RESISTING





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Resisting Kane

A novella of erotic romance by

STEPHANIE ADKINS

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For the Romance Divas

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Chapter One

As the midday sun shone brightly through Madison Carey's bedroom window, a smile grew across her face. Moving her hips beneath Julian's tongue, she admired the way the light reflected off his bronzed skin as he knelt on the floor between her legs. Wrapping his muscular arms around her thighs, he pulled her to the edge of the bed and shoved his tongue deeper inside her pussy.

Inhaling sharply, she arched her back as an agonizing moan rushed to the surface. Instantly, Andrew's warm lips contained her cry of passion as he claimed her mouth with his own. The feeling of one man's tongue plunging inside her repeatedly while another one gently pried her lips apart was enough to send her mind reeling.

It wasn't the first time the threesome had enjoyed a Sunday together in Madison's bed. Eleven years her junior and extremely virile, the two men were more than willing to satisfy her every whim whenever she snapped her fingers.

As Andrew's tongue delved inside her mouth, she jerked her body feverishly. Grasping Julian's blond hair tightly in her hands, she began to grind her body viciously against his tongue, causing him to suck and lick even harder. The need to climax had become overwhelming. Breaking contact with Andrew's mouth, she rose up on one elbow, her jaws clenched together, and growled deeply as she watched Julian eat her pussy like a man possessed.

"Oh, fuck! Yes! Yes!" she shouted.

Andrew grabbed a hardened nipple and tugged at it roughly. Her head back, her eyes closed, she urged Julian on. His teeth nipped her clit as he sucked, and his tongue stroked it with a fierceness that lifted her higher and higher. Until...

"Oh! Oh!" she cried out as the pressure began to take over. "Fuck! Faster, baby! Faster!"

As her body trembled violently, she dug her feet into the side of the bed to lift her hips away from Julian's unforgiving mouth, but he kept her in place. Digging his fingers into her hips, he latched on and sucked hard as she writhed and screamed beneath him.

The last current raced through her body, and she fell back onto the bed, limp and breathless. Closing her eyes to keep the room from spinning, she sighed contentedly as they both kissed her flushed skin, leaving tantalizing trails across her thighs and breasts. After several hours spent between the two men, her body felt on the edge of exhaustion.

"You ready, baby?" Andrew whispered seductively in her ear.

Grinning widely, Madison crawled on top of Andrew as he rolled onto his back. While he parted his knees and pressed his feet onto the floor, she trembled anxiously like a giddy schoolgirl, waiting as she felt Julian step between Andrew's legs and position himself directly behind her. Her knees on the edge of the bed, she leaned forward and hungrily kissed Andrew while Julian rubbed his cock against her pussy, wetting the crown and getting ready to slip it inside her ass.

She was so excited it was hard to keep still. Reaching between them, she positioned Andrew's cock at her pussy

while Julian pressed the tip of his against her hole. Relaxing her body, she exhaled deeply as they both pushed inside her body simultaneously. They spread her open completely, and all three of them moaned in unison. Holding her hips firmly, Julian slid his cock inside her ass while Andrew pressed his feet onto the floor and raised his hips off the bed, slowly but steadily forcing his cock inside her pussy.

Hands spread against the bed, she swayed her body in sync to their movements. Eyes closed as they rocked together, she reveled in the wonderful sensation of having them both inside of her at the same time.

"Oh ... that feels so good." She moaned softly.

Kneading her breasts with his hands, Andrew watched her closely as she gyrated on top of him. Her mouth opened slightly, and she sighed every so often as they moved methodically inside of her. They always followed her pace, never rushing. With both of them being so well endowed, they let her set the rhythm until she felt like she could take more.

Madison shivered as Julian ran his hands up her back, coming to wind his fingers in her hair. As he gripped her long brown tendrils and pulled her head back, she groaned and bit her bottom lip, instinctively wanting and needing to move faster. Her body felt like it was on fire. They felt so good. Damn good.

"Oh! Fuck!" she wailed. "Yes! Faster!"

Wrapping his arms around her waist and crushing her against his chest, Andrew lifted his hips off the bed at a rapid pace, thrusting inside of her pussy furiously, while Julian pulled her hair roughly and pumped her ass faster. Her voice echoed against the walls and she clawed the bed sheets as both men fucked her. Their growls rumbled in her ears as she steadily coaxed them to do it harder.

"Yes! Fuck!" Julian bellowed, suddenly grasping her hips with both hands.

She knew he was close as she turned to gaze at him. The sweat trickled down his muscular chest, and the veins in his neck protruded as his teeth clamped together.

"That's it, baby! Come on!" she pleaded. "Come in my ass!"

With an anguished moan, he came. His head back and his eyes closed, he drove his cum deep inside her ass while his body shook uncontrollably. Smiling wickedly at him, she watched his expression as he spewed every drop before slowly pulling out and collapsing.

Moaning softly, she barely had time to react before Andrew rolled her onto her back and pushed her to the middle of the bed. Spreading his knees and planting them firmly into the mattress, he began pummeling her pussy while Julian turned over on his side to watch.

"Yes!" she shouted, raking her crimson fingernails along his spine. "Fuck me!"

As droplets of sweat fell from his forehead onto her breasts, she held onto him and raised her hips off the bed to meet his every thrust. Their mating was primal, savage, and she couldn't get enough.

Crawling closer beside them, Julian ran his hand down Andrew's back, causing him to groan. As he continued to fuck Madison hard and fast, Julian slid a finger down the valley of Andrew's ass and shoved it into his hole, making him gasp and yell. The faster he fucked her, the faster Julian would thrust his finger inside of him.

Leaning over, Andrew took Julian's mouth with his own as Madison watched, mesmerized. Seeing their tongues hungrily searching and probing while Andrew continued driving his cock inside of her was incredible. Each time Julian would push his finger in Andrews's ass, Andrew would shove inside of her just as hard.

Releasing Julian's mouth, Andrew leaned forward and began kissing Madison eagerly until, after several minutes, she felt his body begin to tense. As Julian pushed his finger deep inside Andrew's ass, Andrew came in a forceful thrust that made all of them moan loudly.

Gripping his back with her fingernails, she held on to him until his trembling subsided. Exhausted and weak, he pulled out of her and crumbled to the bed, gasping for air. Her body completely satiated, she sighed happily as she lay between them.

For almost a year, she had worked hard as their agent, landing them several prestigious modeling contracts. Only the best companies and advertisers would do. As always, she wouldn't settle for anything less for her clients.

She knew she could mold them into something extraordinary the moment she first laid eyes on them. They had been working as waiters for a local catering company. Their eyes wide and expressive, they both nodded their heads in agreement as she offered them the chance of a lifetime, earning quadruple the amount of their current meager salaries.

Since that day, she had worked tirelessly getting them to the top. With many other successful clients under her belt, she had steadily climbed the ladder at the Avalon Modeling Agency, landing the esteemed position of assistant to owner Courtney Avalon. It had been a long and tiresome journey, but she felt as though she had finally come into her own.

The loud ringing of her cell phone pulled her from her reverie. Reaching over Andrew, she picked up her phone from the nightstand and flipped it open.

"Hello?"

She playfully removed Andrew's hand on her breast and grinned at the devilish expression on his face, trying not to giggle.

"Hello, sweetheart."

The sound of her father's voice made her heartbeat quicken. Putting a finger to her lips, she motioned for Julian and Andrew to keep quiet.

"Hey, Dad. How are you?"

Stern and set in his ways, Police Lieutenant Alton Carey was seldom one for compassion of any kind, not even toward his only child. So hearing his loving affirmation instead of his usual "Hello, Madison" instantly put her on edge. He rarely resorted to niceties unless he wanted something from her or to tell her bad news. The last time he had done so was four years prior when her mother had died from a lengthy battle with ovarian cancer. "I've assigned two more police officers to watch over you. After what happened Friday, I'm not taking any chances. I'm worried about you."

Always blunt and to the point, it was one of her dad's worst qualities, but considering his job, she never expected any less. Sitting up and propping a pillow behind her back, she let out an exasperated sigh.

"Dad, I'll be fine. I told you it was probably just a one-time thing. He's angry right now, but he'll get over it eventually and move on. Please stop worrying so much."

She could almost picture him shaking his head, sitting behind his cluttered desk at work, looking disheveled and tired. There was really no point in arguing with him.

"And what if he doesn't? You're all I have left, Madison," he said sorrowfully. "My men should be arriving there soon to ask you some questions. Give them as many details as you possibly can."

"*What*? Your officers are on their way right *now*?" she asked incredulously, bolting upright in the bed.

Following her shrill reply, Andrew and Julian jumped from the bed and hurriedly dressed as she followed suit. After retrieving her panties and bra from the bedroom floor, she threw open her closet doors and grabbed a pair of jeans and a shirt from their hangers. All the while, she tried to listen to her dad explain how he was only looking out for her safety. Rolling her eyes, she stopped suddenly when she heard the faint sound of car doors shutting in her driveway.

"Dad, they're here. I'll call you back as soon as they leave." As he mumbled a goodbye, she hung up the phone and threw it on the bed as Julian and Andrew nervously paced the floor while she finished getting dressed. She was so angry with her dad for going against her wishes that she couldn't concentrate. It was bad enough to have two police officers already guarding her house, and now there would be two more to contend with. She had told him several times that she would handle it on her own and still he continued to treat her like a child.

Looking in the mirror one last time, she smoothed her hair and quickly applied deodorant before leaving the room with Julian and Andrew close behind her. They resembled deer caught in a pair of headlights, and unfortunately she didn't have time to explain the situation to them. It would have to wait until tomorrow at work. They still had no idea they had been watched like hawks all night long or that it took an act of Congress just to get them in the house.

Explaining to the police officers last night that she had a date planned for the evening had reminded her of the days she had to ask for her dad's permission to go out with her friends. The stream of questions that followed was enough to make her want to scream at the top of her lungs.

Peering through the peephole in the door, she saw two men walking up the brick pathway to her front porch. Their faces weren't clearly visible yet, but she could see sunlight reflecting off the badges clipped to the front pocket of their jackets.

Opening the front door, she hustled Julian and Andrew on their way. She stepped just outside the door and watched as the boys walked quickly past the two officers, never once looking up at them. Madison's anger turned to shock as she stared into the haunting eyes of Terence Kane.

Her dad had failed to mention one of the officers was an old classmate from high school. She hadn't seen Terence, or Terry, as everyone had called him back in those days, since the day they graduated almost fifteen years ago.

Terry had been one of the popular kids in school. He quarterbacked for the football team, dated the captain of the cheerleading squad, and remained a straight-A student. His hazel eyes were a sharp contrast to his ebony skin. He was tall, about six-three, and still as broad and muscular as she had last seen him. The only thing different about him was he had traded his dreadlocks for a shorter style like most of the policemen she knew in her dad's squad.

They were total opposites, she and Terence. While he was well-liked and a class favorite, she barely brushed through high school. She never hung around his crowd, and the few times she had tried to start a conversation with him, he had shunned her, much like he did with every other person who wasn't in his close-knit group of friends. Combine that rejection with the stigma that came from being the police chief's only child, and there you have it. Four years of absolute hell.

Fortunately, two weeks following graduation, her dad had loaded up their belongings and moved them to Los Angeles, where they had resided ever since. Now it seemed as though Terry was back in her life, much to her dismay. Standing upright, her chin held high, she smiled at the two men as they drew closer.

"Madison Carey." Terence smirked, looking behind him at Julian and Andrew as they jumped in their cars and sped off. "Still looking for love in all the wrong places, I see."

Squaring her shoulders, she glared at him spitefully. There was no way she was going to let him continue rattling her after all these years.

"Terence Kane," she drawled. "Still an ass after all these years, I see."

The look on his face was priceless, and the other officer with him tried hard to stifle a laugh. Opening the door wider and motioning them inside, she shot Terence a condescending smile when he walked past her. After closing the front door behind them, she gestured for the duo to follow her into the spacious den so they could sit comfortably and talk.

She could feel Terry's gaze on her the whole time, but she shrugged it away just as he had done her years ago. It had been a stressful couple of weeks, and she was in no mood to deal with his pettiness. He may have been assigned to her case, but that didn't mean she had to like it. Settling on the sofa, they took out their notepads and pens as she sat down in the chair opposite them.

"This is my partner, Drew Sanderson," Terry said, looking sideways at the short, balding gentleman sitting beside him. Her dad couldn't have picked two completely different people if he had tried, she thought to herself. Drew had an easygoing manner about him that made her smile, while Terry's whole aura immediately put her on her guard. Still, if they were going to be spending a lot of time together, she knew it would be better to at least try to keep the peace between them. She dealt with many obtrusive people in her line of work, and he was no different than any of them.

"So Terry, how did you come about finding your way into my dad's squad?" she asked, trying through gritted teeth to be civil.

He shrugged, attempting to deflect the question. "I was on the force in Phoenix until my dad died five months ago from lung cancer. I needed to get away from that town and read an article about Mr. Carey in the newspaper and decided to apply. Now here I am."

For a moment, she didn't know what to say. It was unusual for them to have anything in common, but after the sorrow of losing her mother to cancer, she could understand his pain.

"I'm sorry about your dad."

Nodding his head, he cleared his throat, and looked down at his notepad.

"So tell us about Joseph Sinclair. What's the story with him?" he asked, changing the subject quickly.

Shifting uncomfortably in her seat, she drew a deep breath before relaying the events of the past two weeks.

"He was an employee of mine for several months, but three weeks ago I had to let him go because he'd started binging on drugs and alcohol. Some days he would show up for work, but most days he wouldn't. The days he did show up, he was so stoned no one could work with him. A few days after I let him go, he began threatening me. He left hateful messages on my cell phone and through email. I didn't save them because I didn't think I would need them. At first I just shrugged it off because we've had several disgruntled employees try using scare tactics on us after they were sent packing. Within a few days they usually get over it and go their own way, but Joseph didn't."

After scribbling on his notepad, Drew looked up at her with questioning eyes. "Why didn't you press harassment charges against him when he first started threatening you?"

"I honestly thought he would just go away, and I didn't want to feed his anger. I'm a strong woman, Officer Sanderson. I don't scare easily, and I was determined not to run from him. That was, until Friday afternoon."

Shivering at the memory, she clamped down on her revulsion as she relayed the details. The package she received at work hadn't been postmarked, but she knew instantly it was from Joseph by the garbled handwriting on it. At first she had contemplated calling her dad, but she wasn't ready yet to admit to him what had been going on. Up until then, it had been her secret.

She had hoped she could handle the situation on her own, but after seeing her neighbor's dead cat in the box, she knew it had reached far beyond a simple threat. After reading the tag on its collar, she felt sick to her stomach when she realized Joseph had been that close to her home. Wrapped in a plastic bag, blood had seeped from the incision in its tiny throat, turning its once beautiful gray fur into a ghastly shade of red. Stifling a scream, she had instantly called her father who dropped everything and rushed to her office. After finding out from the crime lab that the fingerprints on the package were indeed Joseph's, they had swarmed his tiny apartment only to find he had vanished, taking all of his belongings with him. Her home was now guarded around the clock by plain-clothed officers who sat in their unmarked car on the opposite side of the street.

Her dad had tried to convince her to stay at his house or with a close friend, but she firmly refused to let the incident change her life. If he continued to stalk her, sooner or later he would make a mistake and they would catch him. Until then, she continued living her life the way she always did, with her first call going out to Julian and Andrew to keep her company.

They'd had no idea of the circumstances surrounding their visit, since Madison had pleaded with her dad to make sure the events of the past two weeks were kept private and out of the press. The last thing she needed was a terrified Courtney Avalon creating unnecessary drama and causing havoc amongst their clientele.

"Have you heard from him since then?" Terry questioned.

"No," she said, shaking her head from side to side. "Nothing."

Leaning forward in his seat, he rested his elbows on his knees and gazed at her intently. "Did you have any type of ... sexual relations with Joseph Sinclair?"

Madison's mouth dropped open in shock.

"I don't see where that has anything to do with this," she retorted angrily.

With that same annoying smirk on his face, he shrugged his shoulders while Drew looked on quietly. "I was just wondering if he might have some sort of personal vendetta against you besides just being fired from the agency."

Taking a deep breath, she struggled to calm herself down before she replied, not trusting herself to speak while she was mad. He was just doing his job and arguing with him wouldn't get them any closer to finding Joseph. She hated giving details about her private life, but this time, unfortunately, it was necessary.

"Yes, we did, but only once, and that was long before he started abusing drugs. It was a mistake. After that one incident, we maintained a strictly professional relationship."

As Terry jotted some notes down on his pad, Drew looked at her quizzically. "In the time you spent together, did he ever mention any family members? Maybe the name of his hometown or somewhere he likes to travel?"

She wished that she could give them more information, but she had already gone over every conversation they had shared, and she still came up with nothing that could lead to his capture.

"No." She sighed. "The only thing we ever really discussed was work. I'm sorry."

Closing his notepad and slipping it inside his jacket pocket, Terry stood up while Drew continued writing.

"We're going to get this guy. People like him can't stay away. He'll eventually make his way back to you when he thinks everything has settled down. When he does we'll be there," Terry said, his voice stern and certain. "Until then, we'll continue watching your house, and if he calls you we'll get a trace on it. Oh, and Drew and I will also be taking turns staying here and going to work with you."

Gasping from disbelief, Madison jumped from her seat.

"What? You can't be serious," she exclaimed. "Why do you have to stay here? I already have men guarding my house! And how am I supposed to work with the two of you following me around all day long? What will I tell my boss?"

While Drew rose from his seat, Terry laughed under his breath, which only annoyed her even further. "You'll have to take that up with your dad. He ordered it. We're to remain with you constantly until Sinclair is caught. At your home, through work hours, and anywhere else you might need to go, in case he decides to approach you."

Terry handed her a business card while she fought to keep her temper at bay. Once they walked out her front door, she would be on the phone with her dad. Not that it would make a difference.

"If you need to leave home for any reason, call my cell and one of us will be here within a few minutes to drive you. Otherwise, Drew will be back this afternoon and he'll be staying through the night. I'll be here tomorrow morning to take you to work."

Following them to the front door, she stuffed the card in her jeans pocket as he rambled on about the seriousness of the matter at hand, and how she should always be on her guard. Her mind raced in a thousand different directions and it was hard to concentrate on anything. She couldn't believe this was happening, and on top of everything else that had gone wrong lately. When would she get her life back?

Terry abruptly turned to face her, and she stopped in her tracks to avoid running into him. A glance told her it was obvious he was amused by her discomfort. Balling her fists, she talked herself out of slapping the smug grin off his face.

"It's good seeing you again, Madison. Maybe somehow through all of this we can catch up on the last fifteen years."

She wished she could tell him there was nothing she would have despised more. And right now she wanted them out of her house as quickly as possible so she could be alone. Forcing a smile, she waited patiently while they made their way outside and onto the front porch before slamming the door behind them and collapsing against it. Muffling a scream, she took several deep breaths in a useless attempt to calm her nerves.

With any luck, Terence Kane would be out of her life as quickly as he had reappeared in it.

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Chapter Two

"Terence Kane?" Madison exclaimed. "Are you kidding me, Dad?"

After rushing through the front door and glancing quickly around the empty den, Lieutenant Alton Carey turned to gaze at his daughter with an astonished look on his face.

"Is that why you called me over here? The way you sounded on the phone, I thought something bad had happened."

Frustrated, Madison threw her hands up in the air. She should have known talking to him wouldn't do any good. Trying to make him see reason was like trying to talk to a brick wall.

"Something horrible *has* happened. Why did you assign Terence Kane to my case? Better yet, why did you hire him to your squad? You know how much I can't stand him."

Chuckling softly, he sat beside his daughter as she plopped down on the sofa dramatically.

"Yes, I remember how much you disliked him in school, but I also know that you're adults now. It's time to put the past to rest. I didn't hire him to upset you. I hired him because he's a seasoned officer who's damn good at what he does. I knew his father, too, and I respected him very much. He was a good man."

Agitated, Madison folded her hands in her lap, refusing to look at him. "It was like being thrust into the past when I saw him today. I hated that time of my life. You know that." Much to her surprise, her dad leaned over and placed a hand on top of hers. With his other hand, he tucked a few strands of her hair behind her ear. It had been a long day, and the comforting gesture made her eyes swell with tears.

"Madison, people have been known to change. You should also remember the pain you brought upon yourself during that time. You can't keep holding grudges over things that happened a long time ago. You should know from watching your mother struggle that life is a gift. Forgive and move on. I'm not as graceful with words as she was, but I'm sure she'd tell you the same thing if she were still here."

Unable to control it any longer, Madison let the tears flow down her cheeks. She knew he was right. Everything had just become so jumbled up with Joseph Sinclair, work, and now Terry. Still, she had gotten through worse times in her life, so she squared her shoulders and prepared to move forward.

"I know. You're right. Besides, there are more important things to worry about right now, like that psycho. Any news?"

While she wiped the tears from her face, her father got up and began to pace the floor. She knew that reaction well. It was what he did best when he couldn't find the answers.

"No. Nothing," he replied. "We'll catch him, Madison. I promise."

"I know you will, Dad. I don't doubt that."

* * * *

The following morning, Madison bounded down the stairway, excited to be going back to work. At least she would be around people other than just policemen. Besides Julian

and Andrew, she'd had several calls from friends wanting to visit over the weekend, but she had made excuses, not wanting to risk anyone finding out the circumstances that surrounded her. How in the world would she be able to explain a balding police officer prowling her downstairs? It was hard enough keeping the secret from Julian and Andrew.

She wasn't used to being without her friends and having no one to pass the time with. Normally she was encompassed in a bustle of activity so the quietness made her two-story home feel even bigger and emptier. Waking up early that morning, she had jumped out of bed, eager to get dressed and back to work just so she would have someone besides a cop to talk to.

Madison rolled her eyes in disdain the moment she saw Terry waiting for her in the foyer with Drew at his side. As soon as Drew walked out the front door, he turned to her and greeted her with a lopsided smile.

"Good morning, Madison," he said cheerfully.

Placing her hands on her hips, Madison scowled at him. It was bad enough for them to be thrown together against her wishes, but seeing how he was obviously enjoying her misery over the whole situation made it even worse.

"I really don't see why it's necessary for you to drive me. I have a chauffeur who can do the same thing with far less aggravation."

She walked past him and into the den. As he followed her every move, she heard him chuckle under his breath. Choosing to ignore it rather than start a futile argument with him, she looked around the room for her purse. She vaguely remembered setting it down in the den when she returned from work Friday evening, but now it was nowhere to be seen. Maybe the housekeeper had moved it.

"Your chauffeur isn't the one being paid to protect you," he reminded her, picking up her purse from a nearby table. "Look, Madison, I know you're not thrilled with me being assigned to your case. That's pretty obvious."

Snatching it from his hand, she stormed past him and walked toward the kitchen.

"Good. Then I can stop pretending to be civil toward you."

After pouring herself a cup of coffee, she fumbled with some paperwork on the countertop while Terry stood nearby and watched. In his black dress pants, long-sleeved blue shirt, and tie, she had to admit he looked quite handsome, but she immediately forced the thought from her mind as quickly as it had entered. She wouldn't go there again if her life depended on it.

"Pretend all you want. I'm not going anywhere. It's my job to watch over you and I'm going to do my job whether you like it or not," he replied, arrogantly crossing his arms over his chest. Swallowing hard, Madison glared at him, trying valiantly not to wail at him with her claws bared.

"You might have walked over me and everyone else you looked down upon in high school, but you won't do it to me again, Terence Kane. I don't need your protection. My father hired you. I didn't. I can take care of myself."

Shaking his head in disbelief, he walked toward her and cornered her against the kitchen counter before she had time to escape. Undaunted, she looked up into his cold hazel eyes and never flinched. She had been up against far more intimidating men than him in her lifetime, and she wasn't about to be bullied.

"You can stand here and act all high and mighty as long as you want to, Madison Carey. I can do this all day long."

Placing his hands on either side of her against the counter, his glare was unwavering. "The fact that you're rich and wellknown in this shallow business you seem to love won't stop Joseph Sinclair from killing you if he's given the slightest opportunity."

His breath was hot against her skin, and even though she knew she should try and step away from him, for some reason her feet felt permanently glued to the floor. She couldn't remember a time she had ever been this close to him, and it was unsettling to say the least. The scent of his cologne pervaded her senses and, as much as she tried, she couldn't control her body from quivering.

"Terry, I know the thought of some helpless woman falling at your feet excites you, but I don't need you. If he makes the mistake of getting near me, I'll ... I'll just take care of it. I'll kill him if I have to."

"And how do you expect to do that?" he asked incredulously.

Shrugging her shoulders, Madison tore her gaze away from him and glanced out the window, refusing to look him in the eye. She had protected herself this long; she certainly didn't need him to start doing it. What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him. Jerking away from her, Terry inhaled sharply as if something had suddenly occurred to him. Then, before she had time to react, he took her purse and poured all of its contents on the countertop. Bewildered, she tried to stop him, but he was much too strong.

"What the hell are you doing? You have no right going through my things! Stop it!"

Every zipper and compartment he opened as Madison looked on helplessly. With his jaws clenched tightly together, he frantically searched through her wallet, every lipstick case, and every other content scattered on top of the kitchen counter as if searching for buried treasure.

"What are you hiding, Madison? A knife? A gun? Where is it?" he demanded, turning to look at her. His heated gaze was probably meant to alarm her, but instead she felt her knees weaken. Grabbing her by the waist, he pushed her roughly against the counter.

His lips were so close. Unsure of what to do next, she looked up at him and waited expectantly. For reasons she couldn't even begin to fathom, she desperately hoped he would kiss her, but instead he began frisking her. Confused and angry, she tried pushing him away as he patted her hips with both of his hands, making his way down her body.

"No! Stop it, Terry! I don't have..."

Now on his knees in front of her, her pleading ended abruptly when she felt his hands grasp the pistol she had strapped to her right thigh. As he looked up at her, the shock was apparent in his gaze, and suddenly she was afraid to say anything else that might anger him even further. "Madison—" he began, the disappointment evident his tone of voice.

"I've been carrying it for protection. That's all," she said resolutely. "It's mine, Terry. I own it legally. I have the documents to prove it."

"It's dangerous, Madison. You could hurt yourself or someone else accidentally."

As he lifted her skirt to her thighs and his hands slipped beneath it, she closed her eyes when his fingers grazed her skin.

"You forget who my father is. I know how to use a gun."

Deftly, he slid his fingers over her skin and began removing the holster while she clutched the side of the counter to keep from falling. Her defenses down, she relaxed against the kitchen counter and tried to keep her voice from shaking.

"I'm tired of looking over my shoulder all the time. I'm sick of worrying if today is going to be the day that Joseph gets his revenge. You don't understand. I just wanted something to help me feel safe."

After resting the gun and holster on the floor, he slid his hands up her legs once again where he clasped onto the hem of her skirt and pulled it back down, smoothing it into place. She expected him to let go, but instead he held on for several seconds.

"That's what I'm here for. You don't need this anymore."

The tenderness in his voice and his touch made her wince. For a moment, she considered reaching out and touching him, but before she had the chance to, he abruptly picked up the gun and holster and stood up.

"I'll keep these," he said sharply, never once looking her in the eye. "We should go."

When he walked away, Madison held on to the counter and tried to catch her breath. The anger returned. She should have known he still had a heart of stone. Damn him!

Throwing her belongings back into her purse, she cursed him under her breath and silently swore that it would never happen again. He wasn't worth it. He never was.

* * * *

The drive to work was long and quiet. Madison looked out the window and tried to focus on something other than Terry sitting next to her. She dreaded the thought of having to explain everything to Courtney Avalon, but hopefully in the end she would understand.

She hadn't heard from Joseph in three days, and she was beginning to wonder how long her life would be under surveillance before he decided to show his face again, if he ever did. Even though she knew it wasn't something to take lightly, she hoped he would slip up soon and get caught so her life could somehow return to normal.

As she and Terry talked to Courtney behind closed doors and explained the situation, she was surprised when her boss didn't fall into her normal theatrics. Noticing the way she watched Terry as he walked around the room though, Madison began to understand. After the aging matriarch placed her hand on his arm and questioned him if he'd had any modeling experience, she rolled her eyes and tuned out of the conversation.

She was grateful he had decided to keep his badge in his shirt pocket as they made their way down the hallway to her office. The stares they received from her fellow associates were unnerving, and yet she maintained a smile on her face so that no one would suspect anything was out of place. After closing her office door behind them, she took a deep breath as Terry walked over to the large window that overlooked Broadway Drive.

Settling behind her desk, she noticed briefly how he appeared lost in thought, and yet she wasn't about to complain. It was actually a welcomed reprieve. Shuffling through the paperwork piled high on her desk, she looked for the itinerary for the upcoming Madrid photo shoot, but she couldn't put her hands on it.

"I married her," Terry said.

Furrowing her eyebrows, she gave him a questioning look while continuing her search through the mound of papers. She really wasn't interested in carrying on a lengthy conversation with him, but she knew the day would pass by even slower if they didn't at least speak to each other occasionally.

"Who?"

Turning to look at her, he smiled half-heartedly before coming to sit in one of the leather chairs opposite her desk. "Felicia ... my girlfriend all through high school. We ended up getting married three months after graduation." Nodding her head, she tried her best to smile. There was no point in hoping to dodge a discussion of old times with him. It was destined to happen sooner or later. It really came as no surprise to her that the two of them had gotten married. They had been inseparable.

"We divorced two years later."

Caught off guard by his remark, she stopped plundering through her paperwork to look him in the eye. He didn't seem upset over the fact that his marriage had ended after such a short time, and she didn't understand why it should matter to her in the first place. The two of them had made her life miserable.

"We got married after we found out she was pregnant. We wanted to do the right thing," he began. "Two and a half months later she miscarried."

She started to say something, but he held up his hand to stop her.

"It wasn't meant to be. We both knew that. We didn't try to have any more children because we knew it wouldn't be fair to them since we had grown out of love with each other long before we got married. We're still friends, though. She's been happily married for nine years now and she has two beautiful girls. Things worked out the way they were meant to."

Unsure why he seemed intent on sharing such personal information with her, she didn't really know how to reply.

"And what about since then?" she asked.

Shrugging his shoulders, he looked out the window again while seeming to collect his thoughts.

"When I left for the police academy, I set my sights on that and nothing else, so there hasn't been much time for anything else other than work."

Madison nodded her head.

"I understand that. There hasn't been much time for anything other than work for me, too."

Tilting his head to the side, he looked at her skeptically. "I have a hard time believing that. You don't seem very lonely."

The remark was probably meant to ruffle her feathers, but she wasn't about to let him get under her skin. She had no reason to explain her way of life to this man and she wasn't about to. It was none of his business anyway.

"I don't have time to be lonely."

When he stood up and leaned slightly over her desk, she never let her gaze leave his.

"I suppose that's true," he replied. "From everything I've read about you and witnessed thus far, you have enough men surrounding you to keep the loneliness away."

Defiantly, Madison got up from her seat and leaned across the desk to look him in the eye. The blood boiled through her veins as she fought to keep her anger under control.

"How the hell can you possibly claim to know so much about me? As of yesterday, we hadn't spoken in fifteen years. And don't try to make me believe you could even give a damn whether I'm lonely or not. All during high school you were so caught up in your perfect little world and perfect little friends that you failed to notice anyone or anything else. Don't you dare judge me, Terence Kane. You don't have the right." Speechless, he broke her gaze and turned away from her. The loud ringing of her desk phone broke the uneasiness, and as she sat back down in her seat, she took a deep breath before answering it.

Much to her delight, it was her former client, Jackson Turner, on the other end of the line. She hadn't seen him since they shared dinner together in Boston several months ago on his last assignment with the agency.

While they laughed and carried on a conversation, she continued to watch Terry walk about the room. Arms crossed, he stopped at the window and gazed over the busy street once again, seemingly distracted. The only time he looked up was when he overheard her mention to Jackson that she would love to have dinner with him at her house the following evening.

Shaking his head furiously, he waved his hands in the air as if to change her mind, but she turned in her chair and faced the opposite wall away from him. Only after she hung up the phone did he let his wrath come undone.

"What are you doing? Do I have to remind you that someone out there is determined to hurt you? Why are you putting another person's life in danger along with your own?"

Biting her tongue, she remained calm while sorting through the paperwork on top of her desk again.

"I haven't seen Jackson in months and he's only going to be in town for two days. If I told him about the situation, he would understand, and if it makes you feel any better then I *will* tell him before he comes over. Otherwise, if it worries you so much then you'll just have to stand outside the door and keep watch. Joseph Sinclair is *not* going to keep me from living my life."

Splaying his hand through his hair, he continued to stare at her.

"Could this Jackson turn into another Joseph Sinclair? Another disgruntled romp in the sack because you were bored and needed some temporary satisfaction?"

Enraged, Madison flew at him, but before her hand could come in contact with his cheek, he grabbed her wrist and kept her in her place. Neither one willing to back down, they glared at each other spitefully.

"You know *nothing* about my life other than what you've read or what you've been led to believe. I'm not the same girl you knew in high school, and I'll be damned if I let you judge me ever again."

His breathing labored and his jaws clenched, Terry's gaze traveled once more to her lips before releasing her and turning away. As he grumbled under his breath, Madison sat back down in her seat and continued working. As far as she was concerned, the discussion was closed.

* * * *

The hours seemed to last an eternity as Madison dodged question after question from every nosy associate she came in contact with throughout the day. They had already decided to introduce Terry and Drew as prospective business partners, which seemed to pacify those who were interested. Several of the models, male and female, followed his every move as they walked from room to room. He didn't seem bothered by the attention in the least bit, but then again of course he wouldn't. She warned him against flirting with her female clients, since most of them tended to revel in drama. One tiny bit of information leaked to them would start a chaos he wasn't prepared for. Still, he seemed to take enjoyment in the fact that it unnerved her so he flirted with them anyway.

There had been no word from Joseph all day long, which probably should have put her at ease, but late that evening as she lay in bed, she tossed and turned like all the nights since Friday. What if he was never caught? What if he decided to take revenge on her family and friends?

Realizing it was useless to try and sleep, Madison got out of bed and slipped on her robe over her lace camisole. She hated to roam the hallways so late at night, especially with Terry under her roof, but she needed something to help her rest.

Tip-toeing down the stairway, she peeked into the den. By the dim light of the lamp, she could see him standing on the opposite side of the room, next to the large bay window. He was talking to someone on his cell phone, and he was obviously agitated by the way he gestured with his free hand.

Even with the distance between them, Madison noticed his jeans were unbuttoned at the top and he didn't have on a shirt. Transfixed at the sight of him, she was unable to take her eyes away from him. His body showed the hard work of a veteran police officer. He was fit, lean, and from where she stood he seemed larger than life. The way his jeans molded to his muscular thighs made her loins ache, and the ripple of his chest and stomach muscles caused her hands to tremble.

Madison shook her head furiously to clear her thoughts as she made her way into the kitchen. Opening the refrigerator, she took out a bottle of red wine and carefully placed it on the kitchen counter while she reached inside an overhead cabinet for a glass. But as she quickly glanced toward the den to make sure Terry was still distracted, the glass slipped from her fingers and crashed to the floor. Within seconds Terry had his gun cocked and pointed in her direction. Startled, she raised her hands in the air.

"It's just me!"

Shaking his head fiercely, Terry put down his gun and walked toward the kitchen.

"What the hell are you doing, Madison? It's almost midnight," he said angrily, glancing briefly at the clock on the wall behind her. "You're lucky I didn't kill you."

Her heart racing, she tried to talk, but she could only stammer for the right words to say.

"I ... I couldn't sleep. I thought ... I thought maybe a glass of wine would help."

As soon as he walked in the kitchen and turned on the light, he held up his hand to keep her from moving.

"Stand still. There's glass all over the floor and you might cut yourself. Where's the broom?" he asked.

Her fingers shaking, she pointed to the adjoining laundry room. After he disappeared inside the small room, she fought to breathe normally. She wanted to kick herself for being so clumsy. Not only did his immediate reaction scare her senseless, but she was also embarrassed.

When he returned and began sweeping the shards of glass away from her feet, she attempted to focus on something other than his body. Having him barely clothed and standing so close to her was threatening to unravel what little bit of sanity she had left.

After several long, agonizing minutes, he rested the broom against the counter, and she began to feel some relief. He was finally through and she could retire to her bedroom with what little bit of dignity she had left. Yet, before she could move, he came to stand in front of her.

He was so close that she could make out the perfect definition of each muscle in his chest and stomach. Inhaling sharply, she looked up into his eyes just as he placed his hands on her hips. Then, in one swift movement, he picked her up and delicately set her on top of the kitchen counter.

"I need to sweep under your feet." He explained stoically as he retrieved the broom and continued sweeping.

Closing her eyes, she silently reprimanded herself for getting excited when it wasn't warranted. He was no different than any other gorgeous, half-naked man she'd had in her home, and there had been plenty.

"Let me check your feet. Just in case."

Setting the broom to the side, he placed his hands behind her calves and raised her legs so that he could look at the bottom of her feet. The jolt of electricity that surged through her body with his touch took her by surprise and made her light-headed. After inspecting them and finding them clear of glass, he lowered her legs. The instant he removed his hands, her body mourned the loss. Just like the morning before, his hands felt incredibly warm against her skin.

When he turned to pick up the broom, she noticed two large scars on his back. Against the smoothness of his ebony skin, they stood out prominently, and as much as she wished she could overlook them, she couldn't help but wonder how they had gotten there.

"What ... what happened to you?" she asked shyly. "How did you get those scars on your back?"

Setting the broom back down, he leaned against the counter opposite her and looked at her. The way his muscles tensed, she wished she had never asked. After all, it was none of her business.

"A few years ago, I helped put away two men who were known gang members and drug pushers. My partner and I had been watching them for a long time, and we finally got a break and caught them in the act. Two years ago, they were released from prison, and they had a vendetta against me since I had sent them there in the first place."

Placing his hands on his hips, Terry looked down at the floor and cleared his throat. As difficult as it seemed to talk about, she felt guilty for wanting to know what happened.

"I was walking back to my apartment late one night when they jumped me. They had been hiding in one of the dark alleyways, waiting for me to show up. They stabbed me three times and left me for dead. Fortunately, there was a witness nearby and he called for an ambulance while I bled out on the sidewalk. I stayed in the Intensive Care Unit for two weeks. I was very blessed to not have any permanent damage. I went back to work two months later and they were caught again."

As a shiver raced up her spine, Madison found herself at a loss for words. She couldn't help but feel sorry for all that he had gone through. Even with the pain he had caused her in their lifetime, she would never wish anything so terrible on him ... or anyone.

"I'm sorry, Terry. I'm sure your parents must have been terrified."

With a nod of his head, he looked up into her eyes again, and she could see the light had dimmed behind his gaze.

"They were. It was around the same time my father was diagnosed with lung cancer, so it couldn't have happened at a worse time. My mother had a lot to deal with, and I lived with that guilt a long time."

With her palms flat on the countertop, she tried to get down just as Terry rushed over and placed his hands on her hips. Pressed so close against him, she felt every curve and every ripple of his body when she slid down the length of him. Her heart throbbing, she averted her gaze from his chest and tried to regain her composure.

"You ... you shouldn't have felt guilty, Terry. It wasn't your fault. I'm sure your parents knew that."

When he stepped away from her slightly, she couldn't help but look up at him. The warmth between her legs had become overwhelming, and she knew if she didn't get away from him soon she would go mad.

"I know, and in a way I'm glad it happened. Ever since the day I left the hospital, I've been correcting things I should

have done a long time ago. Each day is a gift, and now there's this need ... to make things right."

As soon as his voice trailed off, the unspoken meaning behind his words left her speechless.

"You ... you said you were stabbed three times, but there are only two scars on your back. Where is the other one?"

When his hands moved to the zipper on his jeans, Madison's breath caught and held. Slowly he lowered the zipper half way while she watched, enthralled. Placing a hand on the right side of his jeans, he pushed them down just enough to uncover a jagged scar on his hip.

With disbelief, she noticed it was worse than the two on his back. Instinctively, she reached out to touch it, but caught herself before doing so. As her cheeks flushed a bright shade of crimson, Terry grasped her hand.

"Touch me, Madison."

The sad tone of his voice made her knees weak. While she looked into his eyes, she brushed his scar with her fingertips, causing him to close his eyes and press his lips tightly together. His reaction was undeniable, and it left her feeling powerful, but also guarded.

His skin was so hot. Tracing the outline of his wound, she watched as his chest rose and fell with each breath. Now he was the one unraveling.

"I should go to bed," she said quietly.

"Madison..."

Closing her eyes briefly, she shook her head and walked past him, out of the kitchen. Wrapping her arms tightly

around her body, she hurried up the stairway to her bedroom where she locked the door behind her.

Resting her head against the door, she wiped away the lone tear that had escaped and rolled down her cheek.

If only doors could lock out memories.

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Chapter Three

After a sleepless night, the last thing Madison wanted to do was go into work the next day. The only thing that made it bearable was the fact that it was Drew's turn to watch over her. At least she wouldn't have to spend the day with Terry by her side. If nothing else, Drew was a talker so she had little time during her day to even think about Terry, which was a relief.

Anxious for her dinner date with Jackson, she steadily watched the clock throughout the day. If there were a way to silently will the hands to move, she would have been on her way home hours ago.

She had called Jackson during her lunch hour and explained what was going on, but he wasn't worried. It had been a long time since they had seen each other so he was just as determined to spend the evening with her as she was, no matter what the circumstances were.

Much to her dismay, Terry returned to resume his shift at the last minute. As soon as she and Drew walked in the door, he was there to greet them.

"I thought you weren't supposed to be here until tomorrow," she exclaimed in frustration.

"I told Drew I would take over so he could go home and get some rest," he replied.

Even though the officers outside guarded her home around the clock, Terry was unwavering in his commitment to keep an even closer eye on her, and now Jackson, too. After another lengthy argument, it was decided that he would stay in an adjoining room. Far enough away for their privacy, but close enough to reach them in case something unexpected were to happen.

There remained no word or action from Sinclair, and that evening while Madison showered and dressed for dinner with Jackson, she began to feel more at ease. Checking her appearance one last time in the full-length mirror, she smiled with approval.

The short black skirt and red wrap-around blouse had always been her favorite ensemble. The skirt hugged her curves in all the right places and the top revealed just a hint of cleavage. Her long brown hair hung in soft waves around her shoulders, and just barely brushed the top of her breasts.

When she slipped on her black high heels, she heard someone at her bedroom door. Terry was there, propped against the doorframe, and clearing his throat in an attempt to get her attention. He had changed clothes while she was busy getting ready, and he looked almost like the young man she remembered from high school in his faded jeans and tshirt. It caught her off guard, having forgotten how gorgeous he could be when he wasn't trying so hard. Shaking her head, she brushed the thought from her mind as quickly as it had entered.

"Jackson is here," he said.

It was a tone of voice she didn't recognize from him. As his gaze left a heated trail across her body, she smirked briefly and breezed past him. Rushing down the long stairway, she smiled brightly when she saw Jackson standing in the foyer. He looked gorgeous in his black suit and navy blue tie. His raven hair was cut shorter than the last time she had seen him and his bronzed complexion and dark brown eyes took Madison's breath away.

When she swept him into her arms, she caught a glimpse of Terry before he adjourned to a room located on the opposite side of the den. He was looking at her, his expression a hard one to fathom. Before she could think much else about it though, Jackson kissed her tenderly on the cheek and exclaimed with wide eyes how good dinner smelled.

Taking him by the hand, she led him the short distance to the kitchen where her chef had left the filet mignon and vegetables warming in the oven before he retired for the night. It did smell fabulous. She had barely eaten all day long, and she felt her stomach rumble while she prepared their plates and Jackson poured two glasses of wine.

There was never any pretense with Jackson. He would happily take off his jacket and tie and sit on the floor to eat dinner if that was what she wanted him to do. It was one thing that had always attracted her to the gorgeous model. There was no holier-than-thou attitude or pretentious bone in his whole body. Very much unlike the type Madison was used to dealing with on a daily basis.

After dinner, they settled on the sofa in the den with their wine and caught up on their lives since they had been together in Boston. She didn't talk about Joseph, and Jackson never asked questions, for which she was grateful. There was no sense in ruining a perfectly good evening with talk that would upset either one of them.

Terry kept his word and remained in his room with the door slightly ajar, never once interrupting them. It felt so wonderful being in Jackson's company that it was easy to forget the craziness of the past two weeks ... if only for a little while. Her mind had been going at full speed with everything that had happened, and all she wanted to do was relax and unwind.

* * * *

A couple of hours later, the soft sound of Madison's laughter broke Terry from his train of thought as he aimlessly shuffled through a pile of magazines in the small room Madison called her home office. Bored and tired of sitting down, he got up from his seat and walked over to the door to peer out like he had done at least a hundred times in the past two hours. To his surprise, he discovered Madison walking her guest to the front door.

He had half expected them to escape to her bedroom for the night. Backing away from the door again, he listened intently while they said their goodbyes. Then the front door opened and he was gone. For several seconds all was quiet, and then he heard her heels as they clicked across the foyer floor.

"You can come out now," she called to him.

Opening the door, he saw Madison pick up their wine glasses from the long coffee table in front of the sofa. He walked to the front door and checked to make sure it was secured. Gazing out one of the front windows, he caught Jackson's taillights as he turned from the driveway, and he nodded briefly to the police officer sitting in his unmarked car across the street.

Madison had carried the glasses to the kitchen, and after several minutes when she didn't return, he went to check on her. There, he found her standing by the sink, staring blankly out the window.

"You should probably move away from the window, Madison."

Her shoulders slumped, she turned to face him, and right away he noticed a very different look in her eyes. It was nothing like he was used to seeing from the fiery brunette. It was despairing, almost empty and lost. It was unlike her to be so quiet, and it unsettled him more than he expected it to. As much as he hated to admit it, he would much rather see her angry and cursing him than to see her so solemn.

"You're probably right," she said.

She turned off the kitchen light and walked past him, and he closed his eyes when the scent of her perfume wafted through his senses, temporarily jarring his thoughts. Taking a deep breath to regain his composure, he followed her into the den.

"I'm sorry if tonight didn't go as you planned," he said. He couldn't think of anything else to say. It was obvious she was upset, but he didn't know what could have brought it on unless it had something to do with her date.

After turning off one of the lamps by the sofa, Madison stopped and looked at him intently. At first, she didn't say a

word. Crossing her arms over her chest, she appeared to be collecting her thoughts before replying.

"I had no expectations from seeing Jackson other than enjoying his company and sharing dinner together."

Confused, Terry stepped closer so he could gaze upon her more closely in the dim light.

"I thought ... I thought the two of you were..." He faltered.

"No. We're not." She explained, "We were at one time, but it didn't work out. Now we're just good friends, and that's the way we both want it. He's happily married. He has children. When he's in town, he stops by for dinner, and we catch up on each other's lives. Then he goes back to his life and I go back to mine."

Squinting his eyes, he tried to find some reasoning behind her empty gaze. As usual, it was hard to read her expression.

"Oh. I just assumed that he..."

Madison smiled half-heartedly. "Of course you did, Terry. You're great at assumptions."

She started to move to the opposite end of the sofa to turn off the other lamp, but Terry reached out and grabbed her wrist before she could. She wouldn't look at him though. Instead, she stared blankly at the wall as if he would disappear if she just kept quiet.

"I shouldn't have said that, and I didn't mean it that way. I'm just ... I'm sorry. Damn it, Madison, why won't you look at me?"

Removing herself from his grasp, she backed away from him. All at once her demeanor changed. The melancholy was gone. "Of course you meant it, Terry. Isn't that what you think of me? That every male I come in contact with is just prey?"

He didn't know what to say. She was clearly agitated now, and he knew whatever he said would just make it worse.

"I suppose from all the *reading* you've done about my life that you think my job and this house bring me all the happiness in the world. Well, you know *nothing* about me. Believe it or not, sometimes I *do* get envious of people like Jackson who have a family to go home to."

Angrily, she walked toward him, and he took a cautious step backward.

"Of course, you couldn't possibly understand what I'm talking about." She thumbed a tear from her cheek. "You've probably never had to want for anything in your life."

When she turned away from him, Terry grabbed her arms roughly and pulled her close.

"You think—you actually think—I don't know what it's like to *want* something?" He exclaimed, trying to remain calm. "Now you're the one throwing out judgments you know nothing about. I know exactly what that feels like."

Gripping her arms tightly, he continued to glare at her. With his lips so close to hers, he could feel the warmth of her breath against his skin. He was angry. She was angry. The heat that emanated between them both was an intoxication that left him all the angrier for wanting her so damn much.

"Why do we keep doing this?" he asked.

Leaning forward, he gently brushed his lips against her forehead. It was a spontaneous gesture that he couldn't control anymore. He had to feel her skin beneath his lips. "Why can't you forgive me? I know I may be going about it the wrong way, but I want to make things right, Madison, and sometimes I don't know how to do that. I just wish you would meet me halfway."

As the tension left her body, Terry let go of her arms and placed his hands on each side of her head. Pulling back slightly to look into her eyes, he fought the urge to kiss her against her will. She could infuriate him to the point of no return but she could also make his chest burn from sheer want. At the moment he wanted nothing more than to plunge his tongue into her tempting mouth.

"Terry..." She moaned softly, closing her eyes as he brushed his lips against her eyelids.

"Say my name again, Madison," he whispered.

Closing his eyes, he marveled in the feel of her velvety skin against his lips. Tenderly he kissed each cheek while she whimpered softly and murmured his name again. He didn't want the moment to end.

Before he could capture her lips, however, the phone rang. With a gasp, she jerked away from him and looked at him spitefully, as though she couldn't believe she had let herself fall so haphazardly into his grasp. As she walked toward the phone, Terry glanced quickly at the clock on the wall.

It was almost one o'clock in the morning. Who could be calling at this time of night? A familiar uneasiness encompassed him immediately. Mere seconds after she answered, her face became a deathly shade of white, and he knew something was wrong. Terry raced to her side just as the receiver fell from her hands. She looked up at him, her mouth open, but she couldn't speak. He picked up the receiver and yelled into it, but there was nothing. Only silence.

Placing his hands on her face, he forced her to look up at him. "Madison, who was that? Was it Sinclair? Talk to me."

The look on her face sent a cold chill racing up his spine.

"He's here," she whispered, her voice trembling. "He ... he mentioned the clothes I was wearing ... and Jackson ... and you. He's been watching us."

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Chapter Four

The flurry of activity that ensued left Madison in a tailspin. Immediately, Terry rushed her into another room and used a walkie-talkie to alert the officers outside. While Terry and another officer searched the area, one guarded the room she waited in. The only window with open curtains had been in the den, and as they centered most of their search behind the house, she anxiously paced the floor. She couldn't remember another time when she had been so frightened. Joseph had been right outside her home. How could that have happened?

She could hear men yelling and sirens blaring all around the house and along the street. Not long after, her dad burst into the room. When he pulled her into his embrace, she held on tight, grateful for his strength in this moment when she felt at her weakest.

"Have they found him?" she asked.

Defeated, he shook his head. She couldn't understand. He had been so close. She could hear it in his muffled breathing long before he mentioned anything about watching her with Jackson and Terry. Knowing that he'd had the opportunity to kill them all made her feel extremely guilty. She wished she'd never gotten Jackson involved. It had been selfish and dangerous to risk his life, too.

"Please find out if Jackson is okay," she pleaded with her dad.

While he corresponded on his walkie-talkie with the other officers on the scene, she sat on a sofa in the middle of the

room to wait for news. Terry had immediately grabbed his gun and raced out the back door after securing her away. She hadn't heard a word from him since, and the thought that he might be in danger made her sick with worry.

The surrounding commotion seemed to last forever. There were no windows in the small room so she couldn't see what was happening outside, but she heard every detail in the steady stream of voices that came through the walkie-talkies. Yet none of the voices belonged to Terry.

After being unable to reach Jackson by his cell phone, her father assigned one of the officers outside to go to his hotel and check his whereabouts. Even though she tried, she couldn't breathe normally again until several minutes later when her dad got word that he was safe in his hotel room, and that someone would watch over him until his plane left for Boston later that morning.

Again, she waited, glancing every few minutes at the clock on the wall. Each second that passed with no word concerning Terry or Joseph's whereabouts multiplied her anxiety. Every time the door opened, her heart stopped, but it was never Terry, only some other officer wanting to speak to her dad.

Her chef and housekeeper were awakened and told to gather their things before they were hustled to a nearby hotel to remain until things returned to normal, if they ever did. The less lives that were put in danger, the better.

After an hour or so, she was finally able to leave the confines of the small room. She gave what information she could remember to one of the detectives regarding the phone

call, but from what she could gather amidst the swarm of people in her home Joseph had vanished again.

"Where's Terence?" she asked her dad, reaching out to grasp his arm as he walked past her so that he was forced to turn and look at her. "Is he alright?"

"I don't know." He put his hands on her shoulders to steady her. "He placed his walkie-talkie on the counter after he called for back-up, and he didn't pick it up before he ran out the back door. No one has heard from him, but I'm sure he's fine. I'll let you know as soon as I hear something."

When he walked away, she sat down on one of the chairs in the den, and tried not to cry. Terry was stubborn. Surely he would be okay. Her thoughts instantly turned to his mother, and how she had just lost her husband. If something happened to take away her son too, Madison would never forgive herself.

In a daze, she watched the officers and detectives while they continued rushing from here to there, gathering information. Everything seemed so surreal. Crossing her arms over her chest and closing her eyes, she listened to the sound of her heart racing as the voices that surrounded her began to fade into the distance. After several minutes, she felt a gentle touch on her arm, and she opened her eyes to find Drew kneeling beside her.

"There's nothing you can do here, Ms. Carey, and it's getting late. Why don't you go upstairs and try to get some sleep?" His voice was low and calming.

"Has anyone heard from Terry yet?"

When he shook his head from side to side, she forced herself to remain calm. She knew Drew must already be worried enough without her adding to it.

"He took off on foot. He could be anywhere, but I know him. He's tough. I'm sure we'll hear something soon. In the meantime, you should try and get some rest. We've secured the area and your dad assigned a few more officers to guard your house so you're safe. I promise."

Nodding her head, she thanked him weakly before standing to leave. Her dad was busy talking on the phone, but he turned to smile at her when she made her way upstairs to her bedroom. After changing into a long t-shirt, she nestled under the warm bed covers.

Her heart burdened, she didn't feel like she would be able to get an ounce of rest, but as soon as she got still, she drifted into a deep sleep. It had been a long day. Hopefully the morning would bring good news.

* * * *

As her eyelids fluttered open, Madison tried to focus on the sound that awakened her. After realizing it was the police officers talking loudly in the den below her, she rose up on her elbows and waited while her eyes adjusted to the darkness. She couldn't have been asleep long, since the moonlight still beamed brightly through her bedroom window.

Leaning over to turn on the lamp beside her bed, something in the corner of her eye caught her attention. Startled at first, she breathed a deep sigh of relief when she noticed it was Terry, sound asleep in a chair next to her window. She had no idea how long he'd been there, but just the sight of him made her happy and tearful at the same time. Sliding from under the covers, she walked over to him just as he stirred and opened his eyes.

Seeing the glimmer of tears cascading down her face made him sit upright in his chair.

"Madison, what's wrong?" he asked.

She didn't know how to respond. She wasn't sure of anything at the moment. All she knew for certain was that she was grateful he was alive and she just wanted to hold him. Crawling onto his lap, she pulled him close as sobs racked her body.

At first he seemed wary, but when he wrapped his arms around her and rocked her gently in his arms, she felt the anxiety flow from his body. After several minutes, she leaned back so she could look at him. Maybe she was being too straightforward holding him this way, but at the moment fear overcame hesitation. She had never been so scared in her life. Awaking to find him in her room, safe and sound, had brought all those emotions to the surface again, and it had overwhelmed her more than she expected.

"I ... I thought something had happened to you. No one knew where you were," she stammered, her lips trembling.

"I'm sorry." He talked softly as he explained what happened. "I saw Sinclair for just a second before he took off through your neighbor's yard. I chased him on foot for a long time, but I lost him in the darkness. I combed every street and checked every Dumpster, but he was gone. It was like he just vanished into thin air again." Setting his jaw, he gave her a determined look.

"We're going to find him, Madison. I swear to you. He can't run forever."

After shaking her head, she held him close one more time. He felt so warm and strong in her arms. Her mind argued that she should get up from his lap and walk away, but something kept her there. She could feel his breath, hot against her skin, leaving her dizzy and all at once unable to think properly.

As her fingertips slid across his sable skin, she swallowed hard. She knew she should resist the temptation, but she couldn't imagine being anywhere else at the moment other than right there in his embrace. Before she could talk herself out of it, she leaned forward and lightly brushed her lips against his.

She expected him to object, but as she felt him tremble beneath her, she knew that she was having the same effect on him, which only made her want him that much more. Turning in his lap, she straddled his hips and instantly he grasped onto her, pulling her down roughly against his cock. Feeling the hardness of it underneath her made her gasp, and instinctively she rubbed her body against it, making him groan.

Digging her fingernails into his shoulders, she kissed him again, only this time with an urgency that matched his own. As her tongue sought his, she moaned deeply into his mouth. The blood ignited in her veins as she moved against him while he held on to her with a fierceness that shocked her. She didn't want to stop kissing him. She didn't want anything more than to be in this very moment.

They held each other and kissed with an intensity that she had never experienced before. Not once had she ever felt as though the passion alone could swallow her whole. As she struggled to breathe properly, she gasped when Terry suddenly pushed her away from him, his chest heaving.

"No. No." She pleaded with him, "Please don't stop."

The sincere yearning in her voice far surpassed need. She felt if he stopped touching her she would fall apart in his arms. Taking hold of her shirt, he pulled it off slowly as if wanting to savor every part of her body he exposed. After tossing her shirt to the floor, he wrapped his hands around her breasts, and again she felt as though she were falling. Hard.

His touch was sweet and yet overpowering at the same time. When his mouth closed around a hardened nipple, she arched her back and hissed his name in response. His lips. His tongue. They were so hot. As he flicked the tip of his tongue agilely across her nipple, she began to grind her body against his as though she could never get close enough.

Holding onto the back of his neck, she pulled him closer, forcing him to suck harder. Only after he had ravished one breast thoroughly did he move to the other one. When his fingers left a haunting trail down her spine, she writhed in his arms wildly. She was slowly coming undone, moment by agonizing moment.

Pulling back, he watched her closely while he caressed her breasts and then moved a hand downward over her stomach, toward her panties. Leaning back and placing her hands on his knees, she shuddered in anticipation. His fingers dipped inside the lace as she held onto him, afraid if she didn't she would melt into a puddle on the floor.

The first time his fingertips brushed against her clit, she inhaled sharply and dug her fingernails into his jeans. Her head back, she moaned deeply as he began circling his thumb over it in a hypnotic way that left her gasping for air. As his other hand kneaded her breasts, she moved her hips fervently in rhythm with his fingers.

"Madison ... Madison..." he murmured, his voice taking on a longing that fell gently against her ears.

She was so wet. Her clit throbbed with each slide of his thumb as she ground her hips into his. His cock throbbed big and hard against his jeans, and knowing that she would feel it inside her soon was almost too much to bear.

While he stroked her, their ragged breaths mingled together in a maddening race to bring her the relief her body pleaded for. As she climbed higher, she reveled in the feel of his masterful hands as they expertly brought her nearer to the edge.

She marveled at the way he would slow his rhythm just long enough to allow her to fall rapidly only to go faster the next time and leave her clawing desperately toward a release. Repeatedly the torment continued until she felt on the brink of insanity.

"Terry," she uttered breathlessly, her eyes brimmed with unshed tears. "Please ... Oh, God, please..." Finally, after several torturous minutes, he set her free. Sliding his other hand toward her lips, he groaned deeply as she sucked his fingers into her mouth and clamped onto them to keep from crying out and alerting the men downstairs. Pressing his thumb harder against her, he rubbed her savagely until her body began to stiffen.

Then, in one forceful surge, she started to tremble wildly as she dug her fingernails into his jeans and held on through every jolt that coursed through her body. The room spun around her in a vicious cycle that left her grasping for each breath until the last current shook her to her very core. Falling weakly into his arms, she captured his mouth with her own and kissed him.

Reaching between them, she fumbled with his zipper. The urgency to free his cock and feel him inside of her was now an unbearable swirl of emotion that left her drunk. But just as she managed to undo the button on his jeans, he grabbed her arms and pulled her away from him. By the glow of the moonlight she could barely make out the expression on his face, but the change in his demeanor was undeniable.

"What ... what's wrong?"

For the longest time he just stared at her as if he couldn't find the right words to say. Placing his hands on her hips, he forced her off of him and stood up. At first she didn't think she would be able to stand. Unsteady on her weakened legs, she picked her shirt off the floor and covered her body as she fought to understand what was happening.

"I can't do this," he said, looking out the window, his voice low and resigned. "I'm supposed to be protecting you. I—" All at once it was painfully clear.

"You still don't want me," she whispered, rejected. After fifteen years, nothing had changed.

Abruptly he turned to face her. "No ... Madison..."

When he tried to approach her, she stepped away from him.

"Get out," she said vehemently.

Angrily she shook her head as he tried unsuccessfully to talk to her. Defeated, he walked to the door, closing it gently behind him after turning to gaze at her one last time.

For several long minutes, she stood there as the empty room enveloped her, before putting on her shirt and wearily crawling under the bed covers.

Hugging them close to her aching body, she wept.

* * * *

When Madison walked out of her bedroom the next morning, the first person she saw was Terry, sitting in a chair opposite her door. He was dressed in his work clothes again and looked as though he hadn't slept all night. Still reeling from his rejection, she walked right past him without a second glance.

"I take it you're not headed to work in those clothes," he quietly remarked, jumping from his seat to follow her down the stairway.

Not that she felt she should have to explain her reasoning behind donning a pair of faded jeans and a t-shirt that had seen better days, she knew if she didn't he would never leave her alone. "Not after seeing the reporters outside. I called Courtney and told her I'd work from home instead of disrupting our business with paparazzi."

"I'm sorry, Madison. We ran them off," he replied, motioning outside. "We'll make sure they don't cause anymore trouble."

Walking through the den, she stopped in her tracks when she noticed two officers standing guard just outside her back door.

"Is that really necessary? Do you honestly think Joseph would be foolish enough to come back to my house after last night?" she asked, gesturing toward the men outside.

He looked at her sheepishly. "That's your dad's doing. Not mine. And yes, I do believe Sinclair is stupid enough to come back here. People like him don't think. They just act."

Her shoulders drooping, she looked down at the floor and took a long, deep breath. Her life wasn't hers anymore and she hated it.

"Do you have any leads at all?" she asked wearily.

"Not yet. He hasn't used his cell phone again since last night so we can't trace him. Drew is out canvassing the neighborhood, showing Sinclair's picture, and trying to find out if anyone has seen him. So far no one has. We're doing all we can, Madison. I wish I had better news."

Resigned, she shook her head and wiped the tears away from the corners of her eyes before they threatened to overflow. As soon as Terry noticed, he tried to reach out to her, but she backed away from him. "Don't touch me. You've done enough," she said, glaring at him. "Where is my dad? Is he still here?"

Confused, he pointed to the back yard. "He's outside talking on his cell phone. Why?"

Before the sentence was barely out of his mouth, she had walked to the back door and flung it open, startling both men standing guard. Ignoring them, she looked for her dad and found him walking beside the swimming pool, talking on his phone. Her back straight and her shoulders squared, she headed in his direction with Terry right on her heels. As soon as Lieutenant Carey saw her coming, he said goodbye to whoever was on the other end of the line and hung up.

"Good morning, sweetheart. How did you sleep?"

Ignoring his attempt at a pleasant conversation, she gestured to the men that were guarding her house.

"I want them gone," she said bluntly.

As he and Terry both looked from each other to her with their mouths open and eyebrows furrowed, she kept her stance. It had all become too much, and she was tired of it. She wanted her life back once and for all.

"Madison, I can't do-"

"Yes you can. Don't try to make me believe otherwise. I'm sick of this. I know you're worried and I appreciate that, but I'm tired of feeling like a prisoner in my own home. I'll stay here and work as long as I need to, but some of these people have to go," she said, turning to look at Terry. "I can't breathe." The intent was not lost on him. His lips pressed tightly together, and he looked at her like she had reached inside his chest and ripped out his heart.

She yanked her focus back to her father, unable to look in Terry's direction again. "The officers on the street can stay, but I want everyone else gone. If someone *must* stay inside with me then let Drew stay."

If he suspected something was amiss, her dad didn't mention it, and she was grateful. The sooner this discussion ended the better. All she wanted was to get on with her life as quickly as possible. If that life meant staying behind locked doors until Joseph was caught then so be it, but it would be done on her terms. He had stolen her freedom but he sure as hell wasn't going to steal anything else away from her.

Realizing it was useless to try and convince her otherwise, her dad agreed and walked away from them to make another phone call. When she headed toward the back door, Terry caught her arm and stopped her, but she refused to look at him.

"Why are you doing this?" he whispered angrily. "Forget me. Forget last night. Your life is in danger, Madison. Why do you have to be so damn stubborn all the time? Why can't you let someone protect you?"

"I want my life back," she replied, jerking her arm from his grasp. "Now please just leave me alone. I have work to do."

Before he could say another word, she walked to the back door and slipped inside.

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Chapter Five

Three more days passed with no sightings and no word from Joseph. Frustrated, Madison kept busy in her home office, passing the hours by going through the paperwork Courtney had sent over from the agency. Even though her father had let four of the guards go, Terry still hung around, much to her dismay. He wasn't there as frequently as before, but enough to unnerve her.

He remained at a distance, and spoke to her only when he absolutely had to. The rare times she did glance his way, her gaze was met with one that seemed confused and lost. Refusing to let it bother her, she reminded herself that if anyone should feel dejected it should be her. He wasn't about to make her feel guilty over something that was his own doing.

Being cut off from society and everything she knew was beginning to get the best of her, and nighttime only made the hours seem longer. As she lay in bed at night, her body ached with a fierce need that made her angry and also very sad.

Trying to block out what happened in Terry's arms proved to be impossible. At times she could still feel his hands on her body and his warm breath against her skin. It was maddening. She would never confess that to him though. He would just gloat over it, and she'd rather die that give him the satisfaction of knowing he remained under her skin.

Phone calls from the outside world were her only saving grace. Laughing with Jackson, Andrew, Julian, and several

other friends had been the only thing to ease the loneliness that seemed to pervade every hallway and corner of her home.

Late Friday afternoon, just as she had finished dinner, an officer's voice filtered through Terry's walkie-talkie, letting him know that two men in a black Mercedes Benz had pulled into the driveway and were making their way toward her house. Instantly, he and Drew pulled their guns and raced to the front door.

"Are you expecting company?" Terry asked.

Looking through the peephole, she smiled brightly when she saw Julian and Andrew get out of the car.

"Actually, yes," she replied.

When he pulled her back and looked through the peephole, she saw the muscles begin to twitch in his jaw. When he turned to look at her, his anger was so evident she took two steps away from him.

"What the hell are you doing, Madison? Don't you know you could be putting their lives in danger? We've already been through this!"

"It was their idea. Not mine. They know the circumstances," she refuted, setting her jaw.

When she put a hand on the knob to open the door, Terry put his hand on top of hers. The warmth of his touch made her heartbeat quicken.

"Why are they here?" he asked, his tone wary yet firm.

While he searched her expression for some type of answer that would obviously suit him, she felt at a loss for words. How could she tell him that she couldn't rest anymore? That the need for another's touch had taken over every thought and every minute that dragged endlessly by. When they'd mentioned coming over, she had taken them up on their offer before stopping to think of the possible consequences.

Removing his hand from hers, he stepped back as if suddenly realizing what was behind her unspoken words. Now he was the one unable to speak. Breaking his gaze, she opened the front door and attempted to smile at Julian and Andrew as they walked inside. Always the chatterboxes, they immediately started jabbering away as she watched Terry turn and leave the room.

When Drew locked the door behind them, she proceeded up the stairway with Julian and Andrew in tow, unable to recall a time when her heart ever felt so heavy.

* * * *

Shutting her bedroom door and locking it, Madison was startled when Andrew pulled her into his embrace the instant she turned around. She had almost forgotten how exuberant he could be.

"We've missed you," he drawled, his lips hot and heavy against the side of her neck.

Peering behind him, she saw Julian as he began undressing. Normally, she would have been thrilled and overcome with giddy excitement, but now things just seemed ... different. She couldn't even remember now why she had agreed to let them come over. Her body wasn't in it and her heart certainly wasn't. But then again, her heart had never actively played a part in any of her sexual escapades. Sex had always been just something to make her feel special ... even if only temporarily. There had never been any emotional attachment at all. The only time her heart had felt a part of it in any way was when she had been with Terry.

As Andrew ran his hands down her back and across her buttocks, she wished she could just make herself disappear. Before she could protest, he pressed his lips against hers just as Julian came up behind her and grabbed her hips. Pulling her against his body, he slipped a hand underneath her shirt just as Andrew began to fumble with the buttons on the front of it.

"Tell us what you need, baby," Julian murmured seductively in her ear just as she managed to break Andrew's kiss. Any other time she probably would have swooned at the proposition, but now she frantically tried to think of something to distract them.

She couldn't do this. No matter how much her body ached, she couldn't bring herself to surrender to something she didn't want. Gently prying Andrew's hands from her shirt, she looked up at them both and smiled mischievously.

"You know what I want?" she cooed. "What I really want more than anything right now?"

Slipping from between them, she tried her best to sound sincere as their eyes lit up in anticipation.

"I want to watch the two of you," she whispered, grinning wickedly as they turned to look at each other. It had been a long time since they'd played that game together, so the instant the words tumbled from her mouth, they were ready and willing to oblige.

Winking at them, she turned and walked toward a chair in the corner of the bedroom, breathing a huge sigh of relief. She honestly didn't care to watch them, but it was the only reprieve she could think of at the moment. Once they thoroughly exhausted themselves, she would be able to send them on their way home and try to forget she ever agreed to them coming over in the first place.

Settling in her chair, she crossed her legs and smiled at them as they sprawled across her bed and started kissing. Usually during this game she would be naked in the chair or beside them on the bed, stroking her pussy while she watched them. Sometimes she would use one of her dildos or vibrators, but most of the time she preferred to use her fingers since it took her longer to orgasm that way. When she finally did, it was so intense it would literally take her breath away.

Now as she watched them, she wished she had never gotten herself into such a predicament. If nothing else, maybe they would at least be satiated by the time they went home and she wouldn't be left feeling guilty for not giving in to them.

Still, it was hard not to think about Terry, especially when they stroked each other's cocks or when Julian took Andrew's in his mouth. Squirming in her seat, she couldn't help but remember the way Terry's cock had felt beneath her as she rubbed against it. She could only imagine the way it would have felt like inside of her. Watching Julian slide his tongue over the veins that protruded along the length of Andrew's cock, her mouth began to water. While Andrew held Julian's head in his hands and eagerly fucked his mouth, she shifted again in her seat. She didn't realize it would be so unbearable to watch this time. For a moment she regretted not sending them back home.

"Yes ... yes ... that's it." Andrew moaned.

As he looked her way, she smiled at him, hoping it was a convincing, seductive smile and not a forced one.

"You like that, baby?" he asked her, inhaling sharply as Julian began sucking him faster.

"You know I do." She nodded her head as she tried not to glance at the clock on her bedroom wall.

Leaning back slightly, Andrew grasped his ankles while still shoving his hips upward, thrusting his cock inside Julian's waiting mouth. His head back, he groaned deeply and after several minutes Madison could tell by the expression on his face that he was close to climaxing. Thankfully.

Faster Andrew rocked until finally, in one long anguished growl that made the veins bulge in his neck, he shot his cum down Julian's throat. Gasping for air, he shuddered and shook for what seemed like an eternity before collapsing on the bed.

After Julian placed a couple of stinging slaps to his ass, Andrew rolled over onto his stomach, sliding up on his knees while Julian moved into position behind him. Licking his fingers quickly, he slid the saliva over the crown of his cock to wet it before pressing it to Andrew's hole. After darting her eyes rapidly to the clock on the wall, she flinched slightly when she heard Andrew's loud gasp the instant Julian forced his cock inside his ass. Anchoring himself to Andrew's hips, Julian fucked him easy at first. His eyes closed, Andrew moaned in ecstasy as Julian pulled out of him slowly only to shove his cock in harder each time.

She couldn't deny it was an intoxication watching two men fuck. It had always been that way for her. And watching the way these two gorgeous, bronzed men skillfully satisfied each other was no different than any other time. Still, as much as she enjoyed the view, she was ready for them to be on their way.

As the minutes ticked by, she wondered if Julian was ever going to come until at last he called out to her like he always did during this game they loved so much.

"Say it baby," he groaned. "Come on."

"Fuck him, Julian," she encouraged, driving him onward. All the while she glanced at the clock on the wall as their eyes remained closed. "Harder, baby. Harder."

His head back and his teeth clenched fiercely together, Julian thrust and thrust as beads of sweat formed on his bare chest, and Madison continued spurring him to do it faster. After what seemed like an eternity, his body stiffened and he shoved forward one last time as a loud moan passed his lips and reverberated against the bedroom walls.

Trembling violently, he sprayed his cum deep in Andrew's ass until the last drop had been squeezed from his body. Pulling out, he crumbled to the bed beside him and struggled to breathe. Both of them were spent, and Madison hoped it wouldn't be long before they decided it was time to go home. With any luck, they wouldn't go for a second round

Trying to sound enthused, she remarked about how good they were and how much she had enjoyed watching them. When they both turned to smile at her, she licked her lips and winked at them for emphasis.

"Why don't you join us?" Julian drawled, motioning with his finger for her to come lay down beside them on the bed.

Stammering for a reply, she shook her head and tried to smile back at him. "I wish I could, but if we stay in here much longer, the officers downstairs will check up on me." She tried to appear disappointed.

It wasn't a lie really. If she stayed gone too long they probably *would* come upstairs to see if she was okay. The night before, she had decided to take a longer bubble bath than usual to relax her mind, and Terry had come knocking on the bathroom door twice to make sure everything was all right.

After they lay on the bed for several minutes to catch their breath, she was relieved when they decided to get up and start dressing. Once they finished, she stood up and walked over to them, grinning widely.

"I'm so glad you asked to come over. I really needed this." She kissed them both on the cheek. "Thank you."

Hooking her arms through theirs, she walked with them out the door, trying not to seem too eager to get them on their way. When they descended the staircase together, she peered over the banister looking for Terry, but she didn't see him. They stepped into the foyer, and Andrew excused himself to use the bathroom just as Drew appeared in the doorway.

"Where's Terry?" she asked, looking anxiously over his shoulder.

"He went home not long after you went upstairs. He didn't say when he'd be back."

Trying not to look as downhearted as she felt, she nodded wearily to Drew just as Andrew returned to her side and swept her in his arms. Nuzzling his mouth against her ear, he kissed her gently as Julian waited his turn.

After hugging them and promising to call them the next day, she was delighted when they finally stepped out the front door. She locked and fell against it as Drew chuckled under his breath and walked back into the den.

Full of more sorrow than she could understand, she retreated to her office with the hope that working would help clear her thoughts. But instead, she curled up on the sofa across from her desk and prayed for sleep to come quickly.

* * * *

Walking out of the office bright and early the next morning, Madison looked around the den, expecting to see Terry there. She had become used to him greeting her every morning. It was the only thing in the uncertainty of the past three weeks that she felt she could somehow hold on to.

Still, the only familiar sound that greeted her was the hum of Drew in the kitchen as he prepared his regular morning coffee. Disheartened, she made her way to the kitchen just as he walked back into the den. If there was one thing she could rely on, it was the relaxed and good-natured grin he kept on his face no matter what was being thrown his way.

"Good morning," she mumbled, trying to return his smile. "Any news from my dad?"

She would rather ask about Terry, but she felt like she had bothered him enough where he was concerned. She was positive he could feel the tension between them, and continuing to ask of his whereabouts would only make him that much more uncomfortable.

"Still nothing," he said. "I'm sorry, Madison."

It had taken her several times to convince him to stop calling her Ms. Carey, so hearing her name from him brought a much-needed smile.

"It's okay." She sighed. "Drew, would you mind driving me to the grocery store in a few minutes after I take a shower and change clothes?"

It had seemed like forever since she'd been outside and breathed in fresh air. She could easily have gotten someone else to do her shopping, but the walls felt as though they were closing in around her with each passing second she stayed behind locked doors. Even if she had to wear a baseball cap and sunglasses, she was determined to feel like a normal person again if only for a little while.

* * * *

While they shopped the nearly vacant store, and Drew remained a step behind her at all times, she listened closely to his walkie-talkie for the sound of Terry's voice. Even though he had the volume turned down low so as not to attract attention, she would still recognize his voice in an instant. Every time his cell phone rang she would look at him expectantly, but most of the time it was his wife.

Only a couple of people looked her way as she wandered the aisles, which was a welcomed respite. Her cap and sunglasses weren't much of a disguise, but at least it allowed her the privacy to shop without being noticed. After Drew stuck his walkie-talkie and badge in his jacket pocket, they resembled any other couple to the unsuspecting people around them.

On the drive home, she tried to enjoy the scenery along the way, knowing within just a few minutes she would become a prisoner once again behind locked doors. Just the thought made her want to cry. She had become so depressed over the circumstances surrounding her that it was starting to affect her job. No longer did she burn the midnight oil working on itineraries and deadlines. Now she was just as content to stay in her bedroom and sleep the day away.

When the car came to a stop in front of her house, she sighed, wishing they could have stayed gone a little bit longer. Helping Drew with the groceries, she exhaled deeply as they walked in the house and there was still no sign of Terry. While Drew unloaded the bags in the kitchen, she walked the short distance back to the squad car to retrieve the purse she had left behind. Looking across the street, she waved half-heartedly to the officers sitting in their unmarked car when they glanced her way. Stepping inside the house again, she was instantly struck with an uneasiness that sunk deep into her bones and made her shiver. Something didn't feel right.

Just as she noticed Drew lying motionless on the kitchen floor, the front door slammed shut behind her. Startled, she spun around. Fear turned to absolute shock when she discovered Joseph Sinclair glowering at her, mere inches from where she stood.

His clothes were tattered, his hair was disheveled, and there were dark circles under his eyes. No longer did he resemble the model she remembered. He had lost so much weight, his skin now clung to his bones in a frightening way that made her stomach churn. Still, all of that paled in comparison to the look in his eyes. It was a haunting, vicious glare. He looked possessed.

Instinctively, she tried to run away, but he was much quicker. When he grabbed her from behind, they both fell to the floor. Flipping quickly onto her back, she immediately began kicking at him, but nothing seemed to faze him. In one effortless movement, he straddled her legs to stop her.

Struggling to break free of his grasp, she sunk her fingernails deep into his face and tried to gouge his eyes. Taking in a huge gulp of air, she prepared to scream at the top of her lungs, but he was still much faster than she realized. His hand closed over her mouth before she could make a sound.

"Do it and I'll kill you, Madison. I swear it."

Grabbing both her wrists with his other hand, he stopped her flailing as easily as if reprimanding a child. His face was so close to her own now that she could see the steady stream of blood that trailed from the gashes she had forged into his skin. The smell of blood intermingled with the pungent odor of drugs that reeked from his body and clothes. For a moment, she thought she would be sick.

"I warned you. I'm not to be used and discarded like yesterday's garbage," he ranted. "If you promise not to scream when I remove my hand, I might be merciful and not prolong your agony."

Afraid of doing anything that might anger him even further, she wearily nodded her head in agreement. But as soon as his hand left her mouth, he clamped it around her throat. Holding on to her tightly, he pulled her to her feet while she clawed viciously at his arm in a frantic attempt to free herself.

"Joseph ... please..." she begged, her voice merely a gasp in his grip as he glared at her and slammed her back against a wall, lifting her up so high that her feet barely brushed the floor.

"Do you get off on it, Madison? Fucking people and then throwing them to the dogs?"

Grasping for each breath of air, her eyes grew wide with fear when he retrieved a large knife from his back pocket. Dangling it in front of her, he slapped the flat of the blade against her cheek. She felt the pooled tears spill from the corners of her eyes as he described in haunting detail the many ways he planned on torturing her. "I'm going to show you what it feels like being used. I'm going to laugh when you beg for mercy, and each time you scream I'm going to cut you ... slowly."

When he pressed the tip of the blade to her cheek and pierced her skin, she stifled a scream. The pain was excruciating. With his powerful hold on her throat, she knew there was no way she could yell for help. Every time she attempted to break free, he squeezed that much harder.

"When you beg for mercy one last time, your body will be unrecognizable, and no one will want you, ever again."

The words slithered off his tongue like venom. She could feel the blood as it trickled from the cut on her cheek, and in that instant, time stood deathly still. Suddenly, everything became hazy, and his threats echoed faintly around her. She couldn't breathe anymore.

He was so strong, so violent, and she didn't have enough strength left to fight him anymore. Arms fell to her side and eyelids fluttered closed. She stopped struggling just as Terry's voice broke through the stillness, and everything went black.

* * * *

Drifting in and out of consciousness, Madison could barely discern the tears as they fell upon her skin. Trying to open her eyes, she glimpsed Terry as he knelt above her, crying. Closing them again, she could vaguely hear the distant sound of someone calling her name over the slow rhythm of her heart beating.

One beat ... two...

She was being lifted. Struggling to open her eyes again, she felt the warmth of someone's breath against her face and a touch upon her hand.

And then, there was nothing. [Back to Table of Contents]

Chapter Six

Madison tried to open her eyes, but the bright glare of the fluorescent lights above her made her wince in agony. Covering her eyes with her hands, she tried to turn over on her side, but a blinding pain in her head kept her from moving without feeling sick.

"Madison?" came her dad's familiar voice. "Look at me, sweetheart."

Removing her hands, she blinked several times before finally opening her eyes and focusing on her surroundings. Seeing her dad sitting in a chair beside her, she tried to say something, but strangled cries were the only thing she could force past her tongue. When she brushed her throat with her fingertips, she flinched at the pain, and all at once everything came rushing back. Touching her cheek, she felt a bandage there. She remembered. He had cut her.

"Don't try to speak, Madison. Your voice will come back soon. I promise," he soothed, taking her hand in his and pressing it to his lips. He looked as though he hadn't slept in days.

It hurt to move, to swallow, even breathe. A constant bustle of activity surrounded her, and with small, tentative shifts of her head, she realized she was in a tiny space with a curtain around it. She still wore her own clothes, but there were wraps around her neck.

"You're still in the emergency room," her dad explained when he saw the question in her eyes. "You hit your head on the foyer floor pretty hard. They took x-rays and everything looks good, but they plan on keeping you overnight for observation just in case. You're probably going to be sore for a few days."

Thinking back on the horror of finding Drew motionless on her kitchen floor, her eyes grew wide with worry as she struggled to talk, but nothing would come out. Where was Drew? And Terry?

"They're fine," he said gently, sensing her fears. "Drew was knocked unconscious for a long time, but other than a bad headache, he's okay. They've already bandaged him up. He'll probably be here in a few minutes with Terry."

As soon as he said his name, her eyes welled up with tears, but she couldn't say anything. She wouldn't know what to say if she could. After what happened with Joseph, her mind and body were overwrought with so many emotions she wasn't sure how to feel. Just then, the curtain parted and he was there, with Drew right behind him. The minute he saw her awake, he smiled broadly.

Her dad had glanced up when they opened the curtain, and now he stood. "I'll let Terry give you all the details while I go talk to the doctor about putting you in a private room. One leak to the press that you're here and they'll swarm the place."

He leaned over and kissed her on the forehead and told her he loved her. It was the first time since her mother's funeral she had heard those words from him. When he disappeared behind the curtain with Drew, she tried to sit up, and Terry rushed to her side to help her. She swooned briefly as the pain shot through her head, making her shut her eyes and whimper.

"Easy, easy," he soothed, sitting on the edge of the bed beside her. "I know how strong-willed you are, Madison, but you can't rush this. You've been through a lot today."

Opening her eyes carefully, she listened closely as he explained what happened.

"Yesterday, your friend Andrew unlocked a bathroom window downstairs, which is how Sinclair got in the house. Julian knew about it, too. Sinclair's been hiding out at their apartment this whole time, and they've been helping him out with details about where you were, and what you were doing. Sinclair somehow had the idiots convinced he wouldn't hurt you. Anyway, he snuck through the woods and hid in the bushes beside your house, waiting for the right opportunity. When you and Drew left this morning, he made his move."

Taking a deep breath, he continued.

"I went to Lieutenant Carey's office first thing this morning. After seeing those men in your house yesterday, I ... I made up my mind it would be best if he took me off your case. When I returned to your house to get my things, I caught a glimpse of you both through the window."

Taking another deep breath, he stared off for a moment as if lost in thought.

"I used the key your dad gave me to unlock the back door and slip inside. When I turned the corner into the foyer and saw you there, my heart sank. You were so pale, Madison. I've been on the force a long time, and I've seen many things, but I've never been as scared as I was that moment. His back was to me, and when I yelled at him, he dropped you. When you fell, he ran out the front door, but we caught him.

"From what Andrew told the detective, he had a debt to pay for some drugs he'd bought from Sinclair. Since he didn't have the money, he helped Sinclair get to you instead. They're all behind bars now, and I promise you they won't be getting out anytime soon. It's over."

Though she felt foolish for allowing Julian and Andrew into her home and her bed, the relief that flooded through her body made her weak. The tears streamed down her cheeks, and Terry held her while she cried with broken, hoarse whispers. It felt so good being in his arms again. She didn't want to let him go, especially now after everything that had happened.

"Now that I've got you in a position where you can't argue with me," he began, pushing her away from him slightly so that he could look in her eyes, "there are some things I need to say."

As her heartbeat quickened, she leaned back against the bed to listen. He was right, there was no way she could stop him. The pain that radiated in her throat each time she tried to talk was enough to keep her silent.

"Madison, the real reason I applied to your dad's unit was to be close to you. I know I acted like a jerk in high school and I can't apologize enough for that. You were wrong when you said I never noticed you. I did. More than you could ever know. But things were so different fifteen years ago. People weren't as accepting as they are now. I knew if our police chief found out a black boy had a crush on his daughter he would make our lives miserable. Our classmates would have, too. So instead of treating you the way a person should be treated, I fought it ... and I fought you."

She couldn't disagree with him. Knowing her dad the way she did, he really would have made their lives a living hell.

"So the first time I ran across an article about you, it was like something just clicked inside of me. I didn't know what might happen, but I knew I had to at least try. When I found out there was an opening in your dad's unit, I took my chances. And Madison, that night in your bedroom, I wanted you so much. I wasn't rejecting you. I was afraid if I made love to you and got distracted from protecting you ... And then, God forbid, Sinclair got to you before I could save you ... I couldn't have lived with that memory haunting me the rest of my life."

The sincerity in his voice made her emotional all over again. She wished she could apologize to him for the snide remarks, and for battling against him when all he wanted to do was protect her and try to make amends.

"Your dad knows how I feel about you now. After this morning, he ... he just knew. There was no denying it." He closed his eyes briefly as if to block the horrible images from his mind. "While we waited for them to finish your x-rays, he asked me and I told him the truth. He didn't get upset though, Madison. He seemed genuinely happy."

Unable to contain it any longer, she put her arms around him as the tears fell once again. She couldn't remember ever feeling so happy and relieved. It was time. Life was about forgiveness. She was tired of harboring resentments that left her life empty and meaningless. It was past time to put those to rest and move forward. She needed Terry in her life. She understood that now. As soon as was able, she would tell him that.

"I'm staying with you tonight, and I'll take you home tomorrow just as soon as the doctor releases you," he said softly, smiling. "I'm not letting you out of my sight. I did that fifteen years ago and I won't let it happen again."

Leaning in closer, he kissed her gently on the lips. Breathing a sigh of relief, she smiled with pure joy for the first time in a very long time.

It was over. It was finally over.

* * * *

Throughout the night, Terry stayed with her while a police officer guarded the door to her room. They had put her in a private room at the end of an almost vacant corridor, and the solitude was a much-needed change. Discouraged with not being able to talk, she sighed peacefully when Terry crawled into the bed and held her while she floated in and out of medication-induced sleep.

Around noon the following day, Madison was released from the hospital. To avoid the onslaught of journalists waiting in the front parking lot, Terry drove his car around to the rear of the building where she wouldn't be bothered and settled her inside. While he held her hand, she drifted in and out of sleep during the drive home. As soon as they turned onto her street, Terry saw the barrage of reporters in front of Madison's house and grimaced. Fortunately, a couple of officers were able to keep them at bay once they turned into her driveway. The last thing she needed to deal with was their endless questions and clamoring for photographs.

After parking the car, he came around to her side and helped her out. Her headache had subsided somewhat, but she still had to be careful not to move too suddenly or the dizziness would make her uneasy on her feet. Her dad had opted to stay behind and deal with the reporters at the hospital, for which she was grateful. She knew though, without him saying a word, that he was also doing it so the two of them could have some privacy.

When Terry closed the front door behind them, she grinned widely. After the past day, she was actually glad to be in the same place that had once felt like a prison. Everything looked normal again. There were no officers, no walkie-talkies, and no police scanners ... just a comforting silence.

Putting his arm around her waist, he helped her to her bedroom so she could take a shower and get some rest. When she undressed in the bathroom, she caught her reflection in the large vanity mirror above the sink. Grazing her fingertips delicately across the dark bruises on her throat, she swallowed past the pain. She wasn't going to dwell on what Joseph had done to her—she refused to. All she could do now was move forward with her life. Standing in the shower beneath the running water, she scrubbed his dried blood from underneath her fingernails. The cut on her cheek and the bruises would heal in their own time, but for right now she just wanted to cleanse herself of it all—Joseph Sinclair, her past—everything she was determined not to carry into her future.

After patting her body and hair dry, she wrapped the bath towel around her and walked into the adjoining bedroom where Terry was busy trying to find something for her to wear to bed. While he carefully sorted through her dresser drawer and pulled out a pair of panties and pajamas, she couldn't help but smile at his awkwardness.

But when he attempted to help her put them on, she took them from his hands and dropped them on the floor along with her towel. The move caught him by surprise and the way he longingly stared at her body sent a shiver racing along her spine.

"Madison," he murmured breathlessly. "You're in pain. We ... I..."

Before he could say anything else, she rose up on her tiptoes and kissed him. She didn't care about the pain. All she knew was that she needed him. She needed to feel his touch and the security in his embrace. Taking her in his arms, their kisses started tenderly but soon reached a need that made her knees weak and threatened to send her crumbling to the floor.

Finally they could surrender, with no inhibitions and no fears to stand in their way. The longing to be as close to him as she possibly could was reaching unbearable proportions.

She wanted this man more in this very moment than she needed air to breathe.

Lying on the bed, she watched him undress. All the while he continued to gaze passionately upon her, making her tremble to her very core. The way the muscles in his chest and shoulders flexed with every movement only multiplied her trembling to the point where she writhed in anticipation.

When he finally stood naked before her, she inhaled sharply at the sight of his cock, massive and throbbing. When he crawled over her body and claimed her mouth with his own, she reached between them and grasped it firmly in her hand, causing him to shudder and moan.

Oh, God ... he felt so good. Closing her eyes, she traced the tip of his cock in a mesmerizing trail with her fingertips as his lips left hers and dipped to her throat where he lightly kissed each bruise before sliding down her body. His breath felt warm and tantalizing against her breasts, and the instant he sucked a taut nipple into his mouth, her body arched beneath him.

Taking her for his own, and yet holding back slightly so as not to cause her anymore pain, his breathing grew labored as he licked and teased her nipples with his teeth. Everything felt so right. Keeping her eyes closed, she held on to his shoulders tightly when his mouth left her breasts and traveled lower.

"I've wanted to taste you for so long now," he murmured. "I could close my eyes at night and almost feel you against my tongue." His words fell against her ears in an intoxicating way that left her quivering. Slowly he made his way down the length of her stomach until at last he nestled between her legs. She gripped the bed covers and held on tight.

Flattening his hand against her lower stomach to try and cease her trembling, he jutted out his tongue and pressed it to her clit. The sheer exhilaration of having his tongue where every nerve had centered in her body was almost too much. Even before he began licking her, she was moving against him at a desperate pace.

Though he tried to keep her still, she couldn't help but be overcome by the need for a release as he steadily drew each breath from her with every stroke he made. Unable to cry out, her ragged sighs surged past her lips in suppressed moans as he licked faster, stopping every few seconds to suck her clit into his mouth.

When her body began to tense up, she raked the bed while inching closer and closer to climaxing. As if detecting her anguish, Terry let go of her stomach and clutched her upper thighs while he continued to lick her faster. She dug her feet into the bed and ground her body against his tongue in a fearless attempt to free her soul from the thing possessing it.

When he clamped onto her firmly, her body constricted as she raised her hips off the bed and held them there. Then, in one breathtaking moment, the release took over her body, leaving her screams muffled inside her aching throat. Closing her eyes, the convulsions racked her body forcefully for several minutes until at last she collapsed onto the bed, weary and shaken. After that first night he had seduced her, she didn't think she could possibly need him or want him more. Unable to talk, she looked at him pleadingly. If he didn't take her soon, she felt like she would honestly fall apart.

When he crawled over her body, she tentatively touched her throat and tried to speak. Yet, when she opened her lips, all that came out were just garbled whispers. As her eyes filled with tears, Terry cradled her in his arms.

"No, angel. Please don't cry," he pleaded softly with her. "You don't have to say anything to me. I hear you, Madison. Everything you do ... every time you move ... I hear you."

When he let her go and nuzzled his lips gently against her throat, she began to relax once more. Ever so slowly he started to unravel her again as his skillful lips traveled from her throat up and over her jaw. Her lips shaking, she waited for his kiss, and as soon as his mouth neared her own, she captured it hungrily.

The warmth of his body on top of hers, the taste of her on his tongue, the feel of his cock as it pressed against her stomach ... everything came together to leave her dazed. When he broke their kiss and rose to his knees between her legs, he looked upon her lovingly and smiled.

"I need to feel you, too," he whispered, knowing what she needed without her having to say a word.

With his hand, he positioned his cock and slowly pushed inside of her while she held on to his arms and looked into his eyes. As she gasped and arched her back, he continued driving his cock inside of her until she was fully impaled. He felt so big, hard ... and wonderful. Sliding his hands under her, he swept her in his embrace while he continued his gentle thrusting. When she circled her arms around his waist, he nestled his mouth against her ear, and whispered endearments that left her panting for more.

The way he opened her and filled her completely was mind-bending. He was so calm. Never rushed, he took his time and continued murmuring her name softly while expertly lifting her higher. After several minutes, he rolled over onto his back, bringing her along with him. She marveled at how delicately he made every move so as not to hurt her, since normally he seemed to loom above her like a giant.

Straddling his hips, she placed her hands flat against his chest and began riding him. After raising almost all of the way off of him, she would press back with her hands and forcefully drive herself back down onto his cock. He felt so good it was hard to maintain a slow pace, even when the throbbing in her head made her wince. Faster, she continued until she felt him grasp her hips and stop her momentarily.

"Easy, angel," he said softly.

Still holding onto her hips, he kept her immobile above him as he pressed his feet into the bed and began thrusting upward slowly. Once the pain began to subside, she relaxed and closed her eyes. When Terry coaxed her into an easy rhythm, he let go of her hips and began caressing her.

Gently his fingertips slid up her spine, over her shoulders and down her arms while she kept her eyes closed. It was impossible not to lose herself in the feel of his cock inside of her. Her mouth open, she wished she could moan, but there was only a burning sensation every time she strained to say something.

As if reading her thoughts, Terry lightly brushed his fingertips across the deep markings on her throat. Opening her eyes, she gazed down at him, and her heart ached when she noticed the way his gaze glistened with unshed tears. She leaned forward to kiss him. It was meant to be a gentle kiss, but with both of them so overcome with emotion, it grew intently until they were both unwilling to stop and breathe.

Wrapping his arms around her waist, he began to thrust faster and faster until he came inside of her with his moans resounding heavily against the bedroom walls. She wished with all her heart that she could do more than whisper his name, but all she could do was hold onto him while they both gasped for each breath. Flushed with warmth, the pain in her body was temporarily alleviated as they held on tightly to each other. They had missed out on so many years, neither one of them wanted to let go.

When the last quiver rocked his body, Terry carefully drew Madison off of him, and settled her at his side. Now he was the one unable to speak. Still, as he had said, no words were needed. Once she placed her hand on his chest, the furious racing of his heart conveyed everything he couldn't at the moment.

Smiling, she closed her eyes while her body relaxed against him. Despite everything that had happened, she honestly couldn't remember a time when she had felt better. Things had finally fallen into place, and her life no longer felt as though there was something missing. The need was gone to fill that empty space with more work than she could handle or meaningless trysts.

While he softly caressed her skin, she felt herself falling into a peaceful rest. It was a rest that was long overdue for them both. His heartbeat slowing beneath her touch, she looked up at him just as he closed his eyes and went to sleep. Seconds later, she drifted with him.

* * * *

Two days later, as Madison stood in front of her bedroom mirror and freshened her makeup, she took several deep breaths to remain calm. Her voice had returned, but she still had to be careful not to overdo and strain her throat too much while she continued to recover. As she loosely tied a scarf around her neck to cover the bruises, Terry appeared in her doorway.

"The press is waiting outside for your statement," he informed her. "Are you ready?"

She had put it off as long as she could, but it was time to lay everything to rest, and get her life back once again. Maybe once the incessant reporters could see she was fine and would be returning to the agency soon, they would allow her the space to heal. As soon as she was able to, she planned on sitting Courtney down and explaining to her that, although she loved her job, she also needed the time to live her life the way a normal person should.

For a long time, Courtney had tried to convince her that she needed an assistant but Madison had always shunned the idea, wanting to do everything herself. Things were different now, though. *She* was different. No longer did she crave the limelight and the drama that came along with it. Now instead of working long hours, she wanted to come home to Terry and continue building their life together.

Walking over to him, she put her arms around his waist and stood on her tiptoes to kiss him.

"As long as you're there standing beside me, I'll be fine." Grinning, he kissed the top of her head and pulled her

close. "You couldn't get rid of me now if you tried."

Taking her hand in his, he led her out the door and proceeded down the hallway toward the stairs. Her dad was smiling at her from the bottom of the stairway, and she took one last deep breath after giving him a quick hug. The three of them made their way to the front door, and as soon as Terry opened it and the barrage of reporters began to scramble for her picture, she knew then more than ever that it was time.

After fifteen years, it was time to start living.

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Resisting Kane by Stephanie Adkins

About the Author

Growing up in a household that consisted of four brothers and no sisters, Stephanie Adkins spent most of her childhood locked in her bedroom, escaping the testosterone by filling page after page of her diaries with short stories and poetry.

Now, surrounded by even more men in her life—her husband of fifteen years and two sons—she still enjoys the "great escape" by turning her childhood dreams into reality ... one story at a time.

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