



Chicago Heat
Jordyn Tracey

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ISBN 978-1-936110-65-0

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Sugar and Spice Press
North Carolina, USA
www.sugarnspicepress.com

Chapter One

Fawn held up a manicured nail, her mouth dropping open in surprise. “Hold up. You think I’m a what and I did what?” She shook her head in disbelief at what this cop was saying to her. Sure, he was fine as hell with a body she’d pay good money to lick, but damn if he thought she was a prostitute. He could kiss her black—

“Ma’am, if you’ll calm down and explain to me what you’re doing out here”—his gaze dropped to her exposed cleavage and mini so short she was in danger of breaking the law—“dressed like that if you’re not offering the goods for sale?”

She rolled her eyes, planting a hand on her hip. “So it’s a crime now to look good? And don’t call me ma’am, damn it. My name is Fawn Hill as you can see right there on my driver’s license.”

He tapped the small rectangular card in the palm of one hand as he studied it and looked back up at her. His expression alone told her he had doubts as to its validity. When he commanded she wait there while he returned to his vehicle and reached inside for his CB, she groaned. All this mess because she had been on the rebound looking for a new man, but at the same time trying to make Mackie jealous. She was an idiot. He’d been jealous all right. And she’d gotten more attention than she wanted. Never mind the fact that her stupid car had broken down, and she had to walk to find a phone because bad luck didn’t come one thing at time. It came in multiples. She had missed paying her cell phone bill, and the mobile company had disconnected it.

She hated this night, hated her life, and hated the sexy ass cop watching her like she was listed on America’s Most Wanted. She crossed her arms and began pacing back and forth over the sidewalk. The man thought she was selling herself! What a trip. Okay, so she’d gotten desperate and flagged his unmarked car down for a ride. It obviously wasn’t her smartest move, but everyone made mistakes. He should be the one investigated because he sure didn’t discourage her flirting when she realized how hot he was.

Irritated, she turned to examine him again, hoping she’d overlooked his flaws, like a receding hairline or bulging belly. That would serve his arrogant behind right, but she had no such luck. The cop was every woman’s dream being at least six-five with a full head of dark curls, a firm jaw line, and a hard body that must have come from a life in the gym. On top of his looks, he had the cop thing going for him. No woman could resist a man in authority. Well, except her, she thought with bitterness. She raised her chin, and rolled her eyes at him.

After a few minutes of talking with the dispatcher and reading her information off her license to the person, he came back and gave it to her. “Turns out your name *is* Fawn Hill. No record. I think I’ll let you off with a warning. Listen, you need to be careful out here, dressed like that.”

“That’s not your business.” She turned to go. Her feet hurt in the spiky heels she’d worn, but she tried not to let it show. She made it a couple steps away from him before he called out her name. A shiver ran over her hearing it.

“Fawn.”

She hesitated and turned around. His eyes were green, she noted with him facing the street light. “Let me give you a ride home. My shift ended twenty minutes ago.”

“No thanks.” She turned to go, but he caught her arm.

“Don’t be stubborn because you’re mad. Like I said, it’s dangerous in this part of the city.” His fingers on her arm sent shockwaves of desire running through her. This was silly. She’d just been obsessed over Mackie walking out on her. A man like this cop would never be good for her. He raised his eyebrows in question and then let her arm go to hold out his hand. “If it helps, I’m Detective John Harris of the CPD.”

Fawn held out another thirty seconds and then put her hand in his. The temperature was dropping, and she had no idea if public phones even existed anymore, let alone where one was. She should be thankful it was John who stopped and not some rapist. Talk about stupid choices she’d made in her life.

“Fine,” she said at last. “Thank you.” She gave him her address as he saw her into the car. To Fawn’s embarrassment, when she sat down in the passenger seat, her skirt rose to the point that half her ass was visible. It looked like she didn’t have any panties on.

“Fuck!” John grumbled and turned over the engine of his car. When he peeled out of his parking place and sped off down the street, Fawn figured she knew why. In no way was she vain about her looks, but she’d heard enough times “baby, you could be a model” to know even the law man was getting turned on. Of course, it didn’t take much with her exposing it all.

She tugged on her skirt, but the thing wasn’t budging. All she could do was grip the seat on the side of her and hope he didn’t wrap them around a tree because he was hard. Daring to look over at him, she noted his strong hands curled over the steering wheel. Long fingers. A man with long fingers...No, she wasn’t even going there. He wore no wedding ring, but as good as he looked, he had to have a woman at home or somewhere, a woman who knew what she had.

“Do you always dress that way?” he asked as he zipped from lane to lane passing slower traffic.

“What?” She’d been busy speculating on what kind of woman the cop preferred. Stiff, prissy, white, she surmised. “Oh, um, no.” Her embarrassment increased now that she had a chance to calm down. She grew angry quickly, but when it was over, she found more than once, she’d either overreacted or put her foot in her mouth. “I was trying to make Mackie my boyfriend jealous...*ex-boyfriend*,” she hurried to say.

The cop smirked at her and then turned his attention back to the road.

“I thought I loved him, would have bent over backward for him.” She sighed, feeling tears coming on, but she hadn’t cried in a long time. She wasn’t going to start with Mackie. “He dumped me for someone else. I couldn’t accept that, so I went down to where he likes to hang out and shook my thing for anybody who wanted to look.”

“And was he there to witness you *shaking your thing*?”

She laughed. Now that she wasn’t under suspicion, she could forgive him for his attitude. “You don’t have to sound so condescending. Yes, he was there, and yes, he was jealous. Acted a fool in front of the girl until they got in an argument, and then some other guys got into it.”

“But?”

Fawn crossed her arms and stared out the window as the scenery seemed to zip by. “But I came to my senses realizing that he isn’t all that. He isn’t worth my time if he could dump me one day and try to get back with me the next. I can do better, and while I know how to dress sexy, it’s always with class. This is not class.”

She waited for him to agree, to again remind her of what a fool she was for going out dressed like she was, but he didn't comment on it. "You're a beautiful woman. You know that. You can get any man you want."

Fawn shrugged, making her breasts rise and fall. John's gaze flicked over them before he forced his eyes to focus on the road. Fawn suddenly felt like teasing, to get him back for his mistake. She smiled and leaned over toward him to rest a hand on his thigh. The muscles beneath her fingers contracted. "Could I get *you*?"

She thought she had him until he reached down and moved her hand. "Sorry, I don't know you, and well, this isn't the best first impression, is it? You say you're not like you appear to be. You're hurt over the loss of your boyfriend, but then here you are coming on to me the day after it happened."

Her mouth dropped open for the second time that night. She snapped to attention, sitting straight up. "Are you serious? You arrogant son of a bi—"

"Fawn."

"Let me out right here," she shouted. "I said stop the car!"

He pulled to the side of the road, and Fawn flung the door open before jumping out and slamming it behind her. She cursed him all the way down the street, and it wasn't until she drew up in front of her apartment building that she saw how close they had been. He'd let her out only a block away, and since she had grown up in the area, knew everybody and his mama, she wasn't worried about being attacked.

When she jerked the door to her building open, she heard tires turning and looked around to see that he had followed her all the way home. His taillights flickered once, and then he was gone. "Hope I never see him again," she grumbled as she headed inside to her apartment.

Chapter Two

Feeling much more like herself, Fawn stepped up to her mirror while buttoning her long sleeved blouse. Today would be a good day, she determined. The library would be quiet with no drama. Well, maybe until school let out and all the high school kids came in, but still she could handle that. Her boring grey skirt may hug her curves a little more than her boss liked, but it did hang to just above her knees, so he couldn't fault her. Besides, the man had dropped subtle hints that he wouldn't mind them getting together for drinks after hours. She had pretended not to get what he meant. He liked the view, so she wouldn't get into trouble.

However, the small time library that always seemed ready to close if they didn't get more funding was not where she wanted to stay the rest of her life. She had to land a better position. Something in research at a university would be awesome and would utilize her degree. She grinned at her reflection. "Let that stupid cop look down on that. I'm not the ignorant skank he thinks I am."

At last satisfied with her appearance, she strolled across the room and slipped into her shoes before passing into the living room and scooping up her purse. She'd called her cousin to go pick up her car, hoping it hadn't already been towed and that whatever was wrong with it wouldn't break her tiny savings—*again*. She needed to stop trying to live beyond her means and just catch the *L* which ran right near her place, but public transportation made her crazy. That was just asking for her to lose it and go upside somebody's head.

With no car, by the time she made it to work, she was a half hour late. Her boss eyed her as she came in, and she cast him an apologetic look. "Sorry, Mr. Peterson. I had car trouble, and even though I left home early enough to get here on time, there's just no accounting for the unexpected." She laid a hand on his sleeve. "You know what I mean?"

Confusion clouded his eyes, and he blinked at her for a few seconds. "Yes, of course. I told you to call me Les, Fawn. I want you to feel we can be friends, *close* friends."

But calling you by your last name keeps you at a distance. She smiled but didn't acknowledge his words. "Well, I'd better get right to work and make up for lost time. Thanks for being so understanding, Mr. Peterson."

She spun away and hurried to the back room to store her things before heading to the cart of books that needed to be re-shelved. At close to one o'clock, she stood behind the information desk, idling on the computer. Soon she would get her lunch break, and she couldn't wait since the two slices of buttered toast she'd eaten this morning had digested long ago.

Holding her head with a hand, she didn't immediately look up when a patron walked to the counter. "May I help you?" she asked.

The deep voice that responded sounded familiar. "Yes, we need to know where your books on dinosaurs are. So far, we've only located fictional books. We need nonfiction."

Fawn gasped. "You! What are you doing here?" In front of her, dressed in a black collared shirt and black jeans, freshly shaven, was the cop from last night. "Detective Jake, right?"

She remembered his name just fine but wanted to dig at him for making her mad. How could she ever forget how good he looked, and how he had rejected her like she was trash he wouldn't be caught dead with.

His dark brows crashed low over his eyes, but he didn't seem angry. More amused like he knew what she was up to. "It's John. This is a public library. Why wouldn't I utilize it? I could ask the same. What are you doing here?"

Without thinking about it, Fawn put a hand on her hip, but then she shifted her gaze to Mr. Peterson passing nearby. She had to maintain professionalism at work. "I'm working."

He smirked and leaned on the counter, bringing them too close for her comfort in these surroundings. "Hm, now that is interesting. Temptress by night, respectable librarian by day."

"Get your mind off your fantasies, detective. I'm not that type of woman. I told you that last night, but you didn't believe me." When he laughed, she couldn't help staring at how his lips curved and his eyes crinkled at the corners. She put him at thirty-five or so. After some moments, she remembered he had said "we" when he first walked up, and she noticed the child beside him. Her eyes rounded. "Your son?"

"My nephew." He rested a palm on the boy's head with affection. "We're on our way to a dentist appointment, and Kevin reminded me he needs a book for a project that's due in a couple of weeks. I think it's a delay tactic, but no choice." He shrugged.

All of a sudden, Fawn saw him in a different light. He gave off the good father vibe while still looking tough enough to take down a bad guy. John was every woman's fantasy man, at least from what she could see. With much self-control, she resisted sighing like a happy kitten. What John Harris of the Chicago Police Department was had nothing to do with her.

She clicked a few keys on the computer to search out where the nonfiction books on dinosaurs were although she had a good idea, and then moved around the counter to direct them. As she walked ahead of John and his nephew, she told herself it was not that she was attracted to him that she didn't stay where she was and tell them the aisle they were looking for.

"Here they are," she announced and pointed out a good row and a half on the shelf for Kevin to peruse. While she waited a second to see if Kevin was satisfied, John moved up behind her. He was so close she felt the heat of his body through her blouse. The muscles in her back tightened, and goose bumps broke out on her arms. She pretended he had no affect on her whatsoever.

"So, this is how you dress at work. Still nice. I am surprised you haven't been called in to the boss' office by how tight that skirt is."

She frowned and looked over her shoulder at him. He was closer than she thought. Their lips were within inches of each other, and seeing it she parted hers without thinking. His deep blue gaze dropped to her mouth. The desire she glimpsed made her quiver with need.

"Uncle John, I think these would be good." Kevin broke the spell.

Fawn cleared her throat and stepped away from John. "That's good. My coworker can check you out at the front."

The boy glanced between John and herself, and then turned back to him. "Can I get something fun to read too?"

"Sure, buddy. Go ahead." John ruffled his hair, and Kevin ran off.

Fawn and John stood there in silence for a few minutes. She decided to make herself busy by straightening the shelf that Kevin had left askew. "You're a good uncle and brother, taking your nephew to his doctor appointments for your brother or sister."

He didn't respond, and she glanced over at him. He studied her face with an unreadable expression on his.

"What?" she asked.

He shrugged. "His being here raises my worth in your eyes."

She put her hands on her hips. "What's that supposed to mean? You think I'm looking for husband material?" Eying him up and down, she stepped closer. "Let me tell you something, Mr. High-and-Mighty, you're not all that, and I wouldn't go out with you if you were the last man on earth."

Amusement made his eyes twinkle. She wanted to slap him but didn't. "I was kidding. You have a short fuse, don't you?" Rather than let her answer, he continued. "I'm raising Kevin, actually. His father—my brother—was also a policeman. He was killed two years ago in a routine roadside check. Having no other family and no idea where his mother is, I took him."

She put a hand up to her lips. "I'm so sorry. How horrible, especially for him being so young."

He nodded. "Thanks. Threw me for a loop having an eight year old to raise, a confirmed bachelor like myself. I'd seen my brother's horrible marriage and wanted no parts of it. So, even though Kevin has changed my life a lot, having him has not changed that view."

"The view that all women are dogs?"

His expression said he agreed. She rolled her eyes and walked past him. He caught her arm and ran his fingers down her skin, a gentle touch that made her shiver. When his tips reached her palm, she knew he better stop soon or she would need a clean pair of panties.

"That doesn't mean I don't date," he added.

Fawn scanned the area to be sure no one she worked with was watching them. She turned and strolled back between the high shelves of books. "So what are you saying, detective? You want to go out with me?"

She crossed her arms over her breasts, and rather than follow her movements, he kept his eyes on her face for a change. She never minded men looking at her. Most of them wanted one thing, and hell, since she wanted that too, what did she care. Like every other woman, at some point, she wanted to get married and have kids, but at twenty-seven, she hadn't met the right man. These days women were having kids still at forty, so she wasn't one of the ones spouting off about a biological clock ticking away.

Fawn might like having as much fun in a weekend as she could and looked toward furthering her career in the day. She enjoyed the excitement of dating and having sex. But she liked being in love as well, being surprised with flowers just because. That kind of man had never been drawn to her. No, the men she attracted were all about the sex, and if they had to play nice with flowers and candy the first few dates, that's what they did. Fawn was just silly enough to fall for the assholes to be hurt later.

John was all kinds of contradiction. On one hand, his eyes and actions let her know he wanted sex from her, but the fact that he was being domesticated by raising his nephew gave him potential for more. She did believe him when he said he was soured on

marriage, so maybe, just maybe she should give in to the attraction between them. At least this time, she'd be going into it with her eyes wide open.

He stepped closer to her, towering above her five foot seven inch height. "And if I *am* asking you out?"

She pretended to consider it further before answering. "If you are then my condition is no flowers, no candy."

His eyebrows went up in surprise. "Huh?"

She laughed. "I mean it. Don't try to wine and dine me to get in my bed. At least don't do all that normal stuff women love just to convince me to sleep with you." She rested a hand on his chest and played with the buttons on his shirt. Like last night, his muscles tensed beneath her touch. She breathed deep. How she loved the teasing scent of soap and a man's natural smell. "If we mesh, when we're ready, we'll be intimate. If not, we'll move on, and no one gets hurt. Deal?"

Confusion clouded his eyes, and he watched her while he thought over her offer. After a few minutes, he seemed to understand why she asked what she did. Annoyed, she thought he must remember how she confessed that Mackie had hurt her. That did still cut her heart when she thought of her ex. He'd been that kind of man, going all out until she gave it up, and then nothing. No consideration, just partying and sex, nothing else. There had been no tender moments, no sharing of deep thoughts between them. Maybe Mackie didn't have any.

"Yes, beautiful lady, you have a deal."

Chapter Three

John watched Fawn walk away, his eyes on her ass. She was incredibly beautiful. He'd seen that last night, and he was shocked to find her working at the library of all places. Never in his life had he ever been tempted to ask out a woman he had pulled over. They just weren't his normal taste in women, but there was something about Fawn. She intrigued him. Sure, he wanted her. What man wouldn't want to have a taste of that body? She was slender but had curves in all the right places. Her breasts were high and more than enough to fill his palms. She wore her dark hair in gentle waves just past her shoulders, and that compared with her big brown eyes and smooth cocoa skin made up a package he longed to get his hands on.

He had dated black women before, having never limited himself to white women alone. Yet, most women were the same underneath. They wanted to capture a man and make his life a living hell. Okay, he admitted they didn't necessarily mean to, but the results were the same. John had vowed never to be caught in such a trap, so he made a point to be up front about what he wanted and what he was not looking for. Like Fawn, other women had called him arrogant. It didn't bother him a bit. Wanting a woman who was wild enough to please him but not such a whore he had to worry about disease was not a bad thing, and letting her know he would never love her or marry her was good for the woman as well. That hadn't stopped plenty of them from falling for him.

He sighed remembering all the issues of extricating himself from past relationships. Still, Fawn had surprised him. She didn't want the normal pomp and circumstances that went with soothing a woman's mind to the point that she feels she's not a slut if she lets a new man in her bed. But that could be Fawn's broken heart over her previous breakup speaking. She could change that view in a week. He'd keep on his toes. Meanwhile, it was likely that he was in for an amazing time with her.

"Uncle John." Kevin interrupted his thoughts. "Are we going? My appointment's in twenty minutes."

John snapped out of his daydream. "Yes, let's go. Sorry, buddy. Got what you need?"

He nodded. "So, Uncle John, you like that woman? Are you going out on a date with her?"

John shook his head. "That's not your business right now, bud. You just concentrate on getting your school work done on time. Between you and me, nothing has changed, and it never will. Got it?"

"Yeah. I got it."

* * * *

John checked his weapon and then loaded it into his holster under his left arm. He arranged his shirt so the gun wouldn't be too obvious and glanced in the mirror to comb his hair. He frowned at his reflection. Usually he didn't bother with this much prep to look good for a date. Fawn had better appreciate the effort, he thought with a chuckle.

When he was ready, he let himself out of his house and strolled to the driveway. At first he stopped at the vehicle his job had provided, and then he moved on to his private car. He might be required to carry a weapon off duty, but that was as far as it went. A radio for emergencies stored in the car was good enough. He grinned when he slid behind

the wheel and turned over the engine. Fawn might like his Infiniti G37 Coupe. Man, did he hope her skirt was short.

He pulled out of the driveway at a sedate pace, but when he hit the highway, he opened it up and pushed past the speed limit. Within a few minutes, he was on Fawn's side of town, and he left the highway to head in the direction of her apartment. After pulling to a stop, he hopped out of the car and checked his note for which place was hers. 203A was on the basement level.

He wrapped on her door and waited. After a few more knocks and a call on his cell, she opened the door. A scent that was wholly feminine assailed his nose, teasing him and making him want to cut to the chase with her. He held himself in check. Fawn stood there in a mini baby doll dress, black with large red roses over the breasts, down one side and across the bottom. The dress extended to mid-thigh, and he thought if she twirled around, it would flair and show off her panties beneath. He couldn't help wondering if she had on any as it had looked like she didn't the first night they met.

"See?" she said, her head tilted at a playful angle. "Sexy but classy, don't you think?"

"You'll do," he responded.

She pouted, making him want to jerk her into his arms and kiss her full lips. "What? That's all you have to say?"

He held up his hands, grinning. "Hey, you're the one who set the terms. If I say you look beautiful, that you'll outshine any woman we see tonight, then that will be breaking our agreement. You'll start to fall in love with me before night's end."

She burst out laughing. "Arrogant prick."

He reached for her and tugged her close to him. A hand at her waist, he leaned down to breathe in her essence. His cock grew rock hard. "How about I say you look good enough to eat. You *do* like being eaten, don't you, Fawn?"

She gasped and shoved him away, but he knew she liked that. No danger of love there. It was all lust. Spinning away from him, she flounced over to the coffee table in what appeared to be her living room and snatched up her purse. For a brief instant, he did glimpse her panties, and if he made it through the night without attempting to get his hands on them, it would be a miracle. *Respect*, he told himself. He needed to remind himself that while Fawn gave off a vibe that said she was all about a good time and nothing else, that might not be the case. After all, look how she'd shocked him by working as a librarian. He'd never have guessed that about her in a million years.

Fawn returned to his side, and he escorted her out to his car. He tucked her in and hopped into the driver's seat. With supreme effort, he kept his eyes focused ahead while he turned over the engine and threw the car into gear. Fawn cooed and wiggled next to him, capturing his attention. He had to look.

"This is a sweet car, and candy apple red. I love it. I bet you drive it fast, don't you?" She had no idea how good she looked, how she tempted him. She'd slipped off her heels and was barefoot in his passenger seat, dress not slutty as the previous time, but definitely showing off plenty of thigh for his pleasure.

"I do like to drive fast," he told her, infusing his words with meaning.

She rolled her eyes. "Your mind is in one place at all times, isn't it?"

"Not when I've been satisfied."

She shook her head and crossed her legs. Looking out the window, she said without turning, "You already know it hasn't been long for me, but I'm not talking about that."

How long has it been since you've been in a relationship? Did you ever come close to marriage even though you hate it?"

"Not even close. I'm never getting married, Fawn. I have no interest in it. I have never cared for anyone enough to even consider it." After a few miles of driving, he turned off on Kinzie Street leading to Harry Caray's Italian Steakhouse. When they pulled up to the restaurant, John handed his car over to a valet and caught the look in Fawn's eyes. She was impressed so far.

Inside the restaurant, he gave the host his last name having made reservations, and they were seated almost immediately. "Oh, this is so nice," Fawn commented. "I always wanted to come, but I never have."

"No?" He thanked the waiter for their menus and began looking it over. "Why not?"

She raised an eyebrow. "Have you seen the prices, sir? Even the appetizers would break my tiny budget." She gasped. "Which reminds me. We should probably go dutch. Let me find something reasonable."

He reached out across the table and laid a hand over hers. Big brown eyes met his, warming him. "I'm taking care of everything. Your job is to enjoy yourself and entertain me."

She smirked. "Oh yeah, and just what kind of entertainment does a thirty dollar prime rib get you, detective?"

He couldn't resist his next comment. "A tiny thing like you can eat all that beef?"

Her eyes sparkled. "I have eaten that and more."

His cock twitched. He leaned back in his chair unable to take his eyes off her. "You're a very naughty woman, Fawn Hill. I think I will enjoy getting to know you better."

She grinned. "Good, cause I feel that way about you too. I'm sure we'll have a lot of fun." She took a sip of her water and folded elegant hands in front of her while resting her elbows on the table. "So tell me. Why have you never been in love?"

He stiffened. "That again? Why are you so interested?"

"Because I feel like everyone falls in love, even if they decide not to do anything about it, or they screw the whole thing up. To not feel anything isn't..."

"Isn't what?"

She pursed her lips.

He welcomed the arrival of the appetizers they had ordered in between their exchange. Spearing a jumbo shrimp, he steered the conversation to safer waters, and soon had her chatting about work and her goals. John enjoyed every minute of talking to her, even when she teased him—*especially* when she teased him. Already, the night was much more than he had expected, and he looked forward to what other delights he'd discover in dating Fawn.

Chapter Four

After they finished their meal, John led Fawn toward Wacker Drive to enjoy a sight of the river. She never got enough of her city. There was nowhere in the world she'd rather live other than Chicago. When a light breeze stirred Fawn's hair, she laughed, released John's arm, and ran ahead.

"Fawn," he called. "Stay close. You never know who could be out here."

She glanced back and stuck her tongue out at him. "You're too used to crime and bad guys, John. You've got to live. Enjoy the world. Enjoy life." She ran on although he protested, and she didn't stop until she was winded. Breathing heavily and leaning against a rail, she raised her arms and closed her eyes. A happy grin spread over her face.

"Well, hello, beautiful," someone said nearby.

Fawn opened her eyes to a man she'd never seen before. His gaze was riveted to her cleavage. She was about to tell him she was with someone, but John suddenly stepped in front of her, blocking the man's view. "Get lost. She's with me."

"Hey!" The man growled.

Looking around John's arm, Fawn caught a look from him like he was about to challenge John for the right to talk to her, but John reached in his pocket and flashed his badge.

John lowered the tone of his voice. "I said, get lost. *Now*." The man held up his hands, backpedaled, and walked off. John spun to face her. "Didn't I tell you there were unsavory characters out here? You should have listened to me."

She pouted and rested her hands on his chest while stepping close to him. She liked how his body responded to her touch, and if she was ready to take it to the next level, she would have explored him lower. But that wasn't happening on the first date. She wasn't that desperate. "Aw, but you were here to rescue me, my big bad cop."

Annoyance radiated from him. She knew how to tease him out of the funk she got him in. Standing on her tiptoes, she stretched up to his cheek and placed a light kiss there. His eyes widened. "What was that for?"

"For being my hero."

John put his badge away and ran a hand through his hair. The irritation seemed to melt away just like she expected. "I see you're a handful already."

"Yes, but that's a good thing," she promised and turned brushing her body against his. She took his hand and tugged him along. "Let's go find somewhere to dance. I have a bad need to shake my booty."

John went along with her, and soon they found a club. Fawn made sure it wasn't one frequented by Mackie. She didn't need a repeat of the last time she'd seen him, and besides that she wanted to enjoy her time with John. He might be too cautious because of all he had seen in his line of work, but he was intelligent and fun to talk to. He was fine, generous, and attentive. Best of all, although she could tell he wanted her like crazy, he didn't pressure her or try to trick her into letting him take her to bed. That in itself was a super bonus.

Fawn weaved her way through the wiggling bodies in the club while holding tightly to John's hand. When she reached the bar and he stood beside her, she ordered a Sex on the Beach. She eyed John. "You should get a Sex on My Face."

To her satisfaction, John's face reddened, but to his credit, he recovered fast and leaned in close to her to whisper in her ear. "I prefer the real thing rather than a drink. Nothing could be that good."

"Now who's the naughty one?" She laughed and began swerving her hips to the song that had just started.

When she had her drink, she took a few sips and watched John drink a beer over the rim of her glass. She let him get a third of the way done before she dragged him out on the floor. Her arms in the air and her hair swinging left and right, she danced up close to John, turned, and teased him with her ass. He didn't move with her same fluid motions, but when he rested his hands on her hips and let his thighs brush her, a thrill zipped through her body. They gyrated through four songs before Fawn took a break.

Later, during a slow song, Fawn curled into John's arms, loving the feel of being protected. They swayed together with the rhythmic beat, and when she tilted her head back to look up at him, he captured her lips in an amazing kiss she felt down to her toes. She let his tongue part her lips, and she sucked it a moment before pushing hers into his mouth. She felt rather than heard a groan rumble up from his throat. His cock was thick and solid between them. She longed to stroke it, to wrap her legs around his waist, but she held back.

After some time, John broke the kiss and moved his head toward her neck. He skimmed his lips over her skin, sending chills throughout her system. She pressed in closer. "Oh, we really shouldn't be doing this," she said.

"Mm," he agreed. "It's just a kiss, but that can be dangerous."

"Yes." She nibbled his ear. John's hand clenched on her back.

When she was on the verge of suggesting they find a private place, he pulled back and put her from him. His breathing was heavy and his eyes clouded. She looked at him in confusion, but he reached into his pocket to pull out a cell phone. The display was lit, so he must be getting a call. John held up a finger for her to wait as he answered. When he left the floor, she followed him. Near the front entrance, they stopped, and Fawn stood beside John while he spoke with Kevin. She knew it was the ten-year-old by the way John's face softened and the fact that he often called him "bud" or "buddy". She thought it was sweet. They might be uncle and nephew, but their closeness was like father and son. Seeing their interchange over the phone made her heart ache for something more in her own life.

John at last ended the call and turned back to her. "Sorry about that. I have to be available at all times, whether it's Kevin or work."

"Oh, I understand," she assured him. "Don't worry. Do you have to go?"

He shook his head. "No, Kevin was just calling me to say good night." He frowned. "He should have been in bed long before now, but he always calls if I'm not home before he turns in. I guess I have to give him credit for that."

Her eyes widened. "He's not alone is he?"

John grinned and ran fingertips down her face like she'd said something profound. "No, of course not. My neighbor, an older woman whom I've known for years, looks after him when I have to work or go out. She's there, but like a certain woman I know, Kevin can get into things he shouldn't. So Mrs. Cecil probably had a hard time getting him to settle down to bed. I think I worked it out over the phone though."

"Good."

She took his hand and led him back to the bar. They finished their drinks, talked, danced, and had an amazing time. Fawn didn't know when she'd enjoyed herself so much. While she was with Mackie, he was always jealous. It wasn't as if she was trying to get other men's attention. They sought her out on their own, each one deciding she should be with them instead of Mackie.

Being with John was different. Men still approached her like they always did, some having the nerve to tell her she shouldn't be with a white guy. To that, she sucked her teeth and kept walking. The more aggressive ones were set in their place, but she noticed here John didn't flash his badge so quickly. His broad shoulders and a threatening look took care of most situations. The difference between him and Mackie was that Mackie acted like she was his property, something he should be allowed to touch alone. John behaved as if he was protecting her from someone hurting her. How could she not drink that kind of sweetness in? She was finding real quick that John didn't have to use words women normally ate up to fall in love. Just being himself reeled her in.

Chapter Five

Fawn stood behind John digging her foot in the sand. They'd stopped on impulse today to enjoy the tiny beach to the side of Lake Shore Drive. To her, it was such an odd place for a beach, but she'd been here plenty of times. She glanced up from her feet to John. He was such a good guy. He didn't complain once when she demanded he remove his shoes and wade in the water with her.

They'd been seeing each other for two months, and she was pretty sure they were close to intimacy. First one of them would lean toward it, and the other drew back, and then the pattern reversed. It was weird because when she wanted it, she went after it, and John struck her as the same kind of person. Putting it off like this felt like they were afraid things would descend into just sex and not a budding relationship, a relationship they had never intended to fall into.

Fawn moved up behind John and encircled his waist with her arms. She rested her head on his back and closed her eyes. "This is nice, isn't it? The sun shining, and the temperature warm without being too hot."

"Yeah it is. It's perfect." She felt him peer over his shoulder at her, and she opened her eyes to look up at him. "I want to tell you about Janice and Kal."

She gasped. "Really? What brought that on?" Every other time they spoke about important matters, John avoided the subject of his brother and his brother's wife. Fawn never pushed, figuring if he needed to get it off his chest, fine. If not, it wasn't her business. Sure, she was curious because their issues had affected John's life and his decisions.

John turned and held his hand out to her. Fawn put her shoes in the other hand and took his. They intertwined fingers and began walking along the beach at a slow pace. "I don't know. I just felt like talking about it," he continued. "Kal had wanted to be a cop all his life, and I wanted to be just like him. After he'd been on the force for a couple of years, he met Janice. She was a legal aide. They had what you call a whirlwind courtship, and before you knew it they were married. That's when things went downhill."

She considered his words. "So you think they rushed it?"

He shrugged. "Or she was just a bitch."

"Yikes." Fawn frowned. "If you think that, what do you feel about me?"

He kissed her, which wasn't an answer, but Fawn accepted it. She didn't want to know how he felt about her. Not right now. She wasn't sure what she felt yet. She wanted to be intimate with him if only to test whether they'd last. That made zero sense, but it was what occupied her mind of late. The fact that she had little understanding of her wants regarding men was probably why she had so many issues with them.

"So how did it all go wrong?" she asked to encourage John out of his funk. Over the last couple of months, she'd learned a lot about him. If he was in a dark mood, getting him talking—about anything—did the trick to snap him out of it. Even if the subject wasn't pleasing, John's mood would lighten with conversation.

"It started when Kal wanted to get a position with homicide. She thought it was too dangerous. They argued all the time, nonstop."

She wrinkled her nose. "For real, I'm not too happy that you're in homicide. It is dangerous with criminals issuing threats to you guys or killers coming after you because they don't want to be caught. But that's your life. You chose it, and I can't change that."

She'd already been impacted by his job with him being called away on cases during their dates. John always made up for it in the sweetest of ways. She loved that, so she didn't mind the interruptions. Like she said, it was the danger that made her afraid. Maybe Janice wasn't as strong as Fawn considered herself to be. "I'm sorry. I sound like I'm defending her. I'm not. I don't even know her."

"You're right. You don't." She gasped and would have pulled away from him, but he tugged her closer. "I'm sorry. That was uncalled for." He kissed the top of her head while she leaned on his chest. "She thought getting pregnant would keep him from applying for the position. That was a strike against her. She didn't want Kevin for himself. She wanted him as a tool to manipulate Kal."

"Anyway, it worked. Kal didn't join homicide, but that didn't matter because eight years later, after Janice was busy leaving Kevin with friends and neighbors while she went out too much and drank at every opportunity, Kal was killed in a routine stop. A guy ran a red light, turned out to be wanted, and pulled his gun on Kal. My brother died at the scene."

He closed his eyes. Fawn squeezed him as tight as she could, knowing his heart must be breaking all over again. She stroked his back and uttered soothing words she hoped would help. While she couldn't know what it was like having a sibling because she'd been adopted as a baby by an older couple, she did know what it was like to lose someone she loved. Her parents had passed five years ago, and she'd been devastated.

"I'm so sorry, John."

"I know," he said in a quiet voice. "I...We were close, he and I, talked about everything. He said his world revolved around her, and he wanted to do everything he could to make her happy. 'She is a good woman,' he said. Like hell!" John cried. "She came to the funeral with Kevin. She didn't even have the decency to buy him a suit for saying good-bye to his dad. And then afterward, she asked if I could watch him while she took care of some business. I felt Kevin could use a break from her and said yes. I didn't know that was the last time I'd ever see her again."

John broke from her hold and walked a few steps away. He stretched his arms over his head, flexing the muscles of his back. How she enjoyed looking at him. Then something clicked right then. If things never developed between her and John, into something more serious, she wanted to be able to say later, that they explored every avenue. She'd like to sleep with him, but would this be his turn to draw back? He'd taken a couple vacation days, mostly for Kevin's sake, but he'd made time for her today as well. This was the best opportunity as work would not interfere. Plus, this afternoon, Kevin had gone with Mrs. Cecil to her grandson's birthday party. John had told her Kevin wouldn't be back until six at the earliest. It was three-thirty.

She bit her lip and considered her decision again. She was ready. No more thought. Rather than ask him straight out or touch him to get him worked up, she moved past him and stood somewhat in front of him. She fanned herself. "The temperature must have risen in the last half hour."

She caught the ends of her blouse with her arms crossed over her chest and raised it over her head.

"Fawn! What are you doing?"

She pretended innocence. "Oh, don't worry. This is a real bikini top and not a bra. I'm not exposing myself for the world." *Only you.*

After stooping at the edge of the water to wet her fingers, she ran them over her breasts, letting droplets rain down into her cleavage. She knew from the angle she positioned herself that John saw every move. Like he did a minute ago, she stretched her arms over her head to make her breasts rise. Before she could complete her show, John snatched her up to him.

“What the hell are you doing to me, Fawn?”

She blinked up at him, trapped in his steel hold. “What do you mean?”

“You know very well what I mean.” His gaze dropped to her breasts. “Unless you’re ready to let me make love you, put that damn shirt back on.”

Fawn laughed. John had learned to curb his cursing for the most part after he took in Kevin. She must have sent him for a serious spin with her actions for him to curse this much.

“And if I *am* ready, what then?” she let her gaze challenge him.

His eyebrows shot up. He stared at her, and then set her on her feet. She thought he was backing off at first, but then he snatched her blouse from the sand and grabbed her hand. “Let’s go. My place is more convenient.”

It was a good thing he was a cop because he risked being pulled over at the speed he kept up to his place. When they pulled up to a small rancher-styled home with manicured lawn and a boy’s bike resting against the garage door, Fawn sighed. This was something she might never have—a cute little house, a husband, and a child.

John shuffled out of the car and flew around to her side. She shook the turbulent emotions from her mind. This was no time to think about a family—not when they were about to have sex for the first time.

They were soon inside John’s bedroom—neat as a pin unlike her room—and John slammed the door shut behind him. He trapped her between it and his rock hard body and peered down at her. “You’re sure?”

“Positive.” For emphasis, she ran a hand up his outer thigh and reached behind him to grab his ass. She drove him in tight to her and rubbed her breasts over his chest. John growled.

He stepped back and touched a fingertip to her lips. “Stay right where you are.”

She didn’t move but watched as he hurriedly unbuttoned his shirt. He drew it open to reveal his toned pecs and the weapon strapped under his arm. Fawn’s mouth watered at the picture he made. She didn’t think he’d consider taking her with the gun still on, so she didn’t ask. He un-strapped it and set the piece and the holster on his dresser.

When he returned to her, he grinned. “Now, where were we?”

With sass, she said, “You were about to remind me how much you like to eat.”

His eyes seemed to blaze with fire. “Was I? Hm, yes, I think that’s a good idea.” With one hand, he caught her by the hip. “Tell me what you have under your short skirt today, Fawn.”

“Go find out.”

He dropped to his knees, raised her skirt, and whistled. “So these came with the bikini top?”

Fawn licked her lips, giving him a playful expression. “No, they didn’t come with this top, but I liked them. Don’t you?”

“Hell, yes!”

On impulse, she'd slipped into her red thong this morning. John had shared weeks ago that his favorite color was red, easily discerned from his car. She knew right off with her ass scarcely covered, it would drive him nuts. She had been teasing him with the way she dressed, how she brushed into his body, and her words all along. But John had been doing the same. The man was born to make a woman pant over him.

He hooked thumbs into the bands of her thong and tugged it down her legs. With a fluid motion, he leaned up and planted a kiss on her pussy. Fawn squealed. He went on with his task of removing her panties, grasping first one calf to lift her leg out of the thong and then the other.

After he had tossed the garment aside, he went back for her treasure. The anticipation on his face almost made her come by itself, but she couldn't wait to feel his tongue seduce her clit. John shoved her skirt higher and parted her legs. He started off with a long, unhurried lick along the outer edges of her heat. She whined at the pleasure and squirmed, but John held her in place.

When he parted her folds to delve his tongue deep into her pussy, she cried out. She bit her finger and closed her eyes while trying not to pull away. The sensations were too strong, yet too good at the same time. She tugged on his hair to pull him close, then caught his shoulders to shove him back. All the while, John ate her with relish. He twirled his tongue around her clit, sucked it into his mouth, and then released it. When she could bear that no longer, he explored her passage to lap up all her flowing cream.

"Mm, you taste incredible, Fawn. I could eat you all day. Do you know that?" He stood up and stripped off the rest of his clothing and then helped her with hers. She yelped when he scooped her in his arms and carried her across to his bed. Following her down to it, he found her pussy with his mouth again, and while he sucked her aching, swollen bud, he drove his fingers into her. Three all at once since she was so wet, so ready.

Fawn cried out on the edge of an orgasm. She gripped the sheets under her and would have rolled away, but John caught her and held her down. He worked his fingers faster, calling out encouragement to her. How she loved when a man spoke dirty to her during sex, and John either loved it too or knew instinctively how to please her.

"Tell me you like what I'm doing to your pussy, baby?" he demanded.

She whimpered.

"Be a good girl, or I'll stop," he warned.

She cried out. "Don't you dare. Oh goodness, John, I'm about to come."

"Say it."

She raised her hips toward his fingers as he withdrew them slowly and kissed her thigh rather than suck her clit. Fawn thought she would die of need. "I love it, I love it. Don't stop, John. *Please.*"

"That's my girl." He climbed higher on the bed and lay behind her while still stroking her heat. When his cock found her opening and pushed in, John pinched her clit between two fingers and whispered naughty words in her ear. Fawn's climax was explosive. She arched her back and cried out as John pounded her from behind. He kissed her ear, her cheek, turned her head so he could cover her mouth with his. Moments after Fawn came, she shook with pleasure feeling John's hot liquid fill her.

Afterward, they lay in each other's arms, panting. John ran his knuckles over Fawn's cheek and smiled down at her. "Well that was worth the wait."

She kissed one of his nipples and pressed close to his chest. "Wasn't it though?"

Fawn rolled to her back with John beside her leaning on his elbow and watching her. She had always felt comfortable in her own skin, and when she didn't, she cut back until she got to whatever weight worked. Still, having John stare at her with no barrier or no bra to make her girls look their best was a bit unsettling. She wondered if he still thought she was beautiful.

He reached out and traced around one of her areolas with a fingertip. She shivered, her eyelids fluttering closed and then open. Desire tightened her belly, and she wiggled around a little on the bed. John leaned down and licked the tip of her nipple.

"Your nipples are so thick," he commented. "They give me fantasies of doing things."

She grinned. Apparently, he liked her breasts just fine. "What kind of things?"

He shrugged. "Things. Maybe I'll tell you when I'm sure you can be as naughty as I think you can."

She sat forward on her elbow and lowered her lids halfway, tossing him a kiss. "Oh, I can be naughty, baby. You haven't seen bad girl if you haven't seen me do it."

John stroked her breast, kneaded it, and then pinched her nipples. "Is that right?"

"Mm. Yes, but can you handle it? I mean can you rise to the occasion?"

They both looked down to where his cock began to grow out again. Fawn saw why he'd taken her from behind. That position gave him the ability to sink deep and line her body with his. The man was gifted with length and thickness. At first she tried thinking if she'd been with a man comparable to John's size, but then she dismissed the thought. She didn't want to think about any man except him.

She looked up at him and touched his jaw. He needed a shave so soon after doing it that morning. Gazing into his eyes, she felt her heart skip a beat or two. She loved him. Fawn Hill had fallen deep in love with a cop who didn't believe in marriage. She'd never learn. The knowledge hurt so much, she almost cried, and she dropped her forehead to his chest.

"Hey, baby, what's wrong?" he asked.

She tried to play it off. "Nothing. Just thinking about your boast that you could eat me all day, and this session lasted like a minute." She laughed, but it was shaky.

"Then that will never do." He gathered her up in his arms and carried her to the tiny bathroom off his room. "We'll get cleaned up, and I will prove to you that you will beg me to stop long before I'm tired."

They stood in the shower after washing each other, holding on to one another. Fawn forgot everything except having him hold her. She had just gotten her hair done, and now it was wet, but she didn't care. John scattered kisses on her shoulder and stroked her back.

"Fawn?"

She sighed. "Hm?"

"Would you like to go out sometime with me and Kevin?"

She gasped and looked up at him. "Really? Are you sure?"

He nodded. "Yes, I'm sure. We could take in a movie or have a picnic in the park. Kevin likes to toss the ball around."

Her eyes widened excitedly. "Or we could go to the zoo. Kids like that, right?"

He chuckled. "Yeah, usually. Okay, it's settled. Next Sunday, we'll do it. Now then, I have something to prove. Open those legs and let me at that sweet pussy."

Chapter Six

“Uncle John, what are you thinking about?” Kevin asked. He didn’t respond. “Uncle John?”

John snapped out of it. “Huh? Oh, what am I thinking? Nothing in particular.” He hoped he didn’t look like an idiot. He’d been staring at Fawn, considering where his feelings for her were going. Asking her out with him and Kevin had been a spur of the moment decision, and he still wasn’t sure it was the right move. Not that he was getting serious. He wasn’t. All his feelings about love and marriage were the same. At least he thought so. Besides that, could Fawn even be a good mother?

He watched her buying cotton candy from a vendor with all the excitement of a young child. Over the last couple of weeks, they’d done the picnic at the park and the zoo, even though the zoo wasn’t Kevin’s favorite place. John had found his nephew to be different from most children. He got no satisfaction watching caged animals, although, he had enjoyed the aquarium. Now, Fawn had suggested the amusement park, and she seemed to be having more fun than he and Kevin put together.

Fawn came running up. “Oh my goodness, taste this, John. It’s so good. This flavor is called Boo-Blue. Isn’t it yummy?” She bounced up and down, and John did his best not to focus on her breasts. He took the offered sweet, grasping a small piece with his tongue while she held it. Her eyes turned flirty.

“Mm, raspberry,” Kevin said knowingly. “It’s good, but I like the Spookie Fruiti grape the best.”

Fawn broke the intimate connection John shared with her and looked at his nephew. “You do? Oh no, well we can’t have you eating my new favorite instead.” She held out a hand. “Come on, let’s jump the guy and make him give us grape.”

Kevin laughed, taking her offered hand. “If we do that, Uncle John will have to arrest us.”

As they walked away, Fawn glanced back at him, a suggestive expression on her face. “Got any handcuffs, cop?”

John thought he’d come right there. The woman was a born tease, and she liked to keep him worked up at all times. She was about having as much fun as possible. She kept him off balance, which he sometimes thought was the most wonderful experience in his life, and at others questioned whether she had long term potential.

He shook his head, considering it. Long term did not matter. He wasn’t looking for it. Dismissing thoughts of the future, John went to join Kevin and Fawn. Together they decided what ride to get on next and what games they’d like to play. John found himself laughing a lot more, and the heaviness he’d carried around with him since losing his brother lightened for the moment. He pulled Fawn close to his side and gave her a chaste kiss. “How about we try our hand at the hoops first, Kevin. I bet we can win Fawn a teddy bear or something.”

Fawn rolled her eyes. “Oh lord, here we go. Men trying to prove themselves again. How do you know I won’t show y’all up?” She broke from his hold and imitated bouncing a ball and tossing it up for a shot in an imaginary basket.

“Missed by that much,” Kevin quipped, holding up fingers to indicate an inch.

“You!” Fawn shouted and chased after him when he ran. John burst out laughing. He had to admit it warmed him to know Kevin liked Fawn. Maybe she was more fun than he was, less cautious. He sighed and jogged to catch up to them.

They wandered around for a while looking for the hoops and found them near the restrooms. After they’d taken a restroom break, they headed over to the game to try their luck. John pretended to roll up his sleeves even though he’d opted to wear a T-shirt today and strap his gun around his ankle. He’d considered just leaving it behind, but for some reason, trouble followed officers of the law. He didn’t like being unprepared.

“Okay, little lady, which bear do you want?” he asked her with a country drawl.

She giggled and pointed. “That one.”

He’d been busy staring at her. “Sorry, which one?”

She smirked at him and raised her hand to point again. John tugged her into his arms and ran his hand along her arm, ending at her hand. They intertwined fingers, both pointing to the massive pink and white rabbit hanging overhead.

He frowned. “That’s not a bear.”

She pouted so pretty, he felt weak. “It’s what I want.”

His heart pounding in his chest, he nodded. “Anything you want.” For the next half hour, he and Kevin sweated and tossed away money to win Fawn the rabbit. They made plenty of baskets, but the damn system was set up in such a way that they kept winning tiny animals instead. John grumbled in disgust, and felt even more like an idiot because Fawn stood there laughing. She’d long since given up pretending she knew anything about shooting a basketball. She’d missed all but one.

“You can trade those in for a big one if you want,” the vendor suggested.

“Why the hell didn’t you say so earlier,” John grouched.

Fawn gasped and laughed. “Language, John. There are children around.”

He cast her a dirty look and collected her rabbit. The sweet thank you and kiss she gave him made up for his humiliation and aching arms. Through with games, John suggested they find a ride and then look for food. The giant rabbit was promptly stuffed in his arms to carry while Fawn and Kevin walked ahead of him discussing what was the scariest among the roller coasters.

At the biggest coaster he’d come across, Kevin and Fawn turned to face him. “This one,” they shouted together.

“You’ll just chicken out or cry on the ride,” Kevin told Fawn.

She imitated him. “Nuh-uhn, you will.”

“Bet!”

They shook hands, loser having to concede defeat and call the other boss the rest of the day. John rolled his eyes. This wasn’t his date. It was Kevin’s play date, and he was along for the ride. They rushed off, and John dropped onto a bench to wait. He hoped neither of them cried or chickened out. Truth be told, he loved that they were having fun. It made it that much better for him. Could she truly be different from the women he had seen over the years—selfish creatures that were all about themselves?

As was his habit for years, he scanned his surroundings, his gaze lighting on a woman here with her small child, a man there holding a bunch of stuffed animals, jackets, and bags. His family had obviously ditched him like Kevin and Fawn had done to John. He felt bad for the guy. He continued to observe those passing by until he spotted a man walking along that didn’t feel quite right. John had learned over the years to follow his

gut instinct. It had gotten him out of trouble more times than he could count and had been the deciding factor in capturing his man.

John stood up and tucked the rabbit under his arm. He looked back toward the ride briefly and then kept moving, following the man ahead of him. With luck, whatever he might be up to would be over before Kevin and Fawn were back. As they passed a set of bathrooms, John noticed the guy pause and look around as if he was searching for someone. Then the guy tucked his hands in his pockets and began to whistle. He headed straight for the women's bathroom but passed the doorway to duck into the bushes just beside it. He disappeared around the side of the building.

John darted over to one of the vendors and flashed his badge. "Can you watch this for me?" When the vendor nodded, John handed him the rabbit. "Be right back."

He circled the building from the right side, picking his way through the bushes. Branches stuck out and scratched his arms as he went because the space wasn't built to have a walkway alongside of it. At the back, he flattened himself along the wall and peered around the corner quickly and then ducked back. He didn't see the guy, but what he did see was a bag on the ground. John turned to face the wall and peered out again. Seconds later, his target came around the side of the building and bent to unzip the bag. When he pulled a gun from it, John cursed. This was the reason why he always wore a weapon and why he insisted just being a cop drew trouble.

He bent and lifted his pants leg to retrieve his 38 special from the ankle holster. Making his way with caution, he circled around the building. The guy had gone back the way he came. John needed to hurry in case he wasn't still hiding but had left the area in search of whomever he had set his sights on. However, when he came to the ladies side of the building, the man was there with his back to John.

John took a step forward holding the gun in one hand. He stopped when the man called out to someone. "Hey, Jill. Can I talk to you a minute?"

A woman's voice reached John, but he couldn't see her. "I can't believe you came here, Reggie. I told you we're done. I'm seeing someone else. Get lost!"

"Yeah, see I have a problem with that, and you knew I had a part time job down here," Reggie told her. "You just wanted to make me jealous bringing your new lover and parading him by my booth."

"Nobody paraded anything by you, Reggie. Look, I said it's over. Get that through your head."

"No, I don't think so." He began to pull his hand out from behind his back, the one holding the weapon, but John got to him first. He quickly stashed his weapon and caught Reggie's wrist in a tight lock and brought his other hand down on his shoulder.

"Police, drop it," John commanded.

Reggie gasped and seemed about to resist, but John pressed his fingers in just the right spot to force Reggie down on his knees. The hand holding the gun went slack, and the weapon clattered to the ground.

John moved the gun out of reach and secured it. "Face down," he instructed. He looked up at the horrified girl who was now crying. "Get someone to call park security."

She bolted. By now others realized what had happened and were gathering around. Reggie lay on the ground cursing up a storm. John worried about Kevin and Fawn. He'd been gone too long, but then he heard Kevin's voice. "They said it's a guy with a gun. I just know Uncle John is taking care of it."

John grinned and shook his head. The boy should have stayed away if that's what he'd heard. The news had spread back to where they were fast. Soon he'd identified himself to security, the police were called who'd do the actual arrest, and John had extricated himself from the incident with the promise to file a report when he got back to his office. Flexing his tense muscles, he approached Kevin and Fawn where he had ordered them both to go and sit on a bench away from danger. Fawn had looked like she was ready to tell him where he could stuff it, but he had nodded to Kevin, and she complied.

When he spotted John, Kevin jumped up and ran to him. "Uncle John, I just knew it. When everybody started running down here saying some guy had a gun and was under arrest, I knew you would be the one to get him."

Fawn joined them and wrapped an arm around his waist. "Our hero." The sincerity in her eyes warmed him.

"Just doing my job, you two. No need to make a big deal about it."

Fawn sucked her teeth. "I think we need to celebrate with Chinese food and ice cream. Kevin echoed the sentiment. John laughed.

"Why that combo?"

She shrugged. "Just what I'm craving right now. I think I've had enough of the amusement park though."

"Yeah, I think you're right there." He directed them toward the exit when Kevin didn't object to leaving early, with a quick stop to retrieve the rabbit. Soon they were in the car and headed in the direction of his favorite Chinese joint. Aside from the idiot with the gun, it had been a very good day.

Chapter Seven

Fawn lay on her back with one leg crossed over the other and enjoyed John feeding her grapes. Each time he popped the tiny fruit into her mouth, she closed her eyes and moaned like she was in the throws of an orgasm.

He laughed. "Stop it, Fawn. This is no place to do that." He nodded toward the kids playing in several areas around the park. "Good grief, woman, I love sex. I'll be the first to admit it, but you're insatiable. Do you know that? I think it might be on your mind more than any guy's."

She rolled over and sat up on her knees. "Oh please. Don't even try it." She pointed to his crotch. "Your dick is hard ninety-nine and a half percent of the time when you're around me."

"Can you blame me? Look at what you're wearing."

She glanced down at her sundress, a rainbow tie dye pattern, spaghetti straps, scooped bodice, form-fitting, and of course—short. "What? Everything is covered."

"Yeah but there are hints all over the place. Hints that tell me what I could be enjoying beneath it if we were alone. I can't get my mind off your body."

She leaned across him to grab a grape from the Tupperware container. "Whose fault is that? Not mine. Apparently cops have dirty minds." She settled back on her rear, crossed her legs at her ankles, and admired the new pink fuchsia polish she had painted on her toes.

"You're impossible." He laughed and dove across to capture her wrist before she could eat another grape. He ate the one she had between her fingers while staring into her eyes. "I suppose I must give into you. Not like I can resist."

She waved a hand saucily. "Thank you. That's what *I'm* saying."

He laughed, and then the amusement died when his cell phone rang. He answered and listened to the person on the other end. Fawn's heart sank. She hated the seriousness that came over his expression and knew he would tell her he had to go. When he disconnected the call, he did a speed dial to another number right away.

"I'm sorry, baby, but we'll have to pick this up when next I'm off. Unfortunately, criminals don't respect my time off." He cursed and lowered the phone to look for Kevin. Fawn looked too and spotted him over with a couple other kids playing Frisbee. She pointed him out. "Kevin," John barked in a deep, authoritative tone. The boy turned around right away, said something to his friends, and ran over to them.

"What's up, Uncle John? We're not leaving now, are we? The game's just getting good, and—"

John rested a hand on his head. "Sorry, bud. I have to get to work. I'm trying to reach Mrs. Cecil now, but she's not answering."

Kevin grumbled, his head bowed. Then his head snapped up. "Can't Fawn watch me? We can stay at the park longer that way."

"Yes," Fawn answered.

"No," John replied at the same time.

She frowned. "Why not? Come on, we're all joined at the hip lately. Kevin's been around me enough to know me well, and we're good friends, aren't we, Kevin?"

The boy nodded. "Yeah, so how about it, Uncle John?"

John didn't answer. He continued to try Mrs. Cecil, apparently dialing every number he knew that she could be reached. Fawn began to think he didn't trust her to watch Kevin. Sure, she had no experience with kids, but Kevin wasn't a baby. She stood up. "You don't think I can do it, do you? What better time to prove that I can?"

He paced. "This is not something you experiment with, Fawn." She clenched her hands at her sides and was about to tell him about himself when he said into the phone. "Mrs. Cecil, I'm glad I finally got you. I have to go into work and wanted to see if you can watch Kevin. Oh, you're kidding. When do you expect to get in? That long?" He sighed.

Fawn dropped to the blanket they had been lying on and began packing up the dishes from their lunch. She brushed away crumbs and tucked the small pillow she had brought into a bag.

"Fawn," John said.

She didn't look up. "What?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean... Please, can you watch him? I would appreciate it."

She sighed. "Of course. I'd be happy to and don't know why you didn't ask before."

Kevin whooped and threw himself at Fawn's neck before bidding his uncle good-bye and running off to rejoin his friends. John dropped down behind her and drew her close to him. He kissed her cheek. She resisted him.

"I'm sorry," he said again.

"Whatever."

He turned her head to make her look at him. "I'll call later. At least your apartment is within walking distance of here. Don't stay past five."

"Yes, daddy." She rolled her eyes.

He gave her a deeper, more sensual kiss and then rose to leave. Fawn watched him go with butterflies in her stomach. She might have put on a brave front, but she knew how much John loved Kevin. The man was overprotective of him in some ways. He seemed to try to be super dad to make up for the loss of both his parents. The relationship between the two of them was unique and close. Fawn didn't want to screw up the trust John put in her, even if he was forced to do it.

* * * *

How did this happen? How the hell did this happen? Fawn berated herself over and over again, and no matter how many times she reviewed the afternoon with Kevin, nothing came through as a warning that she should not have let Kevin climb the tree. After all, wasn't that what kids did? She'd done it herself a million times as a child. Yet, Kevin had fallen out of it and sprung his wrist. Now, she was left with calling John from the hospital to tell him she'd screwed up. She felt like she was about to vomit.

Sucking it up for Kevin's sake, she dialed John. He answered on the first ring. "Hi, baby, I'm a little busy. Everything going good with you two?"

"Um." She swallowed. "John, don't get upset, but Kevin fell. We're at the hospital because he—"

"What?" he roared. She jerked the phone away from her ear, wincing at his loud tone. "Fawn!" he was calling. She put the phone up the side of her head but not too close.

"It's nothing serious. A mild sprain is all. He's okay," she explained.

“Where are you?”

She shivered at his frosty tone and told him. Before she could say another word, he hung up. Fawn hugged herself and walked over to sit down to wait for him. She’d told Kevin she would be back after she had called his father. Cell phones weren’t allowed back there because they might screw with the equipment. Right now, knowing how angry John was, she wished she was anywhere else in the world.

Guilt turned her stomach, making her want to cry again. She cared a lot about Kevin and had sobbed the whole way there hugging him and telling him she was sorry. He’d been the one to pat her up despite how much pain he was in. He was a real little man, she thought, the way he hadn’t shed a tear. He’d gritted his teeth and bore the agony he must be in. She knew that he did because he figured that’s how John would take it if it happened to him. Kevin thought the world of John. She closed her eyes. *But what will John think of me after this?*

She found out when she heard the siren before he arrived. Moments after it stopped, he came hurtling through the door, nostrils flared, eyes narrowed. Her throat dried. She stood up to face him on trembling legs. “John, he’s—”

He blew right past her and charged up to the information desk. “Where’s my son? His name is Kevin Harris. I’m Detective John Harris.”

He was shown to the back immediately, and not once did he look in her direction. Fawn sank to her seat. Angry at his treatment but understanding, she fought with her emotions. On one hand, she thought she should go back there to show John she cared, and on the other she didn’t want to see him. All of a sudden, she felt like an outsider, like she didn’t belong to their little family. And she didn’t.

While she sat there debating, time passed, and after a while, John reappeared, this time with Kevin at his side. She didn’t move or say a word. John held release papers in his hand and had an arm resting across Kevin’s shoulders. Kevin was wide-eyed looking at her. She had the feeling John had told him what an idiot she was for letting him fall.

John’s pause near her was almost imperceptible. “Let’s go, Fawn. I’ll take you home.”

She followed.

In the car, they sat quietly, and when she glanced over her shoulder at Kevin, she found him asleep. The hospital must have given him a pain killer that made him drowsy. She was glad he was getting rest and didn’t have to pretend to be a man. She wanted to reach back and stroke his hair, to croon to him and tell him everything would be okay now that she wasn’t hysterical, but she didn’t dare touch him. John looked like he wanted to attack.

“How did this happen?” he asked out of the blue.

She opened her mouth to explain, but he stopped her.

“Never mind how it happened. The fact that it did is bad enough. Kevin told me he fell out of a tree, and I’m assuming you let him.” He glared at her before focusing again on the road. “Either that or you just weren’t watching him carefully.”

“What?” All guilt fled in the face of his accusation. “I’ll have you know that I was watching him every minute. I was extra careful because I know how you are about him.”

“Maybe your care isn’t good enough,” he snapped.

She gasped. Hurt tightened her chest. She faced the window so he couldn’t see the tears welling in her eyes. She wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of that. “I didn’t think

anything was wrong with a boy climbing trees. Hell, I climbed trees when I was a kid. Everybody did.”

His chuckle was without humor. “That’s funny. You didn’t think. You know what *I* think, Fawn? I think you’re not mother material. You’re all about having a good time, nothing else. You think about what you want only and not anyone else. You’re selfish.”

The world seemed to crash down around her. “That’s what you think, huh?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I think.”

She sniffed and wiped tears from her cheek. “Well I feel sorry for you because your fears will keep you from living. And the pathetic thing is your fears don’t come from your own bad choices but from your brother! You’re an asshole. I’m a good person, no matter what you or anybody else feels. I don’t care how people judge me and think they know me just because of the way I dress and what I like to do for fun. I thought you’d moved past all that outward stuff, but I guess not.” He pulled into her apartment complex’s parking lot. “I tell you what, John. Don’t call me, and I definitely won’t call you!”

She jumped out of the car and ran for the building. By the time she flopped onto her bed and buried her face under her pillow, she was sobbing like her heart had shattered.

Chapter Eight

Three weeks had passed before John admitted he'd been wrong. He had overreacted. It was true that boys played rough, girls too at that age, and he'd even broken a few bones when he was a child. Yet, he'd gone off on Fawn for a mild sprain, all because he was terrified that one, he was thinking about making her a permanent part of his and Kevin's lives, and two, because he feared she was an irresponsible woman just interested in her next good time. He'd gotten to know her, saw how she interacted with Kevin. He knew she wasn't like that deep inside, but he'd let his fears rule him.

At night he couldn't sleep for thinking of her, missing her. During the day, he threw himself into his work, but he couldn't concentrate. Countless clues were missed and picked up by those on his team. He couldn't afford to screw up at work because people's lives were at stake. Knowing that didn't make his thoughts clearer.

Sitting at his desk late, he closed his eyes and rubbed them. Last time he'd gone to the rest room, he'd seen in the mirror that they were bloodshot. He wanted a stiff drink, but he hadn't eaten since morning. At the thought alone, his stomach grumbled. An idea entered his mind. If he took Fawn her favorite food and begged her forgiveness, would she take him back? It was worth a chance.

The phone rang. It was Kevin. "Hey, buddy. Going to bed?"

"Yeah." Kevin had been down lately as well. They didn't discuss it beyond John telling him he and Fawn had broken up. Kevin had pleaded with him to make up with her, telling him it wasn't a big deal, but John had still been angry. He'd forbidden Kevin to bring Fawn up again. He felt like a heel on all counts.

"It's early for you, isn't it?" he asked Kevin.

"Yeah, well I'm not in the mood for my games."

Guilt ate at John. He'd make it right. "Okay, I'll talk to you in the morning. I love you, bud."

"I know," was Kevin's reply, and he hung up. John sighed.

He rose from his chair, gathered the folders in front of him, and put them away. The sooner he spoke with her, the sooner the three of them would be happy again. He hoped.

At the Chinese food restaurant, he picked up Fawn's favorite meal—General Tao's Chicken and Crab Rangoon—and then headed over to her place. Being a Tuesday night, he didn't expect her to be out, but one never knew with Fawn. She liked to stay active and hated being bored. He smiled thinking of her boundless energy. If he was honest, he'd admit that she'd brought a new appreciation of life to him and Kevin. They both smiled a lot more when Fawn was around. Now they were more somber than before she came along, if that was possible.

He parked his car and hopped out, eager to see her. If she was angry, he'd tease her out of it. He knew all the things that would get her smiling or even laughing. If she'd been crying...His heart constricted. He slowed his steps and had to move so another could pass him on the couple of steps leading to the building. She'd been crying when she jumped out of his car. How could he forget that? He'd hurt her bad. A sweet and precious woman like her didn't deserve to be treated like garbage. He'd spend as much time as needed to soothe away the pain.

Upon opening the door, he could see straight down the steps leading to Fawn's apartment. He froze in place with the door half open and then darted inside to let it close.

The man who'd passed him when he walked too slow stood outside Fawn's door and had apparently knocked. The sound of Fawn's locks being undone reached John's ears, and then she opened the door.

"Hey, baby girl," the man said in deep, sensual voice.

"Hey, Mackie," she responded. "Come on in."

They disappeared inside leaving John standing there with a distinct chill coursing over his skin.

* * * *

Fawn covered a yawn. If she had to suffer through another day in this library, she would scream. She was going nowhere, yet before John, she could at least enjoy some modicum of her job like exploring the new books they got in. However, after she and he broke up, she couldn't keep her mind on work. All she wanted was to see him, to hear him. She'd cried for a week and a half and moped the rest of the time—that is when she wasn't cussing him out for judging her like he did. She missed Kevin too. She wanted to joke around with him and bet him she could beat him at something. Kevin brought out her competitive spirit.

Maybe John was right and she wasn't mother material. Shouldn't her relationship with Kevin have been based on her wanting to care for him and protect him? She wanted those things too, but they hadn't been a huge factor while she got to know him and while the three of them were having fun.

Fun. That's what she'd been judged on. Perhaps she should get more serious. That might be why she couldn't get the research job she wanted. The interviewers glimpsed that spark of life behind her eyes that said she might get up and dance naked on a stack of nineteenth century books. She laughed at that thought, the first chuckle since that day three weeks ago.

Stifling another yawn, she glanced up from the blurring computer screen into the face of her favorite boy. "Kevin," she exclaimed. "What are you doing here?" She looked past him for John but didn't spot him. "Where's your uncle?"

Kevin dipped his head. "He forgot me."

"What!" She lowered her tone and rushed around the counter to grab Kevin's hand. When she'd pulled him into the back room where no one was at the moment, she questioned him. "What do you mean forgot you?"

"He was supposed to pick me up at school today since Mrs. Cecil is out of town, but he forgot." The whole time Kevin spoke, she couldn't see his face because his head was down too low. She pulled him into a hug and stroked his hair. Her temper shot through the roof.

"That bastard has the gall to lecture me on responsibility, and then he goes and does something like this? Oh hell no. He's going to hear it from me." She checked the clock. The time said four-thirty. She had another hour on the job, but Mr. Peterson would just have to get over it. This was an emergency. "Come on, baby. I'm taking you to the station, and John better be there."

* * * *

“What do you mean he’s not here?” John roared. “I told him I’d be here fifteen minutes later than usual and he should wait for me inside. Do not tell me that you put him out of the building.” The principal looked uncomfortable in the face of John’s rage, as he should be. John did not want to hear that no one knew where Kevin was. This city could be dangerous, and they lived too far from Kevin’s school for him to have walked home.

“No, detective, we would never do that. We all know who Kevin is and that you’re his uncle. I saw him about an hour ago standing here on the steps, but then I had to go take a phone call. When I got back he was gone, and I assumed you or Mrs. Cecil had picked him up. I’ll go and question the staff to see if they know anything. If you’d like to come inside...”

“No,” John snapped. “I’m putting an APB out to find him. Trust me, if anything happened to him, I will hold you personally responsible. You have my cell phone. If you learn anything, use it! I will be at the station.”

Fear hammered in John’s system. The city was a terrible place for a young boy to be lost alone. Why had Kevin left the school grounds? He knew better. Or did someone force him to leave? No, he couldn’t think like that, or he’d lose his mind. He had to believe Kevin was safe. He’d find him, and if someone had hurt him, that person wouldn’t live to see the sun rise again.

Fifteen minutes later, John hurried into the station, and one of the guys called out to him. “John, someone just in to see you.”

“Not now,” he barked.

“You’re going to talk to me now, John Harris, and I mean it!”

He turned in shock at the sound of Fawn’s voice. There she stood with a very guilty looking Kevin at her side. John grumbled. “Do you have any idea how worried I was about you? What are you doing here?” he demanded of Kevin.

Fawn moved in front of his nephew with her hands on her hips, eyes blazing in anger. “I’ll tell you what he’s doing here. You rode me hard about being irresponsible and letting him get hurt, and now you forgot to pick him up from school! I can’t believe you. You’re no better than I am, and I don’t see how anyone ever left *you* in charge of a small child.”

He narrowed his eyes and dropped his voice very low. “Are you done?”

She seemed geared to start again, and John glanced around to find they had an attentive audience. He charged over to Fawn and dragged her toward his office with a clipped command for Kevin to follow. When they were in private, he sat on the edge of his desk and folded his arms over his chest. For a good five minutes, Fawn raked him over the coals with disgust plain on her face.

None of what he had hoped would happen when he saw her next did happen. She’d gone back to her ex and proved to him that she wasn’t what he thought. He hated the pain it evoked, knowing he couldn’t have her. Although she was mistaken in thinking he had forgotten, John felt the barrier between them. They couldn’t fix this.

“Well aren’t you going to say anything to defend yourself?” Fawn demanded.

He shook his head. “No, I’m not.” He looked instead at Kevin. “You have something to say, bud?”

Kevin seemed ready to memorize the floor. “I lied,” he said so low John just caught it.

“Say again?” John told him.

“I lied.” Kevin sniffed and finally looked up at Fawn. “I’m sorry, Fawn. I lied to you. Uncle John never forgot me. I left school and took a bus over to the library without Uncle John’s permission. He told me this morning he would be fifteen minutes late getting me, and Uncle John always gets the time just right. He’s good at that. Anyway, I didn’t mean to make anybody worry.”

Fawn dropped to her knees with tears in her eyes and dragged Kevin in for a hug. “Why would you do that, baby? Why?” She peeked up at John with a guilty look on her face. “I just said all kinds of bad stuff to your uncle because I thought he forgot. Now I feel like an idiot.”

“I just...” Kevin broke from Fawn’s hug and shuffled his feet around. He’d shoved his hands in his pockets, and the imprint of his fists flexing and unflexing showed through his school slacks. “I wanted you two to get back together. I thought if you talked, it would all work out.” He looked at Fawn. “I really like you.”

She sniffled. “I really like you too. But...”

John stood up straight. “But it’s too late for us to mend things. You’ll have to accept that Fawn and I didn’t work out, Kevin. I think you’re old enough to see that, aren’t you?” He waited, and soon Kevin nodded. Fawn stood up and turned her back on him. “Thanks for bringing him here, Fawn. I know you’re busy...”

“Yes,” she said quietly. “I jumped to the wrong conclusions.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

He thought he heard a sob, but he couldn’t have. She didn’t care about him that much since she’d run back to her ex. The fact that he’d gone to her place late at night meant...He pushed the thought from his mind, hating himself for wanting her and hating her for making him feel anything at all.

Fawn gave Kevin one last hug, and then she left without meeting John’s gaze or saying another word to him.

Chapter Nine

"Fawn?" Kevin called through the phone.

She yawned and fumbled around for her bedside clock. It was four in the morning. *What the hell?* "Kevin, is that you? Please, sweetie, it is too early in the morning for another trick. You know your uncle isn't going to go for it. He'll be pissed way off."

"He's been shot," Kevin sobbed.

Fawn jumped up and fell out of bed. She untangled herself from the covers and pressed her phone hard against her ear. "Kevin, that's no joke, and you should never even pretend—"

"It's true. It's true. Fawn, he's going to leave me. I just know it. Just like my dad. He's going to die!"

Her heart tattooed wildly in her chest. She struggled to keep control, knowing she had to be there for Kevin. "No, that's not going to happen. Where's Mrs. Cecil? Is she there?"

"Yes."

"Let me speak to her, and then I am coming right there where you are. Don't worry. I'll be there, Kevin. I promise."

She got the details from Mrs. Cecil, that John had indeed been shot and was right now in surgery to remove the bullet from his chest. Fawn rushed around her room to throw on some clothes. She sobbed much like Kevin had done on the phone and swiped at her nose every so often. He couldn't die. He just *couldn't*. She loved him so much, and even if they weren't together, she'd never want something that horrible to happen to him. He deserved happiness.

In less than fifteen minutes, she made it to the hospital in her old clunker and rushed into the emergency room. She knew she looked a trip in ratty old jeans and an oversized T-shirt, but she didn't give a damn. She spotted Kevin and Mrs. Cecil right away. When Kevin saw her, he raced to her and threw himself in her arms. Fawn held on for a long time crying with him. Maybe a good mother would hide her tears and pretend she was less affected, but Fawn couldn't bring herself to do it. She and Kevin held hands and wept in the middle of the floor.

When the tears eased, she guided him over to where Mrs. Cecil waited, and they sat down side-by-side. After some time, Fawn drew the courage to ask for more details about John's condition. "What are they saying? Will he be okay?"

Mrs. Cecil nodded to Kevin who had fallen asleep on Fawn's shoulder. The older woman handed Fawn a jacket rolled up, and Fawn tucked it beneath his head after extricating herself from his hold. When they had moved out of earshot, Mrs. Cecil explained what happened.

"It was his latest case. A man murdered his wife and then ran. John tracked him down on the Southside in an abandoned house. He had a gun and caught John unaware." She choked. "He wasn't wearing a vest."

"Did they say..." Fawn couldn't bring herself to complete the sentence.

"We don't know yet. Thank God the bullet missed his heart, but he's lost a lot of blood. All we can do at this point is pray." Fawn agreed, and they fell silent.

The hours passed. After John had been moved into recovery, Mrs. Cecil convinced the doctors to allow Fawn in to see him, but only for a moment. He lay asleep with a tube down his throat and an IV stuck in his arm. Her throat constricted. With rigid control, she

didn't sob but let tears roll down her cheeks. Dropping to her knees, she clutched his hand and planted a kiss on his still fingers.

"I love you so much, John. I wish...I wish I could go back in the past and not screw up so I could be in yours and Kevin's lives. I love him too. I know I'm not good enough. You don't have to tell me that. I've made poor choices in the past and will probably make many more. Just get well, baby. Not for me, but for Kevin. He needs you. *I* need you, but...I'll be okay. I'm always okay."

She didn't know how long she sat there with her face against his hand. She must have fallen asleep because she didn't hear the nurse come in who tapped her on the shoulder. When she kissed his hand one last time, she turned to leave and found several men looking solemn in the waiting room, some in police uniform.

"How's he doing, Fawn," one of the men asked.

Her eyes widened. "You know me?"

He smiled. "Yes, we all do. John's never been into a woman like he was with you." The man shrugged. "We noticed." The others echoed this statement, and she shared with them what she knew of John. His condition hadn't changed. Now, all they could do was wait until he woke up.

Time seemed to pass at a snail's rate over the next few days. Kevin had wanted to stay with Fawn, and while she would have loved him to stay with her, she didn't want to do anything that John wouldn't like. Instead, she visited Kevin at Mrs. Cecil's house, and together they visited John every day.

At last, the phone call she'd longed for came. John was awake. Fawn showered in record time and dressed. Then she headed over to Mrs. Cecil's house to pick up Kevin. Mrs. Cecil stayed behind to allow them time with John, and Fawn appreciated that. When she arrived at the hospital, she was glad that John's coworkers hadn't arrived either. She and Kevin hurried to the nurse's station in hope that they would allow the two of them in to see John without Mrs. Cecil, a retired nurse from the hospital as their way in.

"Ms. Hill, welcome back," the nurse on duty said. "He's been asking for you."

Her eyes widened. "Me?"

The nurse nodded, but Fawn thought she was just being nice. More than likely, John had been asking for Kevin. She took Kevin's hand and they went into John's room. Just as had been reported, John was awake and looking with eagerness toward the door. Her heart warmed at the excitement she saw stirring there. Not once during the whole time she'd been visiting him did Fawn stop speaking to John. She'd read in a magazine once that people who were in a coma had responded to their loved ones' voices. Fawn had hoped John's response to hers wouldn't be a negative one. She would have backed off if that had been the case, although it would have destroyed her.

"Hello," she said shyly.

"Hello."

She was scared to move from the doorway, but Kevin hurried forward and hugged his uncle. "I love you, Uncle John."

John smiled. "I love you too, bud. I know you've been worrying about me, but don't worry. I'm too stubborn to check out."

Kevin nodded.

Fawn played with her car keys still held in her hands. "I should give you two time alone."

“Fawn,” John called when she turned away. She stopped to look back. “Come here, please.”

On shaky legs, she moved across the room to his bed. He shifted his hand on the bed toward her, and she took it in hers like it was her lifeline. She stared down at the bed too scared to meet his eyes. Tears spilled over her lids and splashed onto her cheeks.

“I had a dream that you told me you love me,” he whispered.

“I...”

“Is it true, Fawn?” he asked, sounding almost as desperate as she felt. “A nurse told me you were here to see me every day. Why did you come, Fawn? I know your boyfriend wouldn’t like you being so attentive to another man.”

She blinked at him. “Boyfriend? What boyfriend?”

He glanced at Kevin. “Wait in the hall until Fawn comes back to get you, okay, buddy? I’m not going anywhere. I promise.”

Kevin hugged him one more time and then went into the hall. He shut the door behind him. John looked back at her. Her stomach began to hurt at his intense stare, even though she’d done nothing wrong. There had been no one but him since they began dating. At the rate she was going, there would never be anyone but him ever again. She couldn’t bear the thought of seeing another man.

“Just before that incident with Kevin, I came by your place to try to work things out, but unfortunately, another man beat me there. I heard you call him Mackie. That was the name of your ex-boyfriend, wasn’t it? It was late when I came, and I couldn’t imagine it was a social call.”

She froze. He had been there? He’d seen Mackie come in her place and must have spotted how she’d been dressed too. Nothing she said would turn things now. Nothing at all. She began to cry harder and tried to pull away from him. He held on and winced in pain at her tug.

“Stop, John. You’ll hurt yourself,” she begged.

“Don’t try to pull away from me, Fawn. Tell me the truth. Tell me everything. It’s the only way to resolve all our issues.”

She looked away. “Can they ever be resolved? You think I’m not good enough to be Kevin’s mother. I agree with you. That I love him doesn’t matter.”

His hand moved from her lap to her cheek. “Talk to me, Fawn.”

She took tissue from the box on his side table and wiped her nose. “I got it into my head that if I went back to Mackie, all the hurt I was feeling over you would go away—or at least ease. He had left several messages over the time I was dating you, but I always deleted them without calling him back. Guess the new girl dumped him. Anyway, that night I called him up, and he was still interested. I admit I invited him over for sex. I was going to numb the pain with him. I told him I loved you, but it hadn’t worked. I told him I wasn’t over you. He didn’t care.”

John’s hand fell to the bed, and he turned his head. Fawn was shocked to see tears in the hardened detective’s eyes, but he blinked them away and tightened his jaw. He stared at the ceiling saying nothing.

“I let him touch me, but—”

“I don’t need to hear anymore,” he interrupted.

“But it was so gross, I asked him to stop.”

John looked at her with hope in his eyes.

“I couldn’t go through with it. I am apparently doomed to suffer over losing you, knowing it was my own dumbness. And I’m glad that Mackie is a lot of bad things, but he’s not a rapist. He took my no for no and left.” She laughed. “Well not without cussing me out and calling me a tease.”

John chuckled. “Yeah, you are a tease.” His gaze dropped to her cleavage. She covered it.

“I would have worn something more respectable, but I grabbed the first thing. I need to tone down the way I dress and act.”

“Don’t change a thing, Fawn.” He took her hand, and they threaded their fingers together. “I love you just the way you are, and Kevin does too. I was the one wrong. I shouldn’t have said the things I did or even considered them. You’re a good woman. You’ve brought light into my life and into Kevin’s life. We were lost without you. I want to spend my life making up for how I behaved. If you’ll only give me a chance, I promise to do everything in my power to make you happy.”

She stared at him. “What are you saying?”

He grinned. “I’m saying marry me. Make me the happiest man on Earth.”

Her mouth dropped open. “Are you sure about that, John? You don’t believe in marriage.”

“I believe in us.”

“Then yes! Yes, I’ll marry you!” Fawn ran out to grab Kevin and told him the news. He whooped and then quieted remembering where he was. They gathered together around John’s bed clinging to one another, and Fawn vowed she’d never let either of them go again.

Chapter Ten

“Oh no you don’t, Detective Harris,” Fawn warned John. “The doctor said you’re still to take it easy. You just lay back.”

John grumbled. “He cleared me for sex, Fawn, and I will have my fiancée. How can you expect me to resist when you come out of the bathroom in that paper thin thing. Damn it, look at your nipples begging me to touch and taste.”

She grinned and wiggled them for his enjoyment. His cock grew out in an instant. She reached down and brushed it with her fingertips. He seized her hand and pressed it harder to him. “You’ll have all of me, baby,” she promised, “but I’m in charge here. You don’t get to be on top. Now, Big Daddy, let Mama please you.”

Excitement brimming in his eyes, he laid back on the pillows. She straddled his hips. The babydoll nightie she’d bought from Victoria Secret was sheer, and she’d known when she slipped into it after her shower that John would be drooling. She’d worn no bra, and her nipples were pebbled in clear view for him to see.

She raised the nightie up to reveal her matching white thong and tugged at one strap. “Do you like my thong too?”

He panted. “Hell yes.”

She giggled. His cock shifted under her. She leaned back and explored inside his pajama bottoms to find the treasure she loved. “Yummy, look what I found.” She tugged it free of the confining material and ran her hand from base to tip. John groaned, his head dipping back. “You’ve worked hard, detective. I think you deserve a reward.”

She scooted down his body and lowered her head toward his cock. John seemed ready to explode. He watched with an intent expression as she stuck out her tongue to sample the precome rising from his tip. John let out a curse. She raised her head. “You’ve reverted to old ways, John. Maybe you don’t deserve a treat.”

“Fawn, if you don’t stop teasing me, I’m going to injure myself and take you by force.”

She laughed. “You’d never do that.”

His eyes narrowed. “Try me.”

Sticking his shaft into her mouth, she cupped his balls and lowered her mouth as far as she could. She sucked hard and rose up again. John fisted her hair. Loving his flavor, she engulfed much of his length, twirled her tongue over the head, and coaxed him to give her his flow. John’s balls contracted. She knew he’d burst soon, so she pumped his erection faster.

“Ah, baby, you’re going to make me come. How I love you,” he roared. She lifted her gaze from his cock and watched him enjoy what she was doing to him. She drew back a little until only his head extended between her lips. A squeeze and a forceful milking brought him to a head. His come shot into her mouth, and to her lover’s delight, she drank down every drop.

When she sat up from him, wiping her lips with the back of her hand, John put a hand out to her. She climbed higher on the bed and nestled carefully over him but not putting too much pressure on his wound. He’d come a long way, but she wasn’t taking any chances. He meant everything to her.

“You are the most amazing woman on the planet,” he told her. “And to think I was stupid enough to almost give you up.”

She rolled her eyes. "Well you know men aren't the brightest spots in the universe."

He squeezed her ass. "Naughty. You're going to get it when I'm one hundred percent."

"Promises, promises."

To her surprise and pleasure, he pushed aside her thong, and his shaft, already hard again, glided up her slick channel. Fawn moaned. For a man weak with an injury, John was strong enough to raise her hips and place her in the center of his body. He tugged her legs open and drove himself deeper.

"You were saying?"

She could do nothing but moan and grind into his hips. Slow and easy, they made love, Fawn closing fast on her climax. Moans escaped her and with her eyes fluttered closed, she let John control their rhythm. Even on his back, the man was a force, and all she wanted was to have him hold her, to have him deep inside her forever like he was.

When she came, she tried to keep still, but John squeezed her ass and drove harder into her. She cried out his name, and her core muscles clenched around his cock until she couldn't help herself. She rode him, bouncing along his thick rod and bracing herself on one hand. John pulled her tighter to him, and then she felt his release. He groaned, keeping their hips gyrating together for along time.

Afterward when they came down to Earth, John rolled her to her back, and she snuggled up to him. "You okay?"

"Are you kidding? I'm perfect. A little soreness isn't going to stop me from enjoying that."

She sat up. "Oh no, I got out of control. Let me get your medicine."

He caught her before she could get off the bed and hauled her back to him. "Stay right here with me, Fawn. Always."

"I will."

They laced their fingers together, and Fawn began to drift off. As she slipped into dream land, she wondered when would be a good time to tell him she'd missed her period and the early test she'd taken had come out positive. At last, she had what she'd thought she could never have. She had a family of her own.

The End

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