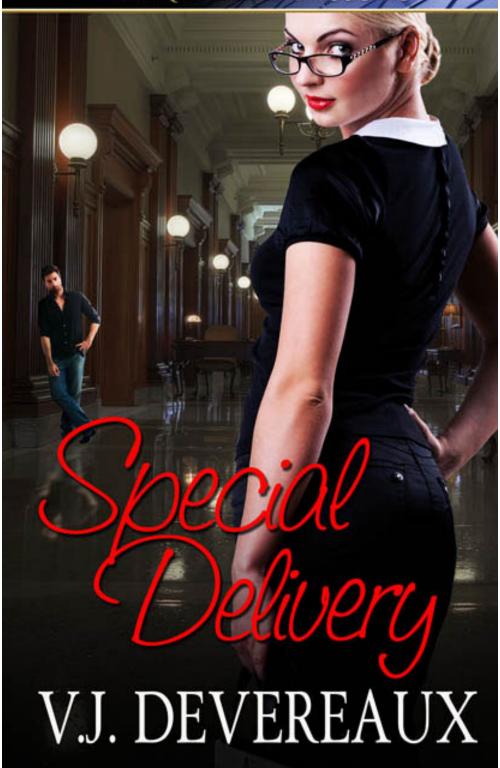
ELLORA'S CAVE Moderne



Special Delivery

V.J. Devereaux

Federal Prosecutor L.C. Mackay couldn't cruise the bars—that was too dangerous for someone in her position. Instead she decided to check the dating websites. Not for dates; she was too busy for relationships, especially in the middle of one of the biggest trials of her career. She just wanted sex. Hot, lusty, soul-shattering sex. The perfect way to destress and relax.

The man was beautiful. He had the face of a fallen angel and a body made for a pinup calendar. So what was he doing on a dating site? His name was Rick, the caption said, and his profile was simple—if a woman was looking for good, clean, no-strings sex, contact him. He always wore a condom, had no communicable diseases and could provide proof if asked.

Just what she needed. But, she wasn't really considering it, was she?

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Special Delivery

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SPECIAL DELIVERY

V.J. Devereaux

Dedication

For Laura, Joann and Cassandra, my readers who caught the things I couldn't see.

And as always, to my beloved husband, without whom this wouldn't be possible.

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Bluetooth: Bluetooth Sig, Inc.

BMW: Bayerische Motoren Werke Aktiengesellschaft

Crown Victoria: Ford Motor Company

Hummer: General Motors Corporation

Lord of the Rings: The Saul Zaentz Company DBA Tolkien Enterprises

Chapter One

Already the trial seemed to be taking forever and Lacey hadn't even finished making the prosecution's case. As she dragged herself wearily into her apartment she didn't feel much like Federal Prosecutor L.C. MacKay, the woman they'd nicknamed Dynamite for her diminutive size but enormous energy. She was just one tired woman. Tired in body and tired in spirit. This case was wearing her out.

Anthony Cardenas was one of the biggest drug dealers on the East Coast, an affiliate of the Mexican drug cartels. The cartels now operated in most U.S. cities and had brought their own particular brand of mayhem with them. Cardenas had chosen the small town of Bridgeport in which to take up residence and run his operation. That had dropped him smack into her jurisdiction and so it had fallen to her to prosecute him.

Information from the case had been leaked that shouldn't have. She was like the boy in the cartoons, trying to plug the dam with his finger except that new holes kept springing up. With the amount of money involved, the risk of corruption was always there and there was suspicion that someone was on the take—either a cop or someone on her own team.

She hated either thought but she had limited the access to the materials and now put vital information in a safe and locked it each night.

Threats had been made against her too, but that was part of the job. Lacey refused to bow to them. She didn't take them lightly though. She kept watch as she drove, keeping alert to make certain she wasn't followed. When she neared her apartment building, she checked that no one lingered near her building door. She used the same caution when she parked and left her car. She was alone but she was always careful.

As if I'm going to be anything else but alone, she thought with a sigh as she left the elevator and walked to her apartment. At least until this trial is over. She opened her door then dropped her purse and briefcase on the table just inside.

Loneliness was guaranteed until it was over and done. Considering there just weren't that many men she could trust inside or outside of it and the few she could were off-limits—a clear conflict of interest if anyone discovered it. Her love life, never much to speak of, was officially on pause.

This case was too important to risk. All of which, on reflection, had been brought up by a visit to her office by her boss.

Her office, as usual, mirrored her caseload. Current cases were in one filing cabinet, completed cases with pending issues or appeals in another set, with the most current case spread across her table and desk, sorted by witnesses, evidence, etc.

Joel Hamilton, her boss, was a big, raw-boned handsome man with a craggy face and piercing eyes. Happily married with three kids, he was very, very off-limits. She liked and respected him a great deal and they got along well. For which she was profoundly grateful as he backed her play as much as he was able.

But, seeing what he had in his hand, not this time.

A formal envelope. He knew how much she hated those things. He held it out to her and, reluctantly, she took it and opened it.

Looking at the paper, an invitation to a charity black-tie dinner via the governor and the State House, Lacey deliberately kept her jaw loose as she looked up at him.

"You have to be kidding me," she said. "I'm in the middle of one of the biggest drug cases in the state and I'm also supposed to kiss up to some politician?"

"No," he said, dryly, his expression wry. "I'm not kidding, and yes, you are. It's just part of the job, MacKay, part of the job."

"Just because you have to go doesn't mean I have to," she replied, grinning a little crookedly and shaking her head.

He grinned back. "Yes it does, but at least you don't have to wear the monkey suit."

"No," she said. "I have to wear a dress that doesn't show a single extra pound and high heels that will have my feet screaming in an hour. Want to trade?"

"Like you have to worry about weight," he scoffed, laughing, as he turned. "No, and you can keep the heels, they're just not me."

Lacey chuckled.

Keeping the weight off was harder than he knew but there was no point in telling him that. She tried not to look at his pretty magnificent ass as he walked away, then smiled and taped the invitation to her monitor so she wouldn't forget.

A black-tie dinner that she would attend alone, to dance with men she couldn't date. Sheer torture.

She glanced upward to shoot an unfair God a nasty look.

* * * * *

As she stepped into her apartment she half listened as the door clicked shut, automatically locking behind her as she dropped her briefcase and purse on the table just inside the door.

She turned on a single lamp, leaving the rest of the apartment in soothing shadow. She reached for the wine bottle on the counter and poured herself a glass—rich and red—something to get her blood warmed up and pumping again.

At least the next day was Friday and the judge would recess them for the weekend.

However, there was no rest for either the wicked or the weary. She still needed to review her notes from the trial so far, the testimony of the upcoming witnesses, look for and plug any possible holes the defense could find in her witnesses' testimonies—some of whom were fragile at best, terrified at worst, and understandably so, all the way around. The Mexican cartels had refined terror to an art form.

It all fell on her as the lead attorney. Which was fine with her, she could handle it. All her life she had wanted to defend the innocent, the helpless, to fight for those who couldn't fight back. She had no reason for it, no trauma in her past, it was just who she was.

The trauma had come later when she realized how few she could save.

She was young for the position. In college, she had been a gifted student, blessed with a memory like a steel trap, and so she had carried a heavier-than-usual course load, determined to go high, far and fast. With the aid of the U.S. government to help pay for it, she had—rising quickly, a shooting star, aided by her service with the Judge Advocate General's office in Afghanistan at the beginning of the war and joining the federal prosecutor's office when she got out.

Her heart twisted a little at the memories but she sighed and put them aside as she flipped quickly through the mail before she tossed it to the counter.

Carrying the glass of wine to the couch, she flipped the TV on, more for the noise and the illusion of company than for any other reason, and opened her personal laptop rather than the one the government provided for her.

She shrugged out of her suit jacket as she scanned the web pages.

Absently pulling the pins from her hair, she found her home page didn't offer much consolation or relief, especially after finding her own picture accompanying one of the blurbs on the local news pages. She hated having her picture out there, which was another reason she made an effort to look markedly different away from work.

With relief she let her hair spill down around her shoulders, shook her head and scrubbed lightly at her scalp. In the office and in court she always wore it up, either in a French twist or a bun at the nape of her neck, to keep the wavy mass of it firmly under control. She loved having long hair though, loved what she could do with it, but she had also found that both judges and jurors viewed her more seriously when she kept it up. It was also part of her persona at work—strict, straitlaced, tough and no-nonsense. Almost the complete opposite of who she was in private.

The weight of the trial lay heavily on her shoulders. Not for the first time, she wished she had a shoulder to lean against but she had discovered that on the way to

being a kick-ass federal prosecutor she had somehow become intimidating to most men. A wry smile twisted her mouth at the thought as she briefly set the computer aside and wandered toward her bedroom.

A glance in a mirror as she passed gave the reason for her amusement. At just barely five-foot-three barefoot, with her curly blonde hair tumbled around her shoulders and pale blue eyes, she hardly pictured herself as intimidating. Since the *Lord of the Rings* movies though, there had been a few who had compared her to an elf, others to an avenging angel. The last especially made her laugh. Anyone who really knew her knew she was no angel.

She hung her jacket and skirt on a hanger for the dry cleaners, not even considering wearing them a second time, not the way she had sweated that day in court. Not that she had let that show either.

Nothing showed. Not on her face. She was as cool as a cucumber in the courtroom, before TV cameras, wherever—unflappable, the ice queen.

It had been tough going, especially under the blistering gaze of Tony Cardenas and his associates.

She had called only the cops and expert witnesses to the stand so far, not the individual witnesses. The ones who had been directly hurt by Cardenas. Particularly Ellen Foster.

Foster's home had been invaded and she and her two youngest children had been terrorized as Cardenas' boys had searched for her eldest son—all of fourteen and one of Cardenas' dealers. Word on the street was the kid had been skimming.

A few days later the boy had disappeared.

His decapitated body had been found in the woods, beaten and bound—decapitation being one of Cardenas' favorite methods of expressing his displeasure.

The trial was a lot of responsibility.

She headed to the bathroom. A quick shower refreshed her a little. She returned to the living room and curled up on the couch once again to scan her email as she glanced at the TV screen now and then, finding little in either place to hold her attention.

She realized she was just putting off the inevitable. Her one guilty pleasure...her secret addiction.

If she couldn't have a man in her life, she could dream — or at least daydream.

This was her personal laptop. This one was as private as she could make it. In no way did her real name or ownership of it appear anywhere on it or on any of the software, save for the credit card bill when she had purchased it.

She didn't, couldn't, cruise the bars. That was far too dangerous for someone in her position, so she cruised the dating websites instead, to look at the eligible men who were some years younger than she, but who was to know? Most of them were average, more than a few were nice or very nice to look at, and one or two were absolutely drop-dead gorgeous.

More than one or two. She stopped at a particular picture.

God, the man was beautiful.

He had the face of a fallen angel, with piercing eyes so dark brown they looked black, chiseled cheekbones in a lean, handsome face with strong, defined features and a square jaw. His firm mouth was made for kissing, the lower lip a little fuller than the top. His dark hair was cropped close to his head, his beard neatly trimmed to frame that firm mouth, to trace that jaw.

His eyes couldn't possibly be that piercing in real life. He had a dash of daring, of mischief, and promise in those twinkling eyes, while a sexy come-hither grin played around his lips.

It was too easy to dream of sucking on that mouth, nibbling on that lush lower lip.

At the corner of it was the hint of a dimple.

He was a fire sign, as was she, promising passion, energy. Both of which she needed. While she wasn't sure how much she believed in any of that, she was as superstitious as any of her colleagues. Even the ones who swore they weren't superstitious.

And then there was his body.

In the picture he stood with his shirt open to reveal an impressive set of pecs and a lean, ridged six-pack that made her brain just seize up and freeze. She thought she caught just the hint of a tattoo on a muscled arm, the edges barely hidden beneath a short sleeve. What would it be like to touch that sculpted body, to run her fingers over those solid muscles, to have those long legs in those tight jeans wrap around her?

Damn, just the thought of touching him made her hot and wet.

"Special Delivery" was the name he had given his dating page.

He certainly was.

What was a man like that doing on a dating website? He should have women pounding down his door.

Reluctantly, she closed the page.

She hesitated, fighting a grin. Then there was the Special Friends site.

For a dating site, it was just this side of porn, and sometimes not just, it crashed the party entirely.

Half the time it just made her giggle like a teenager.

Many of the men on the site had just taken pictures of their "packages" in varying stages of readiness. It was a smorgasbord of cocks, some incredibly and unbelievably impressive, providing an eye-opening experience in more ways than one.

Some also included their faces, but not all.

One body though, caught her eye this time.

The picture had been cropped to cut off the face and highlight the rounded curves of the man's pecs beneath the shirt, the ridged abdomen. In this view, the jeans had been left unbuttoned and partly unzipped to hint at what lay beneath and he was clearly wearing no underwear. He hadn't needed to expose himself, what he had was blatantly illustrated by the thick ridge beneath the jeans.

Involuntarily, Lacey went hot, tight and wet at the thought of what lay behind that zipper.

Oddly enough though, there was something familiar about that body, about the picture.

The more she studied it, the more it seemed familiar. She thought she caught a glimpse of a tattoo on one arm.

As a visitor to the site, she was allowed one look into a file, a hint of the profile. A tease, but it was enough.

His name was Rick, it said, and his profile was simple—if a woman was looking for good, clean, no-strings sex, contact him. He always wore a condom, had no communicable diseases, and could provide proof if asked.

Lacey's mouth and throat went dry. Her pussy contracted just looking at that body as a thousand fantasies ran through her mind. She swallowed hard.

Well...

No, she wasn't really considering it. Was she?

He still seemed familiar though.

On impulse, she opened up another tab, returned to the other dating site and scanned through until she found the one she wanted.

Again she thought she saw the hint of a tattoo.

Comparing the two pictures, there was no doubt in her mind that Rick was also Special Delivery.

His profile there was equally blunt. All of the "interest" boxes had been left unchecked. He wasn't looking to reveal anything of himself, wasn't looking for or

expecting a long-term relationship. Anything else though? If that was what the lady wanted, he would be more than glad to provide it.

To her shock and amazement, just looking at that chiseled face, that incredible body, she found she *was* considering it, her pussy tightening at the thought. What would it be like to have that warm skin, those firm muscles, beneath her palms? That hard body against hers? That thick cock slide up inside her?

He obviously had a credit card or he couldn't have paid for the site. So, he had an address, a job and earned enough money to pay for both services on a monthly basis. It wasn't that expensive, but it wasn't cheap either. He was also internet savvy.

There was a remote chance he could also be a serial killer but she would have known if one was around. It was her job to know such things.

No-strings sex with a gorgeous man she didn't know. And who didn't know her. A total stranger, no connection to the case, no ties to that life. As safe for her as possible.

Her name wasn't on her mailbox downstairs, or on her apartment door.

It was one night. A hookup. Internet hookups were commonplace nowadays.

A little rush of excitement shot through her.

A lot could be said for the idea. Certainly with this one. He would be someone she could be her true self with, because he couldn't possibly know her. She didn't have to maintain the standards that L.C. MacKay did. If all she could have was the sex, she was perfectly willing to trade it for intimacy, for love, or the illusion of either. She would have paid almost anything at that point just to have someone touch her, someone to ease the terrible tension building inside her. Someone with whom she could let her hair down.

It was unlikely that anyone who knew her knew she was sex-starved and so lonely she'd have paid for company if she had dared risk it. The pressure on her was relentless. It weighed her down.

She had made it through before and she would make it again if she needed to, but...

What if she didn't need to?

Just the thought of those strong muscular arms around her was enough to make her want to weep. It certainly made her pussy want to. To make love to that? To have that hard body pressed against her? To have a cock buried deep inside her, making her forget the tension, the worry and fear of making a critical mistake. The concern that a single misstep, a sudden surprise, would set a man like Cardenas free? To feel pleasure that would turn her muscles loose, her bones soft...

She'd always been highly sexed, had always believed that you couldn't be as passionate, as driven as she was in or out of the courtroom and not be. As the months of preparation and then the weeks of the trial had dragged on, her need had only grown.

Toys had carried her for a while but they just weren't enough anymore. There just wasn't any substitute for contact, for the touch of hands, for a warm body against hers.

She hurt. She was lonely.

On impulse, she turned to the Special Friends site, to make it clear what it was she was looking for. An instant message link allowed her to tap out an inquiry.

Taken on a short vacation a few years past, the picture attached to her IMs had been chosen deliberately for its ambiguity. In the photograph she was sitting on a pier by the ocean, holding her billowing sundress down between her legs. Her hair was down and she had sunglasses on to hide her eyes. It was a playful, fun image, but it didn't give a lot of detail. In it she looked nothing like L.C. MacKay and everything like Lacey, the nickname her little sister had given her. She typed her first instant message.

Are you for real?

Truthfully, she didn't expect an answer and certainly not so soon. She had already turned away from the site when her IM pinged and a message popped up.

	Yes.
	Simple, short and to the point.
	Her eyebrows shot up.
	For a moment she went still. Then she flipped back to his picture. Not the one on
the	"friends" site, but on the dating site.
	Was he really as beautiful as that picture?
	She swallowed hard.
	Please forgive me if this question is rude but, you don't expect anything in return?
	A paid escort or male prostitute would ruin her. She couldn't take that chance.
	A pause, then.
	No. Just great sex.
	For some reason that made her grin. She shot back a response.
	Promises, promises. How do you know it will be great?
	Because I'm that good.
	Cocky. Or confident?
	Yep. That too.
	I like cocky men.
	Good thing.
	A smiley face was attached, a wink and a grin.

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Her mood lightened, she smiled. All right.

You're also on the Matchmaker dating site.

She wanted him to know she knew that.

Are you?

She shook her head, though he couldn't see her since her camera was turned off. It was too much of a risk that someone might recognize her.

No. I just look, lurk.

Did you like what you saw?

Oh, yeah. Wow. Impressive pecs.

A laughing smiley face appeared.

She liked him already.

Is your offer serious?

Are you interested?

God, if she didn't do something soon, she'd lose it. It was just too much and she couldn't talk to any of her colleagues about it, it would be seen as a sign of weakness. Weakness wasn't something she could afford, not now.

It wasn't the pressure, it was the isolation.

This case was different. Too much money was involved—Cardenas had been raking in millions—and too much danger. Two witnesses had mysteriously disappeared just

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before trial. Her other witnesses were now in protective custody, just in case. For a

moment, only a moment, she hesitated.
Yes. Okay. When?
She was a little startled and surprised.
Don't you want to know anything about me? No.
He typed another smiley face, this one with its arms outstretched.
Just tell me what you want. Is it your fantasy to make love to a stranger? Do you want to be kissed?
Kissed? She pictured his hard body against hers, that firm mouth with its slightly full lower lip, kissing her. Her body tightened.
Yes and yes. Are you a good kisser?
A pause.
You'll have to judge that for yourself.
She chuckled.

Special Delivery

All right. When are you free?

A moment passed before he answered.

How soon do you need me?

Need him? Now, tonight.

Would tomorrow be too soon? I'd ask for tonight but it's late.

Her breath caught, waiting for his response.

Tonight would be possible, but you're right, it is late and I like to take my time. Tomorrow night will be fine. How would you like it to go? Would you like to be swept off your feet? Carried into the bedroom, f**ked until you scream?

Her breath exploded out of her as her pussy went hot and wet. She swallowed hard as her throat went dry at the thought of him taking his time.

Yes, that would work very well.

Do you like your nipples sucked, your clit licked?

Well, that was to the point. Now her nipples ached as well. She shook her head as she imagined his mouth on them—hot, wet and warm.

A little bouncing smiley face appeared and she laughed.

Yes and yes. *smile*

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Good. Where?
She told him.
I'm Rick. What do I call you? Lacey.
It was how she thought of herself, but no one except family called her that. And now this man.

Chapter Two

The building was one of the newer courthouses, built to be less imposing than the old for some reason, oddly sterile and strangely institutional, but apparently there was still some impulse to include wood. There were odd touches of it around the room—the judge's bench, the defense and prosecution tables, and strangely located accent pieces. None of it made the room seem any less bland. On the contrary, it tended to make the room seem only that much more institutional.

To her amusement, Lacey found herself energized, anticipating the events of the evening as she walked into the courtroom the next day. It had been too long since she had been touched. With her career, dates were few and cautious. She was always conscious of her image, her reputation, but with Rick she didn't have to worry. He didn't know her. In a way, he would just be her relief valve. And it would be only this one time.

Even so, a dozen times during the day as the trial progressed and more expert witnesses testified, she thought to send an email and call it off. The risk was tremendous. Each time she did though, she'd remember his picture. The pecs, the abs, the daring in that grin and the glint in those dark eyes stopped her every time. If he was half as gorgeous as his pictures, if he had half as much of a sense of humor as his IMs...

Finally the day's testimony drew to a close.

Still cautious, still wary and watchful, she was home in record time.

She showered, taking her time afterward to prepare with a light body spray all over before she drew on the embroidered silk robe she normally wore around the apartment to remind herself now and then that she was still a woman and not just an attorney, not just a federal prosecutor. She even applied some makeup, keeping it light, casual.

The doorbell rang and she jumped.

It was madness and she knew it, to bring him here, to her own apartment. But a hotel was completely out of the question. It was too public, too many people might recognize her. There would be records. She had always been a risk taker. Most of her gambles had paid off though. Would this one?

If she didn't like the look of him or the vibe, she could simply not open the door.

On bare feet she ran to the door to peer through the fisheye peephole, excitement racing through her, her nerves alight as she prayed not to be disappointed.

She wasn't.

Her breath caught at the sight of what waited on the other side of the door. The man on display was everything he had advertised...and more.

He was gorgeous, absolutely, incredibly gorgeous.

A shot of heat burst through her.

If anything, he was more handsome in person than he had been in his pictures. The high chiseled cheekbones with the slight hollows beneath them were definitely as promised, as was the lean, square jaw, the firm mouth with that lush bottom lip and those piercing dark eyes.

And the dimples. One couldn't forget those dimples.

His body was magnificent beneath the t-shirt and jeans, his broad shoulders and chest stretched the tight cotton, his arms were strongly and firmly muscled. His waist was lean, trim, the jeans snug around narrow hips and long, long legs.

She thought she could see a hint of the military in his stance but what the pictures couldn't convey was the air of strength about him, of competence, even a kind of dangerousness. Not the mean dangerousness she saw every day in Cardenas and his cohorts but the kind that said this man knew how to take care of himself.

Every part of her went hot, tight and wet at the sight of him.

She opened the door.

In an instant, she was swept off her feet and into his arms. His hot mouth closed over hers. Heat burst inside her as he kicked the door shut behind him, his hands slid down to tighten around her butt and he lifted her. He held her easily, as if she were nothing.

No doubt about it, Lacey thought in that brief moment when she still could think, he can kiss. Then thinking was done. His mouth was incredible, mobile as it devoured hers. It moved over hers, possessed her. His tongue dove deep to taste, to take. It swept through her mouth, claimed every part of it as he drove her back against the wall, as he hefted her higher and his hands cupped her ass. She wrapped her legs around his waist.

She melted, his embrace firm but not frightening, his mouth possessive.

But she could kiss too, and kissing that firm mouth was a pleasure. Her tongue met his, tangled with it, the taste of him as clean and fresh as water.

Their tongues dueled. She nibbled and sucked at that full lower lip. He asked directions to the bedroom, then backed her quickly toward it.

Rick was stunned and incredibly aroused with just that one brief glance. His first and only thought was, *What is a woman like her doing calling me*? Most of the women who contacted him didn't look anything like her. Not that he minded. He loved women, all kinds of women, that was one of the reasons he did this, but she was something else, another level entirely. He had a brief glimpse of a tumble of golden hair that framed a pair of eyes so blue they reminded him of the color of a glacier he'd seen in a picture—pale, yet vibrant.

Her firm mouth moved beneath his as hungrily as he ravaged hers. That response was another pleasant surprise. Most of the women who called him didn't have the slightest clue what to do, what it was to make love, not really. They were tentative, unsure of what they wanted or what to do and he wanted to kick the asses of the men who had treated them so poorly.

This woman though, wasn't tentative in the least. Her hands skimmed over his shoulders to curl around his head, her fingers combing into his hair to pull his mouth down harder against hers. Passion burst into flame inside him, his cock hard in an instant.

Most of the women posted pictures that showed them in their best light and those pictures weren't necessarily accurate—nor were the men's pictures—concealing age and extra pounds.

He couldn't even guess her age, and at the moment he really didn't care. If she was carrying extra pounds it was in all the right places and all he wanted to do was fuck her. Slowly. Take his time to enjoy every minute of fucking something as sweet as her.

In the brief moment he had to see before his mouth closed over hers he could tell the apartment was nice, the kind he expected from this class of neighborhood. It was clearly laid out, her bedroom door already open and waiting.

He reached the bedroom and let her fall back gently to the bed, catching her head in his hand as he let her drop to the mattress and almost wished this weren't so choreographed, so rehearsed, but he would keep to the plan, to the script. Though he already was pretty sure he wouldn't be able to keep to it for long. There was simply too much here to play with.

Still a lot of pleasure was built into that script. After all, he was the one who had written it.

He worked hard at keeping his body in shape and if there was one thing he was definitely good at, it was sex. He also had a stronger sex drive than most men but it was more than that. A lot more.

Things had been rough after he'd come back from overseas. He'd had a hard time adjusting. Relationships were difficult, and not just for him, but for a number of the guys who had come back. The thought of doing without sex though...

Rick loved women. He loved the way they looked, loved the way they smelled, he loved making love to them, he loved sex, loved watching the pleasure he gave them.

More than anything else, he loved to fuck and he hadn't yet met the woman who could keep up with him.

After a conversation with one of his newly divorced coworkers it hadn't taken him long to realize that he didn't have to give up women, there were a lot of lonely ones out there, most of them reading romance novels with pictures of guys who looked like him on the cover.

All of them wanted to be touched, if only once, by someone who looked like him, had a body like his. This way he made a lot of women happy, as well as himself.

This woman though?

He trailed his mouth over her cheek, her skin as soft and smooth as a rose petal beneath his, to taste the tender skin at the curve of her jaw and she shivered beneath him. Her body strained upward to meet him, to brush against him. It sent a rush through him and he feasted on her throat as she turned her head, allowed it to fall back to give him access.

Another shot of heat went through him.

With one hand braced on the mattress, he let the other cruise up from her hip, slowly gathering the thin material of that soft silk robe, drawing on it so it would slip away to reveal her skin, her body to him. For the first time in a long time a rush of anticipation went through him.

Even more astonishing was the sensation of her hands as she stroked him in return. Those small hands skimmed over his shoulders, up and down his arms, drew his head, his mouth, harder against her throat as her body shifted and writhed beneath him.

Heat poured through Lacey in rushing waves of need, of desire. She couldn't get enough of his hard body, poised over hers, of his hands, his mouth on her. She craved that touch, yearned for it. Her own hands were hardly still as she ran them up his strong arms, over his broad shoulders, wherever she could reach, her fingers combing through his close-cropped hair. She smiled at the smoothness of it beneath her hands.

That expert mouth knew all the places to touch as his lips moved over her throat, paused a moment where her pulse beat wildly against his mouth and then skimmed down to where it curved to meet her shoulder, to savor her there with lips and tongue. Already her body was heated, on fire, her nipples tight, her pussy aching and wet. Fire burned wherever his mouth touched and goose bumps shimmered over her skin as his lips traced a path along her collarbone, down along the curve of her breast as her robe was drawn slowly away from her body. Cool air washed over her, but didn't come close to putting out the fire beneath her skin.

His hand caught and cupped her breast at the same moment his warm mouth closed around her nipple.

Lacey cried out softly. Her back arched as pleasure shot from nipple to core to pussy.

That soft cry, her body rising to him, sent another bolt of lust, of desire, through Rick. Her nipple was a rigid peak against his tongue and he savored it, drew on it. The warm, firm, full weight of her breast as it filled his hand was just another cause for delight. It seemed as if her breast swelled just to his touch and he continued to caress it as he moved his mouth to the other nipple, nipping it lightly.

Her hips bucked.

It was as if in the past he had played a violin, joyfully and with skill, but now he played a Stradivarius.

He was in heaven. Making love to her was a joy. Here there was no tentativeness, no delicate sensibilities, no protests, no need to hide some part of her anatomy and no rush. She was just passion.

Drawing that hard bud into his mouth, he suckled on it hard and she moaned, writhed beneath him as her hands slid up his arms to clutch at him, to cling to him.

He was as hard as a rock, his cock straining against his zipper and all he wanted to do was fuck her blind, to screw her until neither of them could walk. And then do it all over again.

She was astonishing.

In delight he made his way down her body until he was almost kneeling between her spread thighs, her body revealed to him. He relished the feminine softness of her belly, though it was firm beneath his mouth as he searched for her erotic zones, the places he could kiss, could savor, to make her hot, wet and wild for him.

He found one just inside the curve of her hip and made her groan when he pressed his mouth to it, sucked lightly. Her hands had fallen away to clutch at the bedclothes. Her hips bucked beneath his hands even as he pinned them to the mattress.

For a moment he just breathed in the musky scent of her, of her need, her pleasure, as he slid his hands from hers down to her thighs to gently coax them open. And smiled at what he found there.

She was trimmed but not shaved, still natural, but not too natural. He liked that. No, he loved that.

He brushed his mouth across her mound, against the soft hair there.

"You don't have to do that," a soft voice said – the first time she had spoken.

That voice was surprisingly deep for her frame. A low, sexy contralto.

He looked up into those pale blue eyes, the lids heavy with passion and desire, her firm mouth now soft and a little swollen.

With a smile, gently parting her delicate labia with his fingers, he said, "Oh, yes I do. I love eating pussy."

He did. Loved the scent and the taste of it, but most of all, he loved the pleasure she would take from it.

And then he proved it, lowering his mouth to that tender flesh.

Lacey thought she'd lose her mind as his warm mouth closed over her, as his tongue slid deep within her most intimate places, between her labia to lick, to suck. She quivered as heat poured through her. Almost of their own volition her thighs spread wider, opened for him even as his hands coaxed them farther apart. His tongue dove deeper inside her then slid up to circle her clitoris and send sharp shots of bliss flying through her until all thought was gone. All she could feel was his mouth on her clit. His tongue flicked and the muscles in her thighs and belly leapt with each motion of his tongue. It was incredible. She thought she would fly apart from the sheer pleasure of it.

Her hands fluttered in the coverlet, clutched as she surrendered to him and Rick watched in delight and amazement as they tightened in the covers, soft cries whispering from her lips.

As he licked and lapped, tormented and teased her, he reached in his pocket for a condom.

He had no doubt in his mind that he was going to—no, he had to—fuck her. Had to fuck that sweet responsive body.

Practice had made perfect and he'd taken the precaution of opening the wrapper just before he knocked on the door to her apartment, just in case, so it was simply a matter of teasing it out.

His cock nearly leaped from his jeans, it was so eager to take her, but he wasn't nearly finished. He just didn't want to have to wait when the moment came to put the thing on.

The feel of her muscles as they twitched to each movement of his tongue was absolutely, deliciously erotic until he slid a finger inside her scorching heat, into that delicious wetness and her tightness closed around him. His vision hazed at the thought of sliding his cock into that.

She moaned and her head tossed as he teased her with mouth and finger, as he drew the swollen bud of her clit out to suckle on it as she quivered.

Her body grew taut, opened for him. Her back arched as he drove her up, she trembled nearly uncontrollably and then he sent her over the crest.

She cried out as Rick surged up her body to drive his throbbing, aching cock inside her and the hot, wet tightness of her pussy closed all the more closely around him, her inner muscles flexing, gripping him.

Ecstasy erupted through her as his thick, hard shaft rammed up inside her and she cried out as she came around that incredibly delicious cock as it thrust deeper, ever deeper.

Desperate for more, to take every inch of him, for everything he could give her, she braced herself, clutching frantically at the wrought iron bars of her headboard as he pounded into her.

More pleasure hammered through her with each hard thrust, the width of him stretching her.

Through the ecstasy that poured through her, she looked up into his handsome face to see it locked in pleasure of his own. His hips shifted as he wallowed in her and a new level of pleasure shot through her as his long, thick shaft filled her. He looked incredible as he fucked her, intensely male, and she arched into him, to take that last little bit more.

With his hands tight on the top of her headboard to give his thrusts that much more power, every beautiful muscle was taut. She looked down to see his long, thick cock driving into her pussy and another jolt of pleasure shot through her.

His eyes opened, his gaze met hers.

Rick looked down and saw those pale blue eyes watching him through her fluttering lashes, her face flushed with passion. She closed around him even more, as if her sweet tightness hadn't already been enough, as if having her come around him, her internal muscles working him, hadn't been enough.

The sight of that shattered his control.

He exploded inside her.

It seemed as if the top of his head would come off as he rammed his shaft even more deeply inside her, his cum spurting powerfully as she bucked beneath him, trying to take everything he could give her. His orgasm seemed endless as her body worked him.

Then he collapsed over her as her arms closed around him, her hands shaking, stroking. Something else few of the women he met this way, did.

"Am I too heavy?" he murmured, when he could find the will and the words to talk.

She shook her head, but even so, he shifted to the side, simply so he could look at her.

Her blue eyes enraptured him, the color was such a clear blue. Once more, as he looked at them, he was reminded of a glacier with the sunlight shining through it, making it glow.

Bending an elbow and propping his head on his hand, he looked at her and reached out and cupped one full breast, teased the nipple lightly, just playing with her idly.

She murmured, seemed pleased. Delighted, he continued to play, shaking his head in wonder.

"What is someone like you doing calling someone like me?" He didn't even realize he'd voiced that question aloud until her shoulders moved just a fraction and she answered.

She never talked about her personal life, but to her surprise, Lacey found herself answering.

"I'm divorced," she murmured as his hands moved over her, enraptured her. "I'm under so much stress and it's so difficult to meet someone."

Her job was demanding. Her ex-husband Jack had been too, and he was not sympathetic. After a while she had stopped talking to him about her cases, about her needs, closing herself in her office to go over files. Finally, there'd been nothing to keep them together.

She looked up into Rick's eyes, into his beautiful sculpted face, the lines so clean, so perfect. She reached up and traced his cheekbone, the thin, carefully trimmed line of beard that ran along his jaw, skimmed her hand over his chest, his arm, his shoulder. She decided turnabout was fair play.

"What about you?" she asked, and shook her head in wonder, just looking at him. "You could have anyone. Why this?"

Every inch of him was beautiful—his body cut, the muscles sharply defined.

Rick shrugged as he played with her breast, plucking lightly at one nipple then the other. They had hardened again and she squirmed a little at his touch, sighed.

He closed his eyes in pure pleasure as she caressed him in turn.

Most women didn't do that. They didn't seem to know he enjoyed being touched as much as he enjoyed touching.

He liked her hands on him.

"I like women, I like the way they smell, the way they feel. I like giving them pleasure. I like touching them and playing with them," he said, letting his head settle to the pillow as he watched her.

She wasn't classically beautiful, there was too much strength in her features, in her expression for that, but she was definitely lovely, and her body was incredible, well-maintained but still retaining that feminine softness.

He was never precisely aware of the moment when he closed his eyes to absorb the warmth of her body against his, the softness, the scent of it, and the gentle caress of her hands on his skin.

* * * * *

To his astonishment, Rick woke with his arms wrapped around a soft, warm woman, his head on her shoulder as her hands held him gently, soothingly. He'd never done that before with any other woman—fallen asleep.

It felt wonderful. She felt wonderful. Without even thinking about it, he cupped one breast, shifted down her body just a little to take her nipple into his mouth and suckle on it, drawing her closer so he could suck on that full breast in earnest.

A soft moan whispered out of her.

Smiling, Rick slid a hand down between her thighs to the growing dampness there and slid a finger inside her.

Her body arched in response as it had earlier and she whimpered, nearly sobbed with desire.

And then he slipped another finger inside her. Her soft cry of need was music to his ears.

Lacey awakened to find Rick still there. She was unable to resist running her hands over his beautiful body, through his dark hair. When his hot mouth closed over her breast pleasure coursed through her.

More please, was all she could think and then he obliged her.

His fingers plunged inside her, fucked her, found her G-spot and slid over it as his warm mouth closed over her nipple while he suckled harder on her breast.

She moaned, her hips matching each thrust of his fingers as they fucked her. A third long finger joined the other two, stretching her and she writhed, lifted her hips so they could go deeper. It was as if she couldn't get enough of what he did to her.

Lifting his head, Rick watched her, watched the flush of color that rose in her fair skin, those pale blue eyes fluttering with pleasure as her breasts swelled to his touch and her body arched.

She was incredible, definitely not his usual date, she was too responsive, too lovely for that.

Even as she shuddered with what he did to her, with his fingers plunging more and more insistently inside her so he could watch the pleasure rise in her, she spoke, although she was clearly only half aware of what she said.

"Oh, God, I needed this so badly."

Somehow those simple words, that desperate need, touched him in a way he had never been touched before.

Leaning down to kiss her gently, he said, softly, "Then you'll have it."

Deliberately, he drove his fingers harder into her, curling them a little to stroke them across her G-spot.

With a soft cry, she came, her body arched as if in offering. He took it, his mouth closing around her nipple once again to suckle hard, and she very nearly screamed as she bucked wildly, creaming around his fingers.

God he loved that. It was pure pleasure to watch her as her orgasm took her, her pussy clenching around his fingers.

Rick dragged his jeans up within reach and grabbed a condom. A two-condom night, that rarely happened.

It would tonight. He could too easily imagine fucking her again and again in every way imaginable, just to hear her scream as her small body bucked and trembled beneath his.

Dazed, nearly sated, Lacey felt him brace above her and looked up into his handsome face as his cock pressed at the entrance to her pussy.

The view was incredible, all his lovely muscles on display, and his cock—so long, so thick—poised at her entrance.

"Oh, God, yes," she whispered, and saw him grin, the dimples flashing for a moment just before he slid that cock home in one slow, smooth thrust and she lifted her hips to take him.

It drove a moan of pure pleasure out of her as he filled her, stretched her once again.

His hips shifted as that long shaft pierced her completely, filled her and she looked up to see him grin wickedly and with definite pleasure as he wallowed inside her. His eyelids fluttered a little as his gaze turned inward and she watched as he savored the pleasure of her pussy so snug around him.

Deliberately, she tightened around that thickness inside her as a rush of pleasure washed through her and grinned.

He smiled down at her and began to fuck her in earnest. With his eyes on hers, he drove his cock deep into her even as she reached up to brace herself against the headboard once again.

With his eyes still on hers, he lowered his head to her breast, flicked his tongue against her nipple. A spear of electric delight shot through her.

Pleasure gathered in her belly. She had never been so well and truly fucked.

"Would it be possible to do this again?" she asked, the words out before she even realized what she was saying—she who usually examined every word carefully before she spoke.

Lowering his mouth to her ear, his breath caressed it as he said, "We're not done yet, but yes, definitely yes."

She smiled.

Special Delivery

His hips moved more and more urgently, his long, thick cock filled her again and again.

Every muscle in her body quivered as those words echoed inside her and Lacey came hard and fast.

Chapter Three

Walking into the crowded courtroom Lacey found herself energized once again, ready to take on the world. It was clear that even Cardenas noticed it, and didn't like it, but his scowling glares bounced off her as if she wore an invisible shield. She ignored him as usual, placing her briefcase on the table and opening it, then glancing briefly at Jeremy Nolan, the other federal prosecutor, as he came to sit next to her as second chair.

Jeremy was a tall, handsome man in his early thirties with a thick thatch of brown hair and big ambitions. He nodded briefly. "L.C."

She hated when anyone tried to force a friendship by calling her Lauren, or more daringly, Laur or Laura, both of which she disliked. It was another layer of privacy, her name, of the separation between her work and her life.

Jeremy wasn't a close colleague. He wanted her job. He had wanted her too, once, thinking perhaps to dominate her somewhere, or gain an edge over her. Nothing against him, he was a good enough attorney, a nice enough guy, but she wasn't giving him either.

She had a strict rule about making a mess in her own backyard. As a single woman socializing with her married colleagues, she knew it could get awkward so her only interactions with her colleagues were at work.

Her personal life was off limits. There were no pictures of loved ones on her walls or desk. Instead she had a habit of picking up odd little toys when she spotted them. Her shelves held a collection of them, scattered among the law books—a bobble-head baby elephant, an oddly squishy thing with tentacles that lit up when you shook or bounced it. Whatever caught her fancy. Toys aside, once she stepped into the courtroom, she was a complete professional.

She thought about Rick, about the weekend. It had been a lot of fun, and already she wanted him again. Sensing Jeremy's eyes on her, she smothered a smile.

Jeremy glanced at her and lifted an eyebrow. She gave him a thin, professional smile in return. "You look relaxed," he whispered.

In more than one way, Lacey thought, remembering.

She had felt his eyes on her as she walked into the courtroom, and knew what he saw, the attitude she projected. Her strides in the three-inch heels were smooth and confident. She had chosen to wear an ice-blue suit to match her eyes, and the personality she wanted to project. The fitted jacket and skirt hinted at but didn't reveal her curves. The skirt came just above her knees and showcased her legs. She'd been told she had great legs and was just vain enough that she liked to show them off.

The thought made her smile just a little.

He was right though, about being relaxed. Usually she was pretty wound up, intense and focused, driven. Today she was a little more at ease.

The pressure of the trial had been taking its toll, but today she felt it less.

"Thanks," she said and smiled to herself. "I took a little bit of a break this weekend and got some exercise."

That was one way to put it.

Her body ached sweetly from use. There were light bruises on her breasts from Rick's fingers and her nipples were still sore from his teeth. At the memory, her body tightened as heat moved through her. She couldn't remember feeling so satisfied in years, if ever.

The bailiff entered the courtroom, everyone rose and the trial resumed. Calling her first witness of the day—one of the DEA agents who had helped penetrate Cardenas' operation—Lacey put on the screen the crime scene photo of one of the dead witnesses.

As horrific as it was for the jury, it was difficult as well for her. She had known him. She had promised to keep those people safe.

Predictably the defense objected to the inflammatory nature of the crime scene pictures. There was some debate but in the end, she won. She had actually seen some of those bodies and what had been done to them.

She presented some of the more gruesome details of the operation, how any threats to it were eliminated, any sign of weakness considered a danger and therefore immediately removed.

Bodies had been found, the heads missing—in the manner of the major Mexican drug cartels—presumably delivered to the family or to the dead man's boss as a warning against talking or mistakes. Then there were the thousands who wasted their lives to his drugs or the hundreds who died each year from robberies or rape because of them.

She was going to put Anthony Cardenas away for the rest of his natural life with no possibility of parole. To do so she was going to rub the jury's collective noses into what he did to secure his business.

* * * * *

For the first time in a long time, Rick was finding it hard to concentrate at work and not for the usual reason—a certain blonde kept creeping into his thoughts. Even more so since she'd emailed him the previous night, asking for an encore, something he rarely if ever did, since it always led to consequences. With Lacey, he hadn't even thought twice, he had only asked when. He remembered how their one encounter had gone. Remembered when she'd bent over to find his shoe.

Her ass had been perfect, smooth globes.

Then he had slid his cock between them, his shaft sliding inside her in one smooth movement and he had known instantly that she had wanted him again too. After going up on tiptoe, she was the perfect height for him. He had clasped her hips as she placed one hand on the bed and then he had powered into her in smooth, steady, delicious strokes, as those tight muscles closed around him.

Now every time he thought about her he found he could barely think at all and his cock was so hard beneath his jeans that it hurt.

He was hot and sweaty but all he could think about was Lacey and her sweet lush little body trembling beneath his.

Briefly he had considered running home to take a shower first but then he'd discarded it. She'd take him as he was, he hoped.

The ride to her apartment on his motorcycle was nearly maddening. It seemed too long, and he fought the urge to go faster. Was she as hot as he remembered, as beautiful? He had second thoughts. Maybe he should have gone home, shaved and showered. Made himself more presentable, but then he shook it off. She'd take him as he was.

He knocked on the door and she opened it almost instantly, as if she'd been waiting for him, watching through the peephole.

To his surprise, not only was she as pretty as he remembered but she was also somehow smaller than he remembered. Then she smiled, or rather grinned with clear and evident delight, and leaped into his arms. Suddenly nothing else mattered except the sweet weight of her.

Only Lacey was important.

All she wore was a tight little t-shirt and a pair of terrycloth shorts, her golden hair bouncing on her shoulders.

"Oh, God, I need you," she said.

With an answering grin he wrapped his hands around her tight little ass and kicked the door shut behind him as he pinned her to the opposite wall. His cock was as hard as a rock, knowing her pussy was so close, especially when she wriggled like that, and he desperately wanted to fuck her.

"I should shower," he said.

Burying her face in his shoulder, Lacey took a deep breath and shook her head. "No, you smell wonderful—all sweat and sexy man."

She tasted him, pressing her mouth to his throat and tasting the salt on his skin as she sucked lightly on it.

His hands tightened on her, hefting her higher on the wall, his thigh thrust between hers. She was driving him crazy.

He ripped her t-shirt over her head, his hips driving hers against the wall, dryfucking her as he exposed her breasts.

"Damn, you are beautiful," he said, watching her.

With one leg beneath her, his hips and cock bumping against her, he captured her hands with his, pinned them to the wall over her head and devoured her breast. Then he switched to the other, catching it with his teeth to tug on it, the fingers of one hand slipping beneath her shorts. She moaned as his fingers pierced her.

To Rick's delight she was already hot and wet, her pussy soaking her shorts.

"Fuck me, Rick," she begged. "Please."

"Oh, yeah," he promised, "I'm going to do that and a whole lot more." He carried her to the bedroom, set her on her feet, bent her over the end of the bed and jerked her shorts down to expose her.

"You have the most glorious ass," he said as he smoothed a hand over those lush globes, the other going to the button of his jeans.

She trembled, watching in the mirror on the back of the bedroom door as he shucked out of them, his cock springing free, already engorged, the broad cock head flared. His hand closed around it, pumped it before he slid the condom over it.

"I want you to watch me fuck you," he said.

Her eyes locked with his in the mirror.

"Watch me, Lacey." He put the broad head of his cock against her pussy.

Special Delivery

Every inch of Lacey's body went hot as he pressed against her aching slit. She watched in the mirror as his cock entered her, just the head of it at first and no more. He worked it around inside her. Teased her with it. Tormented her. She moaned, pressed her hips back against him.

"Rick," she whispered as she watched him in the mirror. "Please."

It was torture for him, too.

"God, you feel so fucking good," he groaned. "So tight."

She was so snug, so hot and so wet around him. The sight of his cock in the mirror as it slid into her pussy, as he pushed it between the smooth ivory globes of her ass was nearly enough to make him come. He wallowed in the pleasure of fucking her, pushed a little deeper, his hands on her hips keeping her from taking control.

"I can't get enough of you," he said, reaching around to cup one firm breast in his hand.

Just the sight of his cock slowly disappearing inside her transported Rick to a whole new level of ecstasy. It was incredible. Then his hand cupped her breast and his fingers found her nipple and a look of sharp pleasure spread across her face.

Thrusting, withdrawing, he drove gradually deeper until his cock was seated all the way inside her, stretching her with each inch that entered her, as deep as he could go. His cock head pressed against the back of her vagina. He shifted his hips so she could feel it pressed inside her, filling her completely. The pleasure was so incredible, so intense.

She whimpered. The sound she made was like a shot of heat through him. With her hands braced on the bed, his cock buried deep in her pussy, Rick's hands were free. Even as he fondled her breasts with one hand, as the fingers on that hand tugged and rolled her nipples, the other found her clit, traced it.

She cried out.

"Oh, God, yes."

With her trapped beneath him, his fingers tormenting her, Rick bit lightly at her shoulder, and she bucked.

"I want to feel you come around my cock," he said, softly, and she shuddered, her pussy clenching around him as he caressed the swelling bud of her clit.

"Gently," she pleaded, her eyes in the mirror watching as he touched her, as his cock slid in and out of her.

He smiled. He couldn't imagine anything quite as beautiful as watching Lacey enraptured by his touch, by his cock inside her.

"Yes," he said and toyed with her, with that swollen clit and watched her eyelids flutter and the color rise beneath her skin.

Her muscles began to twitch and jump. A near sob caught in her throat as her body tightened beneath him, around him.

It was incredible, amazing to watch as her hot, sweet pussy tightened around him. Rick struggled for control.

His cock felt huge inside her, swollen. It throbbed. Straightening, he trailed a finger lightly down to the base of her spine. That single stroke, that simple touch, was like striking a match.

"Rick." With a cry of ecstasy, Lacey came. He fucked her hard and deep, pounded into her almost furiously and she clenched around him as she came yet again.

Rick's orgasm raced from his cock to his balls to burst inside him. He poured into her, jetted with so much force a distant part of his mind wondered if he'd break the condom before he finally collapsed over her.

They tumbled to the bed, crawled up the length of it.

Rick dragged Lacey against him to give her a kiss.

"Damn," he said, "you're going to kill me one of these days."

She grinned. "That'll take some doing. I'm not sure which one of us is likely to die first."

Special Delivery

With a sigh, she ran her hand over him, a soft and soothing caress, a small smile curving her firm lips, her eyes intent as she stroked him, as her fingers traced the curves of his chest, circled his nipple and then drifted over his abs.

He found that he liked that featherlight stroking as she snuggled into him, that gentle touch surprisingly comforting in some strange way.

"So..." she said, lightly, clearly amused. "Hi, Rick, how are you, good to see you, how did your week go?"

He chuckled. "About as usual. Yours?"

She sighed a little, the sound tugging oddly at his heart, hearing something in it that shouted at all his protective instincts.

"Rough. Are you hungry?"

"What do you have?"

Her eyes glinted as she looked at him sideways. "I bought a couple of steaks. It's almost always safe, as long as you're not a vegetarian. Baked potato, a salad."

With a grin, he assured her, "I'm a steak man all the way. Got 'shrooms?"

Her blue eyes sparkled. "What's a steak without mushrooms? Fried onions?"

Rick chuckled. "Oh yeah."

She skimmed a hand over his abs. "Do you mind that I do this?"

"Do what?"

"Touch you like this."

The question surprised him. He frowned a little. "No. I like it."

"Good," she said, "not everyone does. I like to touch, so that's a relief."

He shook his head. "How could someone not like it? I could lie here for hours while you do that."

"That can be arranged," she said, smiling. "There is nothing quite like touching a beautiful, well-maintained male body."

"Or a female one. And you can touch mine all you want," he said.

With a grin, she looked up at him and said, "I may take you up on that."

That idea was all right with him. He was beginning to really like it. His stomach growled, the mention of the steak awakening it. That and the exercise.

"It seems someone besides me is hungry," she said.

Watching Lacey roll gracefully to her feet and pull on that little robe he remembered from the first night, it wasn't hard to imagine making love to her again. And again.

Naked, her hair a tousled mess, she was something—high, full breasts, neat, nipped-in waist and that little feminine softness in her belly. He loved to press his thumbs into that belly, that little bit of give beneath them and the firm muscle underneath.

She offered him a hand up.

For a moment he debated giving it a good yank to pull her back down on top of him. But he didn't, just let her pull him to his feet with surprising strength, taking the opportunity to give her a quick kiss once he was up.

Her smile was nothing but a quick flash but it was oddly gratifying. With a grin he watched her tight ass sway beneath the little robe as she walked to the kitchen.

As she put the steaks on the broiler, she glanced at him.

"Do you mind if I ask what you do?" she asked curiously.

Rick looked back at her and braced himself a little against her reaction. Just a glance around her apartment was enough for him to know she was a little different in more ways than one from the girls he dated and the women he visited. Definitely a little higher class here.

Her eyes went to the tattoo on his arm and he saw something in them. Still, there was something reassuring in her voice, her tone, even in the way she had asked the question.

"I did some time in the service. Army Rangers," he said, leaving out the details.

"Afghanistan. Now I work for a parcel delivery service."

Ranger. That told Lacey a lot about him. He was smart, capable – both of which she already knew – and used to secrecy, to following orders.

She saw him stiffen up a little when he mentioned the parcel service, but she smiled. "Ranger, huh? Some of the best men I've ever known were Rangers. I'm impressed." She was, it was tough duty. "The delivery service—is that why the 'Special Delivery'?"

With a grin and a nod, Rick said, "Yeah. They say you should do what you're good at."

Lacey had to laugh.

"Want to toss those potatoes in the microwave for me?" Lacey said. "I did a lot of jobs like that, trying to get through college, waitressed and whatnot, even though I was ROTC and spent some time in the service, myself. Army all the way. Judge Advocates Office after I graduated."

"Lawyer, huh?" he said, eyeing her.

"Yeah," she said, "something like that. Would you mind terribly if I didn't tell you what or for whom?"

He looked at her, his dark eyes assessing. "Still JAG? That sort of thing?"

"Something like that." It wasn't that she wanted to keep secrets from him or that she didn't trust him, after all she had trusted him enough to fuck her, but there were lives in her hands. It wasn't her right to make that call for them.

For Rick that hesitation was telling. Something echoed in her voice. Those crystal blue eyes were wary. ROTC. And JAG. Damn. That explained the apartment.

Rick shrugged. "I'm just the guy you met on the internet."

"No," Lacey said, suddenly, sharply. "It's not that."

"Hey, Lacey," he said, and tugged her to him for a quick kiss, skimmed his hands beneath that little robe to warm skin beneath it. "I wasn't taking offense, really."

Those pretty pale blue eyes looked up at him—he really liked the color of her eyes, the warmth in them, he decided. Her hands smoothed over his chest in a gesture he thought he might be able to get used to pretty quickly.

She took a quick, short breath, let it out. "Okay. Just so you know."

"I know," he said, and looked at her mouth, normally so firm but soft now.

He wanted to take it, so he did and savored the taste of her as her hands slid up over his shoulders to comb into his hair.

Rick slid his hands down to cup her ass and then he spanked her, quick and sharp. Her eyes shot open and her mouth twitched.

"What was that for?"

"Because I like the feel of you, the feel of your tight, round ass," he said, and grinned as he smoothed his hands over her. "Don't pretend you didn't like it."

She shook her head and smiled.

Parting the smooth firm cheeks of her ass, he let his thumb brush the base of her spine to make her shiver before he pressed a finger against the tight rosette between them.

"You know I'm going to take you here," he said, the thought sending a rush through him, and through her to judge by the sudden brightness in her eyes, the flush in her cheeks. "Have you ever been taken that way?"

Her voice was a whisper. "No."

"I will. I'm going to take that pretty ass of yours slowly," he said softly. "Push my cock into you inch by inch. You'll be so tight it will be almost painful for both of us, but it'll be good, so good, once I start to fuck you. I'll get you hot first, so hot you'll be

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begging for it and then when my cock is in your ass, I'll play with your breasts, your clit and your pussy until you come as I fuck you."

She shivered as color flushed beneath her skin. "Damn," she said, "you're good."

"That's just talk. You haven't seen anything yet, but you will." As he helped put dinner together, he studied her. "You're not from around here though. I think I'd remember you."

"Not from here, no, and you probably wouldn't remember me even if I were."

"Why not?" he challenged, as they sat down to eat.

She glanced at him and asked, "Football player, right?"

"Yeah," he said warily.

With a shrug, she pointed at herself and grinned. "Geek. I was probably the one whose shoulder you peeked over to get test answers."

"Glasses?" he asked, smiling.

She nodded and said, "Oh yeah."

He laughed, admitting, "Then yeah, probably."

They spent dinner discussing growing up. Safe topics—the movies they liked, music, people they had known—searching for common ground.

And Afghanistan. Something Rick rarely spoke about. Not many people understood. His ex-girlfriend hadn't. Lacey did.

She might not be willing to tell him who she was or what she was doing but she had let her guard down enough here in her apartment, in his presence, that she allowed herself to share those memories with him.

Something about her said she didn't let her guard down that often.

"If you still want that shower," Lacey said, "why don't you go take it? I have to check my email." It was the only excuse she could think of, but she needed him out of

the room, and she didn't want to be so rude that she blocked him from seeing the betraying pages.

"Sounds good," he said, and gave her a kiss on the forehead as he went by and added, "Stop worrying." Lacey watched him walk into the bathroom. She thought of him in there, the water pouring over him, soaping up all of that lovely body as she checked both her email and voice messages. Her phone would have rung if anything drastic had happened, but she couldn't afford to be caught behind the eight ball.

There was nothing new. Nothing but the man in the bathroom. She could hear the water running. Moving quietly, she put both her laptop and her phone in her office again and then slipped into the steam-filled bathroom to peek past the shower curtain.

He was just rinsing the soap from his dark hair, his head back, the water sleeking the hair on his chest and the silky triangle that ran down from his navel to the thick curls surrounding his cock.

As quietly as possible she eased into the shower and dropped to her knees, grinning mischievously as she leaned forward and drew his soft cock into her mouth.

Rick heard her come in, felt the cool breath of air, so she didn't startle him. She might not be willing to tell him who she was or what she was doing but she had let her guard down here in her apartment, in his presence. Something about her said she wasn't often unguarded.

He continued to rinse his hair while she moved around him. Then he suddenly had to brace himself against the walls of the shower as her mouth closed over his cock to take it in, surrounding it while her tongue slid over the head.

Every muscle in his body locked, went taut.

He looked down to see Lacey on her knees, her wet hair clinging to his thighs as her hands slid up the back of them. She took him deeper and he groaned as she sucked on him in earnest. Each soft draw of that hot mouth on him only made him harder.

It hadn't been that long since he had come but watching his cock as it slid between her lovely lips, her tongue swirling around the head, was enough to have him nearly as hard as a rock. More so when her throat worked around the crown. He thought he would lose his mind as she cupped his balls. They tightened as her fingers stroked the sensitive skin of his inner thighs and she sucked him deep.

"Lacey," he groaned. "I'm going to come."

Her hands tightened and she sucked on him in earnest, her head bobbing, and he lost it. He gushed down her throat as she swallowed his cock, his hot, thick cum pumping. It was sheer heaven. None of his women had been willing to do that.

To his astonishment, his knees were wobbly as she sat back on her heels to give him a wicked grin. Shaking his head at that glint in her eye, he said, "Damn, you're good."

"And don't you forget it," she teased, laughing.

As he had the last weekend, Rick stayed, falling asleep on the couch with her as they watched TV, Lacey in his arms.

He woke playing with her, his hands already filled with her naked breasts beneath the little silk robe, his mouth pressed against her throat as she gasped and sighed to the movements of his hands on her.

Curling her into the crook of his arm, he kissed her as he teased and plucked at her tight nipples, devoured her mouth and her cries of pleasure as he slid a hand between her thighs to toy with her clit and play with her pussy. He discovered he could make her come nearly endlessly, her body trembling in response to his touch, by stroking her G-spot or teasing her clit.

It was as if he played a fine musical instrument as he watched the color flood beneath her skin, as cry after cry of pleasure whispered from her and she creamed again. He was absolutely enthralled with watching her come.

Moving carefully, Rick eased her to the couch as he kneeled beside it and began to torment her yet again, enchanted by each soft sigh, delighted that she would let him do this to her. It was as if she were his own private sex toy and he loved it.

She just abandoned herself to him, to what he did to her with his mouth, his fingers. He teased and played with her clit as he slid the fingers of his other hand inside her pussy to stroke her G-spot, then lowered his head to her breast, and suckled.

Lacey was steeped in pleasure, infused with it, the intensity of it nearly overwhelming. Each time she thought to beg him to stop, he sent bliss shimmering through her again.

When his fingers pressed against the tight rosette of her ass she was too limp to stop him. One long finger pierced that tight barrier and she moaned softly, his invasion somehow exhilarating.

He shifted her leg out of the way, his warm mouth found her clit, his tongue teased at it as he reached up with his now-free hand to play with a nipple.

Incredible pleasure began to fill her, pooling low in her belly. A sob caught in her throat as he began to finger-fuck her ass, working that finger around inside her, moistening her with her own fluids.

The pleasure built once again, her whole body going tight, muscles quivering. Another finger pushed inside her ass. It was incredible as he sucked at her clit.

"Rick, please," she begged.

With a smile, he sucked hard and sent her over, her body quivering wildly as her orgasm shot through her, his fingers still fucking her ass.

Surging up her body, he whispered into her ear, "That's what it will feel like when I take you there, only better."

Lacey shivered in pleasure and anticipation.

"Unfortunately," he said, kissing her cheek lightly, "I've got an early shift and there're things I have to get done. I can't stay, or I would take care of that now. Next time though."

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She smiled up at him, still dazed with pleasure, just the thought of there being another time sending a burst of warmth through her.

"You're a tease," she said, touching his cheek. He was a gorgeous man. She was glad he seemed to want to be with her.

"Always leave them wanting more," he said, smiling.

"You did that. I can't seem to get enough of you touching me."

"Neither can I," he admitted. "You can always get in touch with me during the week, you know."

The smile faded, her eyes became haunted. "I can't promise anything. There's so much to do, it may just be to say hello."

Chapter Four

It had been a particularly rough day in court, crowned by the glimpse Lacey had had of a man across the street from the courthouse. He'd made the distinctive gesture of pointing his fingers at her like a gun and pulling the trigger as she had walked down the courthouse steps. Intimidation, nothing more. Since he wasn't actually armed, he'd said nothing directly to her and was no real threat, she couldn't call him on it, not publicly. Making an issue of it would only make her look weak.

Still, she couldn't ignore the fact she was on a public street, and had he been armed, he would have had a clear shot at her.

For that matter, so could anyone with a high-powered rifle from a dozen buildings around her. That sort of thing was common in Mexico and she couldn't ignore the possibility that Cardenas would attempt something like it here.

She was also starting to get a lot of pressure from the media about the slow pace of the trial and the endless stream of witnesses. If she was going to nail the coffin closed on Cardenas, she needed to make sure she had all her i's dotted and t's crossed. There couldn't be any doubt he was guilty, with as few chances for appeal as she could manage.

With the pressure growing in the media, she knew Joel was also getting some pressure from above. Already there had been calls from her boss, gentle hints, but hints nonetheless, to speed things up.

On reflection, Lacey had to admit that the weekend had relaxed her considerably and anticipation of the weekend to come now gave her a boost of energy. Thinking of Rick's touch, his cock inside her, his marvelous mouth on her, kept her alert and energized, warm, excited. Even through some of the most boring testimony. She was imperturbable even in the face of the defense's cross-examination and her own redirect.

Still, she let out a breath of relief as she walked out of the courtroom at the end of the day.

There were two more days to go before the week was over. Then, come Monday she'd be bringing the first of her civilian witnesses to the stand.

They weren't all solid, but those who mattered the most would stand up. She had held them until now, wanting the jury to see real people, like themselves, last. She wanted to leave that image, that memory, with them.

What worried her though, was that she'd had to turn over the list of witnesses to the defense, as she was required. By law she could not deny them that, but the information was dangerous.

Most defense attorneys were dependable, upright, reliable people, but this was a drug trial. There was a lot of money on the table here, enough to tempt a lot of people—witnesses, cops, attorneys. More than one previously honest attorney had had their heads turned for far less than Cardenas could offer. The only one she knew who couldn't be twisted or turned was herself.

It also wouldn't be the first time that a defense attorney had revealed information, intentionally or inadvertently, to the defendant, that put all her witnesses in jeopardy.

As a precaution, after the loss of the two potential witnesses while they had been preparing for trial, she'd had them all placed in protective custody, apart from each other, to preserve their testimony and their safety.

She walked out of the courthouse alone as always, with not even Jeremy for company. They never traveled together. Everyone had taken Cardenas' threats seriously, so they always left separately, and they both had police drivers. After the death of the witnesses it hadn't taken Jeremy long to understand the wisdom of the two of them leaving in different cars. She was the lead target if Cardenas and his boys decided to get serious about the threats.

If anything happened to her, Jeremy would take over the case. It wouldn't even be the first time a prosecutor had died during a case, although those had been different circumstances. Worse still was that no one knew the real circumstances of at least one death. They had found the body in his own car, parked in a desolate area, with no clear indication of suicide or murder. *Despite all the evidence*, she thought wryly, thinking of all the crime shows.

She did not, however, have a guard—not only because she didn't want anyone to think she was frightened by Cardenas' threats but because she didn't want anyone dying for her.

That had already happened once. She didn't want it to happen again.

A memory whispered through her, of the IED going off, the eerie silence that followed, which was just an echo of the enormity of the blast. Warmth had flooded her, running down her chest, her thighs, as a weight pressed her down into the seat.

She remembered looking into a pair of green eyes. Beloved eyes, although she'd said nothing. Death had been instantaneous. For that she had been grateful.

Never again.

The gantlet of reporters was waiting outside for the defense attorneys and Lacey was grateful that neither group looked at her.

Yet.

So far she hadn't made any major mistakes. Or minor ones, for that matter. Something, anything, for the defense or the press to get hold of and shake like a terrier would a rat.

Nor had the defense been able to get past or make a major dent in the witnesses she had brought forward. They had rattled one or two, but so far the case was solid. She had been very, very careful, walking the fine line between prepping their testimony and rehearsing it.

She also couldn't risk it appearing as if she was trying to avoid either the defense or the press, and so she looked in that direction as she went by, watched the defense attorneys make their excuses for their poor showing. Their cross-examination hadn't been able to shake anyone too badly and that had to be worrying them.

Lacey could feel sorry for them. With Cardenas, they had to be terrified about now. With his life and freedom on the line, failure was not an option. The punishment for their lack of success would be harsh.

At the sight of her, half a dozen heads turned her way.

"Ms. MacKay," the voices shouted.

Lacey kept walking as they rushed in her direction, microphones and cameras thrust toward her.

"I have no comment," she called to them, walking steadily, without apparent concern. Far better to say nothing than to accidentally make a slip they could call her on or ridicule her for. Far too much was on the line to take that risk.

So far, she was winning. Real winners didn't boast or brag. They didn't need to, their work spoke for itself. She would let hers speak for her. Lacey was content with that.

Her driver waited to take her back to her office in the Federal Building. She would leave in her own vehicle from there. Again keeping distance between her work and her personal life, such as it was.

She had taken several defensive driving lessons over the years and learned a few more while overseas. Some the hard way.

From the parking garage she would take her own car, a little convertible BMW she had bought used. It was her one indulgence. She loved to drive and to drive fast. As a concession to the threats, she now kept the top up, somewhat secure behind the lightly tinted windows.

She nodded to her police driver as he held the car door open for her and calmly ducked inside as the reporters closed in. The driver swiftly closed her door and hurried around to the other side before he could be trapped by the horde.

"Nice timing, Joe," she said with a smile to the burly driver as he slid into his seat.

He grinned. "Been practicing, L.C."

She used the time on the drive to the office to review her notes, as she did every day.

Michael Patterson was her first non-professional witness, one of Cardenas' dealers she and the cops had turned in exchange for a deal. A tall, gangly black kid, he was oddly appealing, funny and wry—a little ironic considering he was thoroughly hooked and coming down off the drugs he used to deal.

He was being held in protective custody, as were Ellen Foster, George Parnell, and half a dozen others. Everything had been done to keep them all safe.

Still she was worried.

After turning over the witness list, as a precaution, she called all the protective teams and warned them that there might be trouble.

For her, the weekend couldn't come fast enough. At least then she could escape from thinking about the trial. A little.

She couldn't think of Rick now, however much he haunted her thoughts at night. However much she longed for his touch.

Nor could she think about the niggling worry, the fear he might call it off, or not contact her at all. That he'd change his mind about continuing to see her. She'd survive but she also knew that it would hurt. A lot. More than she'd expected.

It wouldn't be the first time she had intimidated a man with her degree. It would be even worse if he knew exactly what it was she did, the kind of cases she tried.

Her male colleagues had a difficult enough time. Most of them were also divorced, unless they had married someone in the field and even then there had been problems.

Which was why she hadn't told him. And, she couldn't take the risk. Though she yearned to have someone to talk to about it, all it would take was a slip of the tongue, a casual mention in the wrong place where he might be overheard. It wasn't that she

didn't think Rick could keep his mouth shut, but the fear that she might be wrong, that she had misjudged him, kept hers shut.

She let out a breath. She already cared about him too much. Could she afford to do that? Could she afford not to?

Pushing it away, she resolved not to think or worry about the weekend. That was two more very busy days away. Until then, she had testimony to review, other cases to review, email to check. Pushing her glasses up her nose, she settled in to do just that.

* * * * *

Music pumped loudly from the gym's speakers as Rick settled in on his back at the bench, the weights suspended above him on the rack, one of the gym employees poised to spot him in case he couldn't hold the weight. Not that he couldn't, but safety first.

Most of them televisions scattered throughout the gym were tuned to the local news channels at this hour, all of them set on mute, the subtitles scrolling across the bottom of the screen.

He was only vaguely aware of any of it, concentrating his attention on keeping his movements fluid, controlled.

Unlike the spotter—so ripped he couldn't bring his arms against his body—Rick wasn't interested in building bulk or competing in contests, he simply wanted to keep in as good shape as he'd been in the service. He liked staying toned, fit, even more so now that there was someone in his life who really appreciated his hard work.

He finished his first set flawlessly and lay back momentarily to let his muscles recover, glancing idly at a TV screen. As always lately, he found his mind drifting to Lacey and the coming weekend.

He had dialed back his extracurricular activities.

The truth was, he hadn't gone on another date, real or internet, since he'd met her. His taste for other women had faded, having found in that single woman, a smorgasbord.

On the television, the cameras were focused on a bunch of lawyers on the steps of the Federal Courthouse downtown, a place he avoided like the plague. He recognized the faces, they'd been all over the news. Defense lawyers for the big drug trial taking place in town. Everyone knew about it, you couldn't miss it since it was all over the newspapers. It was a tough case, too, by all accounts.

No one had questioned whether the local Federal Attorney could handle it. She was rumored to be tough as nails, a real ice queen, there was no one tougher. She was unbreakable, incorruptible. Like Eliot Ness, she was considered untouchable.

From everything he had read about Anthony Cardenas, she needed to be. Cardenas was a tough case too. He had left a string of dead bodies behind and around him, and a mountain of coke and pot. A lot was riding on that prosecutor.

The cameras shifted to the woman in the crisp yellow suit stepping confidently down the steps beyond the defense attorneys.

More than a few of the guys had stopped to watch and Rick couldn't blame them since he was doing the same thing.

If only because of those legs.

The woman on the screen had beautiful, shapely legs that seemed a mile long above three-inch heels, and there were hints of a really nice body enclosed by a suit the color of summer sunshine that was snug but not tight across a truly great ass. A brief shimmer of lace trimmed the top of a camisole beneath the fitted suit jacket.

Her brilliant golden hair was swept up neatly, smoothly and tightly into an elegant French twist to reveal a long, slender throat. Gold glimmered at throat and ears—classic pieces. She appeared to have a fine-boned face, but it was difficult to tell, because she looked down at the steps as she descended. She was coolly beautiful, slender and straight except for the hint of a really nice rack.

The cameras moved toward her as her name appeared at the bottom on the screen. The text identified her as Federal Prosecutor L.C. MacKay.

So that was her, the ice queen, Dynamite MacKay.

As he reached for the weights again he looked back up at the woman on the screen as the cameras moved in for a close-up of her face.

Rick froze when she looked briefly into the cameras.

Lovely, long-lashed eyes, as blue as a glacier and as cold, stared back at him from the screen. Beautiful familiar eyes.

Shock went through him.

He had never seen those eyes that cold, that fine-featured face so grim, so stern. He had only ever seen her joyful as she leaped into his arms.

A sudden and surprising burst of heat went through him. He knew what lay beneath both suit and camisole.

Lacey hadn't lied to him, she had said she was a lawyer, just not which lawyer.

To his shock, he realized he was fucking a federal prosecutor. *A federal prosecutor. The* federal prosecutor. The one with the toughest drug case in the nation held tightly in her small, strong hands.

He was doing L.C. MacKay.

Looking at her in that neat little suit and those fuck-me heels, he thought she was so hot. He wanted to do illicit things with her. And she wanted to do them with him. He wanted to bend her over, push that tight skirt up and fuck her blind.

Even so, he also knew the risk she faced, that she took every day. There had been threats on her life. Witnesses had died. He knew it. So did everyone else.

Now he understood the shadows in her eyes, the tension that would disappear the moment she opened the door.

She took a huge risk each time she saw him. If anyone were to find out about their relationship, the circumstances of it, the way it came about, her reputation would be ruined. It was an incredible chance to take.

In that same moment, he also knew that the pressure on her must be enormous.

It was one of the biggest trials in the country right now. Every eye was on her. He understood the weight that lay on those slender shoulders. No wonder she needed release, escape.

He looked at those cold blue eyes and thought of the warmth he saw in them instead.

Chapter Five

The headache pulsed and pounded against Lacey's temples. It had been a truly tense day, with the first of her protected witnesses taking the stand. She wanted the jury to remember Ellen Foster.

Ellen Foster, whose son Jordan had been one of Cardenas' dealers. The kid had been stupid enough to skim both product and money off the top—the product for his nose, the money for his mother, a single woman raising three other kids. Even in small towns there were tough neighborhoods, places that nice people ignored and the cops visited too often.

Theirs had been one of them, a street of gray, run-down houses with broken-down cars parked in front of them.

Even so, the Foster house had been markedly different than the others. Ellen Foster hadn't given up. Not then.

Her small scrap of grass had been mowed. The interior had been kept neat and clean for her children.

She had fought hard for her boy, but she hadn't been able to fight the cycle of poverty, hadn't been able to fight his need to be the man of the house, to help provide for his family as his father had not.

Ellen Foster had positively identified the man who had broken into her house one night with three other men, all of them looking for her eldest son, her boy. Two days later her boy had turned up dead, decapitated, his body left at the corner where he used to hang out and deal the drugs he sold.

To everyone's astonishment Ellen Foster had identified Cardenas as the leader of the men who had kicked down her door and terrorized her other children when they came looking for her boy. She was unshakeable because her son had identified Cardenas as the man he had been working for.

The cops knew Jordan had been working for Cardenas. He had been one of Cardenas' dealers. Cardenas wanted to punish Jordan for his transgressions.

It was all solid, but Lacey needed Ellen Foster's anger, grief and pain visible on the stand, she needed that emotion so the jurors would connect to Ellen Foster, the mother of a murdered child.

It had been tough for Lacey to draw out that emotion, to put her through that once again. To make her cry again for her lost boy.

With a shuddering sigh, Lacey stepped out of the elevator. Someone was standing at her door. Someone very familiar and very welcome. He had a backpack over his shoulder and roses the color of a summer sunset in his hand.

Seeing the tiredness in her shoulders and the shadows in her eyes, Rick knew better than to mention it, to say anything about what he knew.

Instead, he openly admired her gorgeous body in another trim suit, knowing that was what she needed from him right now.

"I found these," he said, with a tip of the head toward the flowers in his hand, "but what I really want to do is get you inside, push up that tight little skirt and fuck you blind."

With a laugh, Lacey said, "You say the sweetest things."

But she was already sticking her key in the lock of her door as Rick moved behind her to help unbutton her jacket.

The door swung open as he pushed her inside, tossing the flowers aside to focus on where the jacket opened as he kicked the door closed.

It was indeed a lace camisole, pale blue this time, but not loose. This one stretched across her breasts, clung close around her waist.

Rick reached out and pulled her in for a kiss. She went willingly. His mouth found hers, covered it even as he tugged at the back of the camisole until it came free. Sliding his hands beneath, he found the hook at the back, released it, and then the two little hooks that anchored the straps.

A few tugs and the whole thing came free from beneath the camisole. Her nipples pressed against the thin lace. Beneath that her areolas were dusky shadows.

Lifting his mouth from hers, gratified to see her eyes looked dazed, he pushed the jacket from her shoulders, capturing her wrists in one hand as it fell. With her hands in his, her back was forced to arch just a little.

Rick was pleased to see her nipples growing hard as he brushed his free hand over the fullness of her breasts, over those sensitive peaked tips. Her breasts seemed to swell as if she offered them to him. The muscles in her back, shoulders and chest tightened.

"Thank you," he said, regarding that gesture, as he pulled the pins from her hair and let them drop. "I think I will."

Her hair tumbled free around her shoulders as he pulled lightly at her bra to free her nipples from beneath it.

He opened his mouth on her breast over the rough lace. Lacey shuddered as his hand, free now, dropped to the hem of her skirt and slid beneath it.

He used his teeth to tug on a nipple as his hand slid over the nylon of her stocking, the roughness picking it.

He stopped, paused, groaned and she smiled, trembling just a little as his fingers traced the lace at the top, stopped at the garter for a moment, and then sought out her lace panties.

She moaned as he pressed his fingers against the drenched lace between her thighs.

"Damn, Lacey," he said, "is that for me?" Two of his fingers slid past the lace to spear up inside her.

Instead of an answer, another moan whispered from her as he finger-fucked her steadily then pressed his fingers against her G-spot. All her tense muscles turned to water against him, so that she seemed to melt into his touch.

Kissing his way from her lips to her throat while his fingers plundered her, he whispered in her ear, "Come for me, Lacey."

She did, as she creamed around his fingers.

Turning her, he pushed her over the high arm of the couch, slid her skirt up over her pretty white ass and admired the view of a pale blue lace garter even as he unsnapped it. Hooking his thumbs in her lace panties he skimmed them down her legs and tossed them aside.

"God," he said, "you're so fucking beautiful."

Quickly, sharply, he spanked each white globe and watched them blush as pale as the roses he had bought her as she cried out.

A flip of the button of his jeans and his aching cock was free.

She glanced over her shoulder. "Just fuck me, Rick, I want to feel you."

All the blood rushed from his head to his dick and then he drove it inside her tight, hot pussy as she wanted. He groaned with sweet satisfaction as it closed around him, so wet, so tight, coating his aching cock with her cream. Thrusting deeper, glorying in her pussy, tight around his shaft, Rick shifted her so he could reach her breasts and her clit, her pretty ass high in the air, thanks to the high heels.

Pulling out of her with a groan, he reached in his pocket and found the lube. Uncapping it with two fingers, he sent the cap spinning away as he pressed the bottle to her tight brown rosette and squirted a generous amount inside her anus, between her butt cheeks, and over his rigid cock. Two fingers speared inside that tight entrance and she groaned deeply as they invaded her. He scissored them, worked them, plundered her tight ass with them as she moaned and wriggled until that tight sphincter loosened.

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Withdrawing his fingers, he pressed the head of his cock against her. Wiping the excess lube from his fingers, he found her breast again as his other hand teased her clit. He breached her ass, groaning as she arched beneath him.

"Rick," she moaned as he thrust his cock slowly deeper into her sweet, tight ass.

He shifted, just to savor that tight pleasure-pain of her so very close around him, even as he worked the lubricant around inside her, worked it deeper as he worked his cock into her. Fucking her slowly and steadily as she shifted and writhed, gasping, soft cries escaping from her, and then he was as deep as he could go.

"So tight, Lacey, so good. Fuck," he ground out and then he began to fuck her.

Each slide of his thick shaft up her ass stretched her unbelievably, but the pleasure was there too. So intense as he began to thrust into her. His hands tightened on her breast, pinched her clit.

Lacey thought she'd lose her mind with the pleasure and pain of his cock buried so deep in her ass.

"Oh, God, Rick," she cried as he filled her, as he began to slide in and out, to drive harder, faster, the slap of his hips against her rhythmic. Ecstasy swelled inside her as he thrust.

It swamped her, filled her, stretched her, as it exploded inside her—as he exploded inside her, his hot cum pumping into her ass. An indescribably incredible sensation. So intimate. Rick plundered her as she came around his fingers, as she bucked and thrust against him. He drove deep, taking the depths of her ass.

Rick held her as she trembled, cradled her in the curve of his arm across her chest, both of them braced by her hips against the arm of the couch.

"Are you all right?" he said, softly, worriedly, in her ear.

His cock was still buried inside her.

"All right," she murmured. "Hmmm. Yes. Oh, God. Wow."

He smiled a little and let out a breath. "You seemed a little tense," he said, and grinned. "Are you more relaxed now?"

She laughed as he withdrew from her carefully. He turned to sit on the couch and pulled her into his lap.

"Yes," she said. "That was just what I needed. Thanks."

"Anytime. That's what I'm here for."

Lacey looked at him, really looked at him, at the strong handsome lines of his face, at the depths hidden behind his dark eyes.

"I really do appreciate it, you know," she said. It was nothing more than the truth.

He nodded. "I do."

Getting up, her knees a little unsteady, Lacey walked over to where the roses had come to rest on her console table.

"It seems a shame to treat such beautiful flowers so poorly," she said softly, picking them up to breathe in the soft scent. She paused, her throat tight. "No one has bought me flowers in a long time."

Rick got to his feet, zipped up his jeans. "Now that's a shame. Someone should always give women flowers, no matter how beautiful they are."

"The women or the flowers?" Lacey asked, amused, as she put the roses in water.

With a grin, Rick said, "Both." Picking her up, throwing her across his shoulder, he carried her out of the room. "Now, we both need a shower."

Chapter Six

In truth, as far as Rick was concerned, there was nothing better than waking up with a warm, willing woman in his arms, or he in hers. His head was on her shoulder, his arms around her, while her hands floated over him so gently he almost didn't know they were there, except for the deep contentment that filled him with that evanescent touch.

Her cheek brushed his hair, her lips pressed against his forehead, and he simply absorbed it. Wallowed in it. And smiled. That though, was how he knew Lacey was awake as well, and as content as he to simply to lie there wrapped in each other's arms, locked away from the whole world.

Let the storms and whatever blow outside, in here they were safe, content. He pulled her closer and she snuggled into him. It was early yet, still dark. So what had awakened him?

Distantly, he heard her cell phone ring.

Lacey was out of bed like a shot, flying across the room on fleet feet, alarm in every line of her face and body.

Rick watched the transformation from seductive, beautiful woman to federal prosecutor with something like awe. He watched the Lacey he knew freeze all her emotions and set them aside to become Federal Prosecutor L.C. MacKay. Lacey frowned, bit her lip and picked up the phone.

The warmth of Rick's body against hers vanished in the chill air of the apartment. At this hour of the morning, on a weekend, the news couldn't be good. Wouldn't be good, she knew.

"MacKay," she said, crisply, sharply, all too aware of Rick lying in her bed watching, his dark eyes worried and concerned.

"There's been a break-in, Lauren," a grim voice said. Chief of Police Mark Russell. She recognized his voice.

Even as he spoke she was reaching into her closet for a pair of tweed slacks, a neat white shirt and a jacket to match the slacks.

Always look calm, cool, professional, no matter how bad it might be. The public wanted—no needed—the reassurance that she was in control. Even when she wasn't. Even when the sure premonition of disaster whispered through her. With the Bluetooth headset in her ear, she dressed.

"Where?"

"The defense attorneys' office," Russell said, his voice tight.

"Fuck," she snapped, as she fought her emotions. Throttled them. It wasn't what she needed right now.

"We're alerting the teams," he said.

"Is everyone responding?"

"We just got word," he said cautiously.

Lacey closed her eyes. In other words, no.

"A car is on the way, Lauren," he said.

She disconnected and dialed another number. A deep, familiar voice answered.

"Armitage."

Sam Armitage was special ops, old school, a veteran of the police force with a thick moustache, iron gray hair and a lean and craggy face. She liked him a lot and trusted him implicitly.

It was his people guarding the witnesses. Already she guessed that there would be grief that night for both her and him. And for Mark Russell.

"Sam," she said, quietly. "What do you know?"

"I heard," he said, shortly. "There's been nothing from my people, Lauren. No alerts, but I've got reinforcements on the way, just in case."

She could hear the worry in his voice. "All right."

Turning, she looked at Rick, stretched out in her bed. He was so beautiful. For a moment her throat locked, certain of disaster, wanting to ask, unsure whether she could or should. It was too much to explain. Terror and grief hovered. So much might have gone wrong.

Rick looked at her, looked at the pale blue eyes wide in the gray darkness, with only the nightlight in the hall illuminating her.

Her mouth was tight, grim, but those eyes were not.

"I know who you are," he said. "L.C. MacKay." She had needed him too much earlier and he hadn't wanted to unsettle her with that revelation until she relaxed. "I saw you on the news. Those beautiful eyes of yours are unmistakable."

Letting out a breath, still she hesitated, her eyes on him.

"What is it?" he asked.

The tough federal prosecutor was there but also the woman. The one he'd begun to love. Looking at her, so strong, so vulnerable, he knew it was true.

"Will you be here?" she asked, reaching for her clothes, as her eyes lowered. "When I get back?"

Rolling out of bed, he went to her, touched her wrist so she would look up at him.

"If you want. I'll be here as long as you need me," he said.

She nodded, dressing quickly. "I don't know how long I'll be."

Again, insistently, he said, "I'll be here. There's cable TV and food in the fridge. I'll be fine. Go, Lacey."

Shrugging the jacket on, she turned but he caught her arm and stopped her long enough to give her a quick kiss.

"I will be here," he said again, firmly, knowing she needed to hear it.

Lacey's heart wrenched. There was no time to think about what he said, what she heard in his voice. She snatched up her purse and ID as she nearly ran out of the apartment.

Joe was waiting outside the building with the car at the curb, the door already open.

"Keep your eyes open, Joe," she said, "something's going down. We can't take any chances."

With a nod he threw the door shut behind her and scrambled around the car to get in on his side.

"I heard. Word of mouth," he said. "Lights and siren?"

"Do it. Downtown until we know more." Flipping open her phone she punched in the numbers and conferenced the call. "Gentlemen, what do we know?" she asked.

Mark Russell answered with Jeremy on one line and Sam Armitage on the other. They'd been waiting for her call.

"According to Will Callahan, our much-respected advocate for the defense," Russell said bitterly, "they had a break-in at his offices sometime after dark. Likely around midnight. That set off his alarms. The alarm company verifies that."

"What's missing?" she demanded, as if she didn't know. The defense was covered by the break-in story.

Russell hesitated only a moment. "The files are a disaster, spread across the office. They don't know for sure."

Her throat tight, she said, "Sam?"

"Every unit but one has called in. We're still trying to reach the team on Foster," he said, tightly. He paused. "There's no answer. We've got people on the way."

Lacey glanced at the rearview mirror, met Joe's eyes. They both knew what that meant. If someone could have, they would have answered. Since they hadn't, they hadn't had time to call for backup.

She didn't crack, didn't flinch, didn't acknowledge by so much as a flicker or a blink, the tears that burned behind her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Sam," she said tightly, because she knew he needed to hear it—hear it from her.

They were his men.

"We don't know," he said, but the knowledge was in his voice.

Softly, she said, "I know."

"Our people should be there shortly."

Looking up at the review mirror, she gave Joe an address. His eyes met hers again.

"Joe," she said, quietly. It was a risk. They could walk in on the bad guys. There could be someone waiting in the darkness for the first to respond.

Joe nodded, tromped on the brake and spun the car around in the pre-dawn darkness to turn them toward the safe house where Ellen Foster was kept. Lacey was only grateful that Ellen's children—too young to testify against Cardenas, although all of them had identified him as the "scary man"—were somewhere else, with family.

The scary man.

Lacey wanted to weep. Instead, she reached into her purse, pulled out the .32 she had only ever fired on the shooting range.

"Sam," she said into the phone, "how quick can we get people on Foster's children? I want them out of there ASAP."

His voice went cold and hard, angry as he caught the implications. "You got it, Lauren." It would be just like Cardenas to make an example of the children as well as their mother and they both knew it. Deliberately, she pinched her nose to push back the tears that gathered at back of her eyes.

Arriving on the scene to the kaleidoscope of light from the police and emergency vehicles bathing the isolated little house, it was obvious that the shooting was long over.

* * * * *

The apartment seemed empty and cold without Lacey. The bed certainly did. Rick stood looking at the door and thought about Lacey, the woman. He needed to know more. As a Ranger, he knew the value of intelligence and recon. It was time he knew more about her.

She'd given him permission to stay, to wait. She hadn't said that anything was off limits. In fact, she'd *never* said that anything was off-limits. The level of trust she had granted him shook him.

The one thing he'd noticed about this place was that there were no pictures—none. Not even of herself.

He walked into her office—the only room in which he'd never been—and looked around with a certain amount of surprise.

It was familiar, that room.

Painted an institutional gray, there wasn't much decoration, just her laptop, shelves for her law books, an old service trunk, the kind of thing you'd find on base at the end of a bed, for personal possessions.

With something like reverence, he knelt before it and lifted the lid to find Lacey...and Lauren.

There were pictures of her in uniform, both formal dress and desert camo, and her medals. Those medals were still pinned to her uniform blouse, now folded neatly in the trunk. A picture frame rested on top of it, the picture within it of a good-looking man in

a Ranger uniform, the frame well-worn. A news article lay on top of it, a story about an IED attack and the soldiers who had been wounded or who had died in it, including a man of the same rank as the man in the picture.

The man was listed among those who died.

Lacey was on the survivor list.

There were small smudges on the article, small puckered marks.

Her diplomas were there as well. College. Law school. From the dates on them, he guessed she was probably ten years older than he was, give or take a year or two. Not that it mattered as far as he was concerned. She certainly didn't look it or act it.

Someone had created a scrapbook with articles written about her, about her cases, carefully preserved. It wasn't the kind of thing that Lacey would have made, he knew instinctively. A mother, a friend—it was the kind of thing someone close would have given her.

He could find nothing about the ex-husband. Somehow he knew that her husband hadn't been that officer who had died. If he had been, her marriage certificate would have been in there as well. This was the gravesite she visited, the one she carried with her.

She might have loved her husband once but it was the man in the picture she had loved deeply and truly, and that man, the unidentified officer in the picture, was dead.

For him there had been the girlfriend he had come back to but he had come back a different man than the one she had known. She had wanted to understand but she couldn't, and kept expecting him to be that man once again. He never could be. It wasn't her fault. His anger had frightened her. It had frightened him. She hadn't wanted to listen to his stories, the stories he and Lacey had shared.

* * * * *

He was watching the football game on the TV, the sound low, when he heard Lacey's key in the lock.

It had been all over the news. The bodies and the blood.

Lacey had been calm, cool before the TV cameras, her eyes cold, as she said that Cardenas had claimed his last victim, that she would put him away forever.

Only Rick had seen the pain behind them.

As he had watched he had fought the rage at the stupidity of the reporter who hadn't been able to see it, hadn't looked into those blue eyes, hadn't known them as well as Rick was coming to know them.

Rick stood up, turned as Lacey walked in the door, her pale face composed. Her eyes were enormous in that still face. Those pale blue eyes looked at him and tears brimmed.

A single tear spilled over.

All it took was that look. He was already striding toward her. Lacey didn't know how to ask, but Rick knew what she needed.

Her face crumpled. She went to her knees as he caught her, held her as she cried, as she wept on his shoulder, her body shaking. Crying for Ellen Foster and her orphaned children.

Rick wrapped his arms around her.

Chapter Seven

The invitation taped to Lacey's monitor mocked her but she couldn't deny it and time was running out to do something about it. She tugged it free to look at it thoughtfully as she ran her fingers over the fine paper, over the embossed letters.

Ellen Foster's death had been a clear warning to the other witnesses but Sam had already moved them to a location only he and the people who guarded them knew.

And Lacey, of course, because she needed to talk to them. But whenever she visited, she went alone.

It was a risk.

Her address was not public record and she knew how to drive defensively. Joe followed at a discreet distance, making sure that she didn't have a tail, before he peeled off at the city limits.

It had taken time to reassure them. The trial had been adjourned for a few days for debate whether to declare a mistrial but Ellen's testimony had been complete and the defense had already cross-examined her. No one could say it hadn't been fair and legal.

To Lacey, the trial had become a monument to Ellen's courage. It had become personal and Lacey was going to see to it that she hadn't died in vain.

The trial had continued with the judge making a stern statement that actions like this would not deter justice in the United States.

So it had become even more important for Lacey to do this thing, to put her face out there in public and in front of the TV cameras to show that life goes on, the trial was going on, she wasn't afraid and so no one else should be.

But she had another reason to be nervous.

Would he agree?

Deliberately she flipped open her cell phone and made the call. Her heart pounded in her chest.

To her surprise, given the time of day, he answered and she smiled even as she listened to the noises coming from the background.

"Lacey?" Rick said, a little puzzled as he stepped out of the line and signaled he was taking a break from the loading.

"You wouldn't happen to have a tuxedo around, would you?" she asked.

Now he was a little intrigued. "I can get hold of one. Why?"

For a moment she hesitated and he went still. Unless he was mistaken, she was asking him for a date.

Oddly, that changed everything.

Something else was going on though.

"There's this black-tie thing, courtesy of the State House," she said and he could almost hear her try to find the right words for what she said next. "I'd like you to go with me."

Rick took a slow breath, knowing what she offered him. And she was giving him the right to refuse. It would take their relationship to an entirely different level. To his surprise, he found he wanted it.

"It'll be terribly stuffy," she said quickly. "Really boring, with endless speeches. The food will only be so-so."

It wasn't just that and they both knew it. They would be together, publicly—very publicly.

When did I fall in love with her? Rick wondered.

He wasn't exactly sure but he suddenly knew, then and there, very sharply, that he was. And he was suddenly and inexplicably afraid for her.

Special Delivery

"Oh, so that's why you want me to go," he said, laughing off his fear, "to relieve the tedium."

"Yes," she said softly.

"Black tie?"

"Uh-huh."

"I think I can scare up a tux. When? This weekend?"

Relief went through Lacey in a wash that was so strong it made her head spin.

"Sorry for the short notice," she said, fighting her smile.

He chuckled, his voice rich on the phone, sending a burst of warmth through her.

"No problem," he said. "I'll manage."

Flipping the phone closed, Lacey grinned and suddenly found she was looking forward to this dinner after all.

She wasn't so sure though, after trying to squeeze in shopping for a dress after a late recess by the judge that left her short on time. There had been no time to get her hair done.

That frustration lasted only until she stepped out of the elevator with the dress bag over her shoulder to find Rick waiting for her at her door. Just the sight of him literally took her breath away. Her throat locked as it caught, as her breath shuddered in her chest.

He was beautiful. The black tuxedo and crisp, white shirt suited his dark coloring, his neatly trimmed beard and moustache and his incredible body so well.

He looked dashing, just a shade piratical, as he turned to look at her. His smile widened as she walked toward him.

"You look amazing," she said.

The look in her eyes was more than gratifying.

Rick shrugged lightly, grinned. "I've been told I clean up well."

"They didn't know the half of it," she said, a smile erasing the harried expression she'd worn when she'd stepped out of the elevator.

"The name is Bond, James Bond," he said, doing a creditable Scottish accent with a tug at the lapel of his jacket.

She laughed and then he brought his other hand out from behind his back and watched her face go soft, her eyes wide.

He held the single white rose out to her.

"Purity?" she said, her eyes twinkling as she took the rose to breathe in the soft scent.

Rick smiled in return. "My intentions are pure."

Laughing, she said, "Are they? Oh damn."

He caught her up in his arms, looked down into her laughing face. "I said my intentions were pure, not my thoughts. Should I fuck you first?"

What would she do if he told her he was in love with her? He was half afraid to find out.

She reached up to touch his cheekbone, traced it delicately, almost in wonder, and her eyes softened.

"No," she said softly.

With a sharp smack on her ass he said, "You better get ready then, or we'll be late and it won't be my fault."

"I can wish," she said regretfully, and shook her head as her hands spread over his crisp white shirt and the firm muscles underneath it.

Wryly, she looked at him and unlocked the door.

Snatching up the bag at his feet, Rick followed her into the apartment.

"I have something to relieve the tedium," he said.

Tilting her head at him, she said, "What?"

He just tossed the bag at her.

Catching it, she looked inside and burst out laughing even as she blushed.

She needed something to take the edge off and what was in the bag would do it, since they didn't have enough time for him to do anything else properly.

"I dare you," he said, grinning as Lacey looked at him.

She sucked on her teeth as she looked in the bag, raised an eyebrow before she looked back at him and shook her head in amusement.

But she smiled.

Then she disappeared into the bedroom.

Accustomed to women taking an astonishing amount of time to prepare, Rick flipped on the TV, remaining standing so as not to crease the tux too much and, with a glance at his watch, resigned himself to the wait.

So he was surprised when he heard the door open only a short time later. He turned and all the breath went out of him as she stepped out of the bedroom.

Her hair was caught up in her usual French twist, but rather than tucking the ends in, she had left a spray of curls loose, with small glittery pins tucked here and there. With her hair up and chandelier earrings dripping from her ears, all attention was drawn to her lovely face, her long slender throat and the plunge of the neckline of her dress.

As discreet as it was, ending as it did between the ripe globes of her breasts, Rick also knew she wore no bra beneath it. There was only Lacey. His dick twitched and hardened at the thought of sliding a hand inside, even as he swallowed hard.

That dress ran like water over her body in some soft fluid material that shimmered as she moved, the full skirt flaring to swirl around her legs, a long slit in it revealing and then concealing them.

It was the look in her eyes—the blue of the dress making them almost glow—that caught him though.

How could she possibly love him?

She wasn't the federal prosecutor in that moment as she looked back at him, just a woman. He didn't deserve her.

"You look beautiful," he said as he went to her. He touched her cheek and she smiled up at him. Lacey let out a breath and looked up at him in visible relief.

"I guess it would be wrong to tell you how much I want to touch you right now," he said as he pulled her close.

She gave him a glancing sideways look from beneath her lashes that was surprisingly flirtatious.

"No more than I want to strip you out of that tuxedo," she said with a grin as they turned, Rick's hand in the small of her back.

She picked up her purse as he held the door for her.

"So," he said, pulling her into his arms as they waited for the elevator, "how should we tell people we met?"

Taking a deep breath, she looked at him, shrugged.

"We tell them the truth. That we met on the internet. It's perfectly acceptable these days." She paused and then grinned mischievously. "Just not the whole truth."

Curiosity was killing him. Had she done it?

Reaching casually into his pocket, he found the little remote and pressed the button.

Her response was more than gratifying.

Lacey gasped and shivered a little as something vibrated inside her, the erotic buzz scaling up swiftly and then down, oscillating. A burst of heat went through her, triggered by the vibrating egg inside her. She glanced at Rick, who grinned with evident delight.

"I wasn't sure you'd do it," he said, his dark eyes sparkling as he pulled her into his arms again, "but I can guarantee that the evening won't be too boring and that by the end of it you'll be so hot we might not make it back in the door of the apartment."

Just the idea had her hot, excited. She blew out a soft breath.

"How far?" she asked.

"Thirty feet or so, according to the box," he said and that wicked grin returned. "It has different settings, different speeds and styles. You'll have to let me know later which ones you prefer."

It would definitely be an interesting evening.

"Well, fair warning," she said as they walked through the lobby, "we have a driver for the evening. After what happened to Ellen Foster, my boss has insisted on taking extra precautions. No limo, but a state car."

It was a big black Crown Victoria—Police Interceptor version—not a tank, like a Hummer and, as they had found out in Afghanistan, probably about as safe, which was not that reassuring.

Joe looked startled when they walked out then nodded to Lacey in greeting.

"Lauren," he said, then looked intrigued. There was respect in his demeanor as he looked at her companion. "Good to see you, Rick."

Rick was equally as taken off guard.

She glanced at Rick. "I wondered if you two knew each other." As a matter of course, she had checked him out—doing that job personally.

Rick wasn't surprised.

"It's a damn shame what happened to you, Rick," Joe said as he opened the door for them before going around the car to the driver's side.

It had been.

The return from overseas, the transition to civilian life had been tough enough, and so had the return to his old job with the Sheriff's Department. They had replaced him, of course, when his deployment had stretched out but had held his job for him, as required.

Unfortunately, the county budget had been cut back. In the end, the county had been forced to let both go so he and the other officer had suddenly found themselves without jobs.

Still struggling with the transition, suddenly finding himself without the job he had been promised, the one he knew, Rick had gone down a few dark roads, had gotten drunk and into a few bar fights before he had started to dig himself back out of the darkness again.

Come to the dark side, we have cookies.

Except that they didn't. It had been a rough time.

He looked at her. "You knew."

Slowly Lacey nodded, those pale blue eyes watching him. Of course she would have checked up on him. She just hadn't said anything.

Instead she had left him with his dignity. Unlike others. A slender hand slipped into his and Lacey's fingers twined between his.

He looked down into her eyes. "You know I love you, don't you?"

Those eyes went wide and her breath caught audibly.

"Rick," she whispered as she looked up at him.

Joe, sliding into the driver's seat, missed all of it.

Rick's heart twisted as she just stood there—silent, still. "You don't have to say anything."

"No," she said. "My hours are impossible, I'm never home and I've got ten years on you."

Something in him eased a little.

Special Delivery

Rick smiled, suddenly knowing for certain what he had only hoped, and said the one thing that would convince her.

"It doesn't matter."

That shut her up. Her eyes went wide.

"Come on, we have to go, folks," Joe said, from inside the car.

"I love you, too," she said.

For a moment Rick went still and then he kissed her softly. Giving her a hand into the car, he smiled and said, "That doesn't get you out of this, you know," and turned on the remote, turning the dial up to full as he slid into the car beside her.

Lacey visibly arched as the device inside her throbbed and buzzed and she bit back a soft moan. He saw her eyes go to the rearview mirror in mild alarm.

Apparently oblivious, Joe's eyes were on the side view mirror to gauge the traffic before he pulled away from the curb.

"This is going to be fun."

Lifting an eyebrow Lacey glanced at him.

Keeping his hand in his pocket Rick changed the rhythm of the instrument and watched her tremble a little.

* * * * *

When Rick had said he loved her, Lacey's brain had frozen, those simple words almost shattering her. She hadn't allowed herself to consider it, hadn't even let herself admit how much she wanted it.

How much she wanted him.

Rick, her Rick with his deep, dark eyes, beautiful body, his classically beautiful face...his gentleness, his understanding. He was just too beautiful. There were plenty of women out there without all her baggage, her age, her complications, her responsibilities.

The little sex toy inside her definitely did force Lacey to stay focused. It felt amazing, delicious. She found that she was grateful they had been standing for most of the evening, with the exception of dinner, although there were moments when she looked at Rick in exasperation.

To her delight and occasional dismay though, she'd find the thing inside her buzzing at the oddest moments. While listening to a state senator talk about the budget, she'd glanced at Rick to see his expression bland and apparently interested in the conversation. Only the twinkling of his dark eyes gave him away as the thing inside her shivered.

By the time the dancing began she was so turned-on she could hardly hold still. And amazingly grateful that she was still standing. She was hot, wet and ready.

It had been an impulse to insert it and far too difficult to remove it now. Not that she wanted to.

Rick grinned and swung her into his arms to dance. She glared at him, but she wasn't angry, just...hot, excited.

Inside her, the egg was on a slow, maddening buzz. The pattern was highly erotic. Her breath shuddered each time it moved. She looked up into Rick's handsome face, shaking her head at that mischievous grin.

"You're killing me here," she whispered.

His dark eyes intent, Rick's grin broadened. "I know. Do you know how much I wish I could find an empty room somewhere in this place?"

Lacey swallowed a soft moan. She trembled in his arms, as she looked up at him, felt her face flush.

"And do you know how beautiful you look right now?" he said as he looked down at her.

"Do you know how turned on I am right now?" she said in return, deliberately shifting her hips so she brushed her mound against his cock beneath the tuxedo pants.

To no surprise she found it hard.

"How soon can we leave?" he asked.

A rush of heat went through her but she sighed.

"There's still one or two people I have to talk to before we can go."

His grin spread. "That's a shame."

"You just like torturing me," she said and laughed.

He touched her face and said, "I do."

Something in that look just melted her. "Well, I have to go powder my nose first," she said.

"Do you want something to drink?" he asked.

She nodded. "A glass of white wine would be nice." She didn't dare risk anything stronger.

The egg inside her flashed briefly to full power and she nearly groaned before glancing back over her shoulder to give him a teasing glare as she walked toward the restrooms, hips swinging.

He just winked and disappeared into the crowd.

On the way she passed Joel and his wife, Angela. She brushed her hand across Joel's sleeve as she went by so he would know she was passing and gave them both a nod and a smile.

She greeted one or two other people before finding her way to the ladies' room.

It was a relief to step into that relative peace and to find no one else there. The dancing had only just started and she knew a lot of the women were waiting for a conversation to finish so they could get their husbands away for the only dance they might get that evening.

With a sigh, she took advantage of it. Only Rick had made the evening bearable. That and his little toy. She smiled at the thought. She wasn't social by nature. She preferred smaller, more intimate gatherings. Friends.

As she washed her hands, the door opened. She glanced up, ready to smile politely at the person coming in and then went very still, careful not to make any fast moves. Her heart and stomach sank even as the men came in, quick and fast.

All of them were armed, all of them were dressed like the wait staff.

Her mouth tightened.

"Scream or fight," one of them said warningly, his voice faintly accented, "and we just start shooting and a lot of people get hurt. We don't mind that so much, but we don't want to die here either. Come quietly and no one dies."

The same kind of tactics they used in Mexico.

What choice did she have? Either she went or a lot of people died needlessly. She went.

They hustled her down the hall quickly and quietly, leaving two of them, apparently unarmed, at the end of the short hall to keep people away until they were gone.

* * * * *

Rick waited patiently in the line at the bar down at the end by the windows, giving him something else to look at besides the back of someone's head. He was more than ready to get Lacey home so he could play with her. From the look in Lacey's eyes so was she. He fingered the little remote in his pocket, smiling. It was turning into a good investment.

The view from this bar wasn't the best in the place, looking out as it did over a corner of the delivery dock and the white panel van, probably parked there by the caterer. The rest though, gave a pretty good view of the city, the towers rising high above.

Special Delivery

Movement down by the dock caught his attention—some of the waiters, unmistakable in their white jackets.

They were hustling. That was unusual. He frowned until he saw the reason why.

Lacey, with four men around her, all armed. They pushed Lacey between them, automatic weapons concealed but not invisible.

"Fuck," he said quietly.

Instantly, he reached for the man standing next to him.

"Look," he said, grabbing him and pointing.

"What the...oh fuck," the man said. "Who is that?"

"The federal prosecutor," Rick snapped. "Lauren MacKay. I need you to find her boss, find the Chief of Police and tell them what you saw."

Rick released the man and ran to the nearest door in the glass wall, his eyes locked on the van as the men shoved Lacey inside and slammed the door shut.

No way in hell he would reach them in time. He knew it but the parking lot and Joe were just beyond.

Even as he slammed through the doors then skidding down the grassy slope, he kept his eyes on the van and tried to get a plate number. He flipped open his phone.

"9-1-1. What is your emergency," the voice on the other end said.

"Just listen and write," Rick said. "My name is Rick Morrison. Six men have just taken Federal Prosecutor Lauren MacKay."

He quickly gave them the number of his cell, the name of the conference center and as much of the license plate as he could see as the van pulled away.

"Stay on the phone, sir," the voice said.

"Yeah, right," Rick said as he snapped the phone closed, leaving the signal open.

Joe was standing outside the car having a smoke when Rick raced across the parking lot. At the sound of running feet Joe spun.

"They've taken Lacey," Rick shouted.

"Fuck," Joe said.

Tossing the cigarette away, Joe jumped in the car and reached across to fling the door open for Rick. Rick dived in as Joe revved the big V8 engine.

"Which way, what am I looking for?" Joe asked, understanding without needing to be told that time was of the essence.

"East of the parking lot, a white panel van," Rick said.

"Got it." They shot across the parking lot, picking up the access road. "I'll call it in," Joe said, and triggered his radio.

"There," Rick said, as he spotted the van, his heart sinking as it moved out into traffic.

Joe nodded. "I see it."

"Don't close too tight," Rick said. "No lights or siren. They might kill her and just toss her out if they think we're onto them."

Again, Joe nodded, concentrating on keeping an eye on the van while calling in the information.

"We have to keep patrol cars off them until we know where they're taking her," Rick said.

They followed at a discreet distance, both watching the van each time it turned.

"Got it," Joe said, then said. "Boss wants to talk to you."

Rick's cell phone rang.

"That'll be him."

Rick flipped it open.

"Talk to me," the voice on the other end said.

"They took her out of the conference center in a white panel van," he said. "We don't dare get close enough to get a good read on the plates for fear of spooking them into killing her, dumping her and running. Call off the dogs or we'll just have a dead body."

He heard the chief speaking rapidly to someone else.

Another voice came on, Sam Armitage, a man Rick respected tremendously. The man knew his business.

"SWAT's on its way," Armitage said.

As much as the thought chilled him, Rick said, his jaw tight, "You and I both know that this isn't a hostage situation, Sam. It's an assassination, just like they've been doing in Mexico. They're going to kill her one way or another. They've got something in mind or they'd have done it already."

Their favorite method of assassination was decapitation. Rick went colder, if that were possible.

"Got that," Sam said, his tone grim. "First I gotta know something. What's your place in this?"

"I'm in love with her, Sam," he said.

A pause.

"Okay," Sam said, evenly. "You're Johnny-on-the-spot then, Rick. How do you see this? How do you want to play this?"

Rick closed his eyes, took a breath. "All right. Sam, keep everyone back until we know where they're going. They need someplace private, yet open, I'm guessing."

Suddenly he looked around, figured direction, distance and time. He thought about it, and even as he did his gut went tight.

Whatever hope he'd had that they'd recover Lacey intact began to fade. Fear threaded through his veins. His heart sank.

"They're going to Greenspace."

He looked at Joe.

Almost every city it seemed these days was doing some kind of project downtown to draw people back to center city, to reclaim old factory spaces and turn them into recreational areas.

That's what the Greenspace project was.

Everyone in the city knew about Greenspace.

It was open space. It had once been factories, but was now piled with demolished buildings and rubble. Open enough for snipers but also open enough to see headlights, cop lights coming, to see movement, and to hear it.

They'd have watchers out, spotters. Just in case.

Softly, Sam began to swear. He knew what a maze, what a disaster, Greenspace was for his people.

Rick went still as he remembered his own training.

Then he began to strip of the tuxedo jacket, out of the betraying white shirt that would be a beacon on a dark night like this. He pulled the jacket back on to cover his paler skin.

"Kill the lights, Joe," he said, conscious that the man was watching him out of the corner of his eye as they closed.

Obediently, Joe waited until they were in shadow between streetlights and flipped the headlights off so the difference in the lighting wouldn't be noted, his eyes on the distant white van.

"What are you going to do, Rick?" Joe asked quietly.

Taking a deep breath, Rick said, "I'm going to go get her back. There're things I can do as a civilian that cops can't."

Rick looked at Joe, a nice man, a family man and a good cop.

"Okay," Joe said, "I got that. It was getting close to time for me to retire anyway."

Both of them knew that questions would be raised if Joe didn't stop Rick from doing what he planned, if he insisted that Rick wait until the proper authorities arrived, and Rick would be forced to make a move.

If they did that, Lacey would be dead.

Either way, Lacey would not do well.

"Sam," he said into the phone, "as soon as your people get her spotted, keep everyone off me until I can get in. Have your people find the spotters and take them out, then move in carefully. If you hear gunshots, all bets are off—either I've succeeded or I've failed. The bad guys are dressed like waiters, white jackets. I'm in my tuxedo jacket. Ask your people not to shoot me, okay?"

For a moment there was silence.

"Yeah. You'll need a gun." Joe handed Rick his backup.

The van was moving through the fence, all eyes would be on it momentarily.

It was Rick's best chance.

Joe brought the car to a near stop in the darkness between the next streetlights. He paused only long enough to let Rick roll out of the car between some abandoned vehicles before he pulled away, switching on his headlights to draw any attention away from Rick's movements.

Rick moved into darkness, lit only by the distant city lights that surrounded the construction area. He was conscious of the headlights of the van moving slowly as it picked its way through the mounds of rubble. It was clear they had a destination in mind. He didn't have much time.

Neither did Lacey.

Chapter Eight

Crouched on the floor of the van, slightly hampered by the skirts of her dress, Lacey watched the men who had taken her. One was driving, another was in the passenger seat, two sat on what passed for seats and two other sat on their heels. All of them were armed.

There was only one other weapon in the van, a machete. It lay on the floor, impossibly out of reach.

She had a fair idea what it was meant for. It was meant to intimidate and it succeeded, she just didn't let it show. She was grateful she'd used the ladies' room first. She didn't want to disgrace herself.

Not that she had resigned herself to her fate, not by a long shot.

The man in the passenger seat had a video camera trained on her. There was a reason for it and she suspected that she knew what it was. Cardenas wanted to watch. She ignored it and awaited her chance.

She braced herself as the van rocked and rolled, unable to be sure where they were or where they were going. As soon as the van came to a stop and one of the men turned to slide open the door, Lacey snapped a side kick at one and launched herself at the man by the door, hoping and praying to make it through. If she could make it through she could dart around the van, put it between her and the guns, buy a little time.

She didn't make it. The other two had been prepared to take her.

The four men dragged her out of the van as she struggled and fought and the other two, the driver and the passenger, slowly got out.

"No sign of pursuit," one of them said.

They had left the headlights on as illumination.

Lacey looked around and her blood went cold. The urge to beg and plead was there but she clenched her teeth against it, trying not to look as terrified and sick as she felt.

It was the perfect killing ground—a wide, shallow bowl surrounded by mounds of rubble.

A tarp had been spread in the center of that bowl, and two sets of cement blocks had been set on it. One of the men stepped forward, lifted his chin and grinned at her.

"My boss wanted me to give you a message. Not so tough now, huh, bitch? We're gonna record this so he can watch you die when he gets out."

A cold chill went through her.

* * * * *

Rick let the man in his hands drop. The fight had been short, silent and brutal, but he was alive and the other man wasn't. He couldn't regret it, not looking down at what he saw in the center of the construction zone.

Like a beacon of light, Lacey's pale blue dress and golden hair stood out against the darkness. Despite her struggles, the men held her easily.

He quickly searched the man he had killed, finding what he needed—another gun and a spare mag.

One of them was saying something to Lacey. The other had a small handheld video recorder.

Fury hazed Rick's sight. They were going to kill her and record it. He looked at Lacey's pale face as she stood there waiting to die and wished he had some way to let her know she wasn't alone, he was coming. He tucked the extra mag into his pocket, and found something else there.

Suddenly he smiled and then with a shake of his head he moved quickly and silently down the slope to get in range, in more ways than one.

* * * * *

Lacey was terrified as they pushed her toward the tarp. At first the odd sensation inside her was just distracting, and then she realized what it was, and nearly mouned with relief, though she quickly choked it back.

Rick was here, somewhere near. She just felt it. Terror and hope warred within her.

Even so, she kicked and fought, as much out of instinct as to buy him time, while they wrestled her to her knees, turned her and forced her onto her back across the tarp—her shoulders on one set of blocks, her head on the other.

Between was empty space, to allow the machete to pass.

Above her was the sky, the stars hazy and few against the city lights. Four of the men held her arms and legs pinned to the tarp. Another man took up the machete.

He smiled and tested the blade with his thumb.

"The blade is not too sharp," he said. "It may take several blows to cut off your head."

Please, Rick, she prayed.

The man lifted the machete, taking it in both hands and raised it over his head.

Even as she prayed there were two sharp cracks. They echoed off the distant buildings. An almost comic expression appeared on the man's face as blood sprayed from his eye and he fell backward.

With almost metronomic regularity, two more shots rang out. Another fell and the others spun.

Lacey scrambled for a dropped weapon, rolled on her back as one of the men reached for her and fired two quick shots.

The man, the one who had promised to take her head, fell.

The man with the recorder dropped it to reach for a weapon and another, different gun—a shotgun—boomed.

Special Delivery

Two more shots, and then the more distant crack of a rifle, but all Lacey could see as she rolled away from the blocks was Rick coming out of the darkness, a gun in his hand, his chest beneath his tuxedo jacket bare.

Even as she looked at him, even as she came to her knees, he caught her up in his arms, held her close.

A dozen men in black came out of the darkness, Joe with a shotgun in his hands, to take charge of the two who had only been wounded.

Lacey cared about nothing but Rick, her arms locked around his neck and her face buried in his shoulder.

Chapter Nine

The jury foreman stood, his eyes resolutely on the judge, as were the eyes of the rest of the jurors. No one looked at the defense table. It was not a good sign—if you were the defense.

Her face impassive, Lacey tightened her fingers around Rick's as the foreman began to speak, began to read the verdict.

"On the first count of the indictment, murder in the first degree, we find the defendant, Anthony Cardenas, guilty. On the second count of the indictment..."

In his seat at the defense table Cardenas turned his head to glare furiously at the back of the room.

At her.

She met his gaze evenly and allowed herself a small smile of satisfaction. Whatever else, she knew that she had gotten him. It had been Lacey who had built the case.

Due to the circumstances of the attack on her, rather than take the chance that Cardenas would walk on a technicality or on appeal, Lacey had taken herself off the case, though she had been kept informed of all details.

Jeremy had handled it well enough.

They had discovered the leak and to everyone's dismay, it had been in the police department, a temporary civilian secretary with a son hooked on drugs and access to the chief's office. She had given Lacey up when the request had gone through for Joe to act as driver.

Lacey, despite everything, was already on another case, mafia this time, her workload hardly diminished.

This case would always be special though. She looked up at Rick, standing beside her.

"Congratulations, babe," Rick said, softly.

She smiled. "We got him."

* * * * *

Outside, sleet tapped at the windows, a chill radiating as winter settled. Inside they were having their own private celebration. The dinner had been eaten and the champagne drunk. Lacey gasped as Rick's mouth claimed her breast. The warmth of it closed around her nipple as his tongue slid across the taut peak. She moaned as she stroked her hands over his broad shoulders, combed them into his close-cropped hair, to press his mouth harder against her.

It felt wonderful, incredible.

One of his arms was beneath her, curled around her to keep her close, to keep her back arched and to make sure she couldn't wriggle away as he began to torment her with his mouth and hands. He suckled and nipped at the tight nub of her nipple, and bright bolts of pleasure shot through her to her core, to her aching pussy as just the fingers of his free hand brushed ever so lightly over her body. They drifted over her belly, her abdomen, thighs, just over the tight curls of her mound, and her muscles twitched wildly with each evanescent caress.

With that same light touch he coaxed her legs apart to play lightly with the hairs there, the delicate tissues of her labia, her clit. Lacey thought she'd lose her mind as he toyed with that sensitive swollen nub.

His finger slid up inside her and he found her G-spot and began to stroke. She whimpered softly as sweet pleasure swept through her. Another finger joined the first, to stroke until her hips rose, and then they withdrew. A soft murmur of disappointment escaped her. The fingers returned, but not alone, there was something with them. It hummed and her back arched higher as bliss washed through her.

Lacey gasped as the vibration of the bullet within her throbbed and Rick's finger gathered her moisture so he could tease her clit once again.

Carefully withdrawing his arm from beneath her, Rick propped his head on that hand and just looked at her as he pleasured her. Her pretty face was flushed with color, her eyelids fluttered a little as her head tossed. The muscles in her thighs and belly jumped as he played with the swollen nub between her thighs.

With a sigh of pure satisfaction, he leaned over her, kissed her lightly and said, "I love to watch you like this, to watch your pleasure. You're so beautiful."

She was. He'd never enjoyed making love to a woman as much as he loved making love to Lacey.

Then he dialed up the bullet and watched her back bow as her breath caught once again. He brushed his mouth across her furled nipple. She shivered and her hips bucked.

Changing the vibration of the bullet again, he dialed it higher, and she moaned.

Sliding down her body, he trailed soft, sucking kisses over her belly, dipped his tongue into her navel, and continued down, turning the dial on the bullet up just a little with each kiss, until she was nearly sobbing. Her hands clutched lightly at his shoulders, his arms, and then fell away as he found her clit. Parting the tender folds, exposing it, Rick breathed softly over it and she quivered. Slowly and gently, he closed his mouth over her clit.

She cried out, clinging to the covers. Rick covered his finger in gel lubricant and pressed at the tight sphincter of her ass. His finger slid inside her to push the lubricant deeper.

As his tongue teased her and the toy within her vibrated ever more intensely, he pushed another finger into her. He slid a slender anal vibrator into her ass and pushed it gently inside her.

He shifted it, played it until she moaned. Rick withdrew the anal vibrator and pulled her up into his arms. He set his cock head at her anus. His lips were on her throat. With one arm around her hips, he pushed his cock into her ass.

Teasing her nipples, he played with her clit and drove his cock deep into her. Her muscles grew tight, her breath short, her hands clung to him. His cock was so hard inside her.

She was so deliciously tight that Rick nearly came as he pressed farther into her sweet, dark channel. Pleasure rushed through him as she quivered in his arms, moaned softly...and pushed back.

In one surge, he thrust his aching cock deep inside her and drove a low groan of pleasure from her.

With one arm across her body to close around her firm breast, his thumb and forefinger tight around her nipple, the other was free to tease her clit once more as Rick began to fuck her pretty ass. It was sheer heaven, absolutely glorious. He loved fucking her, making love to her, in so many ways.

He was close to coming. Teasing her nipples, he played with her clit and drove his cock deep, hard.

Her body grew tight, her breath short, her hands clung to him.

His cock was so hard inside her, swelling as his balls drew tight.

With his mouth against her throat, his orgasm so close, and barely able to talk, he whispered, "I love you, Mrs. Morrison."

Lacey came with a cry of pleasure. She clung to Rick, shuddering. Rick came too, his hot cum filling her as he drove his cock deep and stilled.

"I love you, Mr. Morrison," Lacey murmured.

Rick collapsed to the bed, pulled her to his body and she snuggled close as their heartbeats settled and sleep came.

About the Author

V.J. Devereaux currently keeps company with two dogs, two cats, a ferret (since moved, sniff), an African clawed frog and a very forgiving (and sometime inspiring) spouse. He loves the research. The spouse, that is, not the frog.

She self-published and illustrated her first novel on dinosaurs at eight (and got an A) and has been in love with writing ever since.

An avid reader (clocked at 365 wpm; why, no one knows), she was accused of being so desperate to read that she would read skywriting or cereal boxes. But next to those she reads and writes fantasy, mystery and romance novels, and all their marvelous combinations.

The author welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her <u>author bio page</u> at <u>www.ellorascave.com</u>.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

Also by <u>V.J. Devereaux</u>

Cherry's Jubilee

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