A close-up portrait of a young man with short, light brown hair and blue eyes, smiling warmly. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a patterned necktie. In the lower-left corner, a hand holds a fan of US dollar bills, including several \$100 bills and one \$20 bill. The background is a solid, dark blue color.

peggy
hunter

THE
FOX
AND THE
HEIR

Bachelor For Sale, Book Two

The Fox and the Heir [Bachelor For Sale Book 2]
by Peggy Hunter

Whiskey Creek Press

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BACHELOR FOR SALE BOOK 2:

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Dedication

For Jo Ann.

Thank you for being such a wonderful friend.

Chapter 1

"Twenty-five thousand, two hundred dollars is the last bid!"

David Strand, you are one fucking idiot! How the hell did you get into this mess?

"Do I hear twenty-five three?"

The bright lights focused on the stage in the Hotel Gregoire grand ballroom blinded David as he tried to gaze out over the crowd.

He tried to get his mind around it. One minute he was fucking the incredibly sexy blonde from the Grand River Children's Center and the next he was standing on the stage being auctioned off like a side of beef.

"Twenty-five thousand, two hundred dollars going once."

Shit. The blond bitch wasn't even all that good in the sack. What had possessed him to agree to being auctioned off at a four hundred dollar a plate benefit?

Sure, it made for great publicity. David Strand, the most eligible bachelor in Toronto on the auction block to raise funds for charity. It made the headlines of every celebrity rag in the city. Unfortunately, it also dredged up old news ... how he'd walked away from his family's fortune shortly after his parents died in a car accident.

"Twenty-five two hundred going twice!"

Damn! If the auctioneer took any longer to make the sale final, David was going to kick his ever-loving ass.

"Sold!"

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The crowd exploded into applause as David breathed a sigh of relief. *Thank God!* Now at least he could get the hell off the stage. Still, he couldn't help but wonder who...

"Congratulations to Jayne Foxton!"

David moaned inwardly.

Oh fuck! Not her. Anyone but her!

* * * *

Jayne smiled as she gazed at her boss across the massive oak desk. As Jacob Strand's personal assistant for the past two years, she'd come to love the old codger, eccentric warts and all. Why he'd paid for her to attend the charity function in his place and given her carte blanche on what everyone knew would be a bidding war was anyone's guess.

But Jayne had enjoyed the experience. For the first time in her life, she hobnobbed with the rich and famous and was able to bid on a man who wouldn't have given her a second glance under normal circumstances. It was just too bad she couldn't walk up on the stage to enjoy the moment. Instead, she waited for the people to applaud and made a quick exit, having done exactly as her boss had requested.

Jayne had long since learned not to ask Jacob Strand too many questions. While he'd always been very kind, he kept his private life private. She knew enough never to ask.

Still, Jayne had a sneaking suspicion Jacob had more in mind than being his usual unconventional self when he asked her to attend the bachelor auction. Somehow, Jacob expected buying his grandson at the auction would be the first step toward bringing him back into the family fold.

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She had to admit, it was the only reason she'd agreed to go to the auction in the first place. Jacob Strand, self-made billionaire, known and respected the world over for his investment savvy, had been estranged from his grandson for almost twenty years.

The circumstances surrounding the estrangement were never discussed. All she knew was what the papers said in the society pages. His grandson walked away from the family business when he was eighteen, around the time his parents were killed in a car accident.

Now that the old man was on the verge of turning eighty, she suspected he felt a need to bring his grandson back into his life. Hopefully, David would feel the same.

Jayne pushed her glasses higher on her nose as she looked down at the clipboard on her lap. "You have a nine thirty appointment with Dresden Harcourt," she said matter-of-factly.

The old man snorted as he leaned back in his overstuffed chair and raised a cigar to his mouth. "Screw Harcourt," he said as he lit a match and held it to the tip of his cigar. "We have more important matters to attend to."

Jayne curled a fist over her mouth and coughed lightly.

The old man's brows furrowed. He knew exactly what she was getting at. Smoke plumed over his head in a thick, grey cloud as he pulled the cigar from his mouth. "Don't chastise me, girl," he said with a wide grin on his craggy face. "I'm celebrating."

Jayne bowed her head and looked over the rim of her glasses. "I never said a word."

"You didn't have to," Jacob replied. "Just one glance of those pretty green eyes of yours says it all."

Jayne cleared her throat. "Well, you did say you'd stop smoking."

Jacob's brilliant white dentures clenched the butt of the cigar as he grinned at his personal assistant. "And I said I'd only smoke when I had something to celebrate."

Jayne absently ran a hand over the front of her crisp white blouse as the other held the clipboard on her lap. "All right, sir," she said respectfully. "Dare I ask what you're celebrating?"

Jacob pried the cigar out of his mouth and offered a wide grin. "Your victory," he replied.

Jayne frowned. "My victory?"

"Of course," Jacob replied. "You purchased my grandson at the benefit last night. Now we're ready to set the wheels in motion."

"We?" Jayne pulled her glasses off and placed them on the clipboard. "I'm sorry, sir," she said. "I purchased David Strand on your behalf. I don't see how this affects me."

Jacob grinned. "Then allow me to explain." He winked just before he replaced the cigar in his mouth. "You are the winning bidder. That puts you squarely in Davey's life. I expect you to bring my grandson back to take his rightful place at the helm of my empire."

If the situation hadn't been so ludicrous, Jayne might have laughed. Instead she calmly placed her glasses back on her face and leveled her gaze on her boss. "Exactly how do you expect me to do that?"

"With your feminine wiles, of course," Jacob replied.

This time Jayne *did* laugh. It was either that or cry. Judging by the look of determination on the old man's face, she wasn't going to escape the situation easily.

Exactly how would Jayne use her feminine wiles to draw David Strand to his grandfather? It wasn't like she was a sexy siren or anything. In fact, she'd become used to being called "Plain Jayne" over the years. So much so that she was quite comfortable with it.

Everything about Jayne was plain. She didn't wear makeup, kept her copper-colored hair pulled back in a conservative bun. She wore dark-rimmed glasses and always dressed conservatively. Even Jayne's personal life was plain, from her small, conventional apartment to her boyfriend, Tom, who was always ultra calm and sensible.

Jayne hated complications, so much so that she'd detour several miles to avoid them. Even her job as Jacob's personal assistant was devoid of complications ... or at least it was until now.

When it came to feminine wiles, Jayne knew she didn't have any. And that was the way she liked it. At twenty-seven, her life was exactly as she'd planned, slow, easy and not a single complication to muck things up.

And she had no intention of starting now.

"Sir," she said as she looked across the desk at her boss. "I've been working for you for two years."

Jacob nodded. "And you've done a tremendous job."

Jayne swallowed hard. "You know I'd do whatever it takes to help you achieve your goals. That's why I agreed to buy your grandson on your behalf."

The old man's dark eyes sparkled as he nodded lightly. "I know that, Jayne."

"But, sir," she began, not entirely sure what she'd say next. She hesitated briefly before she continued. "I don't think I can bring your grandson back to you." She pressed the clipboard against her chest. "And, quite frankly, I don't think it's fair of you to ask this of me."

Jacob's eyes darkened as he pulled the cigar from his mouth and leaned forward in his chair. "You've never let me down before," he said as he absently tapped the cigar over the ashtray on the desk. "I sent you to the bachelor auction to buy my grandson and I paid a handsome price for him."

Jayne's heart squeezed. "I realize that. And I've provided you with an opportunity to see him."

Jacob chuckled. "You expect me to go on a date with my grandson?"

"Well, no, not a date. Just show up instead of me. He'll have no choice but to talk to you."

"That'll never work. I want my grandson to come to me and you're going to bring him."

Jayne shook her head. "I don't know what you expect me to do," she said. "David Strand would never be attracted to someone like me."

Jacob reclined in his chair and grinned. "So become the kind of woman he would be attracted to," he said simply.

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Jayne quelled the urge to cry. So much for her uncomplicated job. She shook her head as she got up from her chair. "I'm sorry, sir," she said softly. "I can't help you this time."

Jacob placed his cigar in the ashtray and looked at her. His eyes softened and began to glisten. Jayne's heart clenched. *Is he on the verge of tears?*

Jacob bowed his head lightly, his voice rough and low. "I'm an old man, Jayne," he said. "And I've made a lot of mistakes in my life. The biggest one was when I let David walk away. I need to set things right, the sooner the better."

Jayne felt a sense of dread wash over her. She held the clipboard tighter against her chest as she stared down at the old man behind the desk. Her voice shook lightly as she spoke. "Can you tell me why?"

Jacob nodded as he crushed the cigar out. He smiled sadly. "Sit down, Jayne. I'll explain."

Chapter 2

David Strand paced the length of his penthouse living room. He'd never been known as a patient man and tonight seemed like the ultimate test. One which he knew he was failing.

After the bachelor auction two nights ago, his benefactor quickly disappeared after making the exuberantly outlandish payment. While the auctioneer and audience fully expected Jayne Foxton to take a bow, he'd been left standing on the stage alone.

The moment he heard her name, he knew who she was ... his grandfather's personal assistant. He wasn't surprised she hadn't stuck around for the accolades. He'd seen her over the past two years at a distance. Mild and meek, certainly not someone who'd want to be in the limelight. Still, David was embarrassed to find himself standing alone when he should have been greeting his date.

And no one, certainly not the little redheaded mouse his grandfather called a personal assistant, embarrassed David Strand.

So when Mrs. Thyme, his secretary, announced his grandfather's office had touched base that morning and expected him to entertain Ms. Foxton this evening, David pulled out all the stops. The woman wasn't going to know what hit her. If his grandfather planned to use a woman to draw him back into the Strand fold, he was going to discover he'd made an unwise choice.

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You don't send a rabbit to deliver dinner to a fox. The advice his grandfather once shared echoed in David's mind.

David shook his head. It had been several years since he'd last had contact with his grandfather. Was it possible the old man was losing his marbles in his old age? Did he think Jayne Foxtan could reach him? Did he really think it would take so little to undo the past?

When the phone rang, he picked it up on the second ring.

"Ms. Foxtan is on the way up, sir."

David took a deep breath. "Thanks, Putman," he said, acknowledging the security guard before he replaced the receiver.

All right, old man. Let the game begin.

David walked around the living room quickly. He checked the bottle of champagne chilling on the coffee table, turned down the lights to a soft glow and flipped the stereo on. He smiled as various speakers, strategically placed around his penthouse, set the right tone for the evening. He'd just retrieved two crystal flutes when the doorbell chimed. He placed them on the coffee table and vaulted up the five steps to the door. David shoved his hand into his pocket and felt the two foil packets. Yep, he'd thought of everything.

* * * *

Jayne was running her fingers over the tight French braid at the back of her head when the door swung open. She gulped when she peered up at the man standing just inside the dimly lit apartment.

Much taller than her five-foot-seven frame, David Strand towered over her. Deep blue eyes slid over her, from her head to her ridiculously high heels. His chiseled jaw flexed slightly as he ran a hand through his sandy blond hair. "Well, well," he said, his deep, husky voice floating over her. "I see my grandfather prepared you well."

Jayne swallowed hard. She took a deep breath before she replied, "I don't know what you mean," she said softly.

Oh, but Jayne knew exactly what the younger Strand meant. She'd spent five excruciating hours in the hands of hair stylists, make-up artists and the owner of the finest designer clothes store in Toronto. She'd been poked and prodded, yanked, whirled and mostly, whipped into the kind of woman Jacob expected would attract his grandson. Even her glasses were replaced with contacts, something that had Jayne blinking all afternoon.

The end result was nothing short of a masterpiece; at least in Jacob's opinion. When Jayne looked in the mirror, the only thing she saw was herself made up to look attractive. A silk purse made from a sow's ear was still a sow's ear no matter how one looked at it.

David stepped back from the door and swept his arm, inviting her in. As she passed him, his voice coursed over her. "What I mean is Grandpa's little Jayne is plain no more."

Jayne ran a hand over the glittery emerald gown she wore as she cast her gaze over the living room. Soft music floated all around as the low lights focused on an overstuffed black leather sofa. Lit candles were on either side of a silver champagne ice bucket on the massive jet-black coffee table.

"You've gone all out," she said nervously. *Exactly what does the guy have planned for the evening?*

David smiled as he escorted her down the steps. He walked to the coffee table and pulled the linen-wrapped bottle out of the bucket. "Well," he said as he slowly twisted the cork, "I wanted to impress you." The cork dislodged with a pop and flew upwards. David reached for the crystal flutes and poured champagne into them. As he handed a glass to her, he smiled. "After all, you paid a lot of money to spend an evening with me." His eyes fell to her cleavage and darkened to deep cobalt as he tipped his glass to his mouth.

Jayne's hand flew upward in an effort to cover her chest. *Damn this dress.* It pushed her breasts up and made them look like small mountains. She'd hated it on sight. Why had she let Jacob talk her into this?

David chuckled softly. "Oh please, don't. That dress was made to draw attention to your breasts and, I must say, it does the job very nicely."

Jayne felt her face flush under the layers of makeup. "Well, if you don't mind, I wish you'd look elsewhere. You're making me very uncomfortable."

"As you wish," he said as his gaze slowly slid down her body to the fabric clinging over her abdomen and then, lower still, over her hips to the center of her being. Thank God the dress flared at her hips. Her thighs quivered slightly as her core pooled with moisture at David's unabashed gaze.

She pressed her thighs together in an effort to quell the rising heat. The last damn thing she needed was to be

attracted to David Strand. She was on a mission. She must not fail. Jacob was counting on her.

She took a deep breath and moved toward the sofa. "Do you mind if I sit down?" God, if she didn't sit down soon, she'd fall down.

"Of course," David replied as she took a seat at one end of the sofa.

Jayne slowly leaned on the arm and peered up at him. *Whoa!* He looked a lot more imposing standing over her. She pointed at the far end of the sofa. "Join me?"

To her dismay, David rounded the coffee table and took a seat at her side. His leg brushed her thigh, sending shock waves up her spine, as he stretched out beside her. He twisted his torso and placed an arm behind her on the back of the sofa. Jayne pressed herself against the arm of the sofa in an effort move away slightly. The move only made David slide closer.

"So tell me." His breath fanned her cheek as he spoke. "What are your expectations for the evening?"

Jayne swallowed hard. "Expectations?" It was so damn hard to think when he was so close to her. "I..." She hesitated, struggling to think of something to say. "I don't think I really have any."

"Surely that's not true," David said as his hand gently caressed the back of her neck. "I'm sure you came here with at least one expectation."

"No, not really," Jayne replied as she craned her neck in an effort to break contact with his fingers. "Well, nothing more than having dinner with you anyway."

"Dinner?" David chuckled softly as he leaned forward and placed his glass on the coffee table. "I guess we can have dinner..." He paused before he added, "After."

Jayne glanced at him in confusion. "After what?" The words were out of her mouth before she'd taken the time to think about it. She winced when David's face moved closer to hers.

He reached into his pocket and deposited two foil packets on the coffee table. It took a moment for Jayne's mind to register just what they were.

"After I fuck you, of course." He'd said the words smoothly, as if it was nothing out of the ordinary.

Jayne's heart slammed against her chest. This wasn't what she'd signed on for.

She struggled to find the words, struggled to sort out her thoughts as David's hand slowly snaked around her shoulders. She peered at him seconds before his mouth closed over hers. The glass of champagne slipped from her hand and tumbled to the carpeted floor as he pulled her closer, deepening the kiss.

Jayne's hands shot forward, pressing against his chest as his tongue swept inside her mouth. She moaned as she felt his arms encircle her waist, pulling her against his iron-hard chest. Her body sang with sweet desire as she reveled in his bold touch. When had anyone ever kissed her like this? When had a man's mouth made her think such erotic thoughts? She longed for him to rip her dress from her body, to touch her everywhere. She longed to open herself to him, to let him sink deep inside her.

I'm counting on you, Jayne. The words echoed in her head. She wasn't sure whose voice it was at first and then slowly the memory of the old man's words sank into her mind. *Don't let me down.*

Her own words echoed. *I won't. You can count on me.*

And still, her body fought. Sweet moisture pooled in her core as she felt David's hand slide beneath the waves of her dress and slowly glide over her thigh. As his mouth continued to plunder hers, she felt his fingers rip through the crotch of her pantyhose and skim over her silk panties.

This is wrong! This isn't why I'm here! And still her body betrayed her. Her legs fell open, giving him easier access.

David tore his lips from hers and gazed at her as his fingers slid beneath the folds of her underwear. He grinned. "Admit it," he said as his fingers stroked her. "This is why you're here. This," his fingers slid into her moist core, "is what you want."

Suddenly, reality struck Jayne. The fingers that stroked her felt cold and intrusive. She pushed at his chest and tore away from him, jumping off the sofa. "You bastard!" she cried as she glared at him. "How dare you?"

David seemed undaunted by her sudden move away from him. He reached for his glass of champagne and took a long swallow before he replied. "How dare I what?" he asked harshly. "How dare I offer to fuck you? Why else are you here?"

Jayne wrapped her arms around her chest in an attempt to keep her body from trembling. "You know damn well why I'm here," she said through clenched teeth.

"Ah, yes," he replied before he drained his glass and reached for the bottle to refill it. "Dear old Grandfather wants me back."

"If you knew that all along, why did you play games with me?"

"Because I wanted to prove he'd made a mistake sending the likes of you to win me over." David took a long swallow of champagne as his eyes raked over her. "God, what was he thinking? Have you even fucked a man before?"

"I'll have you know I have a boyfriend," Jayne replied indignantly.

David snorted. "Pardon me. I stand corrected. I expect you have a very lively sex life then."

Jayne flinched. "If it's any of your business, it's adequate." He certainly didn't need to know the truth.

David's brows shot up. "What does adequate mean? Does lover boy turn your world upside down when he shoves his cock in you?"

Jayne took several steps back. "This was clearly a huge mistake," she said. "I think I better go."

David shot up from the sofa and grabbed her arm. "Not so damn fast!" he said through gritted teeth. "There's something I want to ask you first."

Jayne glared at him. "Let me go," she said.

David held firm, his fingers digging into her arm. "Doesn't it bother you that the old man is willing to sacrifice you for his own gain?"

"That's not how it is," Jayne said, her temper flaring.

"Isn't it?" David ground out. "Are you that naïve? Don't you know what he's capable of?"

"I know exactly what he's capable of," Jayne cried angrily. "I know more about your grandfather than you will ever know!"

When David suddenly released his hold on her, Jayne stumbled backwards. She struggled not to fall. David's eyes continued to hold her in place. "You know my grandfather better than I do?" he asked, his voice ominously low.

Jayne gathered her wits and made a beeline for the door. With her hand on the doorknob, she whirled around and looked at David. "I didn't say I know him better," she said. "I said I know more about him than you do." She opened the door before she continued.

"Meaning what?" David asked impatiently.

Tears sprang to Jayne's eyes. "I know he's dying!" she cried.

David's face blanched, his brows furrowed. "What did you say?"

Jayne clamped her hand over her mouth. Oh God! What had she done? The one secret Jacob had trusted her with and she'd blown it sky-high.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "I wasn't supposed to tell you. I promised Jacob I wouldn't."

David nodded softly. "Understood."

"He wants you back in his life before it's too late," she confessed softly. "That's why I'm here; that's why he sent me."

David continued to stare at her. "I see," he said.

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Jayne hand shook as she pulled the door open. "Good night, David." He didn't reply as she closed the door behind her.

Chapter 3

David stared at the door long after Jayne pulled it closed behind her.

Her words echoed in his mind. *I know he's dying!*

David grabbed the bottle of champagne and filled his glass. As he drank the bubbly liquid, he knew he'd need something stronger. He went to the bar and tossed ice into a tumbler before he filled it with whisky.

Was it possible? Was the old man really dying? *Jesus!* Assuming Jayne was being truthful, what would it mean? Could David find the strength to forgive his grandfather for the past?

As he tipped the tumbler to his mouth, his mind whirled back twenty years. He was in the hospital waiting room, his mind foggy after having consumed too much booze that night. His grandfather came out of the examination room, blood all over his crisp white shirt. "They're dead," he'd said, his face strained in anguish. "Both of them are dead."

Eighteen-year-old David walked toward him. His life force had just been drained; he was suddenly without the parents he'd loved so dearly. He desperately needed to know his grandfather would always be there for him.

David wrapped his arms around his grandfather's shoulders and sobbed. Yet Jacob felt stiff and cold. David pulled away and looked at his grandfather. Cold hands clamped on David's shoulders and pushed him away. "If it wasn't for you, I'd have my son and daughter-in-law." Jacob

pointed to the room he'd just left. "That should be you in there," he said vehemently. "It should be you!"

David shook his head, pushing the memory from his mind. He'd moved on. In fact, he'd done very well. He'd taken what he'd learned from his grandfather and made wise investments. And look at him now. At thirty-eight, he was a millionaire, lived the highlife, women sought him out at every turn. No social engagement was complete unless David Strand was in attendance.

So why should he give a sweet shit that the old man was on death's door? Why the fuck should he care?

David walked to the sofa and picked up the crystal flute Jayne had dropped when she'd been in his arms. He placed the glass on the bar.

No matter how he looked at it, Jayne came to him out of a genuine concern for the old man. She'd come in an effort to help his grandfather. The fact she'd almost given herself to him was a sign she'd been ill prepared, in spite of the old man's coaching. Yet, David had to admire her spunk.

The woman he'd considered a little mouse was something more of a sleek little fox this evening. Perhaps he should give the lovely lady another chance.

David knew his grandfather's penchant for playing games. It was entirely possible the old man was lying about his impending demise.

Since he couldn't stomp into his grandfather's office and repeat what Jayne had shared with him, why not let the sweet little fox guide him there?

* * * *

"I take it you had a successful evening with my grandson," Jacob said as Jayne took a seat across the desk from him.

All right. She'd been rehearsing what she'd say during the hour-long bus ride to work. There was no way to skirt around the issue. She'd have to come right out and tell him.

"I'm not so sure you'd call it successful," Jayne said as she mentally geared up for the truth.

"Well, I would," Jacob replied, as he grinned from ear to ear.

Jayne frowned. "You know what happened last night?"

"Don't know the details and I don't care. David's secretary called this morning with a request that he see you again."

Jayne felt her bones turn to jelly. She struggled to remain sitting on the chair. "He wants to see me again?" *How crazy is that?*

"That's right," Jacob said. "He's going to pick you up at four today." The old man's brows waggled suggestively. "You must have done something right last night."

"But, sir..."

"You had the right bait, my girl. You've got him on the hook so reel him in!"

"Sir..."

"When you've got him dangling, invite him to my birthday party two weeks from Saturday. I want him there."

Jayne's heart sank. "I'll do my best."

"Good," Jacob said as he reached for a cigar.

"Sir," Jayne said quickly, "do you think that's wise considering the circumstances?"

Jacob waved her concern aside. "Not like it'll make any difference now." He eyed her as he lit a match and touched it to his cigar. "Take the day off to spend at the salon. Davey needs to see you at your best."

Jayne bit down a harsh comment as she left the office. God forbid his precious Davey should see her as she really was. After what had nearly happened last night, the last thing she needed was for David to find her attractive again. Jayne pushed her glasses tighter over her nose. *Sorry, David, what you see is what you get!* If he didn't like it, too bad. Maybe he'd forget the sexual overtures of the night before and simply listen to her.

* * * *

"I wish you'd try to understand," Jayne said into her cell phone as she waited in the lobby of Strand Enterprises.

"I want to understand, Jayne," Tom replied, his voice sullen. "But you cancelled our date last night too. I know this is important to your boss but what about us?"

"This has nothing to do with us," Jayne replied.

"Tonight's special. I wanted everything to be perfect."

Jayne hesitated. *What was so special about tonight?*

Tom seemed to pick up on it. "Don't tell me you've forgotten!" he wailed.

She gripped the cell phone tighter. "Uhm, no. Of course I haven't."

Tom wasn't convinced. "All right, tell me why it's special."

Jayne winced, her mind whirled. "Every minute we spend together is special, Tom."

Tom sighed. "It's our four month anniversary," he supplied.

Oh yeah, that. Had it been four months already?

"And you said you wouldn't have sex with me until we'd been dating four months."

God, she was no more ready to climb into bed with Tom now than she was when she met him at a Christmas party four months ago. She had to admit, he'd been waiting patiently for this day to finally arrive. He hadn't pressured her ... well, not that much anyway. Surely he deserved credit for that.

Still, the idea of having sex with Tom left her cold. The longer she could put him off the better. "I feel terrible." As she said the words, the gleam of a sleek black limousine caught her attention. "I sincerely wish I could be there," she said as she saw a uniformed man step out of the limo and approach the front door. "I want you to know that whatever happens, I wish I was with you."

As the chauffeur walked through the swinging doors and made eye contact with her, Jayne closed her cell phone. She was vaguely aware of Tom's voice. "What do you mean whatever happens?" She switched her cell phone off and tucked it into her purse.

The chauffeur didn't say a word. He nodded and waved softly with his white gloved hands. Jayne numbly followed him out the doors to the limo parked on the street. He opened the door before he nodded again and waved his hand in a gracious way.

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Jayne peered inside the limo's dark interior. With the tinted windows, she could barely make out the shadowy figure seated at the far end. It was an ominous sight. She hesitated. Something deep inside told her to run.

"Please, Ms. Foxton," the chauffeur said.

Suddenly, Jayne was sorry she hadn't gone back to the salon to beautify. The idea that David Strand should see her as she really was struck her as a very bad one. She wanted to see him again, in fact, if she was honest with herself, she'd admit she longed to see him again. But what had possessed her to be herself, warts and all, today?

Jayne took a step back on the sidewalk. "I've changed my mind," she said. "I don't think this is a good idea."

The chauffeur caught her elbow as she backed away. She gazed up at the man in shock when his hand lowered to her back and pushed her toward the open door. Jayne's hands braced on the top of the car as he attempted to push her inside. She gasped when she felt strong arms circle her waist and pull her inside the car.

"Help!" she cried as loud as she could. "I'm being abducted!"

"Stop the dramatics," David said calmly as he held her against him on the plush leather seat. "Shut the door, Stu."

A pretty blond woman peered inside the limo just before the chauffeur closed the door. "I should be so lucky," she said.

Jayne pulled herself out of David's arms and skittered across the expanse of the seat. "That was uncalled for," she said, her hand slowly moving to the handle.

"I'm sorry you feel that way," David calmly replied. "And by the way, the doors are locked."

Jayne's hand fell away from the handle as she glared at David. "I can't imagine why you'd want to see me again."

"Can't you? After what you told me last night, you shouldn't be surprised."

Jayne's eyes slowly adjusted to the low light in the back of the limousine. Dressed casually in a white t-shirt and navy cotton pants, David looked sexier than ever. His hair looked a little mussed, as if someone had run their fingers through it, and his chiseled face was unshaven. She wasn't sure, but he looked almost tired, like he hadn't gotten any sleep the night before.

She was startled when the chauffeur lowered the window between them. "Where to, Mr. Strand?"

David's chin rose as he considered the question. "75 Wilmot Crescent," he supplied.

Jayne frowned as the window slowly rolled up again. "That's where I live."

David chuckled softly. "I'm aware of that. Didn't you think I'd do my homework after meeting you?"

God, she so didn't want him in her apartment. "If you wanted answers, you could have just called."

David's deep blue eyes coursed over her from head to toe. "You look a lot different than you did last night," he said absently.

Jayne's heart squeezed tightly. "I know," she said. "Your grandfather went all out to make me look attractive for our date." She pushed her glasses tighter over her nose before

she raised her chin defiantly. "But what you see is what you get. I'm not willing to put on airs for any man, certainly not for you."

David grinned. "But I already know what hides beneath those," his eyes glanced over her again, "layers of fabric. An haute couture gown or business suit, it doesn't matter."

Jayne quelled the sweet sensations coursing through her body at his words. "What do you want from me?" she asked, her voice laced with frustration.

The air in the limo cooled several degrees before David spoke. "What's wrong with my grandfather?"

Jayne's heart lurched. "He asked me not to tell you," she said. "I shouldn't have said a word."

"But you did," David said softly. "And you can't take it back. Tell me everything."

"I don't know a lot," she said as she peered out the window. "He told me he has an inoperable brain tumor. His doctors told him, in the best case scenario, he has four to five months left. And that's if he isn't under a lot of stress."

"I expect the fact his only grandson is estranged is a major source of stress," David supplied.

Jayne tore her gaze from the window and looked at him. "Of course it is," she said tightly. "Don't you think Jacob wants to set things right with his only living relative before he dies?"

David frowned, clearly deep in thought. "Yes, I expect he would." He templed his fingers in front of his mouth as his frown deepened. "But you'd just think the old man could come up with something a little more original."

"I beg your pardon?" Jayne said.

David's hands fell to his knees as he looked at her. "Never mind."

How could she ignore that statement? David was clearly not convinced his grandfather really was dying. "You think he's lying?"

"I think my grandfather is a lot of things, Jayne," David said. "He'll do just about anything to get his way."

Jayne's body tensed when she realized what he was saying. She shook her head as she struggled to fight tears. "How could you think such a thing about your grandfather? You really think he'd lie about his own demise?"

David grinned. "As a matter of fact, yes, I think he's quite capable of doing just that."

That was easy for him to say. Jayne saw his grandfather struggling with tears as he told her about it. "So why bother with me if you're convinced Jacob's lying?"

David regarded her thoughtfully as the limo came to a halt. The window rolled down. "We're here, Mr. Strand."

"Thanks, Stu." He waited until the window rolled back up before he replied. "You know," he said, "I'm not really sure. I guess it's because there's unfinished business between us."

This time when Jayne's hand reached for the handle on the door, it opened ... in fact it opened before she'd had a chance to pull it. She looked up at the chauffeur as he stood by the open door. "I don't think there's anything left to say," she said as she dashed out of the car. "Thanks for the ride home."

As Jayne rifled through her purse to find her keys, David appeared at her side.

"Shall I wait, sir?"

"No, Stu," he called over his shoulder. "Go on home and give that sweet wife of yours a kiss for me."

When Jayne located the keys, David took them from her shaky hand. "May I?"

"No, you may not!" Jayne cried. She looked to the street in the hopes of calling Stu back. But the limo had already pulled away from the curb and was sailing down the street. *Damn!*

David smiled. "Jayne," he said, his voice soft and so darn persuasive. "My ride has left and I'm here at your door. Surely you won't mind if I come inside for a minute or two?"

Her heart melted. Unable to deny him, she nodded. "Just so you can call a taxi," she said softly, more to convince herself.

* * * *

David held the door open and followed Jayne inside the apartment building. The hall was dim and as his eyes adjusted to the low light, he knew why. The walls were painted a dark grey in an effort, he suspected, to hide the cracks in the drywall.

Jayne wordlessly retrieved the keys from his hand and walked to a wall of mailboxes. He waited patiently as she retrieved her mail and silently made her way down the gloomy hall to the stairwell door.

David saw the elevator doors on the far wall. "What floor do you live on?" he asked.

"Seven." She kept her back to him as she replied, her voice echoing off the walls.

"That's a long climb," David said. "Let's take the elevator."

Jayne pressed her hand on the stairwell door and stopped briefly. "Everyone takes the stairs because the elevator can't be trusted," she said over her shoulder. "But if climbing seven flights is too much for you, be my guest. If you aren't waiting for me by the time I get to my floor, I'll call the repairman," she paused before she added, "or the paramedics."

David smiled. So she thought he was too soft to walk up a few flights of stairs, did she?

David was very fit. In fact, he jogged five miles every morning and went to the local gym four times a week to weight train.

He followed her through the door, biting back the urge to bound up the steps ahead of her in an effort to prove how fit he was.

As he watched her climb the stairs ahead of him, he was glad he'd resisted. Seven flights with her sweet rounded ass wagging in his face. With each step he took, his cock tightened and grew with need. He'd made a wise decision. Best to hold back for now and wait for the right moment to prove his ability. Why waste his energy on seven flights of stairs when it would be better served showing her how fit he was in a more erotic way?

David watched every move Jayne made as they walked up the seven flights. Her shoulders hunched slightly on the last flight. The little vixen was tiring. As her steps slowed, David closed the distance between them. When he reached the step beneath hers, his hand reached forward and touched her lower back. He felt the shock waves course through her at his

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touch. She sprang to life and scaled the last few steps effortlessly.

David grinned as Jayne pushed through the seventh floor door. His touch affected her as much as hers affected him. He looked very forward to further exploring the attraction between them.

So the old man had convinced Jayne he was knocking on Heaven's door. David didn't believe it for a minute but there was no reason he couldn't enjoy his grandfather's personal assistant's company while she attempted to persuade him.

Chapter 4

Jayne took a deep breath as she pushed the key into her apartment door. David lingered near; his sweet, spicy scent filling her senses as she opened the door.

She cast a quick glance over her shoulder as she stepped inside her apartment. "I expect you'll find my apartment quite cramped compared to what you're used to," she said nervously as she hit a switch that illuminated two lamps on either side of her sofa.

Jayne followed his gaze as he took in the small, one-bedroom apartment. The main area, the living room, was decorated in soft earth tones. The rich brown love seat and matching armchair were complimented with cream-colored doilies placed on the back and arms. A lightly varnished coffee table sat upon a jade and cream braided rug. Along the beige walls were various pictures of her family and beloved paintings, mostly of landscapes.

David walked toward one of the paintings and tilted his head lightly as he examined it closely. The painting depicted a beach on Lake Huron in midsummer. A small child walked along the beach, gazing out over the waves.

David turned to her, his eyes lit with understanding. "That's you in the painting," he said; it wasn't a question. "You painted this."

Jayne bowed her head lightly in embarrassment. "Yes," she replied. "It was a very happy time in my life. It seemed natural to put it on canvas."

David's gaze shifted to the other paintings on the wall. "You painted all these." Again it wasn't a question.

"Yes."

He turned to her, his eyes lit with admiration. "Why are you working for my grandfather when you have such incredible talent?"

"Painting is a passion," she said. "But there's no money in it. And," she raised her chin indignantly, "I happen to like working for your grandfather. He's been very kind to me."

David's grin was clearly sarcastic. "Yes, I expect he would be kind ... as long as you do his bidding and don't ask too many questions."

Jayne felt the blood rush to her cheeks as anger bubbled within her. "I know there's a problem between you and Jacob," she said stiffly. "But the least you can do as his grandson is grant him a little understanding..." her voice wavered, as she bit back the tears threatening to spill, "when he's facing the end of his life."

David kept his distance. "I'm here, aren't I?" he said coolly. "Do you think I'd have pursued you otherwise?"

The words stung as cold, harsh reality washed over her. Of course, why else would he be here? It wasn't as if she could compare to the drop-dead gorgeous women he dated. Naturally he was here for Jacob's sake and she had to keep her mind on just that.

A glimmer of hope flickered in Jayne's heart as she gazed at him. "Does that mean you'll see him? He wants you to attend his birthday party. It would mean so much to him," she said hopefully.

David grinned. His eyes sparkled. "It means I'll entertain the idea, providing I get what I want first."

Jayne struggled to swallow the lump in her throat as David's cobalt blue eyes roved over her. She took a step back. "I'm not sure I understand," she said as she turned toward the tiny kitchen. "I'll make a pot of tea and we can discuss this further."

Jayne gasped as David's hands closed over her shoulders and whisked her around to face him. "I'm not interested in tea," he said through gritted teeth. "And it won't take me long to make my demands clear."

David's fingers dug into her flesh as he pulled her to him and planted his mouth over hers. His kiss was punishing as he closed his arms around her and held her against the length of his hard, unforgiving body. When his hands slid to her buttocks, he pulled her up on her toes and rocked his need against her core. Jayne's body sizzled with need as she opened her mouth to accept his kiss. Her arms slid up to cradle his head, holding him in place as she felt her breasts flatten against his solid chest.

David pulled his mouth from hers and trailed molten hot kisses over her neck as one hand slid down her leg and pulled it up slightly. The motion rocked her tighter against his throbbing penis. Jayne's core pooled with need, accepting his erotic touch.

"Ah, Jayne," he whispered urgently against her ear, "I think you know what I want."

"Yes," she gasped.

"And you want it too, don't you?"

Jayne's head fell back to give David freer access to her throat. "Yes."

She was suddenly perched on the back of the sofa with her skirt pulled up around her waist. She didn't know how she got there and didn't care either, as long as David continued to hold her, to touch her.

He planted his hands on either side of her on the back of the couch and leaned down to look into her eyes. "Open your blouse for me, Jayne."

As she numbly followed his demand, his fingers flew to the back of her head and quickly pulled her hair out of the bun. He then removed her glasses, tossing them onto the seat of the couch as his gaze focused on her chest. Jayne's body heated to the boiling point when his deep blue eyes darkened as they settled on her lacy bra.

His hand slowly traced the bits of lace and then circled the nipples visible through the sheer fabric. "Just as I thought," he said softly, almost ominously.

Jayne struggled for breath as her nipples pebbled beneath his gentle touch. "What?"

"Conservative on the outside," he said slowly as his fingers slid beneath the bra, "but liberal underneath." He didn't wait for a reply before he dipped his face to her breasts. Her fingers sank into his hair, pulling him closer, needing him more with every breath she took.

Shock waves coursed through her body as his hand slid up her thigh and over her moist core.

"Damn," he cursed as he raised his face and stared down at her. "You're wearing pantyhose!"

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Jayne blinked. "I always wear pantyhose," she replied.

David leaned back slightly and reached both hands between her thighs. He clenched his teeth as his fingers dug into the nylon and ripped it apart. "Not anymore," he growled as he moved back between her legs.

Jayne might have argued if it wasn't for his hand brushing aside the crotch of her panties and cupping her core. All thoughts escaped her as his warm fingers slowly opened her and slipped into the moist depths of her being.

"You're so wet," David whispered. "So ready for me."

Jayne's body quivered in anticipation when his fingers leisurely stroked her slit. "Do you want my finger inside you?" he asked.

"Y—" Her body rocked in exquisite agony as her mind tried to form the word. "Yes." She closed her eyes, waiting for the moment, waiting for his intimate touch...

"What the hell is going on here?"

The bellowed words seemed to come out of nowhere. Jayne moaned as David's hand slipped from between her thighs. She blinked up at him in confusion, the salacious spell she'd been under now shattered.

David still leaned over her, his breathing labored, his eyes squeezed tightly closed. "It seems we have company."

Jayne leaned to one side to see past him. Her heart stopped; her body broke out in a cold sweat. *Oh my God! Tom!*

Chapter 5

With his hand still on the doorknob, Tom stood there as Jayne struggled to collect her thoughts. *This isn't happening. This can't be happening.*

She couldn't begin to imagine what she looked like from Tom's angle. Her ass perched on the back of the sofa with her skirt pulled up over her hips and her blouse wide open. Not to mention David still standing between her legs.

A cold sweat had coursed over her body the moment her mind cleared. She felt her cheeks flush as she lowered her legs to the floor. She placed her hands on David's chest in an effort to push him away. God, the man was like a brick wall. He didn't move.

"I think introductions are in order," David said smoothly, as though Tom's sudden appearance was no more than a minor intrusion.

"Oh please," Tom replied, his voice eerily calm, "don't let me disturb you."

"Nonsense," David said as he stepped back, finally giving Jayne some space. She blinked as David extended his hand to Tom. "David Strand," he said smoothly. "And you are?"

Jayne almost collapsed in a dead heap when she saw the moisture glistening on David's fingers.

Tom's face blanched as he raised his hands, dismissing David's greeting. "Tom Skirten," he said tightly. His eyes impaled Jayne. "I'm the boyfriend."

"Oh right," David said as he tucked his hands into his pockets. "Jayne did tell me she was dating someone."

Tom's cold brown eyes continued to stare at her. "Did she?" he asked.

"Yes," David replied. He cast his gaze to Jayne. "Well, this is awkward." His eyes sparkled with mischief. "If you wanted a ménage a trios, you should have told me ahead of time."

Jayne wanted to scream. How could David be so calm? "Don't listen to him, Tom. This isn't as bad as it looks," she said.

"It isn't?" Both David and Tom responded in unison.

"Well, no," Jayne said nervously as she tugged her skirt down and pulled her blouse over her chest. "David and I were discussing what it would take to reunite him with his grandfather and we kind of got caught up in the moment."

Tom's face remained stone-cold. "So that's what was going on when I came in," he said cautiously. "You were working out the details."

"Yes."

"We were?" David asked, his face lit in amusement. "I thought I was finger fucking you."

"That's the impression I got too," Tom replied.

Jayne's head swirled. This was a bad dream. It had to be.

Tom closed the door and walked to the fridge. He pulled out a bottle of beer and twisted the cap off. After taking a long swig, he nodded to David. "Want one?"

"Thanks, no," David said. "I think this is my cue to leave." He turned to Jayne. His eye darkened. "Are you safe with this guy?"

Jayne nodded numbly.

David's eyes narrowed. He studied her face closely as if wanting to make sure she wasn't lying to him. "You're sure?"

She nodded again.

"All right," he said before he kissed her forehead. "I'll have Stu pick you up at seven tomorrow night. We have some unfinished business to attend to."

When the door closed, Jayne struggled to make eye contact with Tom. "I'm sorry," she said softly. "I never meant to hurt you."

Tom shook his head before he tipped the beer to his lips and downed it. Jayne winced when the bottle smacked on the countertop. "I knew something was up when you tossed off our anniversary dinner tonight." He opened the fridge and was about to reach for another bottle of beer. He hesitated and then slammed the fridge door closed. He swung around and glared at her. "You know what pisses me off the most?" He didn't wait for a reply. "The fact that you've strung me along for four months. After what I walked into tonight, I know you never wanted to have sex with me."

"That's not true," Jayne said as she took a few steps toward Tom. "I wanted to have sex with you. It's just..." Her voice trailed off.

"Just what, Jayne?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. The time just never seemed right for us."

"In other words, you had to work up the courage to fuck me but you opened your legs freely for Strand. Why? Is it his money that attracts you?"

"No," Jayne said. "It's not like that at all."

Tom closed the distance between them. He grabbed her shoulders and shook her. "Well then, what was it? I walked in here and saw your tit in his hand. And your cunt was wide open for him. If I hadn't come in when I did, he'd have fucked you!"

Tears pricked her eyes. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I never meant for any of this to happen."

"Right," Tom said sarcastically. He released her and took a step back. His eyes roved over her from head to toe. "You make me sick, Jayne Foxton. I'm sorry I wasted a single moment on you."

Tom dangled the keys to her apartment on the tip of his finger. He threw them across the room in disgust. "Have a nice life," he spat angrily. "I hope you get everything you deserve."

* * * *

David ducked around the corner just as the apartment door swung open and Tom stormed out. He carefully peeked out just in time to see the shithead push through the stairwell door.

He smiled. Jayne was better off without him. And, he had to admit, the demise of their relationship would mean there should be no further interruptions from now on.

David came out of hiding the moment the stairwell door closed. He walked back to his post by Jayne's apartment door and heard her gentle sobs. His heart tightened. He bit back the urge to knock on her door. Doing so would reveal he

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hadn't left the building when he walked out of her apartment earlier.

Concern for Jayne's welfare had kept him from leaving. And when he'd heard Tom's outburst, especially when he'd referred to Jayne's sweet pussy as a cunt, he'd been tempted to burst in and take a few rounds out of the jerk.

But when Jayne assured him she didn't feel threatened by the guy, she meant it. As angry as Tom was, he'd been no threat to her.

David laid his hand on her apartment door. "Cry it out, my sweet fox," he said softly. "Tomorrow, he'll be a distant memory."

Chapter 6

"I don't care about the details," Jacob said sourly. "Is Davey going to be at my birthday party or not?"

Jesus! You miserable old bastard.

Jayne wanted to jump across the large oak desk and wrap her fingers around the old man's throat.

"I don't know," she said, her voice tight with anger. She'd left out the ugly details but was in the middle of telling him how Tom had dumped her when he came into her apartment to find David there when Jacob cut her off.

"Well, what did Davey say?" he asked impatiently.

"He said we'd talk about it tonight," Jayne supplied.

"Good," Jacob said. "So your boyfriend didn't screw things up. That's good."

Jayne took a deep breath. "My *former* boyfriend," she corrected. "Didn't you hear me when I said Tom ended the relationship?"

"Yes, yes." Jacob waved a hand in dismissal. "You're better off without him."

Jayne bit back another lump of anger welling her in throat. "Excuse me, Mr. Strand," she said tightly. "You've never even met Tom. How can you judge him?"

"Jaynie," Jacob said as he reached into a drawer and pulled out a cigar. "You said you were dating him for four months but this is the first time I've heard of him. He couldn't have had much of an impact on your life if you've never even mentioned him before now."

"When have I ever discussed my private life with you?" Jayne countered.

Jacob lit his cigar. He inhaled deeply and blew the smoke toward the ceiling. "You never have," he conceded. "But you've never had the healthy pink glow of a woman who'd been thoroughly loved either. If you've been dating that guy for four months, why haven't you ever had that glow?"

Good point. Why indeed?

No one had ever affected her like David did. It was more than physical. David seemed to touch her spirit, as though he could see right into her soul.

Jayne swallowed the lump in her throat. "Can we change the subject?"

Jacob nodded. "Of course," he said. "What are you going to wear for your date with Davey tonight? Something revealing, I hope."

Oh Lord.

* * * *

"Miss Foxtan?" Stu couldn't hide the shock on his face as Jayne pushed passed him and climbed into the back seat of the limousine.

"Yeah," she said as she settled into the seat.

Stu cast a concerned gaze over her. "Are you sure you don't want to, uhm," he hesitated briefly and then went on, "change before I take you to see Mr. Strand?"

Jayne frowned. "Why?" she asked blithely. "Don't I look good enough for the great David Strand?"

"It's not that, Ms. Foxton, it's just..." Stu's gaze swept over her from head to toe.

Jayne raised an eyebrow. "Yes?"

Stu let out a long breath as his face returned to its usual impartial expression. "Nothing, Ms. Foxton."

Jayne snickered softly as Stu closed the door. She knew darn well why David's chauffeur was hesitant about her state of dress. The first time she met David, she was made up into something she wasn't, something his grandfather thought might attract David. Jayne was certain when he saw her again, wearing her conservative work clothes, he'd see her as the Plain Jayne she was comfortable being. Clearly, that hadn't worked either. In fact, their encounter had changed the course of her life.

So, what was left?

Even though Jacob wanted her to go through another makeover, Jayne balked. And since David didn't seem to notice her plain, professional clothes, she knew she had only one angle left ... to let him see her at her worst. Her very worst.

As Stu pulled the limo away from the curb and merged into traffic, Jayne gazed down at herself. She snickered. The look on Stu's face said it all. She was not suitable for David Strand. *Good.*

That was exactly what she was going for when she decided to wear the oversized lime green sweatshirt and faded grey jogging pants. She'd had to go digging deep into her closet to find the worn-out pair of running shoes to complete the outfit.

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Jayne leaned back in the plush seat and gazed out the window. She felt completely satisfied that she'd done the right thing. Jacob was only concerned about how she'd lure David to his birthday party and David was only trying to get screwed.

Why should she make an effort to please either one of them? David had already said he'd attend his grandfather's party if he got what he wanted. And, whether he'd want her now, in all her realistic glory, was a choice he'd have to make.

And, Jacob? To hell with him. She was sick of being his patsy. If he insisted she help mend whatever fences he'd damaged in the past, he'd have to accept the fact that Jayne would do it on her own terms.

From now on, Jayne was going to live her life to suit herself. Jacob had pushed her into buying David at the auction and David had gone on to wreak havoc in her life. Tom was gone and so was just about everything else in her carefully constructed, uncomplicated life.

She had nothing left to lose. So why pretend she did? Jayne was under no illusions. David's interest in her had nothing to do with who she was. And why would it? She was, in essence, a nobody. At least she was when it came to a man like David Strand.

* * * *

The moment Stu escorted her into David's penthouse apartment, her senses went into overload. Other than the gas fireplace and a few lit candles, the apartment was in complete darkness. She suddenly felt as though she was a martyr

delivered to a hungry lion. David was nowhere in sight but she fully expected he'd appear quickly and set about devouring her.

"Good evening, Ms. Foxton," Stu studiously said as he turned to the door.

"You're leaving?" Jayne's voice squeaked in what must have sounded like a mouse.

Stu's bushy eyebrows rose. "Of course," he said. "Is there something more you require?"

"No, Stu, nothing more is required." Jayne's spine tingled at the sound of David's voice from somewhere deep in the darkness.

Stu nodded and pulled the door closed before Jayne could form a protest. She'd have begged him to stay, to keep watch over her if only David's voice hadn't taken her breath away.

Jayne twisted and looked toward the darkened room. Even though she couldn't see him, she felt his presence. Every fiber of her being was charged with his energy.

David stepped out of the shadows and moved toward the low light by the gas fireplace. Dressed casually in a white cotton t-shirt and form-fitting blue jeans, he looked dangerously sexy.

Jayne swallowed a lump in her throat as she mentally tried to stamp down her body's reaction to him. She'd become painfully aware of the fact she'd been left wanting more last night. As she stood rooted in place by the closed door, his spicy scent filled her senses, feeding her need for him.

David waved his hand casually as he moved toward the sofa nestled near the fire. "Join me."

Her feet moved forward in an unconscious need to be near him. She hesitated, peering at David apprehensively. "This isn't right," she said, her words thick with angst.

David's chest vibrated as he chuckled softly. "If you were certain of that, you wouldn't have come," he said. He sat on the sofa and patted the seat beside him.

Jayne shivered as she peered at David. "I didn't feel that I had a choice," she said. "And now that I'm here, I think—"

"Don't think, Jayne," David's smooth, hypnotic voice cut into her thoughts. "Just come here."

Jayne didn't want to think; she didn't want to consider the repercussions of what would come soon after she'd managed to bring David to his grandfather. She knew in her heart David was toying with her. And yet, her body ached for his touch and her mind hummed with the possibility of his hands on her again.

As she stepped closer, her eyes leveled on his. He looked so intense, his jaw set firm, his dark eyes blazing in the soft light. Didn't he notice what she was wearing? Didn't he see once and for all that she was from a completely different world?

* * * *

David felt his body harden with need as she took tentative steps toward him. The washed-out oversized sweatshirt couldn't hide her sweet, firm breasts. His mouth went dry as his eyes focused on the firm peaks jutting forward beneath the threadbare fabric. And good God, the faded jogging pants, worn at the knees, fit her body snugly. It seemed as

though her hips might burst from them at any moment. Her long copper hair was pulled back into a hastily knotted ponytail. Several strands hung loosely around her heart-shaped face.

David watched as Jayne's unpainted lips trembled. She was terrified even though she made a valiant attempt to hide it. She stopped in front of him, her eyes on his face as she placed her hands on her hips in what must have been meant as a defiant gesture. Completely devoid of makeup, her skin gleamed like ivory.

"How do you like me now?" she asked, her eyes struggling to stay focused on him. "I'm not exactly what you expected tonight."

David smiled. Nope, in fact, she was a lot more than he'd expected. His body tightened in all the right places in supreme awareness. As he gazed up at her, he knew something he'd never understood before. All the women he'd ever known sexually would do anything to please him. They'd appear at their best, always hoping he wouldn't see what was hidden beneath the layers of makeup and designer clothes.

Jayne was a breath of fresh air. In spite of the fact she was nervous, she'd insisted he see her as she was, the person she really was, not a made up version of what she thought he'd want to see. The uncertainty in her eyes drew him further into her realm.

He suspected she wanted him to turn her away, to declare her unsuitable for what she thought was his elaborate taste in women. Yet all she'd done was whet his appetite, make him want her more than he'd ever wanted anyone.

David cocked his head to one side as he looked at her. She was a beautiful woman. Why did she insist on hiding herself? How could she not know how incredibly sexy she was?

He held out his hand. "Come here, Jaynie."

As she gazed at him, several emotions, from fear to desire, coursed over her face. Her hands fell away from her hips though she did not reach out to take his hand. Her eyes darkened in confusion but she didn't say a word.

No wonder he was attracted to Jayne. She was a challenge. He'd never had to conquer a woman before; he'd never had to persuade them into his bed.

David relaxed knowing he finally understood why his grandfather's personal assistant was so damn attractive to him. It wasn't her so much as it was the game. *Thank God!* He wasn't losing his touch after all. He wanted her because she was hesitant, perhaps even afraid of him.

Jayne shook her head slowly. "I don't understand why you want me," she said softly. "Doesn't it bother you that the only reason I'm here is to bring you closer to your grandfather?"

"Is that the only reason you're here, Jaynie?" His hand dropped. "I understand your loyalty to the old man but I don't believe you came here tonight with him in mind."

Jayne's eyes darkened. She stood erect, ramrod straight as her eyes impaled him. "I happen to care about Jacob," she said. "How sad is it that I'm reduced to whoring myself to make you see how much he loves you?"

Fury rose like bile in his throat as he flew off the couch and closed the distance between them. "Love?" he said angrily. "My grandfather loves me? Is that what you're saying?"

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Jayne took a step back yet held her chin high and didn't blink once. "Yes," she said, her voice a little shaky but nonetheless certain. "That's exactly what I'm saying."

David wanted to shake her. She knew nothing about his relationship with his grandfather. Nothing. Who was she to judge him? If she knew the truth, how his grandfather had shattered him when he was no more than a kid, maybe she wouldn't be so bent on helping the old bastard.

* * * *

Jayne knew she'd bitten off more than she could chew the moment David leapt from the couch. His dark eyes burned as he glared down at her. And yet her body responded to his fury in the most erotic way. Her core moistened, her nipples pebbled, her entire body sizzled with heated passion.

She stood her ground ... well, sort of. His rapid movements startled her into taking a step back. But she held his gaze, determined he not see just how much he affected her.

His hot breath washed over her as his spicy scent filled her nostrils. She desperately tried to hold her ground, not to cower under his steely gaze.

"So you think I'm the one who's being an asshole?" he said.

Jayne swallowed hard. *In for a penny, in for a pound.* "Yes," she replied. "I think whatever the problem you have with your grandfather should be set aside. He's an old man; he's dying and he needs you."

"You don't know what happened, do you?"

"I don't need to know anything more than I do right now. You, David Strand, are acting like a spoiled child."

David's face darkened even more as his body stiffened at her remark. "Are you sure you don't want to retract that statement?" His voice was ominous. No doubt there would be a price to pay if she didn't.

Jayne shivered in fear ... and anticipation. "I'm sure," she said with as much confidence as she could muster. "I call it as I see it." Where the courage had come from, she'd never know, but she pointed a finger and jabbed it into his rock-hard chest. "You're being a jerk."

David looked down at the finger on his chest. He brows lifted, his eyes widened and his mouth pulled back into a smile. He shook his head lightly as he looked at Jayne. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you have balls of steel."

Jayne swallowed hard. As she lowered her hand, he grasped it. Her heart thundered in her chest as he slowly turned her hand in his and ran his thumb over her palm.

"So," he said softly as his mouth dipped to touch her wrist. "What would be the proper punishment? Should I spank you for being insolent?"

When his tongue touched her wrist and made a slow trail up her arm, Jayne struggled to catch her breath. Every fiber of her being centered on her wrist and the sensations David's tongue elicited. Her body quaked in an effort to stand still, to not let David see just his touch affected her.

She struggled to find her voice. "I have to tell you, if you spank me, I might retaliate."

David raised his face and grinned. His eyes blazed. "That just might be a lot of fun," he said before his arms wrapped around her waist and pulled her against his rock-hard body. "Shall we take this discussion to the bedroom?"

Jayne gasped when he lifted her into his arms, one arm around her back, the other scooped under her knees. He carried her into the darkness and nudged a door open. When he put her down, his fingers instantly curled under the hem of her sweatshirt and pulled it over her head. Warm fingers unhooked her bra and quickly pushed her jogging pants and underwear off her hips. She kicked her shoes and socks off as she stepped out of her pants.

An instant later, she felt cold. She couldn't see him but knew he'd stepped away from her. She blinked in the dark. "David?"

"I'm right here," he said. The room was suddenly illuminated with the soft glow of a lamp by the bed. "I wanted to shed a little light on the situation," he said as she squinted against the glow.

As her eyes adjusted to the light, she felt completely exposed. One arm covered her breasts while her other hand splayed over her core. "I think I liked it better when it was dark," she said nervously as she gazed at him.

David slowly approached her, a lopsided grin on his face. "Don't be shy, my little fox," he said. "I want to see you, all of you." His hand gently pulled her arm away from her breasts. His eyes darkened with lust as he gazed down at them. His smile broadened. "Very nice," he whispered.

"Don't tease me," Jayne said. "I know what I look like naked. I look at this body every day."

David frowned. "Maybe that's your problem," he said. "Maybe you need to see it with a fresh set of eyes ... like mine, for instance."

Jayne laughed sarcastically. He really knew how to lay it on thick. All right. Since it seemed he was determined to screw her tonight, there wasn't much point in trying to hide what little she had to offer. She screwed up what little courage she had and let her hand fall away from her groin. She splayed her arms out wide. "What you see is what you get," she said as she turned in front of him. "Look at my ass," she smacked her hands against it, "flat as a pancake." She turned back to face him. "Look at my breasts," she said as she cupped them, "flatter still." She pointed to the mound of hair between her thighs. "And, honey, I don't know what's going on down there but I'm sure it's no better."

David chuckled as he looked down at her. "You really are something else," he said.

Jayne rolled her eyes. "What I'm trying to tell you is that I'm nothing special. Don't you get it?"

David took a step closer to her and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Jaynie," he said dryly as he pushed her, "shut the hell up."

Jayne shrieked when her knees hit the side of the bed and her torso flopped onto the mattress. The soft satin bedspread felt cool against her heated skin.

She blinked as David quickly shucked out of his clothes. He stood over her for a moment, allowing her gaze to slide over

him. His sinewy chest, smattered with dark curly hair, heaved slightly. Her gaze skittered to his hips and his long strong legs. She couldn't keep her eyes from his penis. It stood at attention, long and proud, pulsing with his need for her.

He moved toward her, pushed his legs between hers as he bent over her. His eyes blazed as he placed his hands on either side of her head. "Do you want me to tell you what I see when I look at you?" He dipped his head and grazed her lips with his. "Or would you rather I show you?"

"Show me."

David's chest vibrated softly as he chuckled. "Good answer," he said before his mouth covered hers.

Jayne gave herself up to the sweet sensations coursing through her body at just the touch of his lips to hers. Her body hummed with the endless possibilities of what was to come.

Forget Plain Jayne. Tonight she was desirable. Tonight she was wanted by the sexiest man she'd ever laid eyes on. Tomorrow, in the light of day, she'd resume her mundane existence. For tonight, just one night, she'd be the person she'd always wanted to be.

David tore his mouth from hers and closed his lips over one ripe nipple. Shock waves slammed through Jayne's body as his hand cupped her breast while he suckled it. His tongue laved her before he sucked it into his mouth. He lifted his head and moved to her other breast while his fingers continued to knead.

Jayne's arms reached up and wrapped around his shoulders. Slowly her hands slid down his back until they

reached his buttocks. His flesh felt so good in her hands, taunt yet pliable, supple but firm. Her fingers gently massaged him.

David ripped his mouth from her breast and licked his way to her neck. "That feels good," he whispered in her ear. "You have sweet fingers." His hands slid down her body to her hips. "Wrap them around my cock."

Jayne's hands left his buttocks and slowly slid over his hips, following his demand. Her fingers gently touched the soft skin of his engorged cock, running from the base to its tip before she wrapped her hand around it. Her eyes snapped open, gazing up at David in awe. His cock felt rock-hard and heavy in her hand, his girth unforgiving as it pulsed against her gentle hold.

The reality of what they were doing slammed into Jayne. He wanted to plant that massive thing ... that ... that ... Godzilla cock inside her. He'd rip her in half. She just knew it.

"Don't worry," David said, as if he could read her mind. "You're not ready yet. When you are, you'll love it."

God, she hoped so. Right now she wasn't sure of anything. "How will I know when I'm ready?" she asked nervously.

David grinned. "Trust me, you'll know."

His mouth closed over hers again as his hands slid over her sensitive thighs. She continued to stroke his penis. If nothing else, perhaps she could give him some relief with her touch.

She sighed when his hands slid over her mound and cupped her. She moaned when his fingers pressed inside and stroked her moist core. David tore his mouth from hers and

raised his head above hers. "I've wanted to taste your pussy since we met," he said as he slowly slid down her body and slipped off the bed.

Jayne gasped when she felt his shoulders brush her thighs as he pushed her legs wider apart. She squeezed her eyes closed when she felt his fingers part the lips of her vagina. "Looks so good," he said, his warm breath fanning her heated core. "So pink and moist and ready for my tongue."

Jayne quivered in anticipation. When she didn't feel him move on her, she opened her eyes and peered at him. His eyes blazed as they focused on her core. Dark and intent, he examined her closely. A tentative finger slid over her slit, pressing against it yet not penetrating. His eyes met hers. He raised an eyebrow in question. "Ready?"

"Do you really need to ask?" Jayne said, her voice raspy with desire.

David laughed softly. "No, I guess not."

Jayne sighed in relief when David's lips closed over her. Relief was soon replaced with ecstasy as he suckled her clitoris. His fingers caressed her slit, each stroke pushing her open, pressing inside just a bit more. Jayne's body convulsed in the sheer pleasure David's mouth and fingers evoked. She raised her hips in an attempt to draw him closer, to urge him to stroke her harder.

As he continued his gentle assault, Jayne bucked her hips against his face in complete frustration. David lifted his face and peered at her. "Easy now," he said softly. "We've got all night."

No, they didn't have all night. What David didn't seem to understand was that Jayne felt as though her body would explode any moment. "Please," she cried.

David smiled. "Please what?"

Jayne's hands slammed on the bed at her sides as she raised her hips. "You know what," she said as she continued to squirm.

"You want me to fuck you?"

"Yes!"

"With my fingers or my cock?"

She'd had enough of his teasing. She rose on her elbows and looked at him scornfully. "I don't care if you use a carrot. Just fuck me!"

David laughed out loud as he crawled up on the bed. He pushed her back against the mattress and kneeled between her thighs. "I think my cock is the better of the three choices," he said as his fingers gripped her hips.

Jayne wrapped her legs around his waist and he pushed the tip of his cock against her slit. He opened her slightly and held himself there for a moment. "There's no going back," he said through clenched teeth. "Once I'm inside you, you belong to me."

He didn't wait for her reply before he pushed forward. She felt herself open for him, felt his long hard shaft slowly slide inside her, pushing against her inner core, forcing her to open to him.

Jayne wasn't a virgin; she'd known a few men in her time. Yet, as David's cock pushed inside her, she felt as though this was her first time. His girth opened her wide; his sheer power

emanating as he filled her. There was no way to hold back even if she wanted to. There was no way to keep even the tiniest bit of her soul from him as his cock took possession of her body. She gave herself to him completely, body and damn it, soul.

His fingers dug into her buttocks as he set a timeless rhythm. His cock slowly slid out of her and then back in, this time reaching further inside her than she thought possible. With every stroke, his shoulders hunched, his buttocks tightened ... and Jayne felt as though the world was spinning around her. Her hips greedily met him with each thrust, her inner core gripping his swollen cock as hard as she could.

"Oh yeah, that's good," David whispered urgently as his hips ground against her body. "Damn!"

He didn't have to tell Jayne what was going on. She knew by the way his body tensed with each thrust that he was having a hard time holding back. She knew he was on the verge ... that he was about to go over the edge without her.

Just as she began to despair, David's hand pressed between them. She cried out when she felt his fingers stroke her clitoris. With every thrust, his fingers pressed, drawing her closer and closer to oblivion. She squeezed her eyes closed, focused on his fingers and his thick, heavy cock in a desperate effort to find release.

David dipped his head and closed his mouth over one of her nipples. When she felt his teeth graze her nipple, she screamed. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders, digging her nails into his heated flesh, as her body gave way to the torrent of release. David's breath hitched as his body

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shuddered against her. Molten hot cum spewed forward, scorching a path inside her.

David collapsed over her, knocking the air from her lungs as she scrambled to catch her breath. His arms wrapped around her and pulled her with him as he rolled to his side.

Jayne blinked at him, her body still quaking. "What the hell was that?"

"That," David said, still gasping for air, "is the way sex is meant to be."

Chapter 7

Jayne woke to find herself on the very edge of the massive bed. One wrong move and she'd land in a heap on the floor. David's hand laid over her back possessively as his body sprawled out over three-quarter's of the bed.

She raised her head and peered at the slumbering figure beside her. Even in sleep, his arm scorched her cool bare back. It would be so easy—too easy—to turn and reach for him, pull him against her for another kick at the proverbial cat.

But as Jayne's slumber ebbed away, her brain went into full throttle. She shouldn't have let him drag her to his bed; she shouldn't have let her body rule her head. And yet, here she was and every muscle in her body ached after having spent the night loving David in a way she'd never known existed. They'd collapsed in sheer exhaustion, only taking enough time to pull back the bed covers and crawl beneath before they both fell asleep.

Their lovemaking had been exquisite. Jayne knew in her heart that she'd never experience anything like it again. Yet, in the light of day, reason had to take precedence.

She rolled off the bed and grabbed her clothes. As she dressed, David moved and opened his eyes. "Good morning," he said.

Her heart lurched as she gazed at him. He looked so damn handsome, so damn sexy. But Jayne knew the light of day would find him thinking with something other than his penis.

"Good morning," she said tersely as she pulled her sweatshirt over her head.

David frowned. "You're not leaving, are you?"

"As a matter of fact," Jayne said as she stepped into her jogging pants, "I am."

"What's the hurry?" he asked, his eyes twinkling with mischief. "I don't think I'm done with you yet."

Jayne shoved her feet into her running shoes. "Oh, but we are done," she said. "At least, we are with this part of the bargain."

David rose on his elbows. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"I lived up to your end of the bargain," she said. "Now it's your turn to live up to mine."

David ran his hand over his eyes and then through his disheveled hair. "Come again?"

Jayne rolled her eyes. "I slept with you. Now you have to come to your grandfather's birthday party."

"Oh, fuck."

Jayne turned and left the bedroom. She didn't want to wait around to hear David lament that she hadn't been that good in bed. His reaction to having to attend the party in exchange didn't sound promising. If he regretted it, it was too damn late.

"Jayne, don't go. We need to talk."

Not a chance! She wasn't about to let him out of the deal they'd made. "There's nothing to talk about. Just be at your grandfather's birthday party on Saturday night," Jayne said as she ran out the door.

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* * * *

"Are you sure Davey's going to be there?"

Jayne sighed as she looked up from the letter Jacob had been dictating. "Yes," she said for the fifth time that morning, "he'll be there."

The old man narrowed his eyes as he examined Jayne's face. "You're sure?"

She slapped her steno pad on the desk in frustration. "Yes, I'm sure. Please, Mr. Strand, can we get back to work?"

Jacob straightened in his chair. "Yes, of course," he said. "Let's get back to work." He cleared his throat. "So where was I?"

Jayne picked the steno pad off the desk and peered at it. "Dear Mr. Solomon, it has come to my attention that you might be interested in buying shares in Strand Enterprises."

"Right," Jacob said. He leaned back in his chair, looking up at the ceiling as he always did when he dictated letters. He took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. "Allow me to outline some of the benefits of being a stockholder."

Jacob suddenly jerked forward, placing his arms on the desk as he leaned forward. "So, on a scale of one to ten, how sure are you that Davey's going to be at the party?"

Jayne blew out an exasperated breath. "Mr. Strand," she began, trying hard to keep her temper in check, "it's clear you are not in the right frame of mind to dictate this letter. Why don't I write it myself and have you okay it later?"

Jacob frowned. "You didn't answer my question."

As she rose from the chair opposite the desk, she replied, "I've answered the question several times already."

"Yes, but not the scale of one to ten question," Jacob said.

Jayne's hand flew to her forehead as she sighed. "All right, on a scale of one to ten, I'll say five."

Jacob's eyes rounded. "You're only half sure he'll be there? That's not good enough. I want a guarantee."

Jayne placed her hands on the desk and leaned over it. "Look," she said through clenched teeth, "I have gone over and above for you. I have done everything you wanted me to do and more." *God, so much more.* "And I've met your grandson's demands. The rest is up to him. If he's honorable, he'll be there."

"Davey had demands?" Jacob's face clouded. "What kind of demands?"

Jayne shook her head. She wasn't about to tell him. And the last thing she needed was to be reminded of just how far she'd gone for the old man. Not because she regretted it but because she wanted to go back, to be in David's arms and make love to him again and again.

"Just know that if he doesn't show, it's not because I didn't make every possible effort." Jayne straightened and squared her shoulders. "Now, if you don't mind, I'm going for lunch. I'll write the letter to Mr. Solomon when I get back."

"Of course," Jacob said.

"Thank you, sir," she said as she turned on her heel.

Just as she reached the office door, Jacob spoke again. "You're a good girl, Jaynie Foxton. I really do appreciate everything you've done."

Her heart skipped a beat. She was being too hard on him. After all, he was very sick. "Thank you, Mr. Strand," she said softly.

When Jayne closed the office door behind her, she threw the steno pad on her desk with force. *Dang the old man anyway. Who the hell used steno pads anymore?* Jacob Strand insisted upon it. And no matter how much she begged for a computer, she continued to work on an old electric typewriter. She supposed she should be glad it wasn't manual.

But, damn it! Jacob insisted on the latest technology when it came to the rest of his company. In fact, it had been said many times that the old man was more up-to-date than most of his competitors. The fact she was still working with outdated office equipment was more about his eccentricities than anything else.

She was sick to death of catering to his every whim. Whether David showed up or not, she'd tender her resignation after Jacob's birthday party.

The party was just a few days away. She could only hope David would live up to his end of the deal.

"Damn it, David," she said softly as she closed her eyes, "be there. Please be there."

Jayne grabbed her purse from beneath her desk and ran for the corridor before Jacob could call on her.

She needed space; she needed time to think. She needed her lunch break.

Chapter 8

Jayne wasn't sure why, but her spine tingled the moment she stepped off the elevator. She tried to shake it off as she walked down the corridor to Jacob's office. Yet the closer she got, the more she felt his presence.

It wasn't that she was psychic. *God, I wish.* In fact, there was a scent lingering in the air that reminded her of David ... spicy, earthy, with a hint of Irish Spring soap.

Jayne tried to shake the feeling as she made her way to Jacob's lavish office space. The odds of David being in the building were so miniscule that she wanted to laugh at the thought.

And yet, as she walked into the reception area, her senses went into overload.

As Jayne approached her desk, she glanced at Jacob's office door. When he was in, the door was always ajar. But it was firmly closed, a sign that her boss had gone for lunch with his old cronies at the local pub.

Jacob's office door would be locked. She was the only other person with a key so she knew there was no reason to check it. And still, her body hummed, her senses sizzled. *He's here.*

Unless he was hiding under her desk, and that seemed unlikely considering his size, there was only one place he could be. She looked at the closed bathroom door.

She sighed heavily. What game was he playing now? There was only one way to find out. She walked to the bathroom door and pulled it open.

"Hi, Jaynie," he said, smiling up at her as he sat on the toilet with an open magazine in his hands.

"David," she whispered urgently, "what the hell are you doing here?"

David's eyes fell back to the magazine in his hands. "Just looking through the *Toronto Financial Digest*," he said matter-of-factly. "This is the latest issue. I haven't gotten it yet."

Jayne rolled her eyes and pulled the bathroom door closed behind her. "I don't mean what are you doing this minute," she said impatiently. "I mean what are you doing here," she pointed to the floor, "in the building?"

"Oh," David said, his eyes twinkling as he tossed the magazine onto the counter. "Lock the door and I'll show you."

"Are you insane?" Jayne hissed. "We're not having sex in my boss's office."

"Don't be ridiculous," he said as he rose. "I wouldn't dream of it. But this isn't his office, is it?" He opened the cabinet above the sink. Jayne winced when he picked out a box of tampons. "Judging by what's in here, I'd say it's your private bathroom."

Jayne grabbed the box out of his hand. She brushed him aside and put the box back into the cabinet. "It's bad enough that you're here at all," she grumbled. "Now you're snooping through my things?"

"I had some time to waste while I was waiting."

Jayne slapped the cabinet door closed and glared at him. When she looked up at him, her breath caught in her throat. Her heart pounded; her body heated. He was toying with her,

playing some kind of game. She should be angry. She should insist he leave.

And yet, as she gazed into those brilliant blue eyes, all she could think about was running her fingers through his unruly blond hair and pulling him to her.

Jayne felt tears of frustration form in her eyes. She loved him, and she hated him. He'd turned her life upside down. Still, she couldn't imagine life without him.

He smiled softly. "The door, Jaynie," he whispered. "Lock it."

Two steps found Jayne at the door. Her hand shook as it hovered over the doorknob. The wise thing to do would be to open the door and run like hell. And yet she couldn't. She twisted the lock and leaned her forehead against the cool door.

"God help me," she moaned. "I'm so weak."

David chuckled softly as his hands closed over her shoulders and turned her to face him. "So am I," he said. "Why else would I be here?" When she didn't reply, he answered his own question. "I need you too, Jaynie, more than I've ever needed anyone in my life."

Jayne didn't have time to consider his words before her mind turned into complete mush. His hands were all over her body, touching, kneading and coaxing her into submission. As if he had to. The moment his hands closed over her shoulders, she was lost.

Adrenaline pumped through her body as David lifted her onto the counter. Her fingers went to his belt and quickly pulled it open. She heard the metallic *clink* as gravity pulled

both his belt and his jeans to the floor at his feet. He quickly pushed his briefs down. She felt, rather than saw, his rock-hard penis press against her abdomen as David's fingers quickly unbuttoned her blouse.

David pushed her bra over her breasts. "If I had my way," he said through clenched teeth, "you'd never wear a fucking bra again."

Jayne gasped when his mouth swooped and captured an erect nipple as his hands slid beneath her skirt and up her nylon-clad thighs. He groaned when his fingers met the barrier of the crotch of her pantyhose.

Time was of the essence, they both knew that, and David made no comment as he slid his hands up to her waist and pulled both her panties and pantyhose down. She lifted her hips as he yanked them from beneath her and pulled them off her legs.

She laughed when he pulled her nylons over her shoes. He made frantic movements in an effort to free her feet. Both shoes and nylons smacked against the bathroom door when he finally freed her.

Jayne sighed with relief when he finally moved back between her thighs. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pulled her to him as his mouth covered hers.

She gasped when his fingers settled over her moist core. As his fingers parted the lips of her pussy and slid over the moist opening, she moaned, throwing her head back.

"Do you want my fingers inside you?" David asked as his lips grazed her throat.

"You know I do," she whispered, arching her back in an effort to receive him.

"Sweet Jaynie," he said softly. "How you make me crazy."

The words barely registered in her head before she felt her body open to his fingers. First one, then two and then—*oh God!*—three fingers, slipped inside her. Jayne's breath came in short gasps as his fingers slid in and out of her, setting a rhythm older than time.

Jayne's hands flew to his erection, slowly slipping over the smooth, hard shaft. When her fingers tightened over him, David moaned softly and pulled away from her. "Be careful, honey," he said through clenched teeth. "You don't want to bite off more than you can chew."

Jayne peered up at him. She wiggled and pushed her thighs together, forcing his fingers out of her. "I wasn't thinking of biting at all," she said. "But I'd love to taste you."

She pushed off the counter and slid to her knees in front of him. She cupped his penis in her hands and stared at it. It pulsed against her fingers, exuding its sheer power. A power she so wanted to possess again and again.

"Jaynie." David's guttural voice made her gaze up at him. It was a warning and she knew it. She was playing with fire.

With her fingers wrapped around his girth, she rested her chin against the tip of his cock as she gazed up at him. "Yes?" She gave him her most innocent gaze. If he had a problem with what she wanted to do, he'd have to spell it out to her in no uncertain terms. "Is something wrong?"

David sighed, his eyes blazed. "No. Nothing's wrong," he replied.

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Jayne snickered softly as she turned her attention back to his cock. His body jerked when she touched her tongue to the tip. Encouraged, Jayne closed her lips over it, gently slipping over the base and sliding just over its head. Her lips gently massaged the tip of his cock, reveling at the soft layer of skin over his rock hardness.

David's fingers dug into her hair, pulling it away from her face as his fingers grazed her lips. "Jesus, Jaynie," he said, his voice coming in raspy gasps, "don't tease. Take me in your mouth."

She needed no more encouragement. One hand fell away from his cock as the other gripped it tightly and slid down the shaft. Her mouth opened wide, taking in as much of him as she could. When her teeth grazed the sensitive skin as she pulled back, he moaned. Her mind swam. She'd never done this for any man before and yet instinct seemed to drive her forward. Her free hand opened over his balls, wrapping her fingers around each orb and massaging as her mouth and fingers continued to work his cock.

David's body jerked again; his body went rigid. Then his fingers curled in her hair and pulled. If she'd resisted, it would have hurt but instinct told her he couldn't take much more. In a final attempt, her tongue ran over his abdomen and then his chest as he pulled her up to him.

As he gazed down at her, he placed his hands on either side of her face. He looked like a man possessed, his nostrils flared, his mouth hung open to reveal gritted teeth, his eyes were a deep, reflecting cobalt.

Jayne's body reacted with sheer need. She wanted him to feed on her, to take what he wanted and leave her depleted. The hunger she felt was like nothing she'd ever known in her life. For the first time in her carefully planned life, she didn't care what scattering debris would be left for her to pick up after. For the first time, only the moment mattered. She didn't want to look beyond the need she felt for David right this minute.

"I wanted to please you," David said as he picked her up and perched her on the counter. "I wanted to give you everything you need." He pushed his legs between her thighs; his iron-hard cock pressing against her core. "But you got away on me."

Jayne wiggled in an attempt to bring their connection closer together. "I wanted to taste you," she said breathlessly.

"And I wanted to taste you," David said. "But I'm too damn hot to wait now."

With that, he pulled her legs around his hips and bucked forward. Jaynie felt herself fall back against the mirror over the counter as his body thrust into her. Each inch he moved inside her was exquisite ... each centimeter made her gasp in sheer, unadulterated ecstasy. David's cock was surely bigger and harder than it had ever been before. Her body went weak when he filled her completely; her hands fell to her sides; she flung her head back. She felt as though his cock had sliced her body into two incredibly salacious pieces. It wasn't until he began to withdraw that she found the strength to grip his hips in an attempt to keep him in place.

David laughed softly; his chest vibrated against her erect nipples, as he overpowered her and pulled his molten-hot shaft out of her. Had it not been for his immediate return, this time harder, more demanding, she would have cried out.

He set a pace she'd have been unable to keep if it hadn't been for his fingers curling under her butt and pulling her forward when he thrust into her. With David doing the work, all Jayne had to do was enjoy the ride. Unfortunately, with each thrust her body grew more and more anxious. Her fingers curled into his shoulders as she leaned forward, accepting each and every blow his hips delivered. With every strike, his cock seemed to delve deeper, touching her deep in her soul.

When David pulled away slightly and closed his mouth over one nipple, Jayne knew she was lost. Every fiber of her being was centered on his cock inside her and the touch of his mouth suckling her. She felt what seemed like no more than a tingle rise from her butt and, as it centered in her stomach, it rose to monstrous proportions, fairly ripping her apart as she gasped for release. Her body shuddered as the need built.

David ripped his mouth from her breast. "You're coming," he said knowingly.

Jayne gasped. "Yes," she said. "I can't help it."

"Good," David said through clenched teeth as his hips slammed against her again. "Give it to me, Jaynie. Give me all you've got."

He didn't have to ask twice. Jayne wanted to scream and quelled the urge by shoving a hand over her mouth as her body gave in to a tidal wave of sensations. Her mind spiraled

when she felt David's last thrust against her. This time he held firm deep inside her as his body exploded. Jayne opened her eyes to see his head bent low, his body shuddering as the orgasm wracked his body.

As they both struggled to catch their breath, Jayne was acutely aware of one thing. The end was near.

As she gazed at David, she knew the love she felt in her heart could not be voiced. There was only one thing that mattered, only one thing he'd understand.

She jumped off the counter and reached for her clothes. As she pushed her arms into her blouse, she kept her gaze focused on the door. "Will you be there?"

When David didn't reply, she turned to look at him. He leaned against the counter, his eyes bright and, somehow, sad. "David?"

"There's something you need to know," he said.

Jayne halted, her heart contracting at his words. She stared at him, unsure whether to ask him to tell her or get the heck out of the room. Before she'd made her decision, he began to talk.

"I loved my grandfather very much once. I don't want you to think I dumped him for no good reason."

"I never thought that," Jayne replied.

David smiled sadly. "Didn't you?"

Jayne tore her eyes from his face and concentrated on her fingers as they buttoned her blouse. "I've heard the rumors," she said, "but I don't know what happened. Jacob never told me."

"Then I'll tell you," David said. "You have the right to know the truth."

Jayne stepped into her skirt and zipped it up. She ran her fingers over the creases anxiously. "It's none of my business," she said softly.

David moved forward and gripped her shoulders. Startled, she looked up at him. She saw raw pain in his eyes as he spoke. "It's very much your business," he said. "You have every right to know."

Jayne took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She lifted her chin as she braced herself. "All right," she said. "Tell me what happened."

David relaxed slightly. His hands fell away from her but his eyes never left her face. "My father was the apple of my grandfather's eye," he began. "Jacob was never very fond of my mother but he was thrilled when their union produced a son."

Jayne leaned against the locked bathroom door as David continued. "My parents spoiled me. Jacob hated it. He always complained that they indulged me too much. For my eighteenth birthday, they gave me a Jaguar." David shook his head slowly. "God, I loved that car. It never occurred to me that I hadn't earned it. My family was rich so I figured I had it coming. I was a selfish little shit."

When Jayne would have responded, David splayed his hands. "Just let me tell you everything," he said. Jayne fell quiet and he continued, "The night after my eighteenth birthday, I went to a party and had way too much to drink. I knew I couldn't drive. I called my father and asked him to

come pick me up. It was raining heavily and I guess my mother didn't want Dad to head out in the middle of the night alone. She went with him. As my parents came to get me, their car was hit head on by a tractor-trailer."

Jayne's hand flew to her chest as tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, David."

He ignored her as he continued. "My mother was killed instantly but my father clung to life for a couple hours. It was too late when I got to the hospital. He was already dead."

Tears streamed down Jayne's cheeks. "I'm so sorry."

"When I got to the ER, I saw my grandfather standing there. I ran up to him, hoping he'd tell me my parents were okay. He told me they were both dead. When I wrapped my arms around my grandfather, he pushed me away. He told me it was my fault my parents were dead. He pointed to the room where my father lay and said it should have been me in there, not his son."

Jayne wrapped her arms around David. "You couldn't have known," she said between sobs. "Jacob was wrong."

Firm hands closed on her waist and pulled her away from him. His eyes sparked with anger. "Don't get me wrong, Jayne, I don't want your sympathy," he said. "I just want you to know why I walked away."

Jayne was shocked by David's cold words. She took a step back, unsure of what to say. "I understand," she finally said.

David reached for his pants and quickly pulled them up. "Good," he said.

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Jayne felt cold all over. He'd wanted her to hear his side of the story, why he and Jacob were estranged, but he didn't care what she thought or how she felt about it.

"David, will you be at your grandfather's birthday party?"

David looked at her. Suddenly the sorrow she'd seen in his eyes was gone. "Only if you agree to fuck me like that again."

Jayne's heart plummeted to her toes. "What?"

"I'll attend the party if you agree to escape with me and find the best place to fuck again." He reached for his pants. "Otherwise, no, I won't be there."

"That's not fair!" Jayne cried. "I lived up to your end of the bargain. I've had sex with you twice now. You have to attend Jacob's party."

David zipped his pants up and pushed his arms into his shirt. After he pulled it over his head, he reached out and touched his fingers to Jayne's chin. "My sweet little fox," he said as he smiled, "you have so much to learn about business."

He tucked his shirt into his pants and unlocked the bathroom door. Before she could utter a word, he planted a firm kiss on her lips. "You should have gotten our deal in writing."

Jayne blinked, her mind whirled. As she sputtered, trying to find something to say, David pulled the bathroom door open. He glanced back at her once last time. "Wear something sexy." He turned to leave and then thought of something else. "No panties, no bra." He wagged his finger at her. "Don't cross me, Jaynie. Otherwise, the deal's off."

Chapter 9

Jayne gazed around the Hotel Gregoire grand ballroom. How appropriate that game she'd been playing with Jacob and David should come to an end in the very place it began. At least she understood the friction between grandfather and grandson. She'd thought of little else since she'd last seen David.

As promised, the hotel staff had pulled out all the stops to make Jacob Strand's eightieth birthday party the event of the year. Tastefully decorated in metallic blue, silver and gold tones, the entire ballroom shone with perfection. Each large round table was covered in gold tablecloths and the eight chairs surrounding them were adorned with silver and finished with gilded blue bows. The head table, where Jacob would sit along with the people closest to him, herself included, was adorned with bouquets of bright red roses and tall, crystal candlesticks filled with both gold and silver candles.

Jayne walked along the back of the head table, checking the place cards as she went. Jacob had insisted every single member of his senior staff be included at the head table. Jayne was to sit to his right. David, his grandson and only living relative, would sit to his left.

Jayne peered at the name card to the left of Jacob's place of honor.

Had he been toying with her when he made his final demands? She wasn't sure what she hoped. Plain Jayne, the person she'd been before she met David, was anxious to

return to her mundane, uncomplicated life. But Jaynie, David's *little fox*, hoped he'd be there and was anxious to figure out just where they'd go to make love.

Jayne tried to shift the bodice of her black strapless dress. Not wearing a bra was going to drive her crazy. Not to mention the wedgie that occurred every damn time she sat down. She wasn't sure which was worse, going without a bra or not wearing panties.

When a member of the kitchen staff burst through the double doors with the ornately decorated seven-layer cake on a trolley, all thoughts of her discomfort disappeared. She waved her hands anxiously. "No," she cried. "The cake can't be brought in until ten this evening. Take it back to the kitchen at once!"

The staff member glowered as he turned about and wheeled the cake back into the kitchen. Jayne sighed and sat on the closest chair. She was immediately reminded of the fact she wasn't wearing underwear.

"Damn it, David Strand," she whispered, "you better be here."

* * * *

When David walked into Hotel Gregoire, he headed straight for the front desk. He gazed at the man behind the counter. "What room is Jacob Strand in?" he demanded.

"I'm sorry, sir," the small man replied in a nasally tone, "we've been instructed not to give out that information."

"I'm his grandson," David supplied.

Dim grey eyes looked him up and down. "I'm sure you are," he said snootily. "I happen to be Mr. Strand's great-aunt."

David wanted to fly across the desk and grab the little worm by his high-top collared uniform. Instead, he took a deep, steadying breath and made a point of looking at the man's name tag. "Matthew," he began, "my grandfather is expecting me. Surely it's no imposition for you to call his room to tell him I'm here."

Clearly the man resented it but, as requested, he picked up the phone and dialed Jacob's room. "Mr. Strand," he said. "I have someone here claiming to be your grandson." There was a short hesitation before Matthew's face colored lightly. "Yes, Mr. Strand, right away."

David raised an eyebrow as Matthew hung up. "Room 960," Matthew said.

David reached across the desk and flicked his finger over the man's name tag. "Thank you," he said sarcastically.

As David rode the elevator to the ninth floor, his body tensed. He was no more ready to face his grandfather now than he had been when he was a teen. Their last moments together still stung.

David had taken what he'd learned from his grandfather as a kid and turned his knowledge into a million dollar empire. David had done well; people analyzed his every financial move, not only admiring his savvy but were quick to follow his lead.

And women sought him out at every turn. Lonely was not a word in David's vocabulary. In fact, he had to duck the women in his life if he wanted time alone.

So, he asked himself for the millionth time, why was he here? Why makes amends with a man he had no respect for?

As the elevator stopped on the ninth floor and the door slid open, David envisioned Jaynie's face. She was the only genuine woman he'd met in his life and while there was little chance they'd find a future together, he was determined not to let her down.

David marched down the hall to his grandfather's suite and pounded on the door.

"Davey!" the old man said as he pulled the door open. "I'm so glad you're here. Come in."

"I won't be here long," David said through clenched teeth. "There are only two things I want to know. Why did you drag someone as sweet and innocent as Jaynie into this mess? And why did you tell her you're dying?"

The old man looked a lot more fragile than he had the last time David had seen him. His heart lurched as the door closed behind him and Jacob limped to the lavish leather sofa. "Sit down, Davey," he said. "I'll tell you everything you want to know. And," the old man's eyes sparkled, "I just might tell you some things you don't want to know."

David shook his head. "I doubt that. But I expect you'll tell me things Jaynie doesn't want to know."

Tired eyes gazed back at him. "You just might be right."

* * * *

As yet another old crony lumbered up to the microphone to share humorous anecdotes about Jacob Strand, Jayne's gaze slid to the empty seat on the other side of her boss. They were well into the second hour of Jacob's eightieth birthday party yet David had not shown up.

Jayne was grateful Jacob had not brought his grandson's name up even once during the cocktail hour, nor when they took their seats at the head table. If ever there was a time the old man would ask, she'd have thought it would be when he noticed the empty seat beside him ... the one he'd insisted be reserved for his estranged grandson.

As time wore on, Jayne's hopes dwindled. David had no intention of showing up at all. He'd been playing her all along.

And that's why I hate the old bastard!

Truer words were never spoken. It wasn't until the crowd burst into applause that she realized she hadn't thought the words; they were the last of the latest speaker's humorous tribute to Jacob. Jayne quickly followed suit when everyone in the room, including the head table, stood and applauded even louder. She looked down at Jacob, seeing the smug, all-too-satisfied look on his face and knew they had just moved from the dinner speeches to the party. She cleared her throat as she approached the podium. "And now, we'll ask you to join Mr. Strand in welcoming the *Five Star Orchestra*."

The band, which had taken Jayne months to secure, immediately struck up a waltz and couples quickly moved to the dance floor to sway to the music.

Jayne sighed. Other than making sure the kitchen staff brought the cake out on time and then set out the midnight

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meal, her job was done. Everything had gone to plan ... well almost everything. The one thing she'd worked hardest on hadn't come to fruition. David hadn't come.

Jacob rose from the table and grasped her hand. He smiled at her fondly as he patted her hand. "You did a fine job, Jaynie," he said. "A very fine job."

"I wish that were true," she replied, trying to ignore the bitter disappointment that seeped into her soul. "I failed at the one thing that mattered most."

"Did you?" The old man smiled as he released her hand. "Why don't you get some night air?" he suggested. "You look like you could use it."

As Jacob quickly disappeared into the throngs of well-wishers, Jayne pressed her hands against her cheeks. They were heated and no doubt, flushed. Getting some fresh air sounded like a good idea.

It took much longer than she'd expected to make her way across the ballroom to the terrace doors. People greeted her with every step she took, all offering congratulations on such a fine evening. Some, like Mrs. Cathcart, the nosey witch, asked why the seat to Jacob's left remained empty during the dinner. Was it true it had been held open for David Strand? Was it true Jacob hoped to make amends with his grandson? If so, why hadn't he shown up?

Jayne never stopped walking toward the terrace as she gave a noncommittal reply. "I don't know what Jacob hoped for."

She wasn't lying. She'd expected the old man to chastise her after the weeks he'd spent grooming her to woo his

grandson. Why he wasn't disappointed in her was something she hadn't figured out yet.

Jayne opened the terrace doors and walked through. It was a cool night yet her heated skin relished it. With the doors closed behind her, the music and sounds of the guests quickly muted.

Sweet sanctuary.

Jayne took a deep breath and walked across to the railing; the only sound she could hear was the ticking of her high heels on the wooden floor. She braced her hands on the railing and tilted her head back, taking in a long cleansing breath. The cool night air tickled her nostrils yet felt so good against her clammy skin.

"Jaynie."

Jayne's body went rigid. Had she heard someone calling her name or had the night wind caused the sound? Her ears pricked, and her hands tightened on the rail. Surely she hadn't heard her name.

The sound floated over her again. "Jaynie." This time there was no mistaking the soft, gravelly voice. *David.*

Jayne whirled around and peered into the shadows. How appropriate was this? David had done a lot of big talking in the past three weeks but now he hid in the shadows, afraid to be seen. Why hadn't she seen this side of him long ago?

"Get out of the shrubs, you coward," Jaynie said as her gaze fell on the far corner of the terrace.

David stepped from behind the plants and walked toward her. She glared at him. "You didn't live up to your part of the bargain," she said angrily.

David smiled down at her. "I most certainly did." His eyes roved over her little black dress. "Did you leave the panties at home?"

"I'm not about to tell you," Jaynie spat. "Just how do you think you lived up to your end of the bargain? Jacob reserved a seat for you and you weren't in it."

"He wasn't expecting me to sit there," David said. "We worked out our differences hours before the party. Now about those panties."

When David took a step toward her, Jaynie took a step away. "Forget my panties," she said angrily. "My mission was to bring you to my boss' birthday party and I failed."

David chuckled. "Jacob would be thrilled to know just how literally you take your job." He took a step toward her. "You didn't fail."

When Jayne would have taken another step away from him, David quickly moved forward and wrapped his arms around her waist.

"No!" Jayne cried. "Don't you get it? The game's over."

David frowned as she looked down at her. "It was never a game. I want you now just as much as I always did," he said softly.

As his mouth crushed hers, she so wanted to believe what he'd said. She pushed all disbelief from her mind as she gave herself up to his scorching touch.

Jaynie tore her lips from his. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she gazed up at him. "I don't know what you want from me," she whispered.

"Yes, you do," David said. "You know exactly what I want."

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Jayne gasped when David lifted her off her feet and carried her to the shadows he'd come from. For a moment, she imagined she'd been absconded by Dracula, and taken into the shadows so no one would see what he was about to do.

When she felt the cool brick wall as he pulled her dress up over her thighs, Jayne knew this was no fantasy, in fact, the fingers she felt press against her core were very real.

"You're so ready for me," David said as his hand flew to the fly of his pants. "You've been waiting for me all night."

Jayne wanted to tell him how wrong he was, she wanted to tell him that she didn't need him. But the moment he unleashed his iron-hard cock and it pressed between her thighs, she knew she was lost. For the life of her, she'd never get enough of him. She wrapped her legs around his waist, urging him closer to her, begging to be filled again.

She cried out when David answered her wish, ramming his cock into her with a force that almost took her breath away. Together they set an age-old rhythm. Her pussy tensed when he drove into her, relaxed when he pulled out and gripped his girth again when he thrust back into her.

With each stroke, Jayne's body grappled to accept him; surely he was bigger than ever before. Yet, when he pulled his throbbing cock out, her body cried out with need to be filled again.

"Fox," David whispered. "My little fox. Tell me you'll never know another lover."

Jayne's head tilted back against the cool bricks of the building as she gave herself up to David completely. Her teeth gritted against the pain her buttocks felt each time he drove

into her. And yet, it was welcome, the bricks were cool in contrast to the heat rising within her. She opened her mouth in an effort to voice her thoughts but nothing came out.

David's groin slammed against her again and again, taking everything she had, leaving no room for her to save even her soul. And he demanded more.

"Jaynie!" His body was tensing, his orgasm near and his touch would take her there soon too. "Tell me you'll never know another lover. I'm the only one you'll ever want, you'll ever need."

"Yes!" she cried out. "Yes, you're the only man who will ever touch me this way. I love you, David! I love you so much!"

With that, the world around them exploded. David shouted his release as Jayne's world spiraled and shattered into a million stars around her. Her body convulsed as David's molten hot cum filled her.

She gritted her teeth when her bare butt scraped against the brick wall as David slowly let her down, her feet finally hitting the wooden floor. Both his hands braced on the wall over her head as he struggled to catch his breath.

Jayne waited patiently, pulled her dress back down over her hips and, in an effort to help, even pulled David's pants up. He laughed when she delicately tucked his now limp penis behind the fly and pulled the zipper up.

"Now what?" she said as she looked up at him.

David grinned. "Now we face good ol' Grandpa."

Chapter 10

"Are you sure you want to face your grandfather?"

David chuckled as he grasped her hand and pulled her toward the terrace doors. "Yeah, I'm sure."

Jaynie pried her hand out of his grip and took a step back. "Well, I'm not sure," she said.

David peered down at her. She never looked as beautiful as she did at that moment. Her eyes deepened to a sea-green, her stance rigid with uncertainty and her cheeks glowed with the knowledge she'd been thoroughly loved. David's heart filled to the brim with love for her. He ached to drag her away from his grandfather's party and show her just how much she meant to him, just how much he loved her.

But he had a mission ... they had a mission. He had to take Jaynie with him to face his grandfather. She needed to hear what the old man had to say. David knew he was taking a big chance. He wasn't prepared to lose his little fox but the truth just might drive her away. It was a chance he had to take. Jaynie's loyalty, to both David and his grandfather had earned her the right to know the truth.

David smiled. "Jaynie," he said softly, "you trust me, don't you?"

Deep green eyes sparkled and blinked. She hesitated. "I don't know."

He reached for her hand and held it against his cheek. "Jaynie, my sweet fox," he said gently. "You've given your body to me time and time again. I know you trust me. I just need to hear you say it."

Jaynie's eyes softened. She sighed. "Yes," she finally said. "I trust you."

David's fingers twined in hers as he nodded, feeling quite jubilant. "Good," he said as he turned toward the terrace doors. "Let's go."

David checked his watch as he led Jaynie through the throngs of people in the ballroom. It was almost nine thirty, he was right on time.

Who knew he'd have time to fuck Jaynie again before having to meet the old man? Definitely an added bonus for being ahead of schedule, another lesson he'd learned at his grandfather's feet as a kid. *Always be ahead of the competition.* In this case, the competition was time.

David wasn't sure if he'd ever get enough of her. In fact, knowing what lay ahead, he was reluctant to follow through.

"Where are we going?" Jayne asked as he led her to a door near the kitchen.

"Patience, little fox," he said as he led her down the hall and pushed through the doors to the hotel lobby. David looked around and spotted his grandfather sitting on a black leather sofa.

The old man rose as they approached. "Davey, Jaynie," he said, his face beaming. "I'm so glad you're here. It's time to set things right."

David snickered to himself. The old man wouldn't have agreed to set things right if they hadn't discussed the situation before the party. He loved the old man in spite of everything that had happened between them but was under no illusions. If Jacob didn't see an advantage for himself, he'd

never have agreed to 'fess up to the truth. And Jaynie needed to know the truth ... all of it.

Jayne was the first to speak as she came to a halt beside David. "What is there to set straight?" she asked. She turned to David before she went on. "David told me what happened the night his parents died."

Jacob frowned, his bushy grey eyebrows lowered as he peered at the floor. "I'm not proud of that," he said, "but David already knows how sorry I am."

Jayne twisted and looked up at David. Her sea-green eyes flickered, clearly stunned. "You do?"

"Well, uhm, yeah," David began. "You see—"

"Davey wanted all the cards on the table before my birthday party," Jacob quickly interjected.

Her eyes darkened to emerald green as her brows lowered. "You did?"

David shifted on his feet. Perhaps he'd made a mistake. Maybe he should have told Jaynie everything before they came to see his grandfather. He'd expected her to be overjoyed knowing he and his grandfather had worked out their differences already, that she wouldn't have to mediate their reconciliation.

Fuck!

All right, Strand. It's too late now.

His mind quickly shifted to damage control. When it came to the corporate world, David was in his element when all hell broke loose. He was known for his cool demeanor as he skillfully defused financial bombs. The right moves, the right words. David had it down to a science. There was absolutely

no reason it couldn't apply to the situation he found himself in right his minute.

He looked at Jaynie, whose glare ate through to his bones. He put on his best and brightest smile. "Yeah, honey," he replied as nonchalantly as he could muster. "As a matter of fact, Grandfather and I worked out our differences this afternoon." When her frown deepened, David was quick to add, "It wasn't easy but Grandfather and I came to a few agreements."

"That's right," Jacob said. "In exchange for David coming back to Strand Enterprises, I've agreed to come clean about my health issues."

David breathed a sigh of relief when Jaynie's attention was quickly drawn to the old man. And still, the tension built. This was not how he envisioned the evening would go.

Jaynie took a tentative step toward Jacob. "What do you mean?" she said slowly, as if she was afraid of what she was about to hear.

Jacob shrugged nonchalantly. "Well, that whole thing about my dying," he said. "I kinda made that up."

Jaynie's chin shot up, her back stiffened. David winced inwardly when she asked, "Kinda?"

Jacob offered a mischievous smile. "Well, okay, I made it up."

"You lied to me," she said.

"Well, that depends on how you look at it," Jacob replied. "I'm eighty years old, let's face it, my time is limited."

"But you aren't at death's door."

David wished he'd grabbed a shot of whiskey before he brought Jaynie here.

"No," Jacob conceded. "Last time I saw my doc, he said I was as healthy as a horse."

Jaynie's body began to shake. "You played me," she said softly, as if to herself. Her hand went to her brow as her legs buckled under her.

David leapt forward and grabbed Jaynie before she hit the floor. He carefully placed her in a chair opposite his grandfather. He grabbed a magazine off a nearby table and fanned her face.

"Oh my God," she moaned. "I've been such a fool."

David sat beside her and pulled her into his arms. "Don't blame yourself," he said. "It's not your fault. My grandfather can be very convincing."

Jaynie's eyes shot open. Before David knew what was happening, he felt the sting of her hand against his cheek. "How dare you blame your grandfather for any of this!" she hissed. "He might have sent me after you but you're the one who proceeded to mess up my life!"

David blinked as she flew off the couch. "You son of a bitch," she cried. "You drew me into your bed, then screwed the living shit out of me, all the while you knew how this was going to play out. You'd have been here for your grandfather whether I'd slept with you or not."

"You're wrong," David said as he got off the couch and took a step toward her.

"Am I?" Jaynie spat. "There was a seat reserved for you at Jacob's birthday dinner tonight. If you and Jacob had already worked things out, why weren't you there?"

David turned to look at his grandfather. It had been the old man's idea for him to lay in wait on the terrace. It would provide an element of surprise for Jaynie; she'd appreciate the fact that they'd settled their differences that much more.

Jacob shrugged innocently. "I really should return to the party."

You old prick! David knew he was on his own even before the old man disappeared through the doors that led back to the ballroom. David stared at Jaynie. *How had things gotten so fucked up?*

"Listen—"

"There's nothing you can say that I want to hear," Jaynie said as she turned to the door.

David leapt forward and grasped her arms. Jaynie whirled around, her eyes burning with unshed tears. "I hate you, David Strand," she whispered. "I never want to see you again."

David released her as if he'd been stung. Her words cut into his soul. He watched wordlessly as she stepped back, turned and walked out the door.

Chapter 11

"That was one hell of a shindig you put on for me," Jacob said proudly. "My birthday party made the society pages of the paper this weekend."

Jayne's head buzzed and her eyes felt like sandpaper as she stood in the office Monday morning. Sleep had not come easily all weekend. She'd shed so many tears she was certain she was dehydrated.

The only thing that came easy was the letter of resignation she'd written Sunday morning. What she once thought would be difficult to do was made easy after knowing both Jacob and David had used her.

"I'm glad you enjoyed the party, Mr. Strand," Jayne said as she leaned forward and placed her letter in front of him.

"What's this?" Jacob didn't look down at the letter. Instead he reached for a cigar, lit it and leaned back in his chair.

"It's my resignation," Jayne said tersely. "I'm sure you expected it."

"And why should I accept your resignation?" he asked. "For the past two years, you've been my right hand."

"I can't stay," she told him. "Not after everything that's happened."

"You're mad at me for lying about being sick," he said.

"That's part of it," she said. "But there's a lot more to it. I made some mistakes that I can't get past."

"You fell in love with Davey." It wasn't a question.

Jayne bit back tears. "All I can say..." She stopped, taking a deep breath in an effort to steady her nerves. "It's best for

everyone if I leave. I'm happy for you that David has agreed to take over Strand Enterprises. You have your wish."

Jacob put his cigar in the ashtray and peered at her. "I have you to thank for making it happen."

Jayne shook her head. "No," she said, "David loves you. He always has. It was just a matter of time before he came back to you."

Jacob picked up the letter she'd placed on his desk and crumbled it in one hand. "I will not accept your resignation, Jaynie," he said. He threw it over his shoulder. "I need you."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Strand," she said. "I cannot stay." She turned and ran out of the office.

Jayne grabbed her purse and ran down the hall. She breathed a sigh of relief when she found the elevator empty. The moment the door closed, the gateway let loose and released her tears. She dabbed her eyes in an effort to look somewhat normal as she stepped off the elevator. Just as the doors opened, she blew her nose.

"Ms. Foxton. Such a pleasure to see you again."

Jayne blinked and looked up. Her fingers stilled with the tissue still over her nose. There was no mistaking that voice. It was Stu.

"Do you have a cold?" he asked, his heavy brows lowered in concern.

"No," Jayne replied, tucking the tissue into her purse. "I'm just fine."

Stu grinned. "That's good news," he said as he reached forward, grabbed her elbow and propelled her out of the elevator. "Mr. Strand will be delighted to know you're well."

Jayne wrenched her elbow free and glared at Stu. "I don't know why you're here but I'm not about to fall for you leading me to the limousine again."

Stu chuckled softly as he clamped his hand on her elbow again. This time it was a vise-like grip. "Mr. Strand would like to see you," he said as he propelled her toward the door. "I'm sure you don't want to disappoint him."

"As a matter of fact, I do," Jayne said through gritted teeth. "And unless you want to make a scene, you'll release me this instant."

Stu's soft grey eyes washed over her. "I'm just doing my job," he said.

"Let her go, Stu." There was no mistaking the gravelly voice. *David.*

Stu released her elbow and nodded to his boss. "I'll be in the limo."

As people milled around them, Jaynie looked at David. "What do you want?"

David smiled sadly. "Nothing," he said. "But there's something you need to know."

Jaynie lifted her chin. "What's that?"

"I love you," he said simply. "I don't know if we have a future together but I'm willing to try if you are."

Jaynie's heart lurched as she stared at David.

He continued, "I admit that I used you in the beginning. You were so damn sweet, I couldn't resist. But as the days went on, my need for you grew into something I can't define. All I know is that I want you at my side. I want you in my bed. I want to share my life with you."

David reached into his pocket and pulled out a cell phone. "I'm going to become Jacob's partner in Strand Enterprises and will, one day, take over his legacy. I want you there with me every step of the way."

Jayne stared at him. Her mind whirled. She was completely dumbfounded.

He stepped forward and pressed the cell phone into her hand. "I won't pressure you to give me an answer right now," he said. "But when you're ready, just hit the redial button on this phone. Stu will come to pick you up right away and bring you to me."

Jayne watched in stunned silence as David turned and walked out the doors. She peered down at the cell phone in her hand.

Before she'd met David Strand her life had been uncomplicated and that's how she liked it. But it wasn't until after he'd come into her life that she'd known what excitement was. She had a choice to make.

Her heart sang with sheer joy as she pressed the redial button.

The Fox and the Heir [Bachelor For Sale Book 2]
by Peggy Hunter

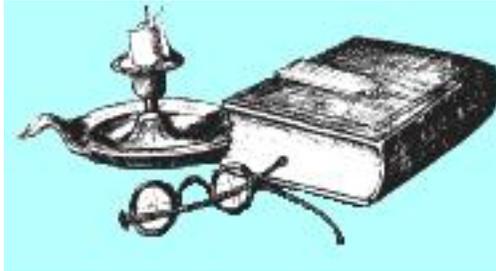
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peggy Hunter lives in Midwestern Ontario, Canada, with her husband, son and several whacky pets. Peggy loves to write and feels blessed to be an author with Whiskey Creek Torrid.

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