, exasperation lacing his words. “What the hell is this? Why all the rapid-fire questions? Why does any of this shit matter? I met her, I liked her, I want to see her again. End of discussion.”

Ronnie held up his hands in a gesture of surrender. “Okay. Sorry, man. I just don't want you to get hurt. You know how these fan girls can be bouncing from driver to driver.”

“Yeah, I know, but this one...she's different. She wouldn't even ask for an autograph, would barely even look at me. She's different, Ron. My gut tells me so. Trust me on this.”

“She could have been trying a different tactic.”

Cam shook his head in a quick movement of denial. “No, I don't believe that.”

“All right. I'll stop with the questions for now. Just be careful. Sometimes these girls—they put up a front of shyness when all they want is to trap you, be linked to you, and get their fifteen minutes, sometimes more than that.”

“I know that. But not Lily.”

They started walking down the hall again toward the doors leading to the parking lot. The week had been a long one, made more so by the fact that Lily hadn't called him. The need to see her again had consumed his thoughts, and images of her in various settings, mostly naked in his bed, had haunted his dreams since the day he met her.

He'd never really thought about women as older or younger, never really given it a passing thought, even though women of all ages threw themselves at him. He dated casually, usually within his own age bracket, give or take a year or so, but Lily wasn't just a year or so older. If he had to guess, she was at least ten years older than him. Was that why she hadn't called? Because he was so much younger? Was that why she hadn't wanted his autograph?

The thought rankled him. Surely she wasn't that shallow. She'd seemed more intimidated than uninterested. Like he'd told Ronnie, she'd barely looked at him, always glancing down or over his shoulder. Yes, they'd made a scene by just staring at one another, but it had been because he hadn't wanted her to leave. He'd wanted to ask her to wait until the signing event was over, but she had looked ready to bolt, ready to be away from it all, ready to crawl over the table and take him on the floor, so he'd given her his phone number and a date and time when he was available, away from a crowd.

Which just happened to be today, in the next few minutes.

"Did you get her number? Maybe you should call her."

"No."

"Damn. Well, I'd say you're at her mercy, then."

"No shit."

"Let's go grab a beer, play some pool. Maybe she'll call if you get your mind off her. My mama used to say that a watched pot never boils, and ya know, sittin' there watching the phone ain't gonna make it ring. "

It amazed Cam how Ronnie's Southern twang emerged every time he talked about his parents or growing up in Georgia. At any other time, you couldn't tell where the man was from.

Cam gave the offer a moment's thought before declining. He just wasn't up for the rowdiness of the guys and the bar. "No, thanks. I'll catch up with you tomorrow about those changes and the team meeting."

“Sure, man, but if you change your mind, you know where we'll be.”

Cam and Ronnie turned different ways at the end of the hall. Shoving the door to the front parking lot open and sliding his sunglasses on, Cam didn't notice the woman sitting on the bench outside until he heard his name.

Spinning on his heels, he couldn't stop the grin that spread across his face.
“Lily.”

Chapter Two

Oh God. She was really there, staring at him, and he—bless his gorgeous face—he looked happy to see her. Looking at his smile, she suddenly felt out of her element again and for some reason not quite up to the dress code in her denim knee-length skirt and brown hoodie. Her pink painted toes curled under as she shifted her weight nervously from one foot to the other in the cute, sparkly flip-flops Alli had talked her into wearing. But there wasn't a dress code, given that he was in faded, threadbare jeans with holes in the knees and one of the back pockets ripped at the seams. His T-shirt was black with a washed-out logo she couldn't make out, and his sneakers had seen much better days. Still, she felt uncertain about how she looked to him standing there while they stared at each other. What was it about him that drew her and scared her all at the same time? Maybe it was his freshness, his youth, his smile that was flawless and bright and aimed at her.

He stopped in front of her. “You're here.”

“Yes. I-I hope it's okay that I just showed up like this without calling first.”

“Yep. I'm glad you're here. I can stop checking my phone every thirty seconds now.”

Checking his phone? Was he serious? Surely not. “I-I'm sure you have things to do. I just wanted to...” Lily hated that she was stumbling all over herself and couldn't seem to get a string of words to come out in some semblance of order and make sense. The man had her all tongue-tied and she wished she hadn't had *that* particular thought, because she would love to be tongue-tied, naked, and wrapped around him.

Dammit. She really had to stop thinking things like that. If she could just stay focused on the fact that he was so much younger than her, she might actually get out of this awkward mess unscathed.

And he had to stop looking at her like he wanted to devour her.

“I have nothing else that I'm needed for until tomorrow, so that means I'm all yours tonight.”

“Oh.” She likely hadn't hidden the surprise at his choice of words, because he laughed. All hers? Yeah, right. In what universe was a man like Cam Carter ever going to be “all hers”?

“You like that idea.”

The man was reading her mind again, just as he'd done at the autograph session. She had to learn not to be so transparent. Alli was forever telling her that everything she thought or felt could be seen in her eyes and in the expressions on her face.

“Well, yes, of course. How could I not?” She'd play along, though. How often did an average, ordinary music teacher and orchestra member get this kind of opportunity? “I'd be crazy to not want you all to myself.”

“Great. Because that's how I want you.” He stepped closer and lifted his hand, then traced the outline of her cheekbone, causing her breath to catch in her throat. “I want you all to myself.”

He was going to kiss her. She knew it because he took off his sunglasses, because the pulse beat in his neck had kicked into high gear, because his lips actually brushed hers. *Oh. My. God.*

He's too young. He's too young. He's too young.

Her mind rattled off the litany. She promised herself she needed to remember it in the event she got carried away and gave serious consideration to spending any kind of time with him. But all of it flew away in the breeze when she let herself get

swept up in the softness of his lips, the insistent tip of his tongue, the feel of his hand sliding into her hair, holding her mouth to his.

It was a brief kiss, just a taste of him, but it was enough to whet her appetite for more. The little devil inside her head laughed. As if she needed her appetite whetted. She had thought of little else in the last six days, and she'd never wrestled with anything more. Should she or shouldn't she? Should she call or just show up?

More than once, she'd picked up the phone and dialed his number but never let the call go through. What if he hadn't remembered her by just her name and voice alone? What if he put her off or changed his mind or hadn't meant for her to take the date and time on the picture seriously?

She'd been so uncertain that Alli had actually followed her to the race shop and waited while she got out of her car and sat down on the bench. As soon as Alli left, Lily had entertained the same notion, but then Cam walked out, and she couldn't walk away without trying. Trying what, she didn't know, but there was definitely something between them, some chemistry even she couldn't deny.

"Just as sweet as I knew you'd be."

Lily smiled, unsure what to say. *You are just as hot as I remembered, and I want to see how hot you are naked in bed.*

"What do you want to do? Dinner? A movie? A concert? A club? Whatever you want to do, we will do."

"A date?"

"Yes. What did you think this was?"

"I don't know. I didn't know you wanted to go out with me. On a date. In public."

Cam looked at her curiously, his smile faltering, his eyes hooded and unreadable. "Was I being presumptuous in thinking that you might like to?"

"I... No. No, not at all. "

The light returned to his face and it took her breath away. Again. *Damn*. The effect the man had on her... Cam Carter wanted her, wanted to spend time with her, go out on a date with her. She wasn't strong enough to deny him or herself. He was offering her a chance few women ever got. Why not make the most of it?

"Just so we're clear here, I want more than one date, Lily."

Well, she wasn't expecting that. She swallowed hard. "More than one date?"

"Oh yes. A lot more than one."

"What do you mean?"

Cam smiled at her and bent to kiss her again, short and sweet, just a meeting of lips. "We'll talk about it later. What do you say we go have dinner? I'm starving, and a steak sounds great."

"Right. Okay."

"Do you mind if we take my truck?"

"Truck? You drive a truck?"

"Yeah. What were you thinking I drove?"

"Honestly, I don't know, maybe a sports car, but a truck never entered my mind."

"My family lives for trucks." His grin was megawatt as he slid his sunglasses back on.

"I can drive my own car."

"I know, but I'd rather us take one car. Like a proper date. Besides, this way I know we'll get to where we're going together, and you won't run on me."

Lily laughed. "Yes, but you'll have to bring me back here to pick up my car."

"I don't care. Just gives me a little more time with you. C'mon."

He didn't give her time to say anything else, because he took her hand and pulled her along behind him. And the view was amazing. Her "good girl" side was admonishing her for staring so blatantly at Cam's ass, while her "devil girl" side was rooting her on with fist pumps in the air.

The man had a fabulous set of buns in denim, and she wondered if he was a boxers or briefs kinda guy.

"You can find that out for yourself later if you really want to know."

Oh God. She'd said that out loud? Humiliation stopped her in her tracks, and she covered her face with her free hand. She was so embarrassed. What the hell had gotten into her? She couldn't look at him, even when he tried lifting her chin with his fingers.

"Oh Cam. I am so sorry. I..."

"Why are you sorry? I'm flattered that you want to know. I am more than flattered." He waggled his eyebrows at her, and she could barely contain her smile. "I am eager for you to know. I can't wait for you to find out. So don't be embarrassed. Besides, I want to know what kind you wear too."

Oh my.

"Yes, I want you like that. I want to take you out on dates, and I want to take you to bed."

"I don't know what to say." And she didn't.

"Don't say anything other than yes. Don't think anything other than yes."

Yes. Yes. Yes.

She repeated the word inside her head as he tugged her along behind him again.

* * *

She was going to be the death of him before he had the pleasure of being with her. Her sweet, warm scent, the softness of her breathing, the way she fidgeted with her hands in her lap, all wrapped around him. She was so different than the other women he'd dated in his life and most especially since he'd been on the racing circuit. He was so much in the public eye. Women threw themselves at him. He didn't trust any of them to be genuine, and he hadn't pursued a woman on his own in years. He hadn't had the inclination or interest.

Until her. Until Lily.

He found her nervousness touching, knowing she was as attracted to him as he was to her, but still, she was unsure. He didn't think it was a self-conscious thing or even an insecurity thing, just that she wasn't quite certain what to make of his intentions. And he could understand that. She wasn't flashy, wasn't a size 4, wasn't the same kind of woman who held the arms of his friends and fellow drivers. Maybe that's what drew him to her. He was different, and so was she.

"I didn't ask if you like steak. Would you rather have something else?"

"No. Steak is fine."

Her voice was soft as she spoke, and she stared out the window. He wanted to touch her, to reach over and hold her hand, and before he could think about it anymore, he did it. Her surprised "oh" made him smile. He liked that, doing the unexpected. If things continued the way they had been since he'd met her, he'd be doing a lot of things she didn't expect.

Pulling her hand over to rest on the bench seat between them, he twined his fingers with hers, squeezing lightly before loosening his grip. She looked over at their hands, then up at his face, and he winked at her behind his sunglasses.

The smile on her face caused his heart to trip, and she flexed her fingers against the back of his hand. She was beginning to relax.

"Won't people recognize you?"

"They might. Not everyone is a race fan, so if they're not, they won't know me at all."

"But if there are race fans in there, won't they talk if you walk into a restaurant with me?"

"Probably."

"You don't care about the things they'll say?"

"Nope. No reason to. What I do in my personal life is my business. That includes who I choose to date." He slid a glance in her direction. "Do *you* care?"

She visibly swallowed again, and he had the urge to kiss the hollow of her throat. It would have to wait, though, until he wasn't driving.

"Well...this is all new to me. I'm not sure what to think or do."

"Just be you. They'll say what they'll say."

The parking lot to the steak house he loved was still fairly empty, as it wasn't yet five thirty during the workweek. He kissed her hand. "Stay right there."

Cam got out of the truck, walked around to her side. He opened the door and reached in for her hand to help her out. She started to move away once she was on the ground, but he held her hand tighter. "Don't worry about being seen with me. Please."

"I don't want it to cause gossip for you."

"It won't." Unless, like he'd said before, there were race fans inside. He was a sports name and face, somewhat a celebrity, and anytime a celebrity of any kind walked around with a woman, especially an unknown woman, there was always press and speculation, suspicion. He had a feeling deep down inside that Lily was worth weathering a few bumpy storms for. He wasn't going to tell her that, though. Given her nervousness, she'd walk away to protect him. He wasn't interested in being protected. He could take care of himself, and he'd do his damndest to protect *her* from the vultures in the process.

Inside the low-lit building, the manager met them at the door. Greetings and pleasantries were exchanged before the hostess led them to a booth in the back. Of the dozen or so patrons, only a few looked up as they walked by, and only a handful seemed to even realize who he was. For Lily's sake, he was thankful.

Once settled, he looked at her, or rather, stared at her. Openly. Without shame. He wanted her pixie face, her full yet compact body, her smile, her laugh, her complete attention. He wanted her with an incredible lust he'd never felt for anyone before, and he wasn't quite sure what to make of it.

She was glancing over the menu and then lifted her eyes to his. A sudden and mischievous smile lit her face. She leaned across the table toward him. "So which is it?"

"Which is what?"

"Boxers or briefs?" she whispered.

He laughed. Of all the things he had imagined she might say, that wasn't one of them. She just grinned. For all his thought earlier about surprising her, he had a feeling she would be doing quite a bit of surprising herself, keeping him on his toes. She wasn't going to fit into any preconceived box.

He leaned closer to her, and when their noses were nearly touching, he whispered back, "Right now? Neither."

Her eyes widened, and he licked her still-smiling lips.

"Do y'all need a minute?"

Both looked away from each other and up at the waitress. The pink that touched Lily's cheeks had him wondering where else she might be blushing. "No. I think we're ready." Cam settled back in his seat and glanced over at Lily, raising an eyebrow in question. She nodded and told the girl, Crystal, what she would have: petite sirloin cooked medium, baked potato with butter and sour cream, ranch dressing on her salad. Simple. And he was thrilled she was actually going to eat. His recent dates wouldn't eat, just drank water while he sat and polished off enough food for two people, sometimes three.

After ordering his own food, he reached out and snagged her hand again, just as he had in the truck. She cleared her throat and looked anywhere but at him. It reminded him of the day they'd met. One minute she was open and teasing; the next she was shy and reserved.

"You rarely look straight at me. Why?"

That brought her gaze to his face. For a moment, by the furrowing of her brow, she looked as though she wasn't sure what to say, but it cleared just as quickly as it

had appeared. "I have to keep reminding myself that you're way too young for me. You're famous, sure. You're fun. I have no doubt about that, but you're too young for me. No matter how much I'm attracted to you."

He couldn't have been more shocked. "Age? Are you serious?"

"Yes."

"You were just flirting with me about what kind of underwear I wear, and now you're bringing my age into it? That's..." He shook his head to clear it. His age? "You like me, though? Feel some attraction, some something between us?"

"What do you think this is? A little attraction? A little flirting?"

He snatched his hand away, rubbing both his palms against his thighs to keep from reaching for her again, dragging her across the table, and showing her just what was between them. "Don't do that. Don't pretend you're not feeling anything more than that."

"Cam—"

"No. I'm not going to listen to it. Age doesn't matter at all. Neither does the fact that some people might recognize my face."

She sighed and looked away from him. *Shit*. Crystal brought their salads just then, giving Lily time to put a little more distance between them. "That you're well-known is a big deal, Cam. Association with you, no matter how brief, can turn my quiet life upside down, and if you think our age difference won't be brought up..."

"I'm not looking for brief, Lily. Hell, I'm not looking at all, but I met you, and I'm interested in you."

"You also can't know things will last beyond this this one date. I mean, look at how it's turning out, and we've just gotten the first course." She lowered her eyes to her salad and stabbed a forkful, and put it in her mouth. It made him smile despite their little disagreement. She liked to eat.

“Only because...” He too ate a forkful of salad. “Excuse me.” He slid out of his seat and tracked down their waitress. Lily followed him with her eyes as he whispered in Crystal's ear and then went back to the table.

“What did you say to her?”

“Nothing that has anything to do with my age or my being well-known in the racing community.”

“Smart-ass.”

“Takes one to know one.” And he promptly stuck his tongue out at her before stuffing another forkful of salad into his mouth.

“Not too young, huh?”

“Nope.”

The rest of their salads were eaten in silence with sly looks passing between them; his smug, hers wary.

“Here you go, Mr. Carter. Just as you asked.”

Cam caught Lily's confusion and gave her his most innocent smile. “Thank you, Crystal.” He pulled out his wallet and produced at least three twenty-dollar bills and handed them to the waitress. “Keep the change.”

She smiled and walked off. Cam turned back to his stunned date.

“What is that?” she asked, pointing to the boxes on the table.

“Dinner. You done?” He pointed to her plate, and she nodded. “Then let's go.”

“Why aren't we eating dinner here? Is our date over?”

Cam slipped his sunglasses on again and took her hand, holding it tightly. “Not by a long shot.”

After exiting the restaurant, he helped her up into the truck again and joined her. “Come here. Lean closer.”

There was a brief hesitation before she moved, but once she did, he kissed her long, slow, and thoroughly. When he pulled his mouth away, his glasses were fogged, and he smiled. “We're going home.”

“Home?”

Her lips were so perfect, all rosy and swollen from his, and he rubbed them gently with the pad of his thumb. “Yes. We're going to your house.”

“We can't. I don't have a house. Well, I mean I do, but not here.”

“Huh?”

She sighed, and the breath blew out against his skin. He fought against leaning over to kiss her again, fought against drawing her mouth down between his legs and asking her to do nothing more than breathe on him.

“I'm staying at my friend's house while she's overseas. This is my vacation.”

Shit. Well, on to plan B. “Okay, well, where do you live?”

“Too far to go tonight. Florida.”

“Daytona?” Could he be so lucky?

“No. Tallahassee area.”

Of course he couldn't. *Damn.* “How long are you staying?”

“She comes back at the end of the month.”

A month. Actually less. More like three weeks. Not much time. “We'll talk about that later too. Right now, I guess we'll be going to my place.”

“You-you still want to continue our date?”

“Hell yeah. Since you're uncomfortable being seen with me in public, what with my being so young and famous, we'll go back to my house, where it's private, to finish dinner.”

“Oh.”

She was so pretty when she blushed. This time he didn't resist the need to taste her, slanting his mouth over hers, bending her back until he was pressed chest to hip with her, and they were lying on the seat.

Cam looked at her, really looked closely at her, wondering if perhaps he'd read her wrong, but there, under her uncertainty, was curiosity, interest, and lust. She

wanted him, and he bent his head to taste her skin. Her breath stopped, and then she sighed, tilting her head to the side.

His lips drifted up her throat to her jaw where he lightly kissed the corner of her mouth.

“This is real, Lily. I promise you.”

She nodded and slid back to her side of the truck cab when he sat back up. “We need to go get my car.”

“Later. It'll be fine at the shop.”

“Okay.”

She offered no more resistance, asked no questions. The relatively short drive back to Cam's upscale neighborhood was made in tense silence, the air thick with need and hunger. She never once looked at him, but he knew she was thinking about where all this might lead tonight, just as he was. Hell, he couldn't believe he'd been so bold as to bring her back to his house, but he wasn't going to change his mind now.

She was out of the truck before he could put it into park and looked up at him from the ground. He smiled. “In a hurry?”

He hopped out of the cab, and they met at the front of the truck. “I don't bring women here, Lily, and somehow I think you needed to know that. This is my private space.” He took her hand and started toward the door, but when she didn't move, he turned back to her. “What?”

Chapter Three

What the hell was she doing? Did she even know? From the moment she'd decided to meet him as he'd suggested on the back of the picture, she hadn't been sure what she was doing.

She was standing in his driveway, planning to get naked with him, and that's not something Lily had thought she would ever do. The kiss after they'd gotten back into his truck at the restaurant changed everything. It was a different kind of kiss. Different from a simple I-like-you-and-would-like-to-date-you kiss. The ride to his house had given her time to make up her mind. She knew what she wanted and what she was going to do. She was going to rob the damn cradle. While some rational part of her was trying to fight it, the carnal, lusty part of her was stronger and more stubborn at the moment.

She tried not to stare, but it was impossible. She could smell him on her and could still feel his kisses. His pull was potent, too much for her to resist.

Her nerves were raw from being so close to him. His eyes were hidden behind his damn glasses, and as sexy as she thought he was like that, she wondered what he was thinking, wanted to see his eyes.

"What are we doing, Cam?" she blurted out before she had even realized she was going to ask. Her inner she-devil was going to kick some serious inner dogooder ass later.

"We are going to have a good dinner."

"That's not what I meant."

"I know, but at the moment, that is what we're gonna do. Just spend some time with me, spend some time getting to know who I really am. You might find that you like me."

"I do like you, but what about later, after dinner?" She was thinking too much again. She had a terrible habit of thinking too much, analyzing things to death instead of just going with the flow and letting things happen. She liked having all the answers, and when she couldn't get them, she held back, became cautious.

"What about it?"

Insufferable. He grinned, and her heart flipped. "Nothing." Indeed. The she-devil took over. "Then we should go inside before the steaks get any colder."

He wagged his eyebrows at her over the top of his glasses. She laughed and shook her head, leaning up to kiss him. When she pulled back, the smile on his face had changed. She couldn't explain it and couldn't decipher it, but it mirrored the feeling she had in the pit of her stomach. It was the first time since they'd met that she had made an overture toward him. Her desire for him would consume her if she wasn't careful. But to kiss him, to touch him when so few women would ever have the pleasure, she couldn't let the chance pass her by. And so, she again resolved herself to the fact she was going to rob the cradle. If he wasn't going to resist or fight this, if he was going to make it this easy for her, she wasn't going to deny him.

Or herself.

"Let's go," she whispered, taking his keys from his hand.

* * *

Cam wiped his damp palms against his jeans. *Damn*. He wasn't ever this nervous on race days. She was full of surprises, this woman he'd stopped on a whim in an autograph line. He took a few deep breaths while following her to the door, his own front door, then inside after she unlocked it. Closing it behind him, he wondered if she was nervous at being alone with him.

She was watching him, her bottom lip caught between her teeth, and Cam tried to imagine what she was thinking. She nodded as if she'd just come to some decision. It didn't take her long to move.

Her fingers went to the hem of her pullover. In seconds it was over her head and dropped to the floor. Her skirt was next. She unbuttoned it down the front enough to hook her thumbs into the waist and slide it down her hips. In bra and panties, she stood, her lip caught between her teeth again, and then she was naked, staring at him with uncertainty. A good dose of determination there too.

"You've offered me something I can't say no to," she said softly. She stepped closer until her breasts just brushed against his shirt, causing her nipples to perk up and tighten. His breath came in short bursts and threatened to choke him. His stomach muscles tightened at the contact and sight of her naked body. He couldn't remember wanting any woman like this.

She looked up at him, took his sunglasses off and set them gently on the glass-topped entry table. "I know women throw themselves at you all the time."

He was having a hard time concentrating, his hands itching, wanting to touch her. "Some," he managed.

"This has nothing to do with your being famous," she whispered while pulling his shirt over his stomach and chest, reaching up on tiptoes to lift it over his head. Her nipples brushed his skin, and he exhaled on a groan.

"No, I didn't think so." He wasn't sure he should be trying to think at all.

"This is all about you and what you do to me. And I don't want to fight it anymore right now. Dinner can wait. I want dessert first."

Her hands drifted to his jeans next, making quick work of the button and zipper. She could have ripped them off—cut them off even—and he wouldn't have cared. He just wanted to be naked with her, inside her. The denim was pushed down his hips, and he toed off his sneakers. When she looked up at him with fire burning in her eyes, he lost all control.

He flexed his fingers into fists once before he grabbed her by the waist and straddled her over his lap as he sat on the wooden bench by the entry table. He'd have to thank Ronnie's wife for talking him into buying it. Till now it hadn't served a purpose, but to take up space. The hard wood under his ass hadn't been the plan, but he didn't think he could make it up the stairs to bed. Her gaze was slightly startled at the movement, but the lust was still there. He was thrilled.

He brushed the hair from her face with one hand while he lifted the other to cup a breast in his palm. As he rubbed the nipple between his fingers, she arched her back, moaned deep in her throat, and her pussy brushed the head of his cock.

Electricity shot through him. She was so ripe, so lush, her body all hills and valleys, and he sank into the softness that surrounded him, burying his face in her neck. He couldn't remember wanting any woman more.

Everything around him vanished, everything except her and the feel of her wet heat touching him. The crown of his cock was so sensitive, and he was so hard... "Inside you, Lily. I need inside you. Wallet. Condom."

He was speaking in one-word phrases, but he couldn't help it. He was afraid if she so much as breathed in his direction, he was going to come right then and there and look like an amateur at making love to a woman.

She reached over and picked up the wallet he'd dropped on the table and handed it to him. With shaking fingers, he fumbled until he found the foil packet, then tossed the wallet away, and ripped the foil with his teeth. She took it from him the moment it was open and pulled out the circle of latex. He groaned when her fingers slid it over his straining cock, her touch soft and insistent without a lick of hesitation.

Once protected, Cam gripped her ass in his hands and brought her impossibly closer. She slid up his cock, then down, taking him completely in one smooth motion, and he was lost. "God, woman."

She tightened her thighs around his legs and squeezed, holding her breath, letting him feel her body pulse against his cock. She exhaled against his lips, sliding

her tongue inside, and he crushed her in his arms. He wasn't sure whom the moan came from, him or her, but the way her pussy sucked at him and the way she started to ride... She was touching the edge of every sexual fantasy he'd ever had.

Her desire for him was real, and that tossed his emotions into a whirlwind. She didn't care about anything else like she'd said: she just wanted him, wanted to indulge herself in him, and he was more than willing to let her burn him alive.

She slid her hands to his head, and pressed the pads of her fingers pressed into his skull as she undulated on his lap, his cock sliding in and out of her. Her nipples scraped his chest, and her breath in his mouth was screaming hot. There wasn't a part of her that wasn't touching a part of him, and he held on as she contracted, shuddered in his arms, and whispered his name against his mouth.

"Damn," he whispered, once again digging his fingers into her ass and shoving his tongue between her teeth, taking her as hard as she took him. He knew the grunts and groans were his this time. His hips pistoned up into her, and the bench bounced against the wall. The harder he fucked her, the more he wanted it to last forever. He didn't want to come but knew he wasn't going to be able to stop it. She was too hot around him, too tight, too wet.

"Look at me, Lily." He ground out the words through clenched teeth when he wrenched his mouth from hers. Her sweet, soft gaze lifted. His balls drew up, cum filled the condom, and his heartbeat echoed in his ears. All the while, his eyes never left hers. An invisible tether held them together, locked. In a split second, life as he knew it was over. Love at first sight. That's what it had been at the signing. He hadn't put a name to it before because he hadn't known then what it was. Now he did. He was in love with her, crazy about her, and he was going make her his.

* * *

"What do you do in Tallahassee?"

Lily looked up at him from across the table where they sat eating reheated steaks and potatoes. She swallowed and wiped her lips with the napkin in her hand. For some reason she suddenly felt naked, exposed, even though she wore one of his

T-shirts. It covered her down to lower than mid thigh, yet he sat there in nothing more than the jeans he'd had on earlier.

He was even hotter to her now that she'd had him. Now that he'd had her. It had been an equal taking, maybe started by her, but finished by him. She wanted him again. Right now. On the table. She couldn't care less about the food. He was all she wanted to feast on.

And he was asking her about her life in Florida. Her normal, everyday, non-race-car-driver-fucking life. The two worlds couldn't be further apart.

"I do a few things. I'm a music teacher, an instrument technician, a flautist in a chamber group, and a substitute teacher from time to time at one of the high schools."

"Really? Wow. A jane-of-all-trades, so to speak. I'd love to hear you play sometime. Did you bring it with you? Your flute?"

Was he serious? He wanted to hear her play? He was a twenty-five-year-old life-in-the-fast-lane—literally—type of guy. Why on earth would he want to listen to her play chamber music? "Yes."

"That's awesome. I've never met a flute player before. Do you like Florida?"

"It's all right." She shrugged. "I grew up there. I haven't traveled much, so..." She let her words fall off because there really was no comparison between her quiet little life and his not-so-quiet and not-so-little life.

"We'll change that." His words were matter-of-fact as he shoved a forkful of steak into his mouth. "I'll take you around the country with me. We'll have a blast. When we get out to California, I'll take you to see my parents. They'll love you. Last year when I went home for the race, a few of the race teams got together and had a huge picnic and contest with kids' charities. From those, we chose winners to come and hang out with us."

"Your parents? Me traveling with you? I think you waited too long to eat tonight."

“Why? I told you this is real, Lily. I want you. Period.” He shoved his plate away and stood. “I’m going to have you too.” The predatory look in his eyes had her up out of her chair and backing away. “You can’t run from me. I’m going to catch you. When I want something, I go after it. I don’t sit around waiting.”

“Y-you’re too young, Cam.”

He lifted a brow and smirked. “My age again?”

Lily swallowed. Hard. Then licked her lips. “Fine, then. If not yours, mine. I’m too old.”

“Bullshit.”

He rounded the corner, and Lily had to turn her head to the side a little to see where the other corner was. His stride was so long, she wouldn’t make it going backward. *Damn*. If he caught her, touched her, she would attack him again. He felt too good inside her. Her body wanted him. Other parts of her wanted him too, but she wasn’t ready to acknowledge those yet.

“We fit good, Lily. You’re soft curves, and I’m hard planes. You’re gentle, and I’m rough. I’m not letting you deny me or yourself. You want it too.”

He reached out and snagged her fingers, pulling her to a stop. He caught her when she was within reach and tugged her close him. His cock was hard against her belly, and he slid his hand into her hair, pulling until her head tilted back. He captured her breath with his mouth.

His other hand dropped to her ass and forced her legs apart from behind. He pulled her up tight until she was standing on tiptoes, then cupped her pussy. The shirt she wore offered her no protection. “You’re so hot here.” He emphasized “here” with a squeeze that made her moan, then slid a long finger inside her. “And you’re so damned tight and soaking wet. I want you choking my dick with this pussy every goddamned day.”

“Cam...”

He let go of her and stripped off her shirt. “My bedroom is up the stairs and to the left. I’ll give you a head start. For every second between the time you get to my room and into my bed before I get there, I’m going to spank you.”

Lily’s eyes widened. He was going to spank her for beating him to his room? Wait. He was going to spank her? She’d never been spanked before, had never even thought about it, but as she looked down at his hands, which she found so sexy, she suddenly had a desire feel them smack her ass.

As quickly as the doubts showed up when she was with him, he rapidly chased them all away. Now all she wanted to do was have him chase her up the stairs and fall on her. Age and other issues floated to the back of her mind.

“A head start?” She was naked, and she didn’t care. A part of her was blossoming right in front of him. Did he realize it? She certainly did and loved the feeling. It was freeing, like getting rid of invisible shackles she hadn’t known were there holding her down. Cam seemed to be the catalyst she’d needed to see that another Lily lived inside her—a bold, brazen, sexual Lily.

He stood stock-still, his hands on his hips. “Yes.”

“How much of one?” She started edging away, sidestepping him.

“Five seconds. But you do realize that is an automatic five swats.”

More wetness pooled between her thighs, and she suddenly wished she knew something about being spanked for pleasure. She’d heard about it, read about it in a few of the romance books Alli had lining her bookshelves, but Lily had never really paid much attention to those passages. “Yes.”

“Oh baby, you’re gonna be so much fun. Ready?” She nodded. “Set?” She stepped to the edge of the breakfast room. “Go.”

And she took off, jogging through the house to the stairs at the front. Jogging for a full-figured, size-18-sometimes, size-16-other-times girl wasn’t always the prettiest sight, but something about Cam and the way he was with her didn’t make her feel uncomfortable or self-conscious about her size. He treated her like she was beautiful, sexy.

She reached the top of the landing and paused. He was at the foot of the staircase watching her. He stepped onto the first step, and she turned to the left, and opened the door at the end of the hall.

His room was furnished just like the rest of the house—sparsely. The king-size bed dominated one wall between two windows, and she made a beeline for it, then crawled into the middle and burrowed under the sheets. They smelled like him: cologne and musk and his own unique scent that was young, fresh, and so damned sexy.

“Damn, I like seeing you in my bed. How many do you think you're gonna get?”

She felt her cheeks heat. “Including the five?”

He nodded and stepped into the room, undoing his jeans as he got closer to the bed. He pulled his cock out but left his jeans on, and she could have creamed right then. He was her fantasy.

“Ten?”

“Try again.” He pulled the sheet from her body and tweaked her nipples before flipping her over. “On your hands and knees.”

With a shiver of anticipation, Lily complied. He caressed the sensitive skin of her ass, the tender flesh of her thighs and hips. She moaned and wiggled a little, silently begging for more of his touch. Her blood was boiling. She couldn't get enough of him. “How many, Lily?”

“F-fifteen?”

“Almost. Twenty. You get twenty.”

Oh God.

Long fingers slid from her anus to her pussy and back again, dragging wetness. One flicked at her clit and one dipped inside her. Her arms were trembling as she tried to hold herself up, but they gave out when he pressed the finger that had been inside her sex against the opening of her ass. He did nothing more than

tease her, but it was enough. Her clit tingled, and her feet flexed. She came with her head buried in the center of his bed, gasping out his name.

“Beautiful,” he whispered. Cam wiped her cum across her ass cheeks. “Have you ever been spanked?”

Her reply was a muffled “no” as she lifted her head, taking in a breath of cool air.

“Just relax. That's part of why I gave you an orgasm. Breathe through the stinging and don't tense up. You'll love it. I promise. You've got an ass just made for spanking, Lily, so round and full.” One more caress of his palms over her skin, then Cam landed a swat dead center.

Pink and heat collided on her skin and sent shivers through him. He'd always loved a little light spanking play with his girlfriends, but Lily's ass... He landed a swat on the other cheek, and his cock hardened painfully.

The way her back arched in a graceful curve, the way her paleness immediately darkened with his handprint, the way her flesh quivered—he'd never been with anyone like her. “How many was that, Lily?”

“Two.”

Her voice was breathless, and he'd hardly gotten started. With a hand on the small of her back, Cam lifted his other one and in rapid succession spanked her cheeks with alternating blows. His palm hovered over her. The heat radiating off her flesh nearly undid him, and she moaned when he leaned down to lick at her tender skin. She parted her legs a few inches more, pushing her ass toward him. He wondered if she even realized she was doing it. The scent of her sex drifted up to him and when he lightly touched her pussy, grazed her with his fingers, her hips bucked, and she let out a keening cry.

He dropped his mouth to her and licked at her juices. She pressed down on his tongue and rode the tip until her body stiffened. He slipped it inside her just as the

spasms rocked her. Her muscles gripped his tongue as he ate at her core, suckling softly until she calmed.

Her thighs trembled against his head as he pulled back. Sliding his hands up her sides, he wrapped them around her waist and turned her over to crawl on top of her body and kiss her. Her legs automatically hugged his hips, her pelvis arched up, seeking his cock, and his cock happily obliged to be found. He was inside her in one swift motion, pounding her cunt without mercy. She clutched him, held him, kept her lips and eyes locked with his.

He'd never fucked so relentlessly before. The combination of the spanking and her sexual reaction to it, the taste of her orgasm on his tongue and the sharing of it with her, the feel of her slippery pussy on his bare cock all pushed him headfirst over the edge of his own bliss. He pulled out, coming on her belly, kissing her as his body jerked through release.

Yes, the woman was going to be the death of him.

Chapter Four

Lily opened her eyes slowly and glanced over at the clock: barely six in the morning. She had no idea what time they'd finally gone to sleep, but she was wide awake and hungry for him again, and she thought about turning over and sneaking down between his legs to taste him, but the arm around her waist tightened. Cam was awake.

Part of her wanted to groan in mortification at the way she'd attacked him before they'd barely been inside his front door. Then at the wanton, shameless way she'd spread her legs for him, loved the spanking he'd given her. The other part of her wanted to roll over and crawl on top of his body and screw him until they both went back to sleep, too exhausted to move.

His lips nuzzled her neck, his teeth nipped at her ear, and her heart skipped a beat.

She lived a simple, uncomplicated, and organized life. It was how she functioned best.

And yet now she ached everywhere, was burning up from the inside out, and she longed for more. She wanted to be fucked into oblivion and then fucked again. She wanted Cam Carter. She wanted everything about him, everything he was, everything he ever would be. She wanted the man who very few ever saw, who let his guard down with her and smiled easily, genuinely, whose very touch could be both gentle and arousingly rough, and his eyes... She couldn't get enough of his eyes.

She wanted difficult, complicated, and the wind blowing through her hair at two hundred miles per hour.

How did a girl fall in love overnight? How was it possible?

Uncertainties slipped through the haze of her desire and made her move. She had to stop thinking of him in personal terms aside from the night they'd just spent together. It couldn't be love, she knew that. It was lust, a very healthy, very large dose of it, but it was still lust. And it wouldn't be lasting beyond the moment she walked out his door. She had to remember that.

Right?

“What's wrong?”

His whispered words feathered across her skin, causing her to shiver. “Nothing, why?”

“You've gotten more and more tense as the minutes pass.”

“Oh. I didn't realize it. I was just thinking; that's all.”

He nudged her with his hips, his cock rock hard against her ass, and he slid his hand down under her thigh to lift her leg. In the next second, he was inside her. “It's way too damned early for thinking.”

Lily groaned, and her muscles clamped down, melting around him.

“I can't seem to get enough of you. Hot and tight.” He wrapped strong fingers around one of her breasts and squeezed, his thumb rasping the nipple as it peaked under his teasing. “So damn...”

His body slowly rocked behind her, his cock sliding in and out in short, hard thrusts. He kissed her shoulder, her neck, all the while his finger and thumb continued to pull at her nipple, pinching it and eliciting little mewling sounds of need from her throat.

So much for needing to move away from him. So much for resisting the lure of him.

“That's it. You like that, don't you? The sharp little twinge. Does it make your belly tighten? Does it make your clit twitch? I bet it does.”

Lily could only continue to moan in response. Cam hadn't talked much during sex last night, but God, hearing his voice like this—low and raspy with a hint of sleep around the edges—turned her on to the point she would be coming if he kept it up, even if he never touched her clit.

“Ever had a man in your ass, Lily?”

Oh damn, he hadn't really asked that, had he? “N-no.”

“Ever wanted to try it?”

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God. Lily licked her dry lips. “Yes,” she answered softly, her face heating in embarrassment, and her pulse thumping in triple time. She'd never dared admit something like that to anyone, but then, no one had ever asked her before; no one had ever acted like they wanted to take her that way.

“Good, 'cause I can't wait to slide deep inside it. It'll be impossibly tight. It'll stretch and hurt a little, and it'll be so fucking hot... Goddamn, I can't... Hold on, baby...”

He pressed his face into the curve where her shoulder met her neck and bit down, not hard enough to hurt, but hard enough to sting, and she smiled at the mark it would leave. He pulled out, pressing his cock hard between her thighs, pulsing, his body rigid and shuddering in orgasm.

Cam lifted his head a few moments later and let go of her. Lily started to move away, but Cam had her on her back, his face buried between her legs before she could. He attacked her clit with his lips and tongue, tugging and pulling and nibbling until she was writhing and gasping for breath.

Before last night she hadn't had a man's mouth on her pussy in longer than she could remember. Cam had reminded her then and now—oh God, right now—of how much she loved it. Her hands were restless, gripping the sheets, lifting her arms over her head to grab the slats of the headboard, then lowering to dig her fingers into his shoulders. Finally, she grasped the back of his head, holding his face tight against her as she rode his tongue, exploding in her own orgasm, crying out as she saw stars behind her tightly closed eyelids.

When her legs had ceased their trembling and she could focus again, she found him still there, between them, licking her down so softly. He raised his eyes to hers and met her gaze before raising his head, removing her hands, and kissing each of her palms.

He pressed the sticky cum between them and wrapped his arms around her, taking her mouth in a kiss that touched her in a way she knew she wouldn't recover from. She tasted herself, she tasted him, and she tasted a future that wasn't hers. She was in love, overnight in love with him, and the admission, just to herself, broke her heart. It would never work between them, not in the long-term, but in bed with him, playing sex games with him, it was easy to forget that.

"I think it's time for a shower. You made a mess," he whispered, stretching out next to her, drawing one long finger through the cream on her stomach. He drew a swirl design, causing her belly to flutter on the inside; then he pressed his wet finger to her lips. She opened and licked his cum with the tip of her tongue before taking his finger into her mouth and sucking it clean. His eyes darkened as he watched her and cursed under his breath.

Lily swallowed against laughter and tears that couldn't—wouldn't—fall, and tried for a light tone of voice when he pulled his finger away and got up out of the bed. "But you said it was too early for thinking."

Cam laughed and leaned down, tweaking one of her nipples. "Naughty girl, using my words against me. You'll be punished for that."

* * *

Forty-five minutes later, Lily stood on the deck outside the kitchen, holding a cup of coffee in her hands and trying not to think about the sex they'd had. She was definitely trying not to think about the sweet and naughty way he'd washed her body in the shower, and most definitely trying not to think about having to leave him when he took her back to the race shop to pick up her car.

She felt him before she heard him. He stepped through the French doors to join her, and the odd connection between them baffled her. She couldn't recall a

time when she'd been so in tune with another person other than Alli and Candi. They'd always joked that they were really triplets, sharing the same mind, but she'd never been this way with a man. "When do you need to be at work?"

"I usually get there around ten or so to go over any changes that have been talked about. I guess I need to check my phone to see what else there is. Hold on."

Lily was holding on. Just barely, but she was holding on. She was torn between running far, far away from him and tackling him to the ground. Sex had never been on her mind this much, but the man had her insides all twisted up in knots and the spot between her legs throbbing every time she looked at him.

Cam came back outside and stood next to her. She watched as he pressed a few buttons and then put the phone to his ear, leaning his shoulder against hers, nuzzling his face in her hair. She suppressed the shiver of arousal that went through her, and a few seconds later, he closed the device and winked at her before placing a smacking kiss on her lips.

"After the shop, I have an appearance to make around eleven, a luncheon at twelve thirty, a meeting at two, and...a date at three."

A date? He had a date? Well, of course he would have a date. What the hell were you thinking, Lily? "Just let me know when you want to go," she said, proud of herself for the lightness in her voice, and he must not have picked up on anything different either, because he didn't let on if so.

Cam smiled, took the cup of coffee from her hands, and sipped from it, then pulled her into his arms. Lily kept her head averted so she wouldn't be tempted to lick the warm liquid from his lips. "Plans this weekend?"

She looked at him then. Was he serious? "Yeah. The race."

"Got tickets already?"

"Yeah."

"Hmmm. Anyone you can give them to?"

"Why?"

“Because I want you with me down in the pits.” He kissed the tip of her nose and grinned like a kid in a candy store. Lily didn't answer. How could she? The look on his face was sincere, earnest, wanting. All of a sudden, well, not all of a sudden, because she'd been wondering since she met up with him at the race shop, but she wasn't glamorous, high-class, a model, or young. She was an average, ordinary woman. She wasn't at all what he should be going after. Not that she had low self-esteem, because she was just fine with herself as she was: hips, curves, *and* age. Still, there wasn't an answer the burning question inside her, though. *What the hell is he doing with me?*

“What do you mean?”

“What?”

“You just asked what the hell I'm doing with you. What do you mean by that?”

“I...I...” Damn, she really needed to get a grip and stop speaking without her head's permission. This was getting to be a little ridiculous.

“Look, baby, I don't know how to answer that. I don't know how to tell you everything I want from you or with you. I just know what I felt when we met and decided to go with it.”

“What did you feel?” She didn't need to be asking questions like that either.

He grinned at her with that cocky, know-it-all, better-than-everyone-else grin that people loved to hate. “Hungry.”

“What?”

“I felt like a starving man.”

“I don't know...”

“Yeah, I know. Look, we need to get going. You can pick up your car and go home to your friend's house. I'll do my stuff, and I'll see you around three.”

Her eyes widened. “I thought you had plans.”

“Yes. With you. What did you think I meant?”

“Nothing. Just that you had plans.”

“You thought I had a date with someone else? I should spank you for that, but I won't. Not yet anyway. I'll come get you at three. Make sure you give me directions when we get to the shop.”

“Okay,” she said in one breath. Then in another, “Maybe we should go slow with this, you know. Maybe we should s—”

“Nope. We should do lots of stuff, but taking this slow is not one of them. I have a month to make you believe that you can't live without me. Slow is not going to work. Besides, I don't know what the hell slow means.” He leaned down and kissed her hard and dropped his sunglasses over his eyes. He walked backward away from her until he entered the house again, then turned and headed out the front door.

“Well, now what?” Lily whispered into the silence.

The front door opened and closed again. The man of her dreams sauntered toward her, all swagger and long, lean legs. Her breath hitched as it had done half a million times in the last fifteen hours. One would think the gleam would have worn off by now at least a little, but not with him. He only seemed to burn brighter, hotter, and she was the one who was going to feel the singe of the flames. “Coming?”

As soon as the word was out of his mouth, the smirk on his face had her nearly bursting with laughter and memories assailed her. Was it four times? Five? She couldn't remember exactly because a couple of orgasms had run together into one long one. With as straight a face as she could manage, she said, “Yes.”

* * *

Cam stood beside his truck watching Lily drive out of the parking lot. He hated the tight feeling he had in his chest. He'd had the same feeling when she walked away from the autograph table. It was fear that he wouldn't see her again, that she wouldn't call, that she didn't really want him. It wasn't a feeling he was used to, and he didn't like it at all. Absently he rubbed at his chest, then dropped his hand and shook his head. He had it bad. There was no other explanation. He wanted her. Completely, wholly.

It was going to be a long-ass day until three when he could see her again.

“Cam?”

“Yeah. Hey, man. Good night?”

Ronnie grimaced behind his own sunglasses, and Cam laughed. *Guess not.*

“Got my ass whooped and broke the damn bank buying rounds. Remind me not to go out with them again without you.”

“You already do know better.”

Ronnie snorted and flipped him the bird. Cam loved their ease, their friendship, the way they made all the facets of their business and personal relationships work for the better. It wasn't always so easy between drivers and their crew chiefs, but Cam and Ronnie had lucked out. They were like long-lost brothers. Cam couldn't have asked for a more knowledgeable man to be in charge, to lead the crew. He couldn't have asked for a more supportive man either. Cam didn't have the most sterling reputation. The majority of people didn't like him, and while he was fine with that, fine with his brash, tell-it-like-it-is way, others weren't. Ronnie understood him, supported him, backed him every step of the way. Ronnie and the crew and the team owners believed in him and allowed him to be who he was, and he knew he was lucky.

And now, there was Lily.

Having her in his corner just left him speechless. She wanted him, no matter how much she tried to push the age thing as being important. It wasn't true. Age didn't mean shit to him. His fame, or rather his infamy, didn't mean anything either. He wanted to drive. He wanted to win. He didn't care if anyone else ever liked him for it. Lily, though. Yeah, he needed her to like him as a man, as a driver. He needed her support, her belief in him, just as he had it from Ronnie and company. He needed to know she could handle the negative press. He would protect her from as much of it as he could, taking as many of the hits as possible, but he knew she would get some of it just by being associated with him. Yeah, the press might tap into their age difference; they might tap into the fact that she wasn't built

like the model girlfriends and wives of his fellow drivers. She was more the girl next door who you were best friends with growing up but never dated or saw as a girl until it was too damned late and she had moved on.

He wasn't going to let Lily move on from him. She was stuck with him, age difference, infamous face, controversial attitude, and all. She—

“Cam? Buddy? You with me?”

Cam grinned and hoped that Ronnie hadn't said anything important. “Yeah, I'm with ya. Sorry about that. Not much sleep last night.”

Ronnie let out a whistle. “Oh? Ya hear from your gal?”

There was the twang. “Yes. She was waiting for me yesterday. We had dinner.” And sex. Lots and lots of sex.

Cam opened the door to the shop, and both men took off their sunglasses. Ronnie immediately put his back on. “You had dinner? All night? Damn, either you had some shitty service or the girl was dinner.”

He ignored the comment and hoped that Ronnie would let it go as well. At the same time, Cam knew that by not saying anything, he was confessing a whole hell of a lot. Damned if he did and damned if he didn't.

“You dog.” Ronnie nudged him in the shoulder. “You did the girl on the first date? Damn. Was she good? Gonna see her again? Gonna share?”

Cam walked off, laughing and shaking his head. No way in hell was he going to answer now, and no way in hell would he be sharing Lily with any of the guys. It had been a running joke with the whole crew that they all shared so much being on the road for most of the year that the only thing they hadn't shared yet was a woman. It wasn't going to start now either, not with his woman.

His. Oh yeah, he loved the sound of that. His woman. Not girl. No, she wasn't a girl anymore. She had the body of a real woman, and damned if it didn't make him rock hard just thinking about it.

“Team meeting in five,” Ronnie called out from behind him.

Cam lifted a hand up in acknowledgment but kept right on walking. After pulling his cell out of his pocket, he found Lily's number in his contact list and sent her a text.

Get home okay?

That wasn't what he wanted to ask, but he figured he'd start with something innocent, not knowing where she was, who was with her, or if her phone lit up like a Christmas tree when a text message came through.

Yes. Aren't you supposed to be in a meeting?

Cam settled down on the floor of the garage and leaned back against one of his cars.

In a bit. What are you doing?

Cam waited a few minutes, staring at his phone, waiting for her name to pop up. When it did, the little flip of his stomach astonished him. Again. It would take some getting used to, this over-the-top attraction and desire for her. He felt like some teenager waiting for his crush to text him, to call him, to give him the fucking time of day.

Having coffee with a friend.

The one from the other day?

Yes.

Ronnie came around the front of car with a clipboard in hand. "All right, guys. Let's get moving."

Gotta go. See you later today.

Chapter Five

"I can't believe he's texting you. I can't believe you spent the night with him. Candi is going to flip her lid when she finds out. Maybe I should have let you go sit in the car and not meet him."

Lily laughed at Allison's playful pout, and in all honesty, she couldn't believe everything that had happened either. Cam Carter was sending her text messages. Cam Carter wanted to see her again. Cam Carter had had sex with her, had had his mouth pressed between her legs, had spanked her until she was more wet than she had ever been. The desire to feel his hands like that again made her squirm in her seat.

"What's that blush for, and why are you grinding in the chair? Tell me, tell me!"

No way in hell was she telling Alli. "Just thinking about him; that's all."

"You have it bad for him."

"I can't have it bad for him. He's... Well, he's... He's just a fling while I'm here for the month."

"A fling? Are you serious? The end of the month is going to get here and you'll be so head over heels in love with him, you won't know what to do with yourself."

"Falling in love is not an option, Alli. I can't. And more to the point, he won't be falling in love either."

"You don't know that. If the blush on your face is any indication, something sizzles between the two of you, and it's not the dinner you had last night. My guess is that it was dessert that lit you on fire."

Lily didn't answer. Instead she lifted the coffee cup to her lips, only to realize that it was empty. *Damn*. She got up and walked to the sink. "I've never been with anyone like him."

"That good, huh?"

"God, Alli. Good doesn't even begin to describe it. He did things, said things... It's not just sex with him. Not for me. And I don't know what it is for him. I mean, I know what he says, but you know, he doesn't have to mean any of it."

"You've never been a just-sex kind of girl, though, Lily. Flings and no strings have never been your thing."

"I know, and that's the problem. If it is just sex with him, where does that leave me in a few weeks when I go back to Florida? Cam Carter is a once-in-a-lifetime man, and I'd be a fool to stop seeing him just because I'm afraid of a broken heart. On the other hand, I'd be a fool to keep seeing him because I'm afraid I'd never get over him."

"You can't stop seeing him. It's just like you said. Cam Carter *is* once in a lifetime. Will you regret the time spent with him more than you would regret wondering 'what if' for the rest of your life?"

Lily knew Alli was right. It didn't make things any easier, though. The man was under her skin. She'd had fantasies about him before she met him, and ever since the staring contest across the autograph table, she'd begun dreaming about him, oftentimes waking up from her dreams in the midst of an orgasm. No other man had had that kind of effect on her. So really, what choice did she have?

"What are you guys doing later?"

"I don't know. He just said he would be here at three. Oh, and I need to ask you something."

"Shoot." Alli leaned back and drained her coffee cup. "Does he want a threesome?"

Lily turned shocked eyes on her friend to see the smirk playing about Alli's mouth. "No. He wants me to be in the pits this weekend for the races—well, he wants us to be in the pits this weekend. I told him we had tickets already, but I don't suppose you know anyone who would want them, do you?"

"The pits? We'll get to be with the crews and up on the pit box and everything?"

"Yeah."

"I'll find someone at work to take the tickets and you tell him yes, we'll be there. With bells on too if he wants."

The sheer excitement of Alli's reaction helped Lily to relax a little more about what was going on with her and Cam, even though she wasn't really sure what the hell was going on with them. Alli didn't have an issue with Cam being so much younger than Lily, so why did she have such a problem with it? Especially if this was only going to be a fling for a few weeks?

But then, hadn't Cam said he wanted to take her on the road with him, out to meet his parents, and that this wasn't just a fling?

"What are you thinking?"

"I don't know what to make of all this. Really, I don't. This is so much bigger than me. I'm not this person. And the only thing I do know, is that I'm not going to want to leave him in a few weeks."

"Deep down inside, I think you *are* this person, Lily. You've just never met anyone to bring it out in you. As for leaving him, don't. You can get a job up here. Candi and I would love it if you were here."

"You and Candi would want race car drivers of your own."

"And there's something wrong with that because...?"

Both women laughed, and Lily realized just how much she'd missed her friends since they'd moved away from Florida. She lived such an isolated life: going to work, coming home, staying to herself. The life Cam lived every day was vastly

different. Right then, she couldn't even imagine fitting into his world. Would she want to give up her solitude for his hectic, traveling-all-the-time, in-the-spotlight life?

The image of him naked, kissing her, spanking her, filling her body with his cock flashed through her mind. His smile and his eyes lit with mischief filled the other part of her mind and she knew in an instant that yes, she would give it all up for a chance at being with him for longer than the three weeks she had left at Candi's house.

"So we have a few hours before he gets here. What say we go shopping?" Alli suggested, interrupting Lily's thoughts.

"For what?"

"Me. I need something to wear to the races."

"You're going to buy something new?"

"Oh My God! Lily! We both need something new and hot. Well, okay, you've already got the guy, the hottest guy, but I don't. And in order for any of them to notice me, I need to wear more than skinny jeans and a tight T-shirt."

"You're not serious? Alli, it's still a stock car race."

"It's so much more than that. C'mon. Candi doesn't have anything fun in her closet."

Three hours later, Lily stood outside the dressing room of yet another clothing store. She'd never seen anyone try on so many clothes in such a short amount of time. Alli was wasted sitting behind the desk of a corporate law firm fielding calls and ordering office supplies. Lily was sure her friend had missed her calling in the wide world of clothes, fashion, and design. She'd always had a good eye for it, but the shopping was more hobby than passion for Alli it seemed.

So long as the job paid her enough money to go on weekly shopping sprees, Alli was happy to do whatever for it.

"What time is it?"

Lily looked at the display on her phone. "It's about a quarter to two."

"Okay. I'll be done after this last outfit. Then we'll get you back to Candi's long before Cam gets there."

Cam's name was said in a stage whisper, and Lily had to smile. She doubted that anyone in hearing distance would realize whom Alli was actually talking about. "I'm not worried about it."

"I know you're not, but you need time to relax and freshen up."

"I haven't been doing anything. Why do I need to freshen up?" She couldn't help but think that a quick power nap would be a nice idea, though. She wasn't used to all-night sex.

"You've been shopping. You had lunch. Honestly Lily, one would think you'd never been on a date before." Alli exited the dressing room, somehow looking even more beautiful than when she'd walked in. She took the clothes draped over Lily's arm and hung them on the rack. "If I didn't know better, I'd think you were trying to sabotage this thing with Cam."

"I'm not. I just... I don't know how to feel about it, how to act about it."

Walking out of the store without buying a thing, they left the mall the same as they had come in, empty-handed. Alli sighed and took Lily's hand, swinging their arms between them like when they were kids. "You're supposed to just go with it. He's into you. He wants you. Don't try to overthink it. He's not like the other guys you date. He's not stuffy, and he's not buttoned-down."

"No, he's certainly not either one of those." And in private with him, she wasn't stuffy and doubtful and buttoned-down either. She was the complete opposite. She was free and sexual and playful. She was the way she'd always imagined being but never had the nerve to be.

"He's going to be good for you. He's going to end up being the man of your dreams. I just know it."

The thing was, Lily already knew it to be true.

* * *

Cam knocked again on the door, and his frown deepened when Lily didn't answer. She hadn't answered her cell phone either the three times he'd called. He looked around. Everything seemed normal for a small residential neighborhood. He'd driven through this particular area of town quite a bit but had never really paid much attention to it.

Older all-brick homes lined the street with fairly large yards and full-grown trees. There were a lot of green lawns, quite different than the more up-to-date subdivision he had grown up in out in California. The oaks and magnolias gave this area Southern charm, and he marveled that it was so close to the speedway. He'd never have guessed from standing there that he was just minutes away from the loud roar of engines a few times a year.

He stepped off the front porch and toed his way through the front flower bed to peer into the front window. He hoped no one saw him. *Race car Driver Turned Peeping Tom*. Wouldn't that be a fun headline? But he forgot all about that when he saw her curled on the couch, sleeping.

A green blanket covered her, and all he could see was her face. It was May, and she was cold. Something about that made him smile. A pair of glasses were folded on the coffee table in front of the couch and from what he could tell, the house, while older on the outside, had been modernized on the inside.

"How the hell do I wake her up?"

Cam tapped on the glass, hoping to get a response out of her. She didn't stir. He tapped a little harder, and still nothing. This wasn't going well. The woman he couldn't stop thinking about, the woman he'd had a hard-on for all day, was sound asleep on a couch. He moved back out of the flower bed and up onto the porch again. In each of the four corners were flowerpots. What were the chances he'd find an extra key under one of them?

No chance. Shit. He replaced the fourth terra-cotta pot and then proceeded to check under the mat at the door. Nothing there either. What the hell was he supposed to do now?

An answering machine. Most people still had one, didn't they?

He hopped off the porch again and went back to the window. Cupping his hands around his eyes, he looked around the living room until he spotted it on a small end table beside a really nice-looking recliner. Talk about the perfect place to take a nap. Or to have her curled up in his lap napping. Or to have her on his lap doing other things.

She'd given him her cell number and one other number. He wasn't sure if it was the number to her friend's house or to her other friend's cell, but he figured it was worth a shot. If a female picked up, he'd know the answer.

The number rang, and so did a phone in the house. He didn't see the phone anywhere but could hear it. Lily stirred slightly under the blanket just as the machine picked up and her friend Candi rattled off a greeting and something to the effect of not being able to come to the phone, ending with asking that the caller leave a message at the beep.

"Lily? Lily, baby, wake up. You look so cute lying there all wrapped up, but I need you to wake up. I wish I could pick you up and hold you in my lap." She stirred even more, and this time lifted her head, looking toward the machine. "That's it. I see you, baby. Look toward the window."

She did, and his cock hardened at the sleepy look on her face, at her mussed hair, at the recognition that lit her face. He smiled. "I missed you today. Come let me in. I want to kiss you and wrap my arms around you. I want to pull you close to my body and feel all your softness rubbing against me. Come get me, Lily girl."

Cam backed away from the window as Lily got up off the couch and moved to the front door. A few seconds later, he heard the *click* of the lock, and the door opened. Red stained her cheeks where she blushed, and he closed his phone with his

left hand while dragging her to him with his right arm. He nuzzled his face into her neck and inhaled deeply.

For a moment she stood stiff, then slowly began to relax and sink into him, nestling close. He just wanted to hold her, but he'd made plans for them, and they needed to get going. Kissing the top of her head, he set her away from him and moved them both inside, then closed the door behind him.

His heart contracted tightly when she looked up at him, lust filling her eyes. *Damn.* "Don't look at me like that."

She licked her lips and opened her mouth. "Like what?"

"Like you want to eat me alive."

Red flooded her cheeks again. "But I do want to eat you alive."

"Dammit, woman! You can't say things like that to me and expect me to be able to keep a level head and resist you."

"Why do you have to resist me?" She tilted her head and started to close the small space between them.

"Oh no you don't." Cam backed up until he was pressed against the door. "You stay over there." But she kept moving forward. He had nowhere to go except to the side, and that's just what he did. He sidestepped her and swatted her ass. She turned not-so-innocent eyes on him and he was so close to giving in and dropping them both on the floor. "Stop trying to get me naked."

"But I don't want to stop. I want you naked."

She was coming on to him, and he was loving every second of it. "I made plans for us."

She licked her lips and reached out to grab his shirt in her fist. "I've been dreaming up plans for us."

Damn. Her voice was rough and throaty, a sexy rasp from sleep, and he let her get within inches of him before he stepped out of reach again. "What if I promise that as soon as we get back in the truck, you can ravish me and hold me prisoner?"

“Really? Prisoner? All mine?”

Oh fuck yeah. All hers. “Yeah, really.”

“Kiss me.”

Oh hell no. If he kissed her now, they would be fucking. Her aggression toward him turned him on, and he so wanted to plant his lips on hers, but they'd never make it to the track if he did. “Those must have been some interesting dreams. Maybe you can tell me about them later.”

“I'd rather show you.”

The death of him. He uncurled her fist from his shirt and kissed the back of her hand. “C'mon. A few of my friends are waiting for me to bring you.”

“A few of your friends?”

That cleared the haze of sleep and seduction right up. He smiled at the wariness that crept into her eyes. She was okay in private with him, but when he mentioned going out in public, she tensed. “Yeah. So do what you gotta do to get ready to leave.”

“Where are we going?”

“Up to the track.”

“Why?”

Cam watched as she fiddled with the blanket that had covered her, as she folded it and smoothed its corners. She reached for her glasses and slid them on, turning in his direction, but she still wouldn't look at him. She was a bundle of nerves, and he wished he knew how to ease her. “I want to take you around the track in a car. I think you'll love it. I want to give you a feel for what it's like going two hundred miles per hour.”

She looked up at him. “Oh wow. Really? That is so cool, Cam.” And just like that, she was loose again with bright, excited eyes. “I'll be right back. Then we can go.”

After she disappeared down the hall, Cam walked around the living area of the craftsman-style home. It was light and airy with all the common rooms flowing into one another. A small breakfast bar separated the kitchen from the dining area, and a set of columns separated the dining area from the living room. It had a warm, homey feeling despite its openness. It was tidy, uncluttered, but felt comfortable with the warm rich greens and blues of the furniture and decor. Off the dining room, through a set of French doors, was a deck, and Cam could almost imagine it full of friends and family for a barbecue. It made him smile, and he knew instantly that he wanted to be part of it, part of Lily's intimate circle. He wanted to be part of her, mixed in with her life as much as he wanted her to be part of and mixed in with his.

"I'm ready."

Cam turned and grinned. She'd changed shirts and now wore one with his face plastered against her chest, his grin right at the indent of her waist. Jeans hugged her hips and thighs, and she wore sneakers. She was cute, beautiful, wholesome, and sexy all at the same time. He wasn't sure which part of her he wanted more in that moment.

He didn't see her as being older. He simply saw her as the woman he wouldn't be able to get enough of, something he had known the second she stood in front of the autograph table and smiled that uncertain, lust-filled smile she didn't think he'd seen.

Her glasses were gone too. He kind of liked her in them. Sexy in a naughty school teacher kind of way. "Contacts?" he asked, pointing to her eyes.

"Yes. I saw you were looking at the deck. Do you want to go out there for a second? Candi has a beautiful backyard. She loves to have people over and throw parties."

Her hips swayed with easy grace, and his cock hardened that much more as unpracticed sex appeal surrounded her. She unlocked the door to the deck, and he

followed her outside. There was a breeze and coolness to the air that was uncharacteristic for late spring in the South.

“It's really nice out here. I can't believe your friend lives so close to the speedway, because from right here, it seems like we're in the middle of nowhere. There are no traffic sounds.”

“Not generally, no. Race weekends are the exception, but even then it's not too bad.”

“Can you hear the cars going around the track?”

“Yes. I'm usually at the races when I come up to visit, but things come up sometimes, you know?”

“I know, but hopefully that won't happen anymore. I hope you'll be at all the races, here and in other places. I want to wake up with you like I did this morning and know that I'll see you later in the day.” He slipped his arms around her waist and pulled her back against him. Her head fit in the cradle of his shoulder, and he leaned down and kissed the top of her hair. “I can't wait to see you this weekend on top of the pit box.”

“We'll be there.”

“Your friend agreed? What about the tickets you guys had?”

“She took them with her this afternoon and is going to find someone at work to sell them to.”

Cam squeezed her tight. He felt her hesitation in thinking about things between them being serious, and he honestly couldn't blame her. “Excellent.” He simply couldn't let her leave at the end of the month. He'd only known her for a few days but couldn't imagine his life going back to the way it had been before her. Somehow he had to convince her they belonged together. “Come on, baby. We need to go before I bend you over the railing and strip your jeans right off your ass and forget the deal we made a few minutes ago.”

In response, she wiggled her butt against his groin, and he couldn't stifle the groan or keep from pushing his hips into her. "Naughty woman. I just might have to forget our little deal anyway."

"Yeah?"

She was already breathless when he slid his hand up her chest and settled it over her heart. It was thumping wildly. Lowering his head, he trailed kisses along her neck and pulled the neck of her T-shirt to the side to nip at her shoulder. "Yeah." He let go of her and stepped back. "But not right now."

She whirled around and faced him. "You. Are. Mean."

Cam laughed at the smile in her eyes, at the mock indignation on her face. He was such a goner. Sliding his sunglasses over his eyes, he pulled her toward him with a hand around the back of her neck. His lips glossed over hers, and that's all he allowed himself before he walked back into the house.

Chapter Six

Lily's heart threatened to pound its way right through her chest wall as she was strapped into passenger side of the demo race car. She'd never been so nervous or scared in all her life, and she couldn't stop checking to make sure that the helmet was on her head as tight as it could be and that her safety belts and neck restraints were secure enough to prevent her heart or any other part of her person from becoming detached.

Cam climbed in through the driver's side window and grinned at her. "You're a little on the pale side inside that helmet, and your eyes are really wide. You okay, baby?"

Lily just nodded, quite certain that she wouldn't be able to find her voice.

"Do you want to get out? We don't have to do this. I just thought you might have fun."

"I-I'm just a little nervous." *A little nervous, hell.* More like a *lot* nervous. Her voice was barely a squeak, but she managed to get the words out. She had a death grip on the padded straps that looked like the harness on a roller-coaster ride and held her against the seat.

Cam reached over and curled his hand over one of hers. His warmth, his smile, the reassuring look in his eyes calmed her like nothing else could. He squeezed his fingers over hers and winked, then sat back. One of his crew helped him get strapped in while Cam put on his helmet. Attaching the steering wheel was the last thing he did before he flipped the ignition switch.

The thick lining of the helmet did little to muffle the roar of the engine as it came to life. The car vibrated around her and for a few minutes she felt as though her teeth were going to rattle right out of her head.

“Ready?”

She turned her head as Cam's voice sounded in her ears. She hadn't known there was a radio inside her helmet, and if she could have him talk to her throughout this little track adventure, she felt sure she'd be okay.

She nodded at him, and he nodded back, then peeled out of the pit box. Being that there was no race and no one else was using the track, there was no pit road speed for him to be cautious of, and Lily couldn't stop the little scream that escaped her throat.

Cam laughed. “Hold on.”

Their speed steadily climbed and never dropped, even as they took the corners. The butterflies in Lily's stomach went crazy. Being on the track like this was like nothing she'd ever felt before.

Cam used up the whole track, riding up high against the wall, so close Lily didn't know how he avoided slamming into it, and riding so low to the apron, she didn't know how he kept control and never once went below the yellow line, though he seemed at times to be jerking sharply on the wheel.

“You want to go around some more?”

Lily nodded and then loudly said, “Yes.” And so, they did. Half a dozen more times, he drove at two hundred miles an hour, giving her one of the most exhilarating and thrilling experiences of her life.

She loved it. She loved the feeling, after she'd gotten used to the quivering in her belly and the thumping of her heart, of course. But she loved the feeling of flying while still on the ground, the speed, the sound of the engine at full throttle, the man in the seat next to her. She loved how he gripped the wheel because it was how he gripped her body, firmly, with utter control and confidence.

When he pressed on the brakes, she could smell a mix of rubber, dust, hot concrete, and oil. She loved that. A stock car fan all her life, she was finding a new appreciation for it. The look and feel he'd given her in the last hour between the tour of the garage area and the ride... Damn, why hadn't she thought of being a driver?

Once they were back in the pit box, Cam twisted and unlocked the steering wheel from the steering column and slid it up on the dash. He then went to work on his helmet, tugging it off his head, then finally worked on his safety belts and neck harness.

Lily had barely gotten her helmet off when the window net on her side of the car was pulled down and one of Cam's crew members reached in to help her with her buckles, hooks, and catches.

“Have fun?”

Lily looked up at the kid. Well, he wasn't a kid really, but he likely wasn't any older than Cam. That brought her up short. Looking back and forth between the two men, young though they might be, there was a vast difference in their faces. Cam had youth, but his eyes seemed older than his actual years. The man at the window helping her seemed more like a boy than a man. Cam had responsibilities on his shoulders that most men her age wouldn't be able to handle. Cam carried the weight of his crew, his sponsors, his bosses, his managers, and his family on his shoulders. They depended on him, and he depended on them.

Lily swayed when she stood on the ground, and the kid held on to her arm just a bit longer. She leaned back against the side of the car and took a few deep breaths.

“You okay? Sometimes it takes a few minutes to get your bearings again after a ride like that if you're not used to it.”

Lily smiled at him. “I'm fine, just needed to catch my breath.”

“I got her, Mick. Thanks.” Cam reached out and brushed a piece of hair from her eyes as Mick walked away. He didn't look like a Mick, more like a Mickey.

Maybe that's what Mick was short for. She shrugged and looked up at the man who stood in front of her, the one she was falling for.

"I loved it, Cam. Thank you so much for bringing me out here and taking me for a ride. I won't ever forget it."

"I'm glad, baby. I hope there are going to be a lot of things between us that you won't ever forget. I—"

"Hey, wanna go for beer and wings?"

Lily looked up at the older gentleman who had walked up. Cam pulled her into the crook of his arm and turned to the man. "Ronnie, this is Lily. Lily, this is Ronnie, my crew chief."

Ronnie's face lit up and he pulled her into his arms for a hug that squeezed the breath right out of her. "So you're the gal? Damn, it's nice to meet you."

"Hi." Lily wasn't sure what else to say. The gal? Ronnie let go of her and just beamed from ear to ear. What had Cam told him?

"So you gonna come sit with me on Sunday?"

"Uh yeah, I think so. Is that all right? We don't want to be in the way or be a distraction."

"You'll be fine, darlin'. Don't worry. We have plenty of room, and it'll make Cam here real happy."

"Okay then, if you're sure."

"Very. So," he said, smacking his hands and rubbing the palms together, "wanna go for beer and wings with us?"

Cam looked down at her, and she looked up at him. She didn't mind one way or the other; she simply wanted to be with him. Time was short, and every moment would have to last years for her. Despite everything he'd said, things would come to an end when the month was over. She'd have to go home, back to her own life.

The question though, was why?

"Sure, we'll come for a little while."

“Great. We'll be at Billy's.” Ronnie jogged off, leaving Cam and Lily alone by the car. Track workers hovered on the other side of the pit wall, but well out of earshot.

“You don't mind, do you?”

“No.”

“You sure? You're not saying much.”

“What did you tell him about me?” She really hadn't meant to ask, but curiosity got the best of her.

Cam laughed and took hold of her hand, walking with her toward the garage area where he'd parked his truck earlier. “Nothing. Honest. I only told him I'd met you and liked you and...”

She stopped short, causing him to have to stop as well. He turned and looked at her, and that's when she noticed the redness of his cheeks. “Oh my God. You told him that we...” Her voice dropped to a whisper. “That we...spent the night together?”

“No, I didn't tell him. He figured it out.”

“How embarrassing.”

“Not really. I don't care that they know. Why should you? I want you. I can barely keep my hands off you. Being with everyone tonight will be a lesson in restraint that I don't want. Seeing you on Sunday will take every ounce of willpower I've got not to put you over the hood of the car and fuck you in front of the world, making sure everyone knows that you're mine.”

He'd stepped closer with every word he spoke until he was pressed tight against her body. He held her around the waist and she felt every inch of his cock through their clothes. His eyes, uncommonly devoid of sunglasses at the moment, had darkened to a near-midnight blue. The lust she read on his face matched the lust his words had brought to life in her body.

"I know you have doubts about me, about this. I'm not letting you go. You should probably start figuring out how to say yes at the end of the month."

"Yes? To what?"

He didn't answer her, just kissed her lips in the sweetest way and started leading her to the truck again. What was he up to? What was he planning? Did he really believe he wasn't going to let her go?

He opened the door to the truck cab for her, and when she was inside, he walked around to the driver's side and climbed up behind the wheel. "You like wings? Beer?"

"Yeah. What's Billy's?"

Cam pulled out of the garage lot and wound his way around the infield to the tunnel that would take them out to the main highway.

"It's a little bar that one of the guys' brothers owns. We go there a lot, at least once a week before we head out of town. I usually end up buying him a new pool table each season because one of us inevitably ruins one of them."

"Oh my."

"We do get rowdy; we do get drunk. Not many women hang out there either, so that's a very good thing. No telling what I'd have to end up buying Billy if women were around."

"Oh my." She didn't know what say. And oddly enough, she was looking forward to being around them all. "Maybe I should call Alli and see what she's up to."

"The one from the autograph line?"

"Yeah."

"No. They'll have her on the pool table. My crew has the most young, single guys of any of the other crews. It wasn't planned that way, but that's how it happened. It works for us. We're all young. Ronnie is the oldest of us and is like a big brother or father figure. We look up to him, and he looks out for us."

“Sounds like a family almost.”

“It is. It's a lot like a family, and that's the only way it will work. We have to be as close as brothers.”

Lily smiled at the thought. She knew he was far away from home living on the East Coast and his family being on the West Coast, and she liked the idea that he had a surrogate family. Even if they were all guys, they took care of one another. It was how she, Alli, and Candi had always been. As close as sisters without actually being blood, though all three of them had sworn they'd been separated at birth at one time or another over the years.

Cam pulled into the dirt parking lot of a small wooden building. At least from the front it looked small, and she wasn't sure how all the people from all the cars out front would fit inside such a tiny place if it wasn't larger toward the back. He helped her down from the cab and locked up the truck. She was nervous to meet the other members of his crew. If Ronnie knew they had slept together, didn't that mean everyone else likely did as well?

“C'mon. They won't bite. Not like I do at least.”

“Do they...?”

He grinned at her with a mischievous gleam in his eyes, and she wanted to kick him in the shin. “No, they don't. Though if you don't wipe that blush off your cheeks, they're going to know something's up.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah.”

“Then you should do something about the bulge in your pants.” Lily slapped her hands over her mouth, and her eyes widened. She couldn't believe she'd just said that. What the hell was wrong with her? Around Cam, she was a completely different person. Flirting and smart-mouthed comments and sex on the first date were things that Alli did, things that Alli could get away with, but...

“How do you suggest we take care of it?”

“I...I...”

“Cat got your tongue, woman?”

Lily shook her head, afraid to speak, afraid of what might come out of her mouth. Cam just grinned at her and ushered her inside the bar.

It was going to be a long night.

Chapter Seven

“Where's your friend?” Cam reclined in the corner of the couch with Lily's head in his lap. They'd been back at her friend's house for a little while, and he was uncertain if they were going to be staying the night there or if they were going back to his place. He didn't know how Lily felt about it, but he sure wasn't planning on spending a night away from her. Sex wasn't the answer to everything, but it could go a long way toward forging a strong bond between two people.

“Candi is in Europe on a tour of Italy. It's been a dream of hers to go on a cooking tour there.”

“Is she a chef?”

He played with Lily's hair as she talked. It had just gotten fully dark outside, and the light from the moon wasn't all that bright, but he didn't want to move just yet. Lily felt like home to him. He'd seen his mom and dad snuggle on the couch many times over the years, and he'd seen his brother and his new wife snuggle together in a recliner or on a couch. It was a closeness he'd always wanted to share with someone. Someone who wanted him for him and not for the money or the fame. Now that someone had a name: Lily.

“No, she's not a chef. Not a professional one anyway. She loves to cook, and when she learned that this tour coincided with part of her vacation time, she petitioned her boss for the rest of the time off for it.”

“It must be expensive, though.” He had tons of money, more than he knew what to do with. Even when he gave away what he thought was a small fortune to causes and charities and relatives and friends, he found it barely made a dent in his accounts.

“Yeah, it did cost her, but she took it out of her 401(k). She said it's an investment. For all I know, she'll come back and enroll in cooking school.”

“Hmmm...maybe I could hire her to cook for me. I can bake some, but I can't cook worth shit.”

Lily sat up and turned toward him, but he couldn't see her face for the darkness. “You can bake?”

“Yep. My mom loves to bake and was always baking something when we were growing up. I used to help some when I was a kid. My girlfriends always found it romantic, just like my mom said they would. She used to tell me I could get out of just about any jam with a woman if I baked her cookies. You surprised?”

“Yeah. I've never met a guy who could bake anything. I know few who do anything in the kitchen beyond punch the buttons on a microwave.”

“My mom baked cookies at least every other day. Different kinds too. Our friends used to always come home with us after school for milk and cookies.” He seriously hoped he didn't sound like a dork. He loved those times, though. They were memories he hoped to pass on to his own kids one day.

“I love cookies. Molasses cookies are my favorite.”

The wistful, playful, pleading tone in her voice made him laugh. She was trying to get him to bake her cookies. “They are, huh?”

“Yes. Big, soft molasses cookies with the sugar crystals on top.”

“Uh-huh.” He'd make her any kind she wanted, but she was going to have to work for them. “And if I agree to make you these molasses cookies, what do I get in return?”

“Umm, well...what would you like?”

“What do you think they're worth?”

She sat there for a moment and then moved, pressing against his side, kissing the corner of his mouth. She giggled and tried a second time, kissing him fully on the lips.

He knew the darkness hampered things a bit, but he wasn't going to let her off easy. "Surely you don't think that's enough."

She leaned in and kissed him again, this time sliding her tongue along the seam of his lips until he parted them. The kiss was slow and sensual, and it was all he could do to keep his hands to himself, but this was her show. For now.

She pulled back. "How was that?"

Her voice was beginning to take on that breathy quality he loved when she started to get excited. He sighed dramatically. "I don't think you want those cookies all that much."

"I do, Cam. I really do."

The pleading tone was fun. The playfulness was fun. "You're going to have to do better than that, then."

"Oh."

She sat back from him and was silent, and he wondered what she was thinking. He started to say something when she slid off the couch and crawled between his legs. Kneeling there, she reached out, unsnapped, and unzipped his jeans.

Cam wasn't sure what he'd expected, but this wasn't it. He slid lower on the cushion as she reached in and wrapped a hand around his cock. Thinking she was perhaps just going to stroke him, he nearly choked when she wrapped her lips around the head, and her mouth glided all the way down.

Holy. Fucking. God.

Lifting her head, she slid her tongue up his length, leaving a wet trail that cooled as air touched it. She wrapped her fingers around the base, worked her mouth up and down over the head and shaft, and squeezed with her hand.

Again, her mouth drifted all the way down, her lips replacing her fingers, and her throat working on the crown. The woman had a magical mouth. He'd have never guessed she was so skilled in giving blowjobs, but damn, was she ever. He leaned

his head back and lifted his hips. She pulled up when he pushed up. It was insane how hot her lips were gliding along his cock, how wicked her tongue was as it danced along the vein, how constricting her throat was when he pushed into it.

She gripped the waist of his jeans and held on tight. He wanted them off. He wanted to be naked. He wanted her naked. But he wasn't about to change a thing, not when his balls were hot and aching to empty into her.

He lifted a hand to the back of her head, slid his fingers through her hair, made a fist, and shoved deep. Again, he did it. She met his thrusts, didn't fight it, took everything he gave. He got aggressive, couldn't help it. She drove him mad with lust, with need, with a desire he'd never felt.

Before he could warn her with words or even a grunt, he came. She swallowed against the sensitive head and he knew she could feel the pulsing of his cock against her tongue. When the last bit had left him, he did grunt. Grunted, moaned, groaned. She'd drained him, was still swallowing against him, still licking at him, and he almost stopped her until he realized she was softly, gently cleaning his cock. No woman had ever done that for him.

She lifted her head and kissed his cockhead before sitting back on her heels. She didn't say anything for a few minutes, and then she whispered playfully, "What about now? Was that better?"

The damn woman was still thinking about those cookies when all he could think about was stripping her and eating her pussy until she screamed loud enough the neighbors were going to wonder what the hell was going on inside the house.

She was going to pay for that.

* * *

She was naked. Outside under the stars with Cam Carter between her legs. Were it not for the makeshift gag of her panties he'd stuffed inside her mouth to keep her from screaming, she'd be doing just that—screaming at the top of her lungs. The fact that her panties were wadded up and stuffed between her lips was naughty enough, something she'd never thought to find erotic, but damn, it was.

Her young lover was introducing her to all sorts of things she had only dared to imagine or fantasize about in the deep, dark recesses of her mind, where she didn't even have to acknowledge them if she really didn't want to. Now she wanted to acknowledge, explore, and experience.

With him.

Cam's tongue licked her from stem to stern and back again before stopping at her clit to tease it with the tip. Each time, just when she got close to the edge, he'd back off and start licking soft and slow. She was going crazy. She wanted him to keep flicking her clit until she came, until she flew apart there on the lounge on the back deck of Candi's house.

He made a few more passes with his tongue, then lifted his head and kissed her inner thigh. "You ready to come, baby?"

Lily couldn't do anything other than whimper her need.

"You sure?" He nuzzled his face in her belly and dragged his mouth down to her sex, sucking on the wet, swollen lips. She thought she was going to come apart right then. He was wicked. She wasn't sure she'd ever get enough of it, fairly certain she wouldn't, and quite certain she didn't want to.

She whimpered her assent louder and lifted her hand to discard the panties. He grabbed her wrists in his long fingers and held them down against the arms of the lounge chair.

"I told you not to move your hands, not to remove the gag, or I'd stop."

And he had told her that. She didn't want him to stop; she wanted him to make her come, to make her shatter and see stars that were brighter than the ones in the sky. She gripped the metal tightly and settled down as best she could.

"Good girl. Now don't move your hands. I can see that next time I'll have to tie you down."

Lily shuddered at the image that flooded her mind at the suggestion of being bound, and promised herself she wouldn't move a muscle in her arms. She wanted

that feeling of helplessness, of being under his complete sexual control, of having all responsibility stripped from her so that all she had to do was bask in the pleasure. The thought aroused her more, and she didn't know how that was possible.

He wrapped his lips around her clit and just held on to it. Restlessness made her move her hips against him, but he still didn't budge. What the fuck was he doing? Why wasn't he making her come?

One finger teased her folds before slipping inside her, joined shortly by another. In and out, slow, then fast, then slow again, until she started meeting his thrusts. When he stopped, she whined her protest behind her gag and gripped the lounge tighter. He was driving her nuts. He withdrew his fingers and slipped them back in again, alongside two from his other hand.

It was then that she began to understand.

The first two fingers probed at her ass, and he lifted his mouth. His breath whispered against the heat between her legs when he spoke. "Press against my fingers but stay as relaxed as possible. Remember to breathe. Take them inside your ass, baby."

She did as he said, bearing down as he pushed against the tight hole. She tensed at the first pinch of discomfort. He licked her clit and pushed again until the digits started to slide inside. "Breathe, Lily."

She did, deeply. Her ass adjusted to the invasion slowly but surely, and then she just melted. Having two sets of fingers filling her was incredible.

"That's it. Yeah, Lily. That's it right there."

He moved his hands until just the tips of his fingers were inside, then slid forward. Out again, then back in, repetitive motions, slow and steady. He was finger fucking her in a way that only she had ever done to herself and had never told anyone about. She liked ass play, even if she was the only one doing it, and when he'd mentioned taking her ass the other night, she'd come harder just at the idea.

"Okay, let's add one more element to this and see if we can't make you fly apart."

He placed his mouth at her clit and sucked it again between his lips, this time worrying it against the edges of his teeth. He kept up the fucking of her holes while he played with her hot little button. She writhed and thrust with her hips. The combined sensation of being filled and having her clit played with at the same time was more than she could stand.

He hummed against her, flicking her with his tongue. He kept adding sensation after sensation, driving her higher. He wanted her to fly apart in his hands, in his mouth, and he was going to get just that.

Lily lifted her hips and pressed against his mouth. She held the position, her belly muscles tight and trembling. She wanted the orgasm that was just out of reach.

He scissored his fingers wide, stretching both her holes, and pulled on her clit with his teeth. She fell back onto the chair, her breathing labored and heavy, her body still undulating, still seeking everything he was willing to give her.

The whimper that escaped her throat sounded like a wordless plea. She swallowed the saliva that had collected inside her mouth behind the panties, and the taste of her own juices flowed down her throat. It was sexy to her—the taste of herself. She'd always loved it, loved to lick it from her own fingers, but to taste it this way was beyond anything she'd ever imagined.

More wetness gathered in her pussy, and the sound of his fingers moving in and out of her was loud in the still, quiet night. She should have felt scandalized at what they were doing outdoors, but she didn't. She didn't care. She only wanted more of it, more of Cam.

He bit down on her clit and pulled, then shoved his fingers in to the hilt. She came, screaming into the balled-up cotton inside her mouth. She felt the cream from her sex slide around his fingers and down toward her ass and his fingers there.

When he let go of her sore and throbbing button, he used the flat of his tongue to soothe her, slowly extracting his fingers from her cunt and ass at the same time, leaving her with contradictory sensations of being empty and full.

Cam lifted his head for the last time, then straddled her body on the lounge, and leaned down until his face was in front of hers. She smelled herself on his breath, and she wanted to kiss him. He pulled the panties from her mouth, tossed them somewhere over his shoulder, planted his lips against hers, and slid his tongue between them. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him back for all she was worth.

She was going to need a vacation from her vacation by the time the month was up.

Chapter Eight

“Is she here yet?”

“You asked me that not five minutes ago, Cam. The answer is still the same. No, she's not here yet.”

Cam heard the impatience in his crew chief's voice and could see in his mind that Ronnie was likely rolling his eyes as well. *Shit*. Where was she? Was security giving her a hard time at the tunnel? They shouldn't. He'd crossed every *T* and dotted every *I* that morning before and after the driver meeting to make sure she wouldn't have any problems getting in.

“I'm sorry, man. I'm just...anxious.”

“Look, she said she'd be here, and she will be. You've got other things I need you to concentrate on.”

“I know.” And he did. They were on a hot streak and about to hit a long stretch in the racing season where there wouldn't be any weekends off. He couldn't afford to be distracted. The team, his car owners, and his sponsors depended on him to be focused, to be in front when the checkered flag dropped. Sometimes he was and sometimes he wasn't, but they all expected him to do his best. Having his attention elsewhere was bad, not only for all of them, but for the other drivers on the track.

Lily though, she wasn't a distraction. He liked being around her, was calm around her, solid and centered. All week at the shop he'd been more alert, in tune, in touch with everything that was going on. He was smiling more, he was joking more, he was communicating more, talking, sharing his thoughts on things that were going on beyond the track, which oddly enough was making communicating about the car easier, more fluid. Since meeting Lily, he had felt more a part of the

team, more comfortable in his own skin than he could remember being in a long time.

He wanted her around, was coming to need her around, and that she wasn't there sitting with Ronnie made him...tense.

"You about ready, Cam?"

"Yeah. I'm on my way now."

"Good. Introductions are in five. I'll meet you in the infield with the rest of the crew."

Cam pocketed his cell and continued making his way to the mobile stage for driver introductions. The extra bounce in his step that had been present all week wasn't there, and he couldn't help looking around the pit area as he passed through the opening in the wall that separated the pits from the garages, searching for her. She said she'd be there, and he knew she would. If nothing else and for no other reason, she loved racing.

He had to mentally kick himself for that thought. She would be there for him too. He knew that as sure as he knew his own name.

They were growing closer as the days went by and he'd felt her absence keenly last night when he'd stayed at the shop with the crew. It was something they had taken to doing for these two weeks of races. The first time had been a couple of years ago. It hadn't been planned; they'd just ended up working all night on the car because there'd been so much wrong with it before they took it to the track before qualifying. Now they just stayed there out of a... Hell, he didn't know why other than everyone seemed to get a kick out of it, sleeping on the floor, talking, drinking beer, ordering pizza. It was a strange bonding ritual they had, and as far as he knew, they were the only crew that did it. One of the guys had even brought his game system this time, and most everyone had stayed up into the wee hours of the night playing racing games.

"Any word?" Ronnie asked as Cam walked up to him.

"No. Nothing yet. She must have gotten held up in traffic or something."

“Probably. Even with a bad economy, there seems to be a pretty decent crowd on hand. Nervous?”

“Not really. What do you think for tonight? Start out getting to the front or hang back? Last year hanging back didn't help us any, and being out front the year before didn't work for us either.”

“Let's make sure you're comfortable in the car, then we'll pull out the playbook.”

“Got it. You'll let me know when she gets to the pit box?” Ronnie nodded, and Cam wished he could call the question back. He knew Ronnie would let him know the second he spotted her.

“You've got it bad for this woman.”

“I do. She's the one, Ronnie.”

The announcer started introducing drivers and crews. Assembled fans either cheered or booed. He was always booed. It didn't bother him. At first he'd been afraid of how his crew would take it, but it didn't seem to bother them either. They took it in stride and week after week put him in the best cars and let their talent, their teamwork, and their driver speak for them. He was the luckiest bastard in the sport. Only a few others had the same kind of camaraderie with their crews that he did.

“The one? As in...? Cam, you're only twenty-five.”

“So.”

“So? We can't talk about this right now.”

They were getting closer to being introduced, and the rest of his pit crew joined him and Ronnie. Lily had fit in perfectly a few nights ago at the bar. She talked to them all like she'd known them as long as he had. She had even beat a few of them at pool, which was odd considering she had said she'd never played before. He'd even asked about it and still couldn't get the truth out of her. She didn't drink beer with them; instead she drank rum and Coke, and he remembered watching her

laugh and smile and joke with everyone, realizing that any other woman he'd dated since becoming a driver in the big leagues had never cared to hang out with his crew, always preferring to be alone with him.

Lily wasn't pretentious and seemed to actually like the whole group of guys. She wasn't intimidated by any of them, and while she had been bothered by his fame and fortune at first, that seemed to have disappeared in the days since. Their age difference was still a big deal to her, though, and he still wasn't sure how to get past that part of her unease. He couldn't care less how old she was or how many years separated them. He only wanted to be with her.

Ronnie led his guys up the steps behind the stage, and Cam pulled up the rear. Everyone was getting into race mode, smiles easing away into thoughtful seriousness. He really liked that about them. They might play around like a bunch of kids, but they were as tough as nails and always gave 100 percent when it came to their jobs.

His crew was announced and the booing started. He couldn't help but laugh. He had die-hard fans, but he had die-hard haters too. That was fine. He happened to like it that way. They never let him get too cocky, but he loved making them eat crow every time he won a race.

His name was called. The boos picked up and drowned out the cheers. Stepping into view, he lifted his arms over his head with his index fingers extended in a gesture of number one. The booing got louder, and his grin got bigger. He loved this. This would spur him on for the rest of the night. He would race every lap as though it were his last, making sure to give the lovers *and* the haters a show to remember.

"You ready to race?"

Cam looked at Mike, one of his tire changers. The kid had a shit-eating grin on his face that Cam returned full force. "Hell yeah."

"That girl coming tonight?"

"Yep. She should be at the pit box."

“You sure she never played pool before the other night?”

“Nope.”

Billy shrugged. “Well, no matter. I want a rematch next week.”

“You get to tell her, then. I don't want to be in that conversation. She beat you fair and square.”

“Maybe, but I just think it was beginner's luck.”

Cam laughed, wondering if Mike wasn't barking up the wrong tree by challenging the woman who had beat the snot out of him in two games of pool when none of the crew had ever been able to beat him before.

They were in the third pit stall with Marcus Cole and David Greer in front of and behind him respectively. Neither particularly liked him, but neither had a beef with him either. He was used to it. His teammate was in the middle of pit road and was one of the new darlings of the sport. He never had been loved like that, so he didn't know what being so well liked right out of the starting gate was like. He didn't care much anymore either.

He was proving to everyone, including himself, that he was worthy of being there, of being in the top five every week, of being a champion one day. He still had a lot to learn, but he wasn't above that. He enjoyed it actually. He just didn't appreciate being treated as though he didn't know shit by the veterans in the business.

“Hey, Cam.”

Cam looked up when Ronnie called his name and smiled. She was there. Lily was standing behind the wall next to Ronnie. There were people around watching, wondering who she was as he walked up to her, but he didn't care. He'd answer questions later or never; it didn't matter. All that mattered was her.

“Hi, baby,” he whispered, leaning in for a kiss. She immediately blushed bright red and tried to turn her head so his lips grazed her cheek. Cam wasn't having any of that. He put his hand on her neck with his thumb under her chin and held her

head still, placing a solid, lip-to-lip kiss on her mouth. When he pulled back, he smiled and hugged her. "Don't turn away like that. I'm not embarrassed, and you shouldn't be either. I'm glad you're here."

"People will talk," she whispered against his neck but wrapped her arms around him just the same.

It felt good to hold her. "I don't care if they talk. Let them. You're here, and I'm happy."

"Break it up, boys and girls. We have a race to run."

"Yeah yeah yeah." Cam pulled back and winked at her, then looked over her shoulder at her friend, Alli, if he remembered the name correctly. She was staring at him and Lily as though she'd never seen a public display of affection before. But then, maybe she hadn't seen Lily in one so blatant. "Hey," he said to her, holding out his hand in greeting. She was wearing the shirt he'd autographed for her, and took his hand.

"Hi."

A low whistle came from behind him, and he turned to see Grant, his jack man, staring straight at Alli. The woman, in turn, grinned brightly. *Damn*. Just like that, Grant was going to get lucky after the race. Women didn't turn him down. Ever.

He leaned over and pecked Lily on the lips again, then turned and walked over to the car, playfully bumping into Grant on the way. "You dog."

"Woof, woof."

Cam laughed and climbed in through the window, settling down into his seat. His safety belts and harnesses were summarily latched before he took his helmet from the hook in the roof of the car and put it on. Ronnie climbed up on the pit box, and Lily followed. Alli stayed on the ground, Grant whispering to her, making her blush and laugh.

"You got me, Cam?"

Ronnie's voice in his ear brought him back to the task at hand. "Yeah, I got ya."

"Good. Your girl is here, so let's concentrate on the race now."

"I know. You got her a headset?" Cam could hardly contain his excitement.

"You act like I've never done this before."

"You haven't. Not like this. She's important."

"I know. I'll make sure she's all taken care of."

Time to get down to it. "I hope these guys around us are on top of things tonight. I don't want anyone getting hurt like down in Atlanta, and I don't want to have to show them we mean business."

"I'm sure they know, and I'm sure they're just as nervous about being around you as anyone else generally is."

"You make it sound like I strike fear in them."

"You? Nah. You're as calm and tame as a pussycat."

"Kiss my ass."

"Exactly. And hey, let's keep it clean tonight. We don't want the powers that be on us for something as dumb as our language. Watch your pit speed. It's forty-five at this track. Under caution is fifty-five. Don't cross the commitment cone unless you intend to come down pit road. Let's keep the mistakes to a minimum tonight."

Ronnie delivered the same speech before each and every race. It helped focus everyone, put them in the right frame of mind, and brought them all down to earth. He turned his head and saw Ronnie hand headsets to both Lily and Allison, instructing them on how to use them to hear him, Ronnie, and his spotter, H.J. Something about her being there, watching and hearing him, settled him in a way he hadn't felt before. He liked it. Was that the same way the other guys felt when their wives and girlfriends joined them? He'd never had a serious girl at the races.

He'd always known racing was going to be his life, but since meeting Lily, well, she was going to be his life too. She wouldn't ask him to give it up; she wouldn't ask

him to put her above it either. He knew the travel and the hectic schedule could be a bitch, but he wanted her with him. He'd been serious when he'd told her he wanted to take her on the road. They wouldn't be leaving until the beginning of June, and he was counting on the next couple of weeks to convince her to give the trip a try.

"Here we go."

"Ladies and gentlemen, friends and fans, please join me in giving the command for tonight's race."

A loud cheer went up, including from Lily and Alli. It was probably a good thing they didn't have microphones in their headsets.

"Gentlemen, start your engines."

The command gave him goose bumps just like every week when the engines around him fired up. He flipped the ignition switch, and his engine roared to life. Tunnel vision kicked in, and all thought fled save for what he was there to do: race.

It was in his blood. He didn't know how since no one else in his family raced, but it was part of him. The rush of speed, the adrenaline, the high powered horses under the hood, the risk, the drama of being out on a track with forty other drivers going two hundred miles per hour and all fighting for the same thing: their own spot in history and that checkered flag.

Being a professional race car driver was something not very many people in the world ever achieved. Doing it well and surviving for years in the sport were something even fewer people got to do. He'd been in the sport all his life, at the top level for the last few years, and he planned to stay there for at least the next twenty. It was all he had wanted to do. He didn't care about sponsors or owners or money. That had never been it for him. All he wanted to do was get behind the wheel and run. He'd have done it for free and tossed burgers if that's what it took. Lucky for him though, he had what it took to get paid for doing what he loved. Yeah, the rest came with it: being the face of a product or company, making public appearances, and endorsing charities or causes or people, sometimes even having to

kowtow to others just so he could get behind the wheel of the car. He wished there wasn't so much bureaucracy in racing, but he bit the bullet and, even to a point, understood all the rules that the powers that be threw down.

"Pedal to the metal, Cam. Bring me another flag."

Cam rolled off pit road behind the cars starting first and second. He hated when qualifying was rained out. He would be starting third behind the leader, Jake Curtis, and they never got off to a good start together. One day they'd have to sit down and talk about it, find out why Jake couldn't seem to find the gas pedal when Cam was behind him.

"Five laps behind the pace car. Then we'll go green."

"Gotcha."

"How 'bout me, Cam?"

"Hey, H.J. I got you too, loud and clear."

"Ten-four. I see we got some old friends as bookends here."

"Seems like it."

"Well, let's keep it clean and see if we can't come out on top."

"That's the plan."

Cam swerved left, then right, warming up his tires. He hoped they'd worked out the bugs from practice. Tight going into the corner and loose coming out of it didn't make racing much fun. He didn't want to have to fight the car until he could get into the pits. He wanted a smooth ride, clean air, and a victory fuck with Lily back in his bed at home after the race.

"What's the number of the car pitting in front of us?" He pressed the gas pedal and picked up a bit of speed, then backed down. They all gunned their engines a little here and there during caution laps but never went over the mandated speed of fifty-five.

"What number is Marcus?"

"Forty-seven."

“Still can't believe he's in a car. Who was the dipshit that gave him a ride?”

The question was a rhetorical one. Marcus Cole couldn't drive without wrecking himself and everyone around him. The man never finished a race, and why anyone would hire him to drive was beyond Cam's comprehension. He was a hothead out to prove something and was going to hurt someone someday in the process.

“Don't know. Maybe he paid someone. One to go.”

“H.J., keep numbers in my head. Up to two back.”

“Got it.”

Cam lowered his visor, tightened the Velcro straps on his gloves, shifted in his seat, and readjusted his foot on the gas pedal. These small rituals kept his mind in the game, kept him on top of what he needed to do, put him further into “the zone.”

“You got twenty-three in front, eighteen coming up on the outside, sixteen behind you, and twenty behind eighteen.” H.J.'s voice was all business, and Cam appreciated it. His crew, his chief, and his spotter might be full of fun and jokes and teasing away from the track, but when it came to running the races, they were serious as serious could get.

Out of turn three and going into turn four, two lines of cars formed, Cam right behind the leader. No passing was allowed until they crossed the start/finish line, and he hoped to hell that Jake Curtis had his foot on the gas.

“Comin' to the line, Cam. Green, green, green.”

The green flag dropped, and the drivers picked up speed coming to the line. Chills raced down Lily's spine. It was one of her favorite things in the world: stock car races. She loved the roar of the engines, the adrenaline pumping through her body, the cheering, the screaming, the cars bumping. The whole atmosphere touched a part of her that otherwise was very out of character. She didn't really care

for big, raucous crowds on a normal basis, and she didn't go to other sporting events. Rock concerts had never been high on her list of fun—the noises and smells were just not something she got into—but the races... She loved to lose herself at the races, and that she was a fan of Cam's... The looks that fans of other drivers gave her, the sneers, the jabs, the cursing they did when Cam brought home the checkered flag, and the grin she got to give them in return. She wasn't vengeful in her everyday life, but put her in the stands or in front of the television for a race, and she became a whole different person.

She wanted to stand up and scream for him but figured that wouldn't be appreciated, being up on the pit box and all. Instead she bit the inside of her cheek and watched with balled-up fists and tense shoulders.

Alli tapped her on the leg, and Lily turned her head and moved one headphone off her ear. She leaned close in order to hear what Alli wanted to say. The cars were going around so fast that there was hardly any sort of lull as there would have been at Talladega or Daytona. “What?”

“What's wrong?”

Lily frowned in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“You look like you're about to break apart. You okay?”

“Yeah. I just want to stand up and jump up and down screaming. I'm not used to sitting quietly at a race.”

Alli nodded. “I know what you mean, but damn, the view from here is much better than where we usually sit.”

“I'm sure it is.” Lily put the headphone back over her ear and listened in as Cam and his spotter talked back and forth about who was around him, where his teammate was—about ten cars back, and what they needed to do to get to the front. At present, they had fallen back to sixth, and Cam was having trouble coming out of the corners and staying in the throttle. His car wasn't handling right, and he was having to fight it, jerk on the wheel to keep it from sliding up the track.

“They're crashin' behind ya,” H.J. said in a voice that was just a bit too excited.

Lily stood, her shoulders tense, her breath held. Alli stood beside her, gripping Lily's arm. Cam was well out of crash range, but Lily hated to see anyone get torn up. If it was a really bad wreck with oil on the track or a lot of debris to clean up, the officials would put the red flag out. That was never good.

Ronnie's voice was next. "Caution is out, Cam. We'll come down pit road for four tires, gas, and take out a round of wedge."

"H.J.? Can you see if the forty-seven can stay out an extra lap before coming in? I want to get out without being blocked in," Cam asked as the cars were coming down the backstretch into turn three.

"Yeah."

Coming down to the commitment cone, tires smoked on many of the cars as they dropped speed to the limit of pit road and Ronnie counted him down to his pit.

"Don't lock your tires. Ten to go. Six. Four, three, two... Now, Cam."

Cam pulled into the pit stall smoothly, and the crew went to work. Alli elbowed Lily in the ribs when Grant slid the jack under the car and lifted it up so the tire changers could do their job. Lily just shook her head at her friend.

She didn't have room to talk, though. She was so taken with Cam, had been since meeting him, and couldn't explain away how much she'd missed him last night. He'd spent the evening with his crew at the shop sharing beers and pizzas and basically camping out, and she'd tossed and turned alone in the guest bedroom at Candi's, wanting nothing more than for him to be next to her.

Grant dropped the car back to the ground and pulled the jack out. Cam started to peel out, but the forty-seven pulled in front of Cam's pit stall at the same time. Lily sucked in her breath and called Marcus Cole all sorts of unkind names in her head.

"Shit." Cam swerved to avoid hitting the man's car and narrowly missed T-boning another car. "What the fuck, H.J.? I thought you were going to talk to them."

"All I can do is ask, Cam."

Hoyt Jr., or H.J. as he'd been known since he'd retired about ten years back, never had much luck on the track but was one of the most well-respected men in the sport. He might not have won any races, but he knew the ins and outs better than most. Since Cam's crew was full of young, rough-around-the-edges guys, Ronnie and H.J. provided experience and guidance, and that had proven to be a successful and winning combination for Cam.

"We're good," Ronnie said. "You didn't lose any spots, gained one. Keep your eye on the prize." Ronnie was the voice of reason, calm and assurance. Lily had seen interviews with him and had always thought he was a good choice for Cam. She thought the same about his spotter too.

"I know, man. But shit, that could have been bad."

"Could have, but thankfully wasn't. Let's just get our focus back."

Lily continued to stand and watch the cars round the track. They would go green again in two laps, and she couldn't wait. Next race, she would be in the stands, screaming her fool head off, remembering the amazing weeks she'd spent in the arms of her favorite driver.

"How's my girl doing?"

She grinned when he asked, loving that he felt that way about her. He'd been good to her, good *for* her. They'd spent every free moment together except for last night, and if her one sleepless night was any indication, she would have many more to go when their affair was over.

Ronnie grunted. "She's still here."

"Good."

"Want me to kiss her for ya?"

"Do it and I'll deck you after the race. She's mine, all mine."

Ronnie turned and winked at her. "Yeah, and she's blushing ten shades of red. Now stop embarrassing the poor woman and start thinking about racing. We're going green out of turn four."

The cars doubled up and H.J. went through who was behind and ahead of Cam. The green flag dropped again, and those same chills from before chased up and down Lily's spine. God, she loved that feeling. She got it every time Cam touched her too.

She had it bad. And as she sat down, losing herself in the race and the occasional chatter on the headset, she began to wonder if maybe she should cut things off between them. She wasn't sure just how serious he was about her, but she was old enough and in tune enough with herself to know how serious she was about him. The heartache wasn't going to be pretty. For once she was glad she lived by herself. She would be able to cry it all out without any witnesses.

Lap after lap went by. Lily watched through green flag and caution laps, not saying much, sometimes not even paying as close attention as she normally would have. Even when Alli tried to talk to her, her responses were to the point, and then she went inside herself again.

"Can we make it to the end?"

Startled out of her thoughts by Cam's voice, Lily looked over Ronnie's head at the screens above. There were five in all. They were running pit scenarios on a couple, had the race on one, car stats on another. It really was fascinating, and if she hadn't been so flustered, she might have paid more attention and asked more questions. There were less than thirty laps to go now. She couldn't believe she'd been out of it for so long. *Damn*. She looked over toward Alli and found her friend gone, standing down at the bottom of the pit box talking to Grant. When had Alli crossed in front of her to get down the ladder?

"No. We need one more stop. This has been a long run, our longest of the night. How's the car feeling?"

"The gearshift is shaking pretty bad the longer we go. If we have to stop, we'll need tires."

"You can't make it to the end on the gas you've got, and we don't want to risk a blown tire by staying out if there's a crash."

“Got it.”

Ronnie looked over his shoulder at her and smiled. She smiled back. Had he realized that she wasn't all there for the last sixty or so laps? When he turned back to the screen, she sighed and vowed to concentrate on the race like a good girlfriend should. *Girlfriend? What the hell?*

Chapter Nine

Well, what do you think you are? came the little devil voice inside her head that she hadn't heard from since she had given in to dating Cam.

Not his girlfriend. That from the little angel voice who had been cursing her for the last week.

Lily was a little floored at her own choice of word. *Girlfriend?* Lovers, yes. Friends, perhaps. No, definitely friends. But “girlfriend” implied something more than just lovers or friends. A queasy feeling settled in the pit of her stomach. She considered herself his girlfriend, and she wanted him to see her in the same way. Good Lord, the more she thought about it, the longer she spent time with him, the deeper the hole became. If she didn't try to get out soon, she wasn't sure she'd be able to.

Cam came around the fourth turn battling Jake Curtis for the lead. She was up on her feet as they crossed the start/finish line, her gaze glued to the bright blue of Cam's car. Jake beat him over the line by less than... Well, not by much. She listened as Cam cursed a blue streak. He was losing his car the longer they went without a caution, and his concern was that *he* would be the caution if something didn't happen soon.

Twenty-four laps to go, and in turn two, something did happen. Jake came down on Cam, and Cam slid back up the track. All was silent on the headset and in her head, save for the mantra *Please be okay please be okay please be okay*. Cam hit the wall at the top of the track and was rear-ended by a car that had nowhere else to go and whose number she couldn't see.

Cam's car was lifted off the ground as other cars behind him were caught up in the mess of metal and rubber. She felt helpless. She always felt helpless, always screaming for the safety crews to get to the crashes quickly, but there was something about knowing the driver personally, being intimately involved with him, that broke a piece of her heart. How did the wives and girlfriends and mothers and children go through this every week for ten months out of the year?

"Cam? Cam, you okay? Talk to me."

One...two...three...nearly four seconds of silence. They were the longest four seconds of her life. "Yeah, I'm okay. Someone ask Jake if he's proud of himself."

"Get out of the car and c'mon. Get off the track." Ronnie tossed his pencil and glared in the direction of Jake Curtis's crew. Someone was going to be getting an earful. "Get everything together. We're done." Ronnie stood, agitation in every jerky movement, and closed the laptop. He turned to her and took her by the shoulder. "He's okay. Probably a little shook-up, but he's okay."

Lily nodded numbly. Cam's car had come to a halt with the back tires off the ground and the undercarriage sitting on the hood of the forty-seven. She couldn't see him get out of the car from where she was, but looking out at the JumboTron in the middle of the field she could. He carried his helmet in his right hand, and his left was balled up in a fist. A close-up shot of his face showed he was pissed. She didn't blame him.

Stepping down the ladder ahead of Ronnie, she was met by Alli, whose arms were wide open. Lily walked right into them and almost burst into tears. It was then and only then that she realized how badly she was shaking. She knew she had to get a grip before she saw Cam. It wouldn't do to actually start crying in front of him.

"He's okay, Lil."

She nodded against Alli's shoulder. "I know."

With her arm still around Lily's shoulders, Alli walked with her behind Ronnie and other members of the crew. Normally Lily would want to see the end of the race, but not now. All she wanted now was to see Cam and then run the hell away.

She got her wish sooner than she'd expected. Rounding the corner of the break in the pit wall, he was making long, angry strides toward the garage. She knew he hadn't seen any of them, because he just kept walking until he was stopped by track officials. She wasn't close enough to hear what they said, but Cam wasn't happy and looked like he was being steered in a different direction against his will.

Ronnie stopped and turned to her, then started walking again when she and Alli got to him. "What are they doing?"

"They're taking him to the infield care center."

"He didn't look like he wanted to go."

"No. He just wanted to get the hell out of Dodge. If he can walk away, that's what he wants to keep doing until he's away from the track. He wasn't quick enough tonight. I've learned it's just best to let him go, let him cool off."

"Yeah. On television he's usually already long gone before anyone starts asking about him."

"Exactly."

Once they reached the garage bay, Lily began to feel uncomfortable and in the way. Everyone was gathering their tools and tool carts. She needed to do something. She didn't know if she and Alli should leave or stay or what. She voiced her thoughts to her friend.

"I don't know, Lil. Maybe we should get out of here and just meet up with them later if they still want."

"Yeah. Let me tell Ronnie."

"Okay. I'll go tell Grant."

Lily found Ronnie at the back of the garage and tapped him on the shoulder. “Ronnie?” He turned to her with a smile. “We're gonna go. We don't want to be in the way. W—”

“Don't you do anythin' of the sort. He's gonna wanna see you.”

“Bu—”

“No buts about it. Grant, c'mere.” He took her by the arm over to where Alli was talking to her new beau for the night. “Now, Lily, you go with Grant here, and he'll take you over to the care center. If you're the first thing Cam sees when he comes out, his mood will improve immediately.”

“How do you know that?”

“I just know. Go on now. They should be letting him loose any minute. He won't want to talk to the press, but he'll want you.”

She wasn't sure at all about what Ronnie was saying, but she went with Grant and Alli anyway. The care center wasn't but a few hundred yards away, and the press had already gathered around the exit. A few curious stares were leveled at her, but she did her best to stay focused on the door. When it opened a few seconds later, Cam walked out, already dressed in street clothes. She wanted to push through everyone and run to him, but she forced herself to stand right where she was.

He was looking around and ignoring the microphones shoved in his face, declining to even say “no comment.” His eyes lit on Grant, who took her by the arm and pulled her into Cam's line of sight. He made a beeline toward her. Then his arms were crushing her to him before she had a second to catch her breath.

He was there with her, safe and sound. He had no scratches, no marks that she could see. And he'd never looked better to her than he did right then all hot and sweaty and rugged. This wasn't the well-dressed and well-put-together man she was used to seeing. He was flushed and mad and full of fire. He was in his element, and once she was sure he was okay, she wanted to strip him, climb his body, and ride him until neither of them could walk.

“Are you okay? I was so scared. You hit so hard, and then the car that lifted you up...” Her arms tightened, and the whispers around them faded away until all she knew was the two of them. He licked a path up her neck to her ear, then nipped the lobe before burying his face in her hair.

“I want you, Lily. Right now.”

His whispered words mirrored her thoughts. “Yes.”

He pulled away and took her hand in his, ignoring all the comments coming from behind them. There would be so many questions, so much speculation, but she didn't care. He was all that mattered to her.

She belonged with Cam in whatever capacity he wanted her, for however long he wanted her. That didn't fit with the real world she had to return to, but for the days she had left, with him is where she wanted to be.

“Give me one sec, baby.”

Lily nodded at him. He didn't want to let go of her hand, but needed to talk to Ronnie, needed to find out what had happened during the few seconds he'd blacked out after hitting the wall. Lily didn't know about that, and he didn't intend for her to ever know. The worry in her eyes cut at him, and for the first time since meeting her, he began to wonder if he could do this to her every week. Then again, even if they went back to being nothing more than fan and driver, she would worry for him, and it would gnaw at him until he could contact her and let her know he was okay.

The best way to handle it was to keep her with him, to reassure her immediately, to let her touch him, making sure for herself that he was fine. A grin split his face. Yep, he just needed to keep her.

He left her standing at the garage entrance. “Ronnie,” he called.

Ronnie came forward and smiled. “Cam. Damn boy, you know how to give an old man a heart attack.”

“I'm good. Anything happen? Any explanations? Any apologies?”

“Nope. Nothing.”

“Asshole.”

“Yep. You cuttin' out?”

“I am. Taking her home.”

“Give her some good lovin' tonight. She needs it.”

“I'm the one who was in a crash.” Mock hurt laced his voice.

“I know, but that little girl there saw life without you flash before her eyes, and it scared her.”

Cam nodded. “Talk to you tomorrow.” He walked away and took Lily by the hand again, bringing it to his mouth for a kiss. She looked at him with unguarded lust and emotion. He had her. “Going to my place.”

“Okay.”

He held out his other hand. “Give me your keys.”

“I didn't drive. Alli did.”

“Excellent.”

“Do you want me to drive? I think I remember how to get to your house.”

“No. I'm fine.” He squeezed her hand as they finished the walk to the designated parking area. He located his truck after a few minutes and got Lily settled inside before he climbed behind the wheel. He turned his head toward her to find her staring at him with that same hungry look from before. “How are you, baby? You look kind of shaken.”

“I am. That was the most scared I've ever been in my life.”

She hadn't put her seat belt on yet, and he reached over and pulled her close. “I'm safe. I'm good. I'm not hurt.”

“I know, but that hit—it was so hard, and you...you...” She took a deep, shuddering breath and turned her face into his neck.

"I'm sorry, baby." It was a terrible crash. There'd been blackness, followed by lots of stars, and then everything slowly came back into focus. He wasn't dizzy or light-headed; he was just... He pressed his lips to the top of her head, inhaling deeply. She smelled like a race: cars and rubber and dust and engines. His very favorite smells.

He'd been in bad wrecks before, worse than this one, but that was different. It had just been him before, so to speak, and that wasn't the case this time. She was involved now. His first thought after the crash once he'd realized all his body parts were still in working order, was of her. Every thought since then had been of her. Was she all right? Was she scared? Was she worried? She wasn't weak, and he knew that, but there was an emotional price in sports like this for the significant others and family members.

She was his significant other too. There was no doubt about that.

He'd fallen so hard for her. He didn't fight it, hadn't even thought to fight it, didn't want to fight it. He'd always been a believer in things happening for a reason and for whatever reason, fate had placed her in his path.

"Cam?"

Her voice was husky, much like it was when she was aroused. He smiled. The urgent need for her that had assailed him when he'd seen her outside the care center hadn't diminished, but he'd tamped it down in the face of her worry. It flared to life now. She lifted her head, and he turned his toward her. The kiss was like lightning, searing and white-hot. It flashed across his soul and struck his balls with intense lust. They weren't going to make it back to his place.

He broke the kiss and glanced around. The race was still going on, and while the lights around the track were bright and could be seen from miles away, they were so deep in the infield, the only other people who would happen by would be other drivers who had wrecked like him. Sure, security did passes, but he wasn't worried about it.

"Get your jeans off."

“What? Here?”

“Yes, here. Get them off.” As he was issuing the order, he was tearing at the buttons on his, freeing his rock-hard penis. He pressed the button near the door and pushed the seat back as far as it could go, which wasn't too much farther, maybe an inch or two. He tilted the steering wheel. The second she had her jeans off, he grabbed for her and pulled her over his lap.

The space was tight, but the close confines were soon forgotten as she straddled his thighs, and he thrust his cock inside her cunt. Lips clashed again, tongues danced, and the tightest pussy he'd ever known was riding him. Her body pressed his into the seat as she fucked him. She didn't let up, and he wouldn't have allowed her to if she'd tried.

She groped at his shirt until she'd worked her fingers under it, then scraped her nails along his skin. The way she squeezed his cock when she rose up so that only the crown was inside her drove him insane. She slid back down with such sweet ease that he hissed his breath out between clenched teeth.

Sex with her was frenzied, hard, and full of desperate hunger. His balls ached to spill deep inside her, and he grabbed at her ass, rocking her on his lap.

He sighed against her neck. “You're going to be the death of me.”

“No more than you are for me.”

Cam smirked and licked her skin. He couldn't deny the truth in either of their words. But goddamn, going out like this was whole lot better than going out any other way he could think of.

He pressed his heels to the floor and lifted his ass off the seat. Her moan echoed through the cabin of the truck. He did it again, and she simply held on, gripping his waist. She tilted her head back, leaving the column of her throat open to his mouth. It was an invitation he couldn't refuse as he grasped her skin between his teeth and sucked. He intended to leave a love bite on her, a physical mark on her creamy skin that she couldn't deny or hide.

“Cam?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“I see lights coming toward us.”

Reluctantly Cam lifted his head and looked out the window. Security. Shit, he thought with a grin. The golf cart was still down at the end of the row of parked vehicles, but eventually it would be even with them. If the guard got curious and flashed his light in the windshield, he'd see Lily. Getting caught screwing by track security could be a bit of a sticky situation.

He was torn between continuing like they were and having her finish him off in her mouth. But God, he loved just being buried inside her. “It's security.”

She tensed as soon as the word was out of his mouth. He had known she would. Exhibitionism wasn't something he'd imagine to be too high on her fantasy list.

“Oh no.”

He pulled her face toward him and kissed her lips, licking at them, trying to melt her rigid posture. When she sagged against him again and started grinding on his cock, he pulled away. “Wanna finish me off in your mouth or wait until we get back to my place?”

“Mmmm.”

“Mmmm?”

She lifted and worked her way off his lap. He immediately wanted to pull her back but didn't have to as she bent and took his cock between her lips, drawing him into her mouth.

Fuck yes. The woman was definitely going to kill him.

Her head bobbed up and down in his lap after she laid herself flat on the bench seat of the cab. Her bare ass jiggled as she wiggled against the cool leather, and it was only then that he realized one of her arms was not visible. She was masturbating.

He reached over and swatted her ass. She responded with a deep-throated moan and a nip at the head of his dick. Naughty girl. He'd get her later for that one.

The security cart pulled up in front of Cam's truck just as he turned the ignition. The guard waved up at him, and Cam grinned as he lightly pressed on the gas pedal and gunned the engine.

Cam got them out on the open highway through back roads that weren't yet crowded with what he knew would be a bitch of a traffic jam. Lily kept writhing on the seat, riding her clit and sucking at his cock, pulling on him, licking him, driving him toward an orgasm that he hoped didn't cause his second crash of the day.

Her movements became more frantic, and she lowered one of her legs to the floorboard. She pushed her face down to the bottom of his cock, and her throat opened up for him. She wasn't sucking him but was breathing roughly through her orgasm. Her body rocking on her fingers with her ass in the air, and her little grunting noises around the shaft inside her mouth pushed him to the edge of reason.

He depressed the Cruise Control button and planted his feet flat on the floor board just a fraction of a second before he pumped his seed down her throat. His balls pulled tight against his body as his cum gushed from his cock and he held the wheel in a death grip.

She swallowed everything he gave her, and when he was somewhat calm again—and she had cleaned all remnants of stickiness from his cock—he tapped his foot on the brake to gain control of the speed again.

She lifted her head from his lap, then sat up, licking her fingers while staring straight ahead through the front window, a slight smile on her face.

He realized then that he might have to rethink the whole exhibitionism thing.

Chapter Ten

“Did he bump you on purpose?”

Lily's head rested against Cam's chest. They'd gotten to his house after he'd had to make a U-turn because he'd passed his exit during his orgasm, and they'd barely made it up the stairs before he tackled her on the bed. The sex that time had been long, but no less hard and rough. He'd turned her every which way before he let either of them come again. He'd also spanked her for having nipped at his cock. She was growing quite fond of being spanked and wondered not for the first time, what other kinky things he might be into and if she'd like to venture further down those roads as well.

He wrapped his arm around her back and held her close against his side. “Who knows. I'd like to think he didn't, but who knows.” Jake used to be great, but he'd lost his edge a long time ago. Now it was just sad watching him out on the track.

“Have you given any more thought to coming out to California with me next month?”

“Yes.”

“Yes as in 'yes, you're coming with me,' or yes as in you've been thinking about it?”

She had. A lot. She wanted to go with him, but could she? Really? There were still a whole two months of summer left, and she didn't exactly have to go back home to Florida just yet. She was sure the girl replacing her in the orchestra for the summer series was enjoying every moment, and her private students were in capable hands for the rest of the school year. And though money was not real

plentiful at the moment, she hadn't had to spend a penny of her own money since she'd been at Candi's...

Going with him, however, was a big commitment. Would he want her to travel more with him? What would happen if they ended up getting on one another's nerves?. How would she feel if it were an only-summer fling? If she got to be with him for those extra two months before she had to get back home to work. Would she ever get over him then? She wasn't sure she'd get over him now, but then...

"Yes, I've been thinking about it."

"And?"

"I don't know yet, Cam. I'd like to. You know that I would..."

"Yes, I do. So what's the problem?"

"I just don't know that it's practical."

He rolled her onto her back and leaned over her. She loved looking at him, whether he was right side up or upside down. Her heart was all wrapped up in him, no matter how she tried to deny it or keep it from happening. She'd been lost the moment he'd smiled just for her.

"What does practical have to do with it? You're not still on about the age thing, are you?"

Was she? No. She wasn't. His age and her age didn't matter at all to her anymore. Truth was, they never really had. They were just something superficial to try and fend off her growing want and hunger for him. "No, it's not the age thing."

"The fame thing? You know it's not that big a deal. Only people in racing know who I am and really..."

Is that what kept her undecided on pursuing things further with him? No, she knew it wasn't that either. It really was, as she'd decided before, her heart that kept her grounded and firmly rooted.

"No, it's not the fame."

"Then what, Lil?"

She couldn't tell him. She couldn't tell him she was falling in love with him. She couldn't admit that out loud to herself, much less think about admitting it to him. Instead she lifted her head and kissed his lips. Kissed him until he finally relented and kissed her back, letting her inside his mouth with her tongue.

She made love to his mouth with that kiss and tried to communicate to him exactly how she felt.

He slid on top of her body. She opened her legs for him, lifting and wrapping them around his hips. Their lips never parted, save for small inhalations of breath, and the kissing continued as his cock moved inside her in slow, gentle back-and-forth motions.

She couldn't imagine going through the rest of her life without him. She couldn't imagine going through the next few months without him—his cock, his kiss, his laugh, his smile, his voice whispering in her ear.

“Lord, woman, what you do to me.” He groaned into her mouth.

His eyes were open, staring down into hers, and she wanted to cry at the emotion, the heat, the unspoken words screaming at her from their deep blue depths. And still the kiss continued.

She tightened her thighs, wrapped her arms around his shoulders, then sifted her fingers through his short hair, holding him to her. How had she fallen so hard for him in so short a period of time? How had she let this happen? It screwed with her small, no-excitement, no-adventure existence. And yet she was still so unsure about how to go back to living that way.

His thrusts picked up speed, and urgency kicked in, but still his gaze remained on hers. She moved under him, arching her back, pressing her breasts into his chest, pushing her clit against his pelvic bone. They moved like that, him fucking her, her body riding the waves, until she broke and flew over the edge. She cried out into his mouth, and the light in his eyes when she came touched her as nothing else ever had. Her pleasure meant everything to him. He smiled and then screwed his lips into a grimace as he pushed against her one last time before his body

shuddered, and he came. His eyes darkened with his orgasm, the pupils dilated until all she saw was black lust.

He kissed her again, the connection between them scaring her right down to her very soul. Something had passed between them, something powerful that she'd never before experienced with any other man. She closed her eyes then, unable to continue looking at him, needing to break the bond for a few moments while she caught her breath and tried to piece parts of herself back together again.

He nipped at her chin, along her jaw to her ear. "Are you okay, baby?"

No, the hell she was not okay. "Yes," she whispered, trying to keep her voice from shaking.

"Good." He rolled to her side, and she let him gather her next to him with his arms wrapped tightly around her. "I like when you spend the night, and I like waking up next to you, your warm body and your wet pussy all within reach."

She liked it too. Way too damn much. Sleep was going to be hard to freakin' come by tonight.

* * *

Lily walked into the bathroom and was immediately cloaked in steam. The man took longer, hotter showers than any woman she knew. She set a cup of coffee beside the sink. "There's someone at the door, Cam."

"Who?"

"I don't know. The doorbell rang as I was coming upstairs. I didn't know if I should answer it or not."

"Yeah, just make sure it isn't press of any kind. It shouldn't be, but...I'll be down in a minute."

"Okay."

If she didn't know better, she'd swear their relationship was a scene right out of *Relationships, Inc.*, one of those stupid reality shows she couldn't stand. They were casual, acting as though they weren't merely lovers. They talked; they carried

on domestic situations with breakfast, reading the paper, making love until noon, talking politics. It was all rather surreal, and she seriously didn't know what to make of it.

She looked out the peephole, and a relaxed smile crossed her face. "Ronnie. Hi," she said after opening the door to him.

"Afternoon, Lily. I didn't expect to see you here."

Her smile faltered a little at the look on his face, the tensing of his shoulders, the strain of his own smile. No, he hadn't expected her, and she was suddenly even more uncertain about things. Did he know something she didn't? "Come on in. Cam said he'd be down in a minute."

"Thanks."

She closed the door behind him. "Would you like some coffee? I just made a fresh pot."

"Sure."

He followed her as they went to the kitchen. She busied herself with coffee mugs and creamer. He simply watched her, watched every move she made. The easy manner from the night before and from all other meetings with him was gone. In its place was tension.

She placed the mug in front of him at the end of the counter, then turned and stared out at the backyard. Well, it would have been a backyard. Instead, though, it was the tee box of the sixteenth hole on a golf course. She actually enjoyed the mornings she'd been at Cam's, watching group after group tee off. She'd sit out on the deck, or they'd sit out there and talk as though they were any other normal couple and not some unknown woman and a famous, hot, young race car driver.

She had a feeling her surreal reality was about to come to an end.

Ronnie cleared his throat behind her. "How is he today?"

She looked over her shoulder at him. "He's fine."

"Any lingering effects from the crash?"

“No, not that I can tell.”

“Has he talked about it at all?”

“He did some last night and a little this morning.” She moved to the sink and placed the midnight-snack dishes in the dishwasher. They'd gotten up around two in the morning for grilled cheese and milk. “What's wrong, Ronnie?”

“I was worried about him when he didn't show up in the shop this morning. He usually comes in to look at the car, see what news there is.”

“Oh.”

“Lily, look, I like you a lot. We all do. You've made that boy smile more than anyone or anything else in a long while.”

“But?” She knew there was a “but.” There had to be. The soft, placating tone of Ronnie's voice, the grim set of his mouth, the way he wouldn't really look at her when he talked—there had to be a “but” coming.

“He's distracted. He's never distracted. He wasn't focused last night like he should have been.”

“The wreck wasn't his fault.”

“No, it wasn't. It might have been avoided though, if he'd been paying more attention to what was going on on the track rather than asking me how you were doing and if you were enjoying yourself.”

Heat bloomed in her cheeks. She hadn't heard that on the radio. True, she'd been kind of out of it herself, lost in thought, but she felt sure she'd have remembered or tuned in had she heard her name. “I'm sorry, Ronnie. I didn't realize.”

“I know you didn't, and I can't put this solely on your shoulders. All this time he's been spending with you makes me think his head isn't in the right place. He's running for a championship, and he's not going to get it if he continues to be distracted.”

"Are you asking me to stop seeing him?" She stopped all her fiddling and faced the weathered and seasoned crew chief. She knew Cam thought of him as a second father, and she would hate to be the cause of any strife between them. She didn't want to know the answer to the question she hadn't wanted to ask.

"No. I'm just saying that maybe it would be better for him—and for the team—if you and he didn't spend quite so much time together."

"He's asked me to come to California with him."

"I don't think that's a good idea right now, Lily."

"What don't you think is a good idea?"

They both turned to see Cam walking into the kitchen, a grin on his face that was aimed right at her. It broke her heart. Dressed in jeans and a T-shirt with bare feet, he looked more like a college student than the one of the top five stock car drivers in the nation. This was one of those times when she seemed to be reaching for stars.

"I was just telling Lily that I don't think it's a good idea for her to sit in the stands at the race next weekend. People have seen her with you, and I'm just not sure that sitting with the regular race crowd is safe for her."

Lily was both grateful and not at Ronnie's blatant lie. She knew why he'd done it; she just wasn't sure it was the right thing to do. At the same time, how could either of them tell Cam the truth of what Ronnie had said? He wanted her to distance herself from Cam, and she knew Cam wouldn't take that well at all.

Cam smoothed her hair in a gentle caress and kissed her. "Why don't you want to sit on the pit box?"

She hoped her lie was just as convincing. "Alli couldn't find anyone to buy the tickets, and we don't want them to go to waste. Candi paid good money for them."

"Really? I guess I can understand that. I'd rather have you on the pit box, though."

“I know. Me too.” Was her smile convincing? “Look, I’m sure you two have things to talk about, so I’m going to go out on the deck.”

Cam let her go, his face full of questions, but when she kissed his lips, his smile was back. The French doors were already open, so she closed them behind her after stepping outside. What would Ronnie say to Cam? Would he now tell her lover the truth of what was being discussed before he had walked in?

She took a seat in one of the Adirondack chairs and closed her eyes against the warm spring day and tried not to think about her heart unraveling.

“Thanks for understanding last night, man. She was pretty shook-up.”

“No problem. I know y’all are getting close.”

Cam grinned. Close didn’t even begin to describe how he was feeling about Lily. Her feelings and thoughts had been plainly written in her eyes and in every touch of her hands and mouth on his body. She was falling for him just as he was for her. “I guess close is one way of putting it.”

“Cam, look... About Lily.”

“What about her? You know, I guess I need to mention that I’ve asked her to come to California with me. I’ve got that sponsor dinner while we’re out there and I’d like to take her. Plus, I’d like to introduce her to my parents.”

“Do you think it’s possible you’re moving a little fast? I mean, she’s great and all, but...”

Cam stared at Ronnie. Yeah, sure it was possible, but he’d known from the beginning he only had a little time to get her hooked on him. He could spend the entire summer really getting to know her, but right now in just these few weeks, he had to spend every waking second with her, getting under her skin, convincing her they could be a real couple. “I suppose so. I’m not going to change anything, though. I want her, Ronnie.”

“I just think maybe you’re losing some of your focus.”

Cam put his coffee cup on the counter. It didn't make a sound when it connected with the granite surface. He slid his hands in his front pockets and simply looked at the caramel-colored liquid in the cup. It was a few minutes before he lifted his head. He respected Ronnie, loved him, trusted him with his very life each and every week. "Losing focus? Me? Are you serious? I've never been more focused, and if you're looking to lay this at Lily's feet and blame her, you need to stop and think about that."

"All I'm sayin' is—"

"I *know* what you're saying. I know you're trying to look out for me, take care of me, do what's best for me and this team. I know that's your job. What happened on the track last night was not her fault."

"Cam..."

"No. I won't hear it, Ronnie. Lily is off-limits. And you'd best not breathe a word of this to her. I won't let this ruin my relationship with you, nor with her."

"Just be careful, Cam. I love ya like a son."

Cam reached out and gripped the older man's shoulder in a gesture of friendship and understanding. "I know, but you've got to trust me on this. Lily is not a distraction. She's anything, everything but a distraction."

"Okay."

"Now, how's the car? Can we salvage any of it?"

* * *

"Oh my God, y'all. I love Italy. I love the food over here."

The connection wasn't all that great—there was a lot of static on the line—but at least they could hear their friend's words clearly from the other side of the world. "Where are you, Candi?"

"Rome. We'll be here for about two nights. It's the most amazing city."

"What about the men?" Alli asked.

“Oh man, the men! They are... Mmmm. And there's this one. He's supposed to be joining us for the last few days of the tour. He's from Greece, and he's gorgeous. Not that I expect him to look twice at me, but... Hey, what about the two of you? Been having a good time hanging out?”

“We ha—”

“Lily's got a boyfriend.”

If Lily could have seen Alli at that moment, she'd have smacked her. Three-way calling was the only thing that had saved her friend. “Alli...” Lily groaned.

“You do, Lil? Who?”

“You're never going to believe it, Candi. Never,” Alli gushed

“Alli, don't. Please.” Lily buried her head in the pillow and waited for Alli to spill the beans.

“Yes, Alli, do. Please. Who is it?”

“Cam Carter.”

“You're shitting me? Oh. My. God. Lily is that true? You're dating Cam Carter? My Cam Carter?”

Alli laughed on her end. “He's Lily's Cam now. He is *so* into her.”

“Lily?”

“Hmmm?” She didn't want to lift her head. Candi had such a huge crush on Cam and was likely more his type. He just hadn't had the chance to meet her. She was petite and cute with wavy brown hair and bright blue eyes. She was always dressed in the latest fashions but wasn't pretentious at all. Men loved her. Men's parents loved her.

Lily finally lifted her head and grinned. Though she loved her lifelong friend dearly, she was thrilled to death Cam hadn't met her. “Yes, it's true. I've been dating Cam for the last couple of weeks.”

Alli scoffed. “Dating? Is that what you call it? You two spend as much time fu—”

“Oh, like you and Grant haven't been doing the same thing, except you do it in public every chance you get.”

Lily heard Candi's gasp on the other end of the phone.

“What? Wait. Alli, you're dating someone too? Who?”

“Cam's jack man, Grant. I met him at the race last weekend.”

“Damn. I go away for a month, and you guys end up with these new men.”

Lily laughed. “Didn't you say there was a Greek man over there?”

“You did, Candi,” Alli agreed. “A gorgeous Greek man, I believe, is how you described him.”

“I also said he wouldn't look at me twice. But you two are having hot sex with a driver and a member of his crew. Maybe I need to come home now.”

“How much should we bet her, Lily, that the Greek god will have her in bed before they leave Rome?”

“At least a hundred.” What the hell was she saying? She didn't have a hundred dollars to be betting off the cuff like that.

“Are you nuts? A hundred? Dollars?” Candi gasped.

“What? The Greek isn't worth it?”

“Oh yeah, he's worth a hundred and then some. But if I win, and he doesn't have me in bed before we leave Rome, you each owe me a hundred.”

Lily laughed and readily agreed to the terms. Candi would lose. No man had ever resisted her or turned her down. She just had the kind of personality that pulled men in.

Alli agreed as well.

“My flight comes in next Wednesday. Who's picking me up?”

“I am.”

“Lily, what about you? Are you going to be there too?”

"I don't know. We'll have to wait and see." She and Cam hadn't spoken of the trip to California again since he'd brought it up the morning after the wreck last week. It wasn't just about her being unsure she'd be going out there with him. It was that she wasn't sure she'd be seeing him anymore at all after the upcoming race weekend. Every word Ronnie had said stuck with her. She kept replaying the conversation over and over in her head.

Was she the distraction he believed her to be?

Was Cam focusing more on her than on his job?

She hadn't thought so before Ronnie had brought it up, but now she couldn't stop wondering and questioning the amount of time they spent together and whether it was having a negative impact on his racing.

"Uh-huh. If I had more time, you'd be explaining the uncertainty of picking me up at the airport, but I have to go. We're getting a tour of a vineyard outside the city."

"Don't forget to let us know how the Greek is in bed, Candi."

A very unladylike sound came through the phone line, along with some very unladylike language at Alli's request, and then Candi hung up. "So are you going to go with him to California?" Alli asked quietly.

"I don't know." The more she thought about it though, Lily did know the answer, and it wasn't one he was going to like.

"Oh please, Lily. That's not likely, and you know it."

"What about you? Are you going with Grant?"

"No. I can't get the time off work right now."

"Understood. Want to get dinner later?"

Alli giggled. "I am dinner tonight."

"Oh God. I don't want to know."

"You aren't seeing Cam?"

“He said he had a meeting to attend and a dinner with the owners. We're having breakfast in the morning.”

“Oh. Are you breakfast?”

“I don't believe so. I think he will be.”

Lily said good-bye, then hung up. She looked around Candi's living room and wondered what she was going to do with the rest of her night. Alone.

Chapter Eleven

“What's been going on with you this week? One day you're happy, the next day you're on the verge of tears. And I've hardly heard from you since the race last weekend. Have you even seen Cam in the last few days? Grant said Cam's been a pain this week at the garage, all moody and snapping at people.”

Lily sat back and tried to get as comfortable on the hard plastic seat as she could. After having spent one race sitting in the pits, returning to the stands among the regular race fans was interesting. She'd seen the race from both sides now, and she really couldn't say which experience she liked better.

The pits were all business and strategy; the stands were all about good fun and camaraderie and where, for the most part, everyone got along. There were some fans, however, who didn't like the fans of certain drivers. Cam was at the top of the shit list. Fans didn't like his no-holds-barred approach to racing. What she'd come to understand about him in the last couple of weeks was that he approached all of life that way. He didn't take a backseat, he didn't sit there and let life happen, and he wasn't about to go down without a fight and let anyone else win if his car was the better one.

As to Alli's questions, Lily didn't want to answer them. She was afraid she'd start crying if she did. She was in such turmoil as to what to do, and it wasn't herself she was thinking of, not really. It was Cam and what was best for him. She knew what she wanted to do, but she didn't know if it was the best thing for everyone involved. Actually, she was afraid she knew what she had to do, and it just plain sucked.

“Lily? Did something happen between you and Cam?”

Lily sighed. “No, nothing. Things have been great.” And they had been. They'd fucked, watched movies, laughed, cooked together nearly every night, even though she tried hard to distance herself from him. Every time she did, though, offering excuses left and right for them to spend their nights apart, he'd disregard her words and show up at Candi's door. He knew she wouldn't be able to say no, that she didn't want to say no.

“Then what? I know something is going on.”

Luckily, the “one to go” signal from the flagman saved Lily from having to answer, and the noise from the crowd drowned out anything she might have said. Everyone stood up and waved their caps in the air. She was no different. She might have screamed too loud, however, as quite a few fans around her turned to look in her direction as she hollered when Cam drove by. He was starting on the outside in second position and he came terribly close to the wall a few times as he weaved back and forth, warming up his tires.

“You like that runt?” the beer drinker asked from in front of her.

She just grinned at him and nodded. What she really wanted was to give him a piece of her mind about the “runt,” but she didn't. She was there to enjoy the race, to cheer on her lover, not to get into verbal spats.

When the green flag dropped, she screamed even louder. Cam took the lead as soon as they crossed the start/finish line. For the first time since entering the gates at the track, she regretted not being in the pits. She wanted to be on the radio listening to him; she wanted to look over Ronnie's shoulder at all the stats on the laptop.

Ten laps in, there was a caution flag for debris on the track, and most everyone sat down. Alli leaned over and nudged Lily's shoulder.

“What about California? Are you going?”

No, she wouldn't be going. She'd be back home by then. She shrugged. “I don't know yet.” She hated lying to her friend, but she really didn't want to have to go into everything here at the race.

"I still wish I could. Grant and I have been going at it like rabbits ever since last weekend, and I don't know what I'll do while he's gone."

Lily looked over at her. Was she serious? "He'll be gone for, what, five days?"

Alli pouted. "Exactly. I'll be a horny-as-hell mess by the time he gets back."

Lily didn't want to think about how much of a mess *she* was going to be once she got back home and didn't have Cam to warm her at night, to hold her, to pleasure her. The flagman held up his first finger in the "one to go" signal and saved her once more as everyone stood and started waving their caps again. Cam was still in the lead, and she couldn't have been more proud. It gave her goose bumps knowing she would see him when the race was over, that she would be going home with him, that she would spend the night in his bed with him between her legs. Those thoughts alone made her sex clench and throb. The pulsing of her clit combined with the adrenaline flowing through her body was going to drive her nuts if she didn't change her train of thought quickly.

The green flag dropped, and the cars picked up speed over the start/finish line.

She would focus on the race. She had been in one of these cars going two hundred miles an hour, and she'd sat up on the pit box. She had such an intimate knowledge of things, more so than she'd had before, more so than a lot of people would ever know. The word "intimate" ran in circles inside her mind. Just the word and she felt her hunger for Cam pulse.

Shaking her head to try to clear it some, she sought out his car and grinned wide, yelled loudly as he flew by. More people turned to her as she cheered him on. Some had astonished faces, some just laughed at her, and some glared. She truly loved it, all of it. Cam was still in the lead at lap thirty and was coming up on lapped traffic. Things could get dicey. The flagman waved the blue flag with the diagonal orange stripe as a signal that the faster, lead lap cars were coming, but it didn't seem to be working. No one was moving out of the way; no one was giving up the tenuous hold they had on their position.

Cam drifted down to the inside groove, trying to pass the same car that had wrecked him the week before. Lily tensed as they came around turn four, headed for the front stretch and turn one. Jake Curtis bumped the rear quarter panel of Cam's car, causing him to swerve down onto the apron in order to not wreck other cars. Son of a bitch. Jake was trying to screw Cam again.

"I wish we had the headsets like we did down in the pits," Alli yelled.

Lily nodded her agreement. She'd love to hear what Cam was saying, what was going on. Not for the first time, she was regretting the decision to sit in the stands.

Cam pulled back in behind Jake, and each time he tried to pass, Jake blocked. She wanted to believe Jake was just trying to keep from going another lap down, but at the same time, she couldn't. It was no secret in the racing community that there was animosity between the two drivers, but it seemed lately that Jake was blatantly out to get Cam rather than to simply race him hard.

She didn't understand it, why it appeared Jake hated Cam. Sure, Cam had a few racing moves that mimicked some of Jake's from earlier in his career and Cam drove the wheels off his car every race. No one was immune to his aggressive style, but he didn't deliberately try to wreck others. He was just out there to win. The fact that he could and did more often than not...well, she figured that rubbed other drivers the wrong way. He wasn't afraid of nudging someone out of the way and he wasn't afraid of payback. He liked good hard racing, the way it used to be.

Just before Cam and Jake got to turn one, Cam tried to make one more pass. He pulled up alongside Jake on the inside. He had the pass made cleanly, and then...

"Shit! No!" Lily screamed.

Jake spun Cam out by catching the tail end of the car. Cam slid down onto the apron, then back up the track, catching traffic on all sides. By the time he came to a stop, the front end of the race car had been sheared off, the back bumper and driver's-side quarter panel were gone, and the driver's-side door was smashed in.

The cheers in the crowd during the crash sickened her. She couldn't believe the happiness people showed at what might be a fatal crash.

She stood there on trembling legs, trying to keep from hitting something, someone, anything to get out some of her anger. The car was pressed right up against the wall, and she couldn't see what was going on with him other than what the JumboTron in the middle of the field showed her, which wasn't much at all.

Her heart beat wildly in her chest, and fear traveled up and down her spine. Was he okay? Was he hurt? She couldn't think, couldn't feel anything but the knot in her gut. Her gaze was fixated on the giant screen, which was now centered on the window net of Cam's car. It was still up and that wasn't a good sign. The signal that he was okay was for the window net to be down and it wasn't. She was shaking, so scared because she didn't know what the hell was going on with him. She'd never invested in a race scanner since she didn't go to races as often as she wanted, but she wished she had one right then so she could at least hear what was being said on the radio. *Damn damn damn.*

"C'mon, Lil. We're going to the infield. That's where we should have been in the first place."

Alli grabbed the small duffel bag that held their wallets, a couple of towels, drinks, and snacks. She snagged Lily's hand and gave Lily no choice but to follow her.

"Awww, you leavin' already? If you backed a real driver, yo—"

"Oh fuck off, asshole!" Alli sneered at the man in front of them.

Lily turned her gaze to her friend, her eyes wide. Alli was definitely more outspoken and more brash than Lily, but she'd never heard that kind of language from her. Lily grinned.

They quickly made their way down the steps and out the gates. They ran in the direction of the tunnel that went under the track. Once they showed the pit passes Cam had left at will call for them earlier in the day when she'd told him they

would be sitting in the stands, security let them through, and they were quickly on the other side, headed toward pit road.

Halfway to Cam's pit stall, Alli called out, "Grant!"

She let go of Lily's hand and ran at a faster pace to reach the jack man before he disappeared into the garage area. Lily caught up to them a few seconds later. "How is he?"

"He's talking. I think he's okay. He finally got the window net down, and the safety crews are getting him out. He'll be going to the infield care center again."

"Okay." Lily couldn't express her relief, but she wanted to cry with it. He was okay. That's all that mattered.

"Y'all can come back here with me and wait on him. He'll be glad to see you," he said, nodding to Lily. "He asked about you a few times tonight, wondering if you'd gotten your fill of the stands and had come to the pits."

"I wish. Why did he do it? Why did Jake do it again?"

"I don't know, but that man needs a good ass kickin'."

Lily couldn't disagree. Grant took Alli's hand, and Lily followed them. Cam's garage bay was the same as the week before, and she took up residence in a corner to be out of the way as more of his crew began arriving with some of the equipment from the pits. They would pack up the garage and load everything into the hauler soon. She wished she didn't feel so helpless, so out of place, yet there wasn't anywhere she could think of wanting to be other than right there waiting for him.

Fear for him made her restless, and she hated being restless. She needed something to do to occupy her hands, her mind.

She loved him, and there was nothing she could do but wait.

Oh God. Had she just admitted that to herself? She loved him? It was true, she knew that, but knowing and actually admitting it were two different things, even if she was only admitting it to herself.

Ronnie walked in, muttering and cursing like a sailor when he turned and saw her. “Lily.”

“Hi.” They stared at one another briefly before he nodded, his eyes soft. “I’m sorry, Lily. You must have been scared out of your mind up there watching, not being able to hear him.”

She didn’t know what to say, didn’t know how to be around Ronnie after their conversation. She knew he hadn’t meant to hurt her or her relationship with Cam. Ronnie was just trying to protect him. She couldn’t fault the older man for that, because she too wanted to protect Cam.

She stood in the corner and watched everything around her, watched as the crew moved as a unit, each person having one particular job to do. She turned around and looked out the open bay door just as the flatbed wrecker drove by with what was left of Cam’s car. She couldn’t read the sponsors’ names, couldn’t see the car number anymore, and could hardly tell what color the car had been.

“Jake’s been black-flagged for the duration of the race.”

She turned away from the sight of the wrecked car. “Good. They should fine him and suspend him. He’s done this two weeks in a row.”

“I know. He’ll be sanctioned. He’ll have to be.”

“How is he, Ronnie? Is Cam okay? I tried to stay away. I wasn’t going to bother him, wasn’t going to try to see him until after the race, but...” Lily couldn’t stop the trembling in her voice, though she tried. She really had meant that she wasn’t going to see Cam until after the race. She hadn’t wanted him thinking about anything but the race.

“I know. He’ll be okay. They’ll check him out and let him go. He asked about you all night. Every time there was a caution, he was asking if you’d come to the pits yet.”

“Yeah, Grant told me. I’m sorry.”

"I've never seen him so hung up on a woman before. To be honest, I don't know if you're a distraction or a help to him. I just know he's a different man since meeting you. Not any less of a driver or any less determined on the track, he's just..." Ronnie's words trailed off.

"I never meant to cause a problem." Tears formed in her eyes. She blinked them back as best she could. She couldn't let Cam catch her crying, or she'd never hear the end of it until he found out what was wrong.

"Damn, little girl, I know that. It'll all work out. Somehow, some way, it'll all work out. He should be here any second, and I have some things to do. You take him home."

Ronnie walked away, and Lily looked around for Alli. She was standing on the other side of the garage with Grant, smiling and laughing as Grant packed up some tools. There was something sweet about them together. He was much younger than Alli, at least by ten years, but it didn't seem to bother either one of them. They were crazy about each other, at ease with one another.

A hand on her shoulder startled her, and she turned quickly to find Cam standing behind her. She was in his arms before she could say his name, crushed against his chest before she could breathe again. Her tears did fall then. He was there, and he was holding her.

"Sshh, baby. It's okay. I'm all right," he whispered, rocking her.

She couldn't talk, couldn't do more than stand there, gripping him tight. She loved him. The thought weaved its way around her mind. She'd fallen in love with him almost from the first moment he'd smiled at her. She couldn't believe it was true, but she couldn't deny it either. And it made what she knew she had to do that much harder.

He held her for long moments, just held her, let her compose herself, let her listen to the strong, steady beat of his heart.

"Let's go home."

Home. She did need to go home, but unfortunately, home wasn't with him. Not for her. They lived such different lives, and the sparks between them burned too hot that when they flickered out, she'd be devastated. "I drove tonight. I'll meet you at your place." She was pleased with the steadiness of her voice.

"You sure?" His look was quizzical, but he didn't argue with her.

"Yes, I'm sure. How about you? Are you okay to drive?"

"Yep. I'm good. I'll see you in a bit, then?"

Lily smiled at him. He was still searching her face, watching her closely, but she kept herself well composed. "Yes."

"C'mon. I'll drive you around to wherever you parked. Traffic shouldn't be one-way yet out on the roads."

* * *

Cam sat in his driveway waiting for Lily to pull in. He'd lost her on the highway somehow, but then, he'd zoned out a little on the way home too. He really shouldn't have been driving, but he needed to do something, focus on something other than his anger, or he was going to go pull Jake Curtis out of his trailer and beat the ever-lovin' shit out of him. Cam didn't know what the problem was, but before they got out to California, they were going to solve it. He wasn't going out on another race track with someone out to get him like that.

Then there was Lily. He hadn't been able to stop thinking about her all night, wondering where she'd been sitting, if she was catching flack for being a fan of his, if she was defending him and giving others crap. He could well see her good-naturedly passing smart-ass comments back and forth with other fans. He knew Ronnie thought she was keeping him from focusing, thought she was causing him to lose his head during the races, but that wasn't the truth at all. If anything, she was helping him. Oh, he was still driving aggressively and not taking shit from anyone. He was still racing hard and racing to win, but he was also racing for her, to make her proud of him. He needed that. He needed her to smile with pride as she watched him, as she cheered him on.

She calmed his restlessness; she centered his focus. He hadn't expected it when he'd met her, hadn't expected the effect she would have on him, but he wouldn't trade it for the world. He had more to race for now than trophies and big paychecks.

He had her.

Her headlights were bright in the rearview mirror as she pulled into his driveway. He jumped out of his truck and tried not to wince. His right ankle was still a bit sore from the crash, but he didn't want her to know that, didn't want her to worry. There were other things he wanted to do to her that didn't include making her worry about him.

He met her at her car and helped her out, then held her tight against his side as they walked up to the front door. Inside, he kissed her deeply, softly, insistently. He had her backed up against the wall, his tongue in her mouth, his hands gripping her hips, his cock pressed against into the V of her thighs. He wanted her naked and in his bed. He wanted that now.

"Upstairs, Lily," he uttered roughly, not releasing her.

"You'll have to back up, then," she whispered, nipping at his chin and jaw.

"Don't wanna." He wanted to stand there and hold her, smell her, feel her alive and hot against him.

"Then I can't go upstairs."

She had a point. With great effort and reluctance, Cam let go of her and stepped back. She walked ahead of him to the stairs and turned, extending her hand to him. He was there in a flash, his hand holding hers as she led him up to his bedroom.

"Have I ever told you how much I love your ass?"

Lily laughed, and the sound warmed him all the way to his soul. "Yes, I think you've mentioned it a few times."

“Good. I just wanted to make sure you knew that I think it's the most perfect ass I've ever seen on a woman.”

“Then you need to have your eyes examined. Do you want to shower?”

“No. I want you to get naked and get on the bed on your hands and knees. We'll shower after.” He shucked his shoes and stripped off the jeans and T-shirt he'd put on in the infield care unit after removing his firesuit so they could examine him.

Cam stared at Lily as she stared at him. Her gaze was riveted to his cock, and he couldn't help but grin. He loved that she lusted after him, loved that she wanted him so much, and he had no doubt she wanted him. Every time she looked at him, touched him, smiled at him told him she wanted him, and he hoped it was the same for her. He hoped every time he looked at her, touched her, smiled at her told her just how much he wanted her, how important she was to him.

“You're a bit overdressed, baby. Do I need to spank that perfect ass?”

Chapter Twelve

“Yes.”

She blushed a pretty shade of pink and pulled her T-shirt over her head, then set to work on her jeans after toeing off her sneakers. She wore a soft cotton-and-lace bra against her creamy skin. He'd learned over the last few weeks how she valued comfort. She didn't wear fancy lingerie to entice him; she simply came to him normal, wearing nothing more special than she would have for anyone else, and he admired her for it. He loved how understated her vanity was, how real she was, both inside and out.

Once she was as naked as he, she crawled onto his bed, poised on her hands and knees as he'd told her he wanted her. “Spread your legs a little wider and lower yourself down on your elbows. Yes, that's right. I want that ass in the air for me.” He stroked the pale skin of her behind, then dipped his fingers lower between her legs, drawing a moan from her. She was wet already. God, he loved how responsive she was for him. Somehow he knew it was just for him. This hunger between them brought out something in her that no other man ever had. She'd never said as much to him; it was just something he'd realized on his own as he'd gotten to know her. Lily had been uncertain of her womanly power and grace when he'd first met her, but soon she'd started to understand how special what he made her feel was. She was not shy with him, not embarrassed at needing him. She no longer cared about what others might think. She was falling in love with him, and knowing that, even though she hadn't uttered the words, made his dick that much harder and made his heart swell with the same emotion.

“You've got the hottest, tightest pussy too. Did you know that, Lily?”

She shook her head, and another moan drifted from her lips when he sank one, then two, then three fingers inside her. Her inner walls clutched at him, drew him in, and protested when he tried to pull out. He loved that. When his cock slid in, her pussy didn't want to let him go.

He drew her wetness up to the tight hole of her ass, and he rubbed against it in a gentle, insistent circular motion, putting pressure on it. He wanted inside her ass, had wanted it since the first night he'd spanked her. He wanted to sink into that forbidden channel and fuck her while he spanked her again. He wanted to feel that incredible heat, that choking tightness.

Again, he dipped his fingers into her wetness, and again, he withdrew them, only to press one against her ass, this time pushing lightly but insistently. She tensed. "It's okay, Lily. Try to relax. Don't fight it. Just like the first time out on the deck."

"It...it feels weird, Cam. Different from the first time."

"I know, but I promise you, once I get inside, you'll beg me never to leave. It'll feel so good, baby, that place between pleasure and pain. All you'll feel at that point is need, hunger, and a fire so hot, you'll start to burn."

Her groan was one of pure desire. She might not know what it would feel like, but she knew she wanted it. She wasn't scared of it; she didn't shy away from it. She pushed for it, and he would give it to her. Hell, he'd give her anything she wanted.

"Remember when I asked if you'd ever had a man in your ass?"

Her ass cheeks flexed at his question, and he rubbed them softly, soothing her. "Yes."

"I'm going to take you there tonight."

She drove back against his hand, raising her ass higher. "Yes."

He'd bought some lubricant the day after their first date, the idea to take her anally firmly planted in his mind after seeing her naked. Something got him,

clawed at him when he thought about the roundness, the fullness of her ass. She was made the way a woman should be, and he wanted to be buried inside her in that most intimate way.

After retrieving the lube, he coated a finger with it. "It's going to be a little cold to the touch, baby, but it'll heat up in no time," he said, rubbing said finger against her small, tight hole. It flexed and then relaxed, flexed and then tensed as he started sinking in. "Try to relax. Push against my finger. Take it. We've done this before. It should be a little easier."

She pushed back until his finger slipped past the restrictive muscle to his first knuckle. "That's good. Now, a little more, a little deeper." He pulled out to the tip of his finger, circling it around just the inside, then pushed in again, deeper, deeper, until he was all the way in. "How do you feel?"

Perspiration had broken out on her skin, and she was moaning almost continuously. He rubbed her hip, across her lower back, and down under her belly to between her legs. His fingers stroked her clit, drawing on her hunger, her arousal as he slowly fucked her ass. She was pushing back against his hand, and he smiled. She wanted more.

Lifting his hand from her pussy, he was rewarded by a whimpered protest. He flipped the cap on the lube and coated a second finger. After pulling nearly all the way out of her ass again, he slowly inserted two fingers and returned his other hand to her clit. She rode him like that, taking the digits without resistance.

His fingers all the way in, he began to scissor them, spread them, stretching her as he pulled back. Each time he started to leave her body, she pushed and clamped down, holding him. God, he couldn't wait to get his cock inside her, to feel the heat and the tightness.

"Please, Cam. Please let me come," she begged, grinding on the fingers teasing her clit.

"Sweet baby begging. I know what you need." And he did, deep down to his soul. He needed the same thing. Everything. "Stroke your pussy for me."

She didn't hesitate, her fingers meeting his between her legs. He removed his hand so she could take over and he could slide the condom onto his cock. He applied a bit of lube to both himself and to her little puckered hole. There was a long, low moan when the cool liquid dripped from the bottle to her skin. He grinned. It was time.

Lily rubbed her clit, tugged at it, manipulated it until she could hardly stand the building sensations. The anticipation of Cam taking her anally had her so on edge it nearly stopped her breath. Just his fingers made her feel full, invaded, and the stretching he'd done...

Her slit was soaked, the bud of her clit swollen and slippery. She wanted to come. She wanted him inside her. "Please, Cam."

"I know, baby. Don't stop what you're doing. Make that pussy cream for me."

She loved it when he talked dirty to her. It sometimes seemed so very naughty because he was so much younger and *looked* so much younger. He was a man, had the mind and body and responsibility of a man, but his face was so youthful, so fresh, so fun. And when he talked dirty to her...she melted even more.

The edge of her orgasm was right there. She pushed her middle finger hard into her clit and gasped as the first wave hit. That's when he started to enter her. He pushed the head of his cock against her tight hole as one wave gave way into another. So intent was she on the bliss flowing through her veins, that his cock wasn't the painful invasion she'd been afraid of. Instead it was a pressure that spurred the orgasm to continue. She rode it until the sensitivity of her clit began to react painfully, and she dropped her hand. He was seated all the way inside her.

Full didn't even begin to describe how it felt. Full was an understatement. She felt stretched, impaled, and yes, now invaded. It was a sweet, hot fuck of an invasion.

"Tight, baby. Your ass is so goddamn tight. And I can still feel the remnants of your orgasm, your muscles still squeezing at the walls of your ass."

“Move in me.” The groan of the words was all she could manage and even that was hard. The longer he just sat inside her, the harder her heart beat, the more aroused she became. Every pulse of his cock inside her, she could feel. It was driving her insane. Sex with him always drove her insane. She wanted him so much.

He held her hips and pushed her forward as he pulled out. It was tight, and it tugged, but it was such a delicious friction. When he thrust inside, he pulled her toward him. Slow and steady, forward and back. The longer they moved, the higher her arousal rose. It wasn't the same kind of arousal as when he fucked her pussy. No, this was darker, hotter. It was a hard hunger growing inside her belly, and as he began to drive harder, deeper, and as she flowed with him, against him, the need grew.

“That's it. Fuck me, Lily. Fuck me with your ass. So tight, pure heaven.”

She went for her clit again, circling it, stroking it. Her breasts dragged against the bed, creating even more heat that traveled through her blood. She couldn't talk; she could only moan and whimper. Her free hand clawed at the bedsheet, and she fucked him.

“Oh yeah, just like that.”

She thrust her hips back, and her ass met his hand as he landed a slap. Again she thrust her hips, and again he spanked her. It was just what she needed for that darkness inside to burst free. Her cry was guttural, ripped from her as she came. Her clit burned, her ass was on fire, and still her body shuddered and clenched and clamped down on Cam's cock.

She no longer fucked him, but he fucked her. In. Out. Hard and balls-deep.

“Holy fuck.”

She agreed. It was pure holiness in the pits of carnal hell. His orgasm filled her, and still he moved inside her. Moments later, he laid his chest on her back and placed the most tender kiss between her shoulders. Tears slipped from her eyes, her heart breaking.

She did her best to keep Cam from realizing she was crying and was pretty sure she'd gotten away with it when he got up and went into the bathroom. Her eyes were closed, and she didn't know he'd come back to the bed until he reached out and wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"What's wrong, baby? Was I that good?"

"Perfect." She couldn't help but smile at his always-at-the-ready sarcasm. "It's nothing. I'm okay." Did she at least sound convincing?

He crawled in beside her and pulled her into his arms. "Liar. Tell me."

Lily shook her head. She couldn't say it, couldn't tell him what was going through her head. He'd try to talk her out of it, and she couldn't let him. She wasn't strong enough to refuse him anything, even at her own expense. He was the most charismatic man she'd ever met, so full of life and laughter, so deeply caring about those closest to him, so fierce and loyal. He could joke with the best of them, and she loved to see his eyes light up when he was just hanging out with his crew.

Cam tilted her head with his hand under her chin and still she tried to look everywhere but at him. "Lily, tell me what's wrong. You've pulled away. Talk to me. Did I...hurt you?"

"No, of course you didn't. I'd really..." Was there any use in trying to keep it from him? Would he ever find out if she did? Would he find out anyway if she didn't? "Am I a distraction for you?"

The surprise on his face couldn't have been more genuine. "What? Why on earth would you think that? Not because of the wrecks? You know enough about racing to know that wrecks—"

"No," she interrupted. "Not because of the wrecks."

"Then what?"

His body, which only moments ago had been relaxed and sated from sex, began to tense under her. This was what she hadn't wanted. She hadn't wanted to upset

him. "I just don't want to be a distraction; that's all. I don't want to take any of your focus away from what you need to be doing."

"Oh baby, you're not. What happened out there tonight was just a dumbass driver. It hurt us some in the points, but not too bad. We're still in this. You *give* me focus. I don't know how to explain it, but you do."

Lily nodded. She didn't know what else to say. She knew he meant what he said, but still, Ronnie's words in the kitchen rang louder in her head.

"Don't give it another thought, okay? We just had a bad couple of races. Nothing we can't recover from."

"You've been spending a lot more time with me this week, though. More so than in previous weeks."

"So?"

So. What had she expected him to say?

"You're overthinking this, Lily. Which means that I'm going to have to show you exactly what one hundred percent focus means to me."

"What are you talking about?"

He rolled her onto her back and slid on top of her, between her thighs, and deep inside her. His mouth took hers, effectively shutting off any further words on the subject. She pushed the sound of Ronnie's voice and Cam's protests and her own need for self-preservation to the back of her mind. She'd deal with them all tomorrow. She'd let him go tomorrow. But not tonight, not right now.

* * *

"You can't be serious, Lily."

Alli stood with her hands on her slim hips, staring at Lily as though she'd lost her mind. She probably had. She was packing her suitcases. It was just after seven in the morning and Cam was more than likely still asleep back at his place. She'd left his bed less than an hour earlier after having not slept a wink all night.

"I need to leave, Alli. Something is happening between Cam and me, and I can't let it go any further. He needs to focus on his racing, on winning, on the things that mean everything to him. He can't do that with me around."

"You're nuts. You're one of my very best friends, but you're nuts. That man is crazy about you. He's in love with you, Lily, and you're going to walk away from that?"

"Yes. He's got crucial races coming up, and he needs to spend every ounce of energy on them. And I..." She sighed, rubbing her tired eyes. "I need to stop living the fairy tale I've been living for the last few weeks. I need to get back to my life."

"I should call him and tell him you're leaving. He'd come and stop you."

Lily looked up. "You wouldn't. Please, Alli, don't call him. Don't make this harder than it already is for either of us. He's going to be upset enough as it is."

"I didn't say I would. I just said I should. Don't do this, Lil. At least talk to him first."

She turned and flopped down on the bed, lying back amid the pile of clothes she'd been folding and putting in the suitcase. "What if Ronnie is right, Alli? What if this little affair has been too distracting for him? We've spent nearly every night together, sometimes full days."

Alli sat beside her head and stroked Lily's hair back from her face. "Don't you think you should let Cam make that decision? It's his career, not yours."

"That's just it. There shouldn't have to be a choice. No one makes those choices, not really. Maybe if I'd had a job up here, some responsibilities of my own, it would have created that balance of time and focus, but... I just think it's best if I go home and let him return to life as he knew it before we met."

"You're copping out, Lily. You're running away instead of trying to work it out. You love him. I don't think you've ever been in love with a man before."

She hadn't. It scared the crap out of her. It threw her insides into chaos, and that's what got to her more than anything. Her simple, normal life would never be the same with Cam in it.

"I loved seeing you, Alli. Next time you need to come see me."

"I hate Florida. You know that."

Lily laughed despite the fact she was on the verge of tears. Yes, she knew that, but it would be a long while before she was emotionally able to come back to North Carolina. "Help me finish packing. I want to get on the road."

"Are you sure this is what you want to do?"

She got up off the bed. "No." She went into the bathroom and gathered her toiletry items from the counter. She remembered one of the mornings Cam had taken a shower in Candi's tub, how he'd coaxed Lily in with him, and how he'd taken her from behind as she leaned against the back wall of the shower. The hot water had poured off Cam's body, dripping on her in erotic drops.

Then there'd been the night on the couch during the discussion of cookies. After she'd... *Oh God*. The panties had been left on the deck.

In the mirror, she saw her face had turned red and her pupils had dilated. The memories of that night on the lounge chair, the panties in her mouth as a gag, the feel of Cam's fingers in her pussy and ass, his lips and tongue on her clit. She had to get the panties.

She tried to walk calmly back into the bedroom where Alli was folding a pair of jeans. She felt Alli look up at her, but Lily just set the shampoo and face wash down on the bed, then left the room and made a mad dash to the back door. Once out on the deck, she looked around and groaned. Everything was out of place.

She quickly set the lounge chairs where they'd been, the chairs back around the patio table, and put the grill cover back over the top of the grill. A cursory survey told her she'd done it all right and there, in the corner by the fake ficus tree, was a pair of pink cotton panties wadded up in a ball.

Snatching them up, she tried to tamp down the always present, always insistent arousal for Cam. Sh—

“What do you have there?”

Damn. She hadn't heard Alli come outside. “Uh, nothing. Just cleaning up out here.”

“Uh-huh. Liar.”

“Oh shut up.”

“Had some outdoor sex with Cam? Is Candi gonna have to wash the chair cushions? Are we going to want to eat off the table again?”

Lily tried not to laugh but couldn't help it. The images Alli's questions painted were quite funny. “No. I already disinfected everything,” she said, walking past her friend and back into the house, her panties stuffed securely in the front pocket of her jeans.

* * *

The sinking feeling in his gut told him she'd left town. More likely left the state. She was headed home, and he was so pissed, he could have spit nails. She'd walked out on him while he'd still been sleeping. She hadn't left him a note, and she hadn't called him. She wasn't picking up her phone either. He'd tried to call her at least a dozen times in the last hour, but she'd just ignored him.

He was going to have to go after her. She'd been talking about being a distraction last night, and he'd just thought it was adrenaline and a bit of fear from the wreck that had her thinking that way. Evidently there was more to it.

He didn't know what had made her run, but he would be going after her as soon as he could get away. He'd have to get Alli to give him Lily's address in Florida, and he'd have to get back in time to leave town for California.

When the doorbell rang just as he'd picked up his cell again, this time to call Alli, he took the stairs at a run to the front door. He couldn't believe who stood on the other side of the threshold. “Jake? What the hell are you doing here?”

"I came to apologize, Cam. May I come in?"

No. "Sure. I don't have a lot of time, but I have a few minutes." *And I'd really like to deck the shit out of you.* He'd hear him out though. Jake was a legend in the sport, and he'd been a phenom early in his career just like Cam. The last few years had been rough for Jake. He'd become almost laughable because he hardly ever finished races nowadays.

He shut the door behind Jake after welcoming him inside. They each took a seat in the living room, facing one another in opposite chairs. The silence was awkward, and Cam wondered if he needed to start the conversation, but he honestly wasn't sure what to say. The longer he looked at Jake, the more his irritation and anger fell away, and sympathy, maybe even some pity, set in. Jake was a former champion three times over, and Cam had always had great respect for him.

"Jake..."

Jake sat up on the edge of his chair with his hands hanging between his knees. He shook his head and looked up at Cam with a rueful smile.

"I'm sorry, Cam. I took some chances in the last couple of races and put both of us in danger."

"I don't know if I'd call what you did taking chances, but thanks for the apology."

"Maybe not from where you sit. I know, I used to sit in the same place. I was young and cocky and full of all the drive and ambition that you are. I've been at the beginning of a career with more talent in my pinkie finger than most of the others on the track have in their whole bodies.

"And now I'm sitting where you will be in twenty years or so. I'm at the end. I can't get a decent ride to save my life, and I do good just to qualify in the cars I can get. The last few years have been humbling and even humiliating at times."

Cam nodded. He'd watched his hero fall from grace just because of a few bad seasons. He had been guilty of mocking Jake and at the moment, didn't feel too good about that. Jake was right. Cam would be there one day too when the young, up-

and-coming drivers would take his place, when he'd lose his edge. And with those thoughts came thoughts of Lily, of her being beside him when his career came to a screeching halt. It would still be hard when the time came, but if he had her in his life... "I don't know what to say."

"I don't expect you to say anything. I'm still proud and cocky as shit, but you deserved an apology for what's been happening on the track. Part of it was not having the car for the kind of driving I think I can still do, and part of it was jealousy that you're where I still want to be."

Cam couldn't have been more surprised. He wasn't sure what he'd thought Jake would say, but that wasn't it. Last night and last week, Cam had been ready to go at it with the older man off the track, but now his respect for Jake grew, and he wished he knew how he could help him.

"You're the only one who will know this before the end of the season, Cam, but I'm retiring. This is it for me. I just can't keep wasting my time, and that's what it feels like now. I want to win more than you could possibly imagine, just one more time, but I know if I won again, I'd want to keep winning, keep trying. It's time for me to move on to the next thing in my life."

"What are you going to do?"

Jake shrugged. "I've been offered a commentator position for part of the season by one of the networks, but I really don't know. I can't walk away completely. Racing is a part of me, it's in my blood, but I think it's time I get out of the car."

"I'm sorry, man. Really." And he was. Cam knew Jake had given everything to his career, married more to it than to his wives. Cam didn't want to end up like that, divorced multiple times and alone. His life was racing; at the same time though, there was more to life *than* racing. There needed to be a balance between his personal life and his professional life. Until Jake had come to see him, Cam hadn't really put it all together in quite that way. "I won't tell anyone what you told me. Is there anything I can do?"

“I don't know, but if there is, I'll let you know.” Jake stood and Cam stood as well. “And thanks. I appreciate you keeping this between us. There's too much racing left this season, and I want to finish it out.”

“I understand, Jake.” And he did. He walked Jake to the door, then watched as he drove off. His need to find Lily, to talk to her was no less urgent than it had been before Jake had shown up. He'd been given a lot to think about, and he knew without a doubt now that he needed to tell Lily what and how he was feeling. He couldn't let it go unsaid any longer.

Chapter Thirteen

The short twenty-minute drive from the small airport in Tallahassee to the street Lily lived on took less time than Cam had anticipated, but the sooner he got to see her, the better. He didn't like not talking to her, not being able to get in touch with her, not being able to touch her. He was tired, irritable, and horny. Horny seemed to reign most of the time, but tired and irritable fought for second place constantly. Around her, he felt settled, calm, and that damn word, “focused.”

There was a balance he was missing—a balance between his incessant need to be with Lily and his drive to be in the car racing for a black-and-white-checkered flag. Both those hungers wanted to come first, and he knew she'd only been trying to help relieve some of the pressure by leaving. It hadn't helped, though. It'd only made it worse. He wished he'd met her in the off-season, but he hadn't, and somehow somehow, he had to get a grip on it all here in the middle of the season or he was going to lose both. He couldn't stomach the thought.

He couldn't wait to take her back home to meet his parents. He'd been so excited he'd met “the one,” she was all he could think about in the short amount of time he'd had with her in North Carolina. Ronnie thought she was a distraction to him, and maybe she had been, through no fault of her own, but the loss of attention to what was going on around him was worse now that she'd left. Maybe he had lost some of his focus because he was trying to keep her, trying to convince her they belonged together by spending as much time as he could with her, in and out of bed.

It seemed to have somewhat backfired. She hadn't left him because she didn't want him or didn't love him. He knew without a doubt in his mind that she *did* love him. She left because she hadn't wanted to get in the way or take his attention

away from the track. The other drivers did it—had wives, kids, special events all the time. If they could do it, he could too. He just had to make sure she knew that he was better off *with* her. His focus was solid when she was near and had gone all to hell when she'd left without a word.

Alli had said Lily's house was the fifth one on the left, and after counting down the houses, he found it and pulled in the drive. It was a small bungalow-style house, older and very quaint. The outside fit the woman who lived there more so than his big monstrosity fit either of them.

He glanced at the clock on the dash of the rental car. It wasn't all that late, and hopefully she'd still be awake. He'd taken the first flight he could out of the small airport near the race shop. He couldn't go to another race without her, couldn't go another night sleeping alone.

He picked up the box from the passenger seat, unfolded his long body from the car, and shut the door. The inside of the house was dark, and he took a deep breath before pressing the small lit button beside the door.

* * *

The ringing of the doorbell startled her.

She wasn't expecting anyone, and she didn't even realize her neighbors knew she was home. She'd kept to herself most of the day and standing out on her patio right then was the first time she'd been outside. The insistence of the doorbell was going to keep her from staying there, staring up at the stars, being reminded of the night on Candi's deck with Cam.

Lily sighed and headed inside. She'd made her choice, and she couldn't start regretting it yet. It was still too fresh, the feel of him inside her still too close. She'd regret the decision to leave him later.

She turned the lock and opened the door. "Cam?" She blinked a few times, certain her eyes were deceiving her. He was still there. "Cam?" she said again.

"You left me."

He walked into her house as though he owned it. What was he doing there? And why did he look so damned good? His jaw was shadowed from not having been shaved recently, and he looked tired, on edge. She'd been gone, what? A day?

His scuffed cowboy boots, faded jeans, and an untucked white button-down shirt made her drool.

She nodded to the box in his hands. "What's that?" Neutral territory, she figured. Take the focus off her for a second until she could get her brain to register with the rest of her that Cam Carter was actually standing in her living room looking better than she remembered, and she'd remembered in really vivid detail.

He set the box down on the couch and then faced her with his hands on his hips. "Don't try to change the subject. You left me. Why?"

Slowly, she dragged her gaze away from his hands, away from the long, strong fingers she remembered touching every inch of her skin. Inside and out. His mouth was set in a firm, unsmiling line, and his eyes were narrow in her direction. She didn't like that look. "I thought it would be best."

"Best?"

"Yes. I was just trying to do the right thing, Cam."

"For who? You?"

"No, of course not for me. For you."

"For *me*? If you were trying to do the best thing or the right thing for me, you'd have stayed with me instead of leaving town. You'd have talked to me, told me what you were thinking about doing. Dammit, Lily. *You* are what's best for me."

"Cam..." She wanted to reach out to him, touch him, hold him. Hell, she wanted to strip naked and then strip him naked. She wanted him to take her on the couch, on the floor, in her bed—she didn't care where. Her body missed him, her heart missed him, and it was taking everything she had to stay plastered against the panel of the front door.

“No, I'm not here to listen to it. We've talked about age and fame, so those aren't it. I don't know what it is, and frankly, I don't care anymore. I want you. Did you think that not talking to you, not seeing you, not having you in bed with me would change that?”

He'd taken one step after another as he talked, until he was standing in front of her, so close she could feel his breath against her hair. She stared at a button on his shirt and refused to look up. If she did, she'd be lost. She might be older than him and she might not be famous like him, but she was every inch a woman who wanted him, who needed him. She'd been freakin' damn miserable without him for all of a damn day. She didn't want to find out how she'd feel without him for a week, a month, a year.

“I don't need you to run from me or to run away because you're trying to protect me. I don't need protection. I don't need a mother, Lily. I've got one. I need you. You are the one who gives me peace and eases me.”

“Cam...” Her heart ached for him. She *had* been trying to protect him.

“I was trying so hard to make you see how much you needed me, how much you wanted me, so that you wouldn't leave. I didn't take into account how much I would need you, because I didn't think for a moment that you'd actually go. Whatever problems I'm having on the track are not your fault. Not in the way everyone thinks, at least. I don't know how to balance the two things I want most in life when I want to be doing both at the same time. I need you for that. I need you to help me figure it out. I need you to be the haven, the calm.”

She had no idea what to say. Tears formed in her eyes and slid down her cheeks at his words. Rehearsed they might have been, but she knew they were no less sincere for it. The button she'd been staring at was suddenly very blurry.

“Look at me, Lily.”

He hooked a finger under her chin and lifted her face to his, then brushed her tears away with his other hand. His gaze traveled over her face, and a frown marred his. She'd been right too. Just one look into those eyes and she was lost. She

could no more resist him than she could do without air to breathe, but why was he frowning? Was he upset because she was crying? What had he expected, though, after what he'd said? "What's wrong, Cam?"

He shook his head this time, but didn't let go of her chin, only tightened his grip slightly. "Do you have any idea what I had to promise Alli to get your address out of her?"

She smirked; couldn't help it. It was the last thing she'd expected him to say. God, what had Alli done? "No." Her voice was barely a whisper.

"I had to promise to let her auction me off at her company's annual charity event, and I had to promise her a blank check so she could win."

Lily closed her eyes and smiled at the mental image of a tenacious Alli wringing all sorts of promises out of a helpless man in need of something only she could give him. She relaxed slightly. "Well, it's for a really good cause."

"A good—Lily, I give to good causes all the time. I give and give and give. But I think it's time I take now. And you are what I want most to take."

She reached up and touched his face, her fingers brushing against his lips. "I really did do what I thought was best, Cam. I thought some of what was happening on the track was my fault, and then there was the conversation with Ronnie, and..."

"I know. Ronnie, too, was trying to do what was best for me. Though I don't have all the answers, and though I don't know how to find that perfect place between the two loves in my life, you and he needed to trust me to try and then trust me to come to you."

"I'm sorry, Cam. I didn't mean to hurt you or upset you."

"I know, baby. You can make it up to me."

"I can? How?"

"You can sleep with me. Let me screw your brains out," he said just before he nipped the end of her nose with his lips. "And then..."

"There's more?"

“Oh yes, there's more.” He kissed her lips. “You can give me the rest of the summer to convince you we belong together, that you are the best thing in the world for me, and that I can handle both the pressure of the races and the delight of having you in my bed.”

“Cam...”

“The rest of the summer, Lily. Starting now.”

“And if by then I'm still not convinced?” She was already convinced; she just wanted to toy with him. She needed to believe she had him.

“Then I'll just have to convince you to stay with me through the rest of the season and try some more.”

“You'd try in the off-season too?”

“Without a doubt. I won't give up, Lily, so you might as well just give in.”

“You make it sound so easy, Cam.”

He slid his hands under her shirt and dipped his head to the side of her neck. “It is so very easy, baby.”

Fingers tugged at her nipples as his lips left a trail of heat in their wake until they settled against hers. “Cam?”

“Mmmm. Yes?”

He pinched the tingling buds, making her gasp against his mouth. “What's in the box?”

His head snapped up, but his fingers never stopped teasing her. Wide blue eyes showed surprise and then darkened in mischief. *Uh-oh.*

“The box? I'm trying to... We haven't... I haven't been able to touch you in nearly twenty-four hours, and you're asking me again about the box?”

“Yes.”

“I'll show you. Come on.” He led her across the room with his fingers pulling at her nipples. If she lagged too much, pleasure-pain sliced through her, and so she

lagged—a lot. He positioned them so they were standing sideways in front of the couch. “Pick up the box.”

He didn't let go of her, so she bent her knees, that deliciously naughty tingling flowing through her at the tension the position put on her nipples. She stood up straight again after picking up the box and held it in one hand while untying the red bow with the other. She opened the lid. “Cookies. You brought me molasses cookies.” Tears threatened to spill again.

“If sex didn't work, I figured the cookies might. However, you keep diverting my attention from ravishing you, and you need to be punished for that.”

Punished? Ravished? “Spanking?” She tried to keep the arousal out of her voice, the need, the hunger.

“Spanking,” he confirmed, smacking her on the lips with a loud kiss.

Lust and love shot through her. “In that case, since I'm already in need of attention-focusing punishment, I think I'll have a cookie first.”

Cam laughed and the sound warmed her heart. “Yes, go ahead, baby. Your mouth is going to be too occupied later for one.”

Lily's breath caught, and her cheeks heated. He was going to drive her crazy with his lust, his craving for her, but that was more than fine. She'd willingly be driven to the brink of sanity with it if it meant he would be with her two hundred miles an hour all the way.

THE END

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Find out more about Lissa and what she's up to at <http://lissamatthews.com>.