



**NEW
YEAR'S
MARINE**

BY

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A
CHRISTMAS
MARINE
BY
LAURA GUEVARA

CHAPTER ONE

Audrey Medina looked over her shoulder at the clock on the wall behind her. Just thirty more minutes before the bank closed and she could go home. On Fridays the bank stayed opened until six pm, to give customers the opportunity to come in after work. The weekend was a short half hour away. As she glanced over to her best friend and coworker, Lexi, Audrey missed the man approaching the counter until he was right in front of her.

Audrey stared at the man before her. His intense blue-green eyes captivated her, striking her mute. He waited patiently while she got control of her damn vocal cords. How embarrassing!

“Hello, how may I help you?” Wow, she really needed to get a hold of herself because her voice sounded all breathless. So not professional.

“Hi.” His deep voice did not help matters. “I’m having trouble with my debit card. Every time I use it, I get an error message saying I entered the wrong pin. I’ve had the same pin since I activated my card several years ago.”

Audrey worked really hard to focus on what he said. The combination of his dangerous looks and dark voice made it hard to do so. He wasn’t in uniform but she knew without a doubt he was military. Maybe it was the short cropped hair, the way he held himself, or the air of intimidation that surrounded him. Or the fact that she worked for a military credit union, either way, he was one hundred percent military. She just didn’t know what branch.

Audrey took a deep breath before she talked again. She wanted to make sure that she was the cool and collected bank teller she was supposed to be. “Let’s take a look to see what’s wrong. May I please see your ID and debit card?”

As he handed both over to her, his fingers brushed against hers. Delicious tremors traveled down her body. Her gaze went back up to his. She

must be seeing things because the color of his eyes seemed more blue than green. Was that even possible? Looking down at the ID card in her hand she saw his name. Alston Hayworth. Alston was a unique name, one she never heard before. She liked that. Getting down to business, she turned to her computer to pull up his account.

Audrey could feel his penetrating gaze on her as she looked over his account. Nothing seemed to be out of place. She couldn't see any reason why his pin didn't work.

"Nothing seems to be out of order," she looked back up to him, "but we can reset it and you can re-enter your pin."

"How long will that take?"

"We can do it right now."

A slow predatory smile transformed his strong features. Audrey knew that look. He wanted her. Audrey blushed. Of course he would make it sexual. To cover up her discomfort she went back to her computer screen. "Okay, enter your pin on the pad."

Audrey watched as he did. The black t-shirt stretched tightly across his chest. No one could miss the big beefy arms or the tall muscular frame. She wanted nothing more than to crawl over the counter and jump into his arms. She knew she would enjoy every single minute. Men like Alston tempted women by just breathing. Hell, she would do all the work. All he had to do was say yes. Audrey's thoughts shocked her. Never before had she reacted this strongly to another man. Again, she glanced over at Lexi. Her best friend mouthed the words "*If you won't, I will.*" Apparently Lexi wasn't immune to Alston's magnetism. Audrey mouthed back "*He's mine, back off.*" Audrey returned her attention to Alston and waited for an opportunity. She simply hoped she wasn't fired for asking out a customer. She never had a chance.

Alston could feel her gaze on him as he entered the numbers on the pad. He suppressed a smile. All women looked at him. It wasn't that he was conceited but at 6'4 he drew attention wherever he went. He was used to that by now. But she was the first woman he wanted to look back at. Audrey. He learned her first name from her tag on her blouse. Alston liked the sound of it. Done entering the numbers he looked back at her. She looked away. He couldn't help the slow smile that spread across his face.

Alston was pissed that he had to come into the bank in the first place. Recently back from a tour of Iraq, his damn debit card kept getting rejected everywhere he went. From the grocery store to the gas station, he got the same message. Invalid pin. The number hadn't changed in the six years since he first opened the account. So, he rushed across town to make it to the bank before it closed. He was glad he made it. The black haired beauty assisting him was worth all the trouble. Her shoulder-length curled hair framed her lovely face. The subtle makeup she wore enhanced her dark eyes and high cheekbones. The dark grey blouse did not hide the swell of her breasts. She was sitting down so Alston couldn't see her lower body, but he bet he would not be disappointed. From what he saw he knew she would be just as curvy.

"Done."

"Ok, the information has been updated. You shouldn't have anymore problems from now on."

Alston nodded his head. He took the pen and wrote down his number on the back of a deposit slip. "I'll expect your call tonight." He slid the paper across the counter to her. She took a look at it. The surprised look she gave him brought another smile to his face. In the past five minutes he smiled more than in the past couple of months. As a member of the elite delta force unit, his job was dangerous and somber, with very little to smile about. Alston was damn happy he survived another grueling tour. Now the angel before him would be his salvation.

“Don’t make me wait, Audrey.” Alston walked away after she nodded her head. He didn’t want to cause any trouble for her at work. But he would be back if she didn’t call him. Alston’s new mission was to get her in his arms and in his bed. He didn’t believe in fate but today’s events might just make him change his mind. Alston hoped he hadn’t completely shocked her with his heavy-handedness, but he learned long ago not to second guess himself and to go after what he wanted. Right now, all he wanted was Audrey.

The hot San Antonio temperature engulfed him as he walked out of the bank. Alston slipped the dark shades on. Late into the year the weather was still in the high nineties. A cold front was expected to drop the temperatures. Everyone prayed for the cooler conditions. Alston wouldn’t believe it until it happened. Texas weather was as unpredictable as the insurgents he fought back in Iraq. The situation could change at any moment. He remembered several years ago people all over South Texas awakened to a white Christmas. Alston hoped it would snow again. Then he could keep a naked Audrey in front of a roaring fire. All he had to do now was wait for Audrey’s call. As a marine he had learned patience. He would try to give Audrey all the time she needed, but his patience wasn’t unlimited.

CHAPTER TWO

Audrey didn't know how she managed to finish the rest of her shift. She was flabbergasted at his demand. She was surprised at herself for keeping her mouth shut until she and Lexi made it back to their apartment complex. That was how they met. Lexi moved in across from her four years ago. The two hit it off right away and had been best friends ever since. It was Audrey who got Lexi a job at the bank after Lexi quit her secretarial job. Audrey warned her that it was sometimes maddening but the pay and benefits were good. It was the only thing that kept them employed.

"Ok, I don't know what happened but you need to spill it."

Her friend knew her so well. Lexi followed her into her spacious apartment. Audrey sighed, knowing she wouldn't get any peace until she told Lexi about Alston. Since he slipped the piece of paper to her, she debated with herself about what she would do. The reasonable sane part of her argued that it wasn't safe, to throw the phone number away. She was crazy for even considering it. The hussy inside screamed for her to call him as he ordered. The two sides battled on inside her head for the past hour. Audrey was going crazy. She needed Lexi's advice. Lexi didn't mince words. She would cut down to the point and tell Audrey how she felt. It was one of the things Audrey liked about her.

Inside her apartment they walked into the airy living room, kicked off their shoes, and made themselves comfortable on the couch.

"Did you see that tall guy in the black t-shirt about thirty minutes before we closed?"

"See him? I drooled all over myself staring at him."

“He gave me this.” Audrey took the slip from her purse and handed it over to Lexi. Lexi read it, looked up at her, and then back down at the numbers.

“His phone number? Mr. Sexy-as-hell gave you his phone number?!” Audrey watched as Lexi came off the couch. Lexi waved the paper in front of her face angrily. “Why the fuck did you wait this long to tell me. What else did he tell you? I’m telling you right now if you don’t call him I will.”

Audrey expected this reaction, which was why she waited to tell her until now. “He said he expected my call tonight.”

Lexi grabbed the cordless phone from the stand and thrust it to her. “Call him now.”

“I can’t call him now. I’ll sound all desperate.”

“Fine, but if you don’t call him by eight tonight, I’m doing it for you.” She added, “I mean it Audrey, if you don’t call that man up, I will. You can’t let a man like that walk away.”

“I won’t. I promise I’ll call him.” Audrey knew Lexi would call Alston herself and god knows what Lexi would say about her.

After Lexi left to her apartment Audrey couldn’t help think that somehow Alston was just toying with her. Audrey sighed as she went to her bedroom to change clothes. Then she remembered the heated look of desire in his eyes. The man wanted her as much as she wanted him. So she was going to take the jump and call him. What was the worse thing that could happen? They would just talk. Not like she would invite him over to her apartment or she’d go over to his place. They would talk, take it slow, and see where things led. That sounded good to her. Going back to the kitchen, Audrey looked through her fridge for something to eat. She found some left over Hunan chicken and fried rice to heat up. The clock on the microwave showed it was seven o’clock. She

had one hour to eat dinner then call Alston. She was going to need something other than left over Chinese food to gather the courage she needed.

“I think I have some tequila here somewhere,” she muttered to herself as the food heated. “Aha, here we go.” A near empty bottle of tequila was all that was left from the last girl’s night out. She was surprised it even made it through the night. Not bothering with a shot glass, she chugged it down. She was one of a few people who didn’t dress it up with salt or lime. She liked it straight up. The liquid burned her throat as it made its way down. With a shake of her head, she went to the cordless and dialed his number from memory. It was now or never.

“Hello,” answered the rich seductive voice after two rings.

“Hi, it’s Audrey. From the bank,” she added as an afterthought.

“I know.”

“You do?” There she went sounding all breathless again.

“You’re the only woman who has this number, aside from my mom, but I already spoke to her.”

“Oh.” A warm feeling that had nothing to do with the tequila spread all over her body after hearing that declaration. She liked that she was the only woman he had given his phone number to. Well, other than his mom but she didn’t count, not really. “You were so sure I’d call?”

“Yes. Make no mistake about it Audrey, if you hadn’t called tonight, I would’ve returned to the bank.”

“Wow, that so didn’t sound stalkerish at all,” she quipped before she could stop herself, the tequila loosening her tongue.

Alston laughed in her ear. “Admit it, you want me don’t you?”

She couldn’t deny that. “Yes.”

Alston's cock jumped at her whispered response. Her soft voice made him hard as stone. He remembered the way she looked at the bank. All that dark hair and lovely skin imprinted in his mind. Just like her voice.

"Have you eaten dinner yet?"

"I'm heating something up."

"Leave it. Have dinner with me tonight."

He waited as she contemplated his request. Who was he kidding? It was no request, more of a command. He knew he was pushing his luck but he wanted to see her again.

"I don't know Alston. I mean I've never done something like this before. I don't know anything about you. We just met."

Alston loved his name on her lips. He would like it better when she was screaming it out, but she was right. She didn't know anything about him. He was lucky she even called him. Patience, he reminded himself. He would go slowly even if it killed it him.

"Ok, we'll go to dinner tomorrow night. We'll talk tonight." She laughed into his ear. Alston relaxed. He made himself more comfortable in his lazy boy. As he asked her questions about herself, he looked around his apartment. It was sparse, utilitarian to the extreme. But when you had his job, not sure how long a mission would take, or if you were coming back, he only needed the essentials. He didn't display pictures of his family. There was nothing really to display. His mom kept most of the family photos. Alston had one brother, Tristram, but they were not on speaking terms. Actually they weren't speaking at all. Ram was three months younger and had a different mother. The only two things that Ram and he shared were their father and physical appearance. It was why everyone assumed they were twins.

"What about family, do you have brothers and sisters?" He wished that if she did, they had a better relationship than he and Ram.

“No. My mom died several years ago. My best friend Lexi is all I have.”

Alston wished he could hug her. He felt the sadness in her voice and wanted to eliminate it. Instead, he changed the subject.

“Why are you still single?”

“It’s going to sound dumb and cliché but I just haven’t found someone who would love me like I deserved to be loved. I would commit myself one hundred percent to the relationship and I would expect the same.”

It wouldn’t be hard to love her Alston thought, taking him by surprise. Love never entered the equation. As crude as it sounded, sex was the only thing he wanted and offered to the women who chased him. They understood that a one night stand was all they would get. Now, he was the one doing the chasing, wanting more. And he couldn’t even pinpoint exactly why Audrey was different. Yet she was because he was spending his Friday night at home, on the phone with her, something that hadn’t happened since he was a teenager, almost twenty years ago.

“Do you have siblings?”

“One, a younger brother.” Alston didn’t want to talk about his brother so he changed the subject back to her. When he looked at the cable box he saw it was it was past two am. They had been on the phone for damn near seven hours.

“Audrey, do you have to work tomorrow?” He should’ve asked that sooner.

“No, I’m off on the weekends. Why?”

“Have you noticed the time?”

There was a pause and then “Oh shit. I can’t believe it’s that late. I was in bed so I couldn’t see the clock on the nightstand. Do you have to be up early?”

Alston almost groaned when he heard she was in bed. The image of her in bed would haunt him all night. “No, I’m on leave for the next two months. I’ll be adjusting to civilian life. Let me take you out to dinner tomorrow night.”

This time there was no pause. “Yes.”

“I’ll call you tomorrow afternoon for directions to your place. Night Audrey.”

“Good night Alston.”

“And, baby....”

“Yes.”

“I’m really glad you called.”

“Me too,” she whispered before she hung up the phone.

Alston placed the phone back on the stand. Getting up he stretched out the kinks from sitting in the lazy boy for a long time. As he walked to his bedroom, he stripped off his clothes. He was naked by the time he got in bed. Soon after, he fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER THREE

Audrey woke slowly. She stretched languidly in her big warm bed. Her bedside clock said it was almost noon. Damn, she only slept this late when she partied with the girls. Then she remembered why she was up late. Alston Hayworth. The man she had a date with tonight. The loud bangs on her door cut through her euphoria. Untangling herself from the sheets, she went to answer the door. It was probably Lexi, so she didn't bother with a robe.

"Why the hell haven't you answered your damn phone? I've been calling since early this morning."

Lexi swept into her apartment, a mini tornado in action. Audrey shook her head and closed the door behind her. "Let me go wash my face and put some clothes on. Why don't you make me something to eat while you wait?"

"You expect me to cook for you after you've been ignoring me?"

"I haven't been ignoring you. I'll explain when I get back."

Audrey heard lots of grumbling as she walked back to her room. Lexi wanted the scoop, so she would make something. She couldn't believe that she stayed up that late talking to Alston. Then again, he didn't do much talking, she did. She also noticed that he didn't reveal too much about himself but asked her plenty of questions. Either way she learned enough to go to dinner with him tonight. Ten minutes later she walked back out to kitchen. Lexi was just hanging up the phone.

"Since you didn't have anything in your fridge, as usual, I ordered pizza, which you're paying for."

"As usual," Audrey added as she served herself a glass of water.

"Yeah, whatever, now tell me about the hottie marine. He's a marine isn't he?"

“Yeah, but he wouldn’t go into any details.” She tried to get more out of him but he expertly diverted her questions.

“Oh,” Lexi squealed besides her, “I bet he’s special ops. Those guys are so full of themselves. Ok, so go on.”

“We talked until two am. He’s thirty-four, has a brother, likes to fish, hates country music, and we’re going out to dinner tonight.”

“Whoa, back up. Is his brother hot?”

“How the hell am I supposed to know?”

“You can ask for a picture. I want a marine too.”

Audrey couldn’t help but laugh as Lexi pouted beside her. Lexi was obsessed with marines. She said that there was just something about them that she absolutely loved. She joked that was one of the reasons she decided to take the bank teller job, so she would be closer to marines. Audrey could only shake her head. Her friend was special but Audrey loved her nonetheless.

The pizza was delivered soon after. They polished it off in no time. They moved back to her bedroom so that they could pick out an outfit for tonight. Lexi wanted her to wear something sexy. Audrey wanted to wear something that didn’t expose so much skin or leg. At 5’6 she didn’t have the long legs of supermodels but they were firm, silky smooth, and looked damn good in stilettos. But since she didn’t know where they were going, she wasn’t sure what to wear.

“Damn it, I should’ve asked where he’s taking me.”

“You can’t go wrong with the little black dress, chica. Besides it will be his fault if you’re overdressed. He shouldn’t be so damn cheap.”

“Lex you’re so wrong for that. I’ll just ask him when he calls.” Until then she would choose several possible outfits. That done, she and Lexi went to

the gym for their daily workout. After eating five slices of pizza, she needed to spend extra time on the treadmill.

She was sliding the key into the slot when she heard the phone ring inside. Rushing inside she quickly snatched up the phone, not bothering to check who it was.

“Hello.”

“Ready for tonight?”

Alston.

“Yes, I just need to know where we’re going so I can choose an outfit.”

“If you have a little black dress, wear it for me tonight.”

“Then, I’ll be ready by seven.” She proceeded to give him directions to her apartment. After hanging up with him she called Lexi.

“Ok, after you shower come on over. I need your help to prepare for tonight. I’m going to wear the black dress.”

Audrey hung up on her friend’s earsplitting shriek. She threw the phone in the direction of the couch and ran to her bathroom, removing articles of clothing on the way. She was acting as if this was her first date ever. Going through her shower routine she was finished in no time. By the time she was out, Lexi was already seated on the bed Indian style.

“Where’s he taking you?”

“Don’t know. He said I should wear a black dress for him.”

“Well damn. Ok, let’s get started.”

They tackled her hair, which took the longest because of its length and thickness. It was blow dried, curled, and styled. Then Lexi applied Audrey’s makeup. Audrey always wore neutral colors but in Lexi’s hands she was transformed. The sexy night makeup, as Lexi referred to it, brought out her

brown eyes and enhanced her long lashes. By the time Lex was done, Audrey looked like a different person. She hoped that Alston liked it as well. As seven pm rolled around, she was dressed in the little black number. Black stilettos heels finished off the ensemble.

“Wow, you’re going to knock his socks off.”

Lexi made final touches as two strong knocks alerted them to Alston’s arrival. He was right on time.

CHAPTER FOUR

Alston waited patiently for Audrey to open the door for him. He wondered if she wore the little black dress for him. The door opened but it was not his Audrey. She looked familiar though.

“Lexi Hart,” she motioned him inside, “Audrey’s almost done.”

“Alston Hayworth.”

“Yeah, I saw you yesterday at the bank. I work with Audrey. Live across the hall.” If he wasn’t mistaken that sounded like a threat.

“I don’t care if you’re a marine, if you hurt my friend you’ll become very acquainted with Precious. I collect knives,” she added as an afterthought.

Alston almost grinned at her not so subtle threats. People who threatened to kill him didn’t usually didn’t live long after. But this was different. She was Audrey’s friend. A friend who cared very much about his woman, he couldn’t fault her. The dark spitfire in front of him won him over instantly. Maybe one day they would compare their knife collections. He too had an extensive collection. But he was damn sure he didn’t want to meet Precious under any other circumstances.

“I have no plans of hurting Audrey.”

“Good. I just finished cleaning Precious. Don’t want to get her dirty so soon. Oh here comes Audrey.”

Audrey walked down the short hallway, looking absolutely fucking stunning. The dress had a deep V neckline. It showed off a great deal of mouthwatering cleavage. His gaze dropped lower. The material ended right above her knees. Alston couldn’t take his eyes off of her as she came to a stop in front of him. He couldn’t wait to strip her naked.

“You look gorgeous.”

She smiled shyly at him. He could just eat her up. He wasn't too crazy about the makeup but he had to admit that she looked beautiful.

"Ok, be good. Don't do anything I wouldn't do." With a wink Lexi was out the door.

Alston could just imagine what kind and how much trouble she could cause. The poor bastard that ended up with her was going to have to watch his back at every turn.

"Somehow I think there's nothing your friend wouldn't do."

"Lexi is...special." Alston laughed.

"Ready to go?"

"You haven't told me where we're going."

Alston followed her out the door. "It's a surprise."

He had made reservations at a restaurant on the Riverwalk. He remembered someone on his flight home mentioned a quiet nondescript place with great Italian food. Alston held the car door open for her and helped her in before going around to the driver's side. Traffic was slow as they made their way downtown. At seven-thirty they entered *Agostina's*.

"*Benvenuto!*" Alston gave the young woman his name. She crossed it off the list. "Your table is ready. Please, follow me." The hostess led them to a booth located in the back of the restaurant, granting them plenty of privacy.

Perfect.

Alston waited until Audrey scooted into the booth before he followed her in. His thigh rested against her much smaller one, their hips pressed together. He wanted to be as close as possible to her as he could. Alston leaned closer to her. Her soft flowery perfume floated to his nostrils. His already rock hard cock strained against the material of his pants.

When the waiter came, Alston ordered a bottle of red wine for them. Next to him Audrey studied the menu. He moved his hand to rest on her thigh, over the material of her dress. Startled she looked up to him. Alston just smiled and looked down at his own menu. Then, his fingers began to trace small circles on her thigh. He heard her soft gasp of surprise.

By the time the waiter returned with the wine, Alston's hand rested at the apex of her thighs. He could feel her heat through the material of her dress and panties. He aimed to find out what she wore underneath before the main course was served. He wouldn't be able to wait. He could see how she tried to remain still and nonchalant as the waiter took their order.

Once he was out of earshot Alston lowered his mouth to her ear. "Give me your panties."

"What?"

"Your panties, I want to hold them in my hand. Take them off."

Audrey stared at Alston. He had completely lost his damned mind. She was not about to take off her underwear and hand them over to him in a crowded restaurant.

"You can't be serious." But the intense look in his eyes told her that he meant every word.

"Reach under your dress and pull them down those sexy legs. Nobody will see. The table cloth will cover you." His fingers pressed more firmly into her, exciting her even more. She couldn't refuse him. His dark words seduced her into agreeing to the crazy, but oh so wicked words.

Without another thought she brought her hands below the table. Alston removed his hand but continued to whisper erotic words into her ear, keeping her in a wild frenzy. Audrey reached under her dress. At a snail's pace

she pulled down her lacy black thong. She almost stopped, embarrassed that the material was wet.

“Don’t stop, Audrey, keep going baby.” His words encouraged her to pull them off. Glancing around to make sure that no one was watching them, she handed him her panties. His huge hand closed over the delicate material. She watched in fascination as he brought it up to his nose and inhaled.

“Aww, baby, your sweet scent is intoxicating.”

Audrey was mortified. No one had ever done or said such a thing. She was sure he could see the blush that spread across her face and neck. She felt feverish. Audrey inhaled sharply as she felt his hands on her thigh once again. She was glad when the waiter interrupted, bringing out the first course. She was in some sort of trance. She didn’t know what the waiter placed in front of them. All her concentration was on his fingers as they danced up her thigh in slow agonizing strokes. Would he touch her intimately? Would she let him? She surveyed the room once again. Nobody seemed to pay them any attention. They were lost in their own little worlds.

Audrey turned her attention back to Alston. He looked so relaxed, as if nothing was out of the ordinary. She envied him that. She wished she looked as calm and collected as he.

“Your skin feels so soft. Are you wet for me?” He didn’t wait for a response. Thick fingers caressed her cleft, teased her, before parting her engorged flesh.

“Alston,” she panted.

“Shh, baby, we don’t want to draw attention to ourselves.” How dare he blame her?! It was his damn fault to begin with. Then, she forgot why was she was mad at him. A long blunt finger slipped inside her wet core. Luckily, he covered her mouth with his, swallowing her cry of pleasure. His tongue thrust

deep, laying claim to her mouth. A discreet cough broke their embrace. Audrey kept her head down as the waiter stopped by to check on them.

“Damn, baby, you make me forget myself.”

Audrey swallowed hard.

“You haven’t touched your food. Not hungry?”

“I...uhm...yes.” How did he expect her to eat when his fingers tormented her? Audrey picked up the spoon and dipped it into the bowl sitting in front of her. Just as she was about to bring it to her mouth, Alston slipped a second finger, stretching her. The spoon clattered back to the bowl.

“Alston please,” she whimpered.

“Shh, Audrey, let me have this.”

“But I won’t be able to eat if you keep doing *that*.”

“Doing what?”

“You know what.” Audrey couldn’t bring herself to say what his fingers were doing.

The bastard just smiled and ate his soup. Audrey did too, slowly, careful not to spill any on her dress.

By the time the main course was brought out Audrey was ready to beg for release. Alston brought her close several times, but just when she was about to crest, he pulled back. The man was playing with her.

“Eat your dinner Audrey. Then we can leave and have dessert back at your apartment.” He finally removed his hand to dig into his steak.

Audrey wasted no time clearing her plate. Twenty minutes later she was done and demanded that Alston ask for the check. She needed to be fucked fast and hard. Alston had teased and tormented her to the point of insanity. Her body needed release and it needed it fast.

Finally, they stood and walked out of the restaurant. Alston pulled her close into his body, his solid arm around her waist. Once in the car, Audrey was able to get a hold of herself. It was then she thought of payback for his games. Let's see how well he kept his composure when the tables were turned.

CHAPTER FIVE

The little witch was going to get them killed. When her hand first landed on his thigh, Alston stiffened, unsure what she was about. Then, before he could stop her, her hot little hand pulled his zipper down. She got a surprise as his cock broke free. He didn't bother with underwear, knowing it would just restrict his massive hard-on he had sported since he met her. As much as he wanted to feel her small hands on him, she needed to pull away before he crashed, killing them both. And there was no way he was going to die before he fucked her.

"Audrey, you better get your hand out of my pants." His voice left no room for argument. Yet she ignored him.

"You don't like it?" She squeezed him hard as she asked coyly.

His hands tightened on the steering wheel.

"Baby, I like it so much that I'm two seconds from pulling this car over to show you what happens when you tease me like this."

"It's only fair Alston. You tortured me with your fingers all through dinner. I burned my tongue trying to eat as fast as possible so we could leave."

"Woman that was different. We weren't driving down the highway. There was no chance of getting us killed." He sucked in his breath as her fingers rubbed the pre-cum all over the head of his dick. "Enough," he bellowed, trying to keep the car in the same lane.

"Don't yell at me Alston Hayworth. You started this and now I'm finishing it."

"Be warned Audrey, once I get you back home, safely, I'm going to finish this little payback. You will beg and scream my name over and over again."

His words did the trick because while she didn't remove her hand, she did stop her movements. Now that he was better able to concentrate, Alston sped all the way back to her place, not caring that he cut people off in his haste. He was an excellent driver. Audrey had nothing to worry about. Not that she looked like she cared one way or the other. She looked straight ahead, her hand still on his hard-on, trying to regulate her breathing.

After he parked, Alston removed her hand so that he could get out of the car. He managed to put his dick back in his pants and zip himself up as he went around to the passenger side. He practically dragged her out. Audrey giggled as he marched them to her front door. She fumbled with the keys, taking too long. He took her keys, opened the door, and gently pushed her inside. Locking the door behind him, he tossed the keys on the nearby table. The loud clink of the keys vibrated through the quiet room. He took off his jacket and undid the buttons on his shirt. He was going to take her up against the wall. He wouldn't be able to undress them completely, much less make it to the bedroom.

"Come here Audrey." She immediately obeyed him. He stopped with the buttons as he crushed her to him. He loved how good the lush weight felt against him. He knew he didn't have enough control to worship her shapely body as he wanted. Her little stunt in the truck obliterated that option. His body screamed at him to take her now. They would have the rest of the night for him to indulge. He planned on spending the night.

"I'm sorry, Audrey, but this first time is going to be rough. I promise to make it up to you later but right now I need to get inside you." She nodded her consent. Alston moved his hands under her ass and lifted her up against him. He pushed her up against the wall. "Lock your legs around my waist." Audrey eagerly helped him get the dress out of the way. Once he freed his cock, Alston sank deep inside her tight, wet sheath.

Alston couldn't help it. He had to move. Audrey felt so good wrapped around his dick, clutching him tight.

"Alston, oh, yes, Alston," she chanted in his ear, egging him on. Her hands somehow pushed his shirt off his shoulders and were busy trying to touch him everywhere. Her nails biting into his skin as his hips pounded against her faster and faster. She moved enthusiastically against him. When he felt her walls tighten around him, his name spilling from her lips, Alston let himself go.

"Come for me, baby," he ordered, as brought down his mouth down to her shoulder and nipped at her skin.

"Fuck, Alston, almost there, just a little..." she came all over his dick, bathing him in her essence. Alston couldn't think straight as his orgasm crashed down on him.

"Mine, Audrey, all mine," he roared. He continued to move against her until he was totally and completely spent. Audrey just held onto him, her face buried in his neck. Her harsh breathing felt hot against his skin. He waited several minutes to get blood flow back to his legs. The wall and sheer will power were the only things that kept them upright.

Audrey looked up at him in shock when she felt him grow hard again. Her mascara and lipstick were both smudged. Her hair stuck out in odd angles. But she was still the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was not going anywhere. Audrey Medina was now his woman.

"I hope your friend doesn't break down your door, with Precious ready to gut me, thinking you might be in trouble for the way you were screaming," he teased.

"Nah, most people don't know the name of her favorite weapon until it's too late. The fact that she told you the name means that she really likes you."

Alston laughed all the way down to her bedroom. After he deposited her on the bed, he began to worship her body as he longed to do, slowly and thoroughly.

*****Christmas Day*****

A freak storm blew in the night before. It left the city frozen and icy in its wake. Audrey snuggled closer to Alston. His big warm body kept the chills away better than any blanket ever could.

“Merry Christmas, baby,” he whispered in that sexy sleep drawl of his that never failed to get her all hot and bothered.

“Merry Christmas,” she whispered back. His hands tightened around her ass. Audrey couldn’t miss the growing erection against her thigh.

Even after the past couple of months he was insatiable. Not that she was complaining. She’d never felt so love in her life before him.

“None of that Alston, we don’t have time. We still have lots to do before your and Ram’s mothers stop by. Besides, Ram and Lexi will be here soon.”

Alston didn’t listen to anything she said. His mouth and hands continued to squeeze her bottom. When his talented fingers dipped lower and parted her from behind, Audrey forgot all about their holiday guests. She moved against him. Soon it wasn’t enough. She lifted up and slid down until she was fully seated on his hardness. Placing her hands on his chest she began to move without abandon. Audrey felt so full, so in control.

“That’s right, baby, so damn good.”

Audrey groaned as his hands moved to her breasts and pulled at her nipples as she began to move faster. Within minutes she was ready to come. Alston talked to her, telling her nonstop how much he wanted her, how good she felt, how beautiful she was. When she tightened around him, his hands flew to her hips, his fingers digging into her flesh as he powered himself up into her.

As soon as her orgasm burst through her, Alston flipped her on her back. His hands planted down near her head as he continued to slam into her.

Audrey grabbed handfuls of the bed sheet to anchor herself. Her throat dry, her mouth opened at the never ending pleasure his thrusts created within her. With one last plunge, Alston came inside her, his loud shout of completion started their first Christmas together.

Snuggling back under the covers, the heavy knocks on the door interrupted the blissful mood. Alston moved first.

“I’ll let them in, and then I’ll join you in the shower.”

Audrey laughed as she forced her exhausted body out of bed and into the bathroom. A warm shower and several cups of coffee would energize her to get moving. It wasn’t long before Alston joined her in the shower. Quickly they showered and changed and met the upcoming day.

A MARINE
FOR
NEW YEAR'S
BY
DRÉA RILEY

CHAPTER ONE

Lexi watched her best friend with envy. They slowly made their way through the line at the burger hut in the food court. Normally, Lexi would be concentrating on getting to her double chili cheese burger with fries, but today her mind was firmly stuck in *I want a man like my best friend's* mode. She really did love Audrey to death but it was a little nauseating seeing Audrey and Alston together. You could see how much they cared for each other and how much Alston catered to Audrey. Her best friend had finally found the man of her dreams. Not only was he attentive and hot, but as ex-military special forces, he was lethal. In a good kind of way. Like intimidating any man who came too close to his woman. Their names even started with an A, both six letters long. It made her stomach-churn. Yeah Audrey was one lucky bitch and Lexi wanted what her friend had.

Lexi sighed heavily. Maybe she would get lucky for New Years, two days away.

"What's wrong, Lex?" Audrey turned from her position stuck under Alston's shoulder to ask.

"Wondering if I could afford to have Alston cloned."

They both laughed.

"I'm not joking. I would clone and marry him on the spot. Seriously, I would snatch him up so fast he wouldn't know what hit him."

Audrey and Alston laughed harder. Suddenly, Audrey gasped in surprise. Alston looked ready to kill. They both stared over her shoulder. Lexi turned to look and then her head snapped back and forth several times. She was lucky she didn't break it. A second and triple take confirmed it. Coming to a stop behind her was an almost exact replica of Alston. The man was dressed in

black, from the top of his black hair to the bottom of his big heavy boots. His voice was even the same dark and deadly tone as Alston's.

"I'm no clone darling but I do look like my older brother. Most people think we're twins. I guess that makes me a sort of clone. Didn't come here looking for a wife, but I'll give it a try."

Her mouth dropped to the floor. He reached out to close it for her. His touch was electrifying, almost scorching her thoughts. Before she got a hold of her senses, Alston stepped between her and his brother. When did Alston move?

"What the hell are you doing here Ram?" He snarled at him.

She peeked around a furious Alston to ask, "Wait, your name is Ram? That sounds so big and...well you know."

"Lexi don't engage him. He's leaving."

"Alston!" Audrey gasped in shock.

"Hey, dude, you're acting like he's some dangerous animal. He's related to you and he is sexy. He can't be all bad. Besides, this is your fault for not telling us you have an almost twin brother. Especially one who could potentially be hotter than you, wait, are you single? That's need to know Intel, buddy. And I, for one, damn sure needed to know." Lexi repositioned herself between the two hulking men, having gained back her speech ability. Firstly, she wanted to get closer to the scorching hotness that was Ram. Secondly, it looked like both men were ready to cause some felonious type damage and that was something she really wasn't interested in happening. Well, unless of course they happened to rip off their shirts before fighting. Then she'd have to reconsider her position.

"I'll deal with you later, but right now I want to know more about Ram." She gave Alston a little sister type glare before turning, what Audrey called her big doe eyes, on his newly arrived brother.

“Darling you don’t know me that well to make assumptions.” Ram didn’t take his eyes off of his brother. It looked like they were ready to duke it out right in the middle of the food court. This was not the place to air dirty laundry. “I can be a wild animal when the need arises. And you look like you have a need.”

“Look you two, cool it,” Audrey interrupted. Lexi was almost glad of it too, “sit down and stop making a scene. Lexi is about to hump his leg! And Alston you look like you’re about to commit a serious crime. Behave, people are staring. They’ve probably called security by now.” Both men looked sheepishly at Audrey. Lexi flipped her the bird and mouthed “cock blocker” at her. With some coaxing Lexi helped her friend lead the two men to a cluster of tables. Two sets of striking eyes sent the same blue-green fire daggers back at each other. Wow, they really looked identical, right down to the tick in their jaw. Lexi couldn’t help it, she laughed.

That only seemed to infuriate them even further. Audrey elbowed her in the ribs. Hard. Finally taking control of her laughter, she motioned for them to sit. They wouldn’t budge. Lexi changed seats so she sat opposite Audrey, thus, leaving seats for the brothers to sit across from each other. Her efforts were met with two quirked eyebrows from the siblings and yet another sigh of exasperation from Audrey.

“Look twiddle dee and twiddle dum, either the two of you sit down or Audrey and I are leaving.”

Alston sat in his seat next to Audrey. She motioned for Ram to sit next to her. First on the list was asking why Alston never shared he had a brother who could pass as his twin. Second was learning if Ram was single. Actually that should be the first question. But she never got around to asking.

“What the fuck are you doing here Ram?”

Wow she'd never seen Alston that mad. So much for a happy family reunion.

CHAPTER TWO

Ram knew exactly where to find his brother. He and Alston might not be on speaking terms, but Ram always made sure he knew where his brother was. So, after the latest incident, he was on the first plane to San Antonio to warn his brother to watch his back and hopefully find the missing marine and get him home to his family. Ram might be a nasty son-of-bitch but he made sure his all of his enemies were dead so they wouldn't come back to haunt him or Alston. As a delta force operative, he put his life on the line not only for himself but for his fellow military brothers. This included his damn older brother, whether they were on speaking terms or not.

So, here he sat, next to a very sexy, very fascinating dark beauty. When he overheard her say that she would marry Alston's clone, he couldn't help but volunteer himself even before he saw what she looked like. Her voice had said enough. It was, expressive. Ram couldn't think of how else to describe it. He just knew that her voice turned him on. Then he saw her face, her little luscious body when she got between him and Alston. Oh, yeah this was one mission he would be happy to carry out.

Then his brother broke him from away from his fantasy.

"What the fuck are you doing here Ram?"

"Can't I just want to see how my big brother is doing?"

Alston snorted. "You're going to have to do better than that."

Ram shrugged. He didn't know how much their present company knew about what he and Alston did in the military. He didn't want to scare the shit out of them by announcing that there had been a bounty on Alston's head. Or that someone confused Ram for Alston and tried to collect the purse last week outside a bar in North Texas. Taking a good look at the woman sitting next to his brother, Ram couldn't help but think that Alston had hit the jackpot. Ram

had been spying on them for the past couple of days, so he knew exactly how Alston felt about Audrey. Ram was thorough in his investigation. He didn't find anything wrong with the pretty Latina.

"An old acquaintance of yours confused me for you." He saw that it finally dawned on Alston that this was a serious, private matter.

Ram turned to see Lexi looking at him. The woman couldn't stop staring at him. Ram was used to the stares and come-ons but she was different. He would not ignore her calling.

"So darling when do you want to get hitched?" Ram couldn't help but provoke her.

"That depends."

"On what?"

"On how soon you can get a physical. I want to make sure that you're 100 percent for the honeymoon. I plan to keep you naked and in bed the whole time."

Ram was a second away from throwing her over his shoulder and to the nearest bed. Hell, a small room was all he needed. She went back to finishing her burger all nonchalant. In front of them Audrey was choking on her drink, and Alston was staring at them, his eyes warning him the hell away. But after that last tidbit, Ram was not going anywhere but to her place. As soon he talked to his brother, he was going to find his way between Lexi's thighs.

"Why don't you take the rest of the day off darling? We can get started on the honeymoon."

She laughed at him.

"Sorry, stud I have to go back to work. Besides, it looks like you and Alston need to talk."

As much as he hated to admit it, she was right. He stole a couple of fries from her plate as they resumed eating. “Yeah, business first. I’ll have your ring for you after work. Just remember that after you get off, I’m going to get you off.” He winked at her and watched the flash of heat rise under her creamy chocolate skin. He’d see how much of her luscious body that blush covered later on.

After they were done eating, Ram followed them outside to their car. Lexi walked beside him, while Alston and Audrey walked ahead of them.

“Why do they call you Ram? What’s your name anyway? Alston never really said. I mean when he said he had a brother Audrey and I both just thought he was talking about one of his Marine cronies. And he always has his tongue shoved down Audrey’s throat so I couldn’t ask him. Lord knows I’ve tried.”

“Tristram.”

He almost smiled when she tried it. “Tristram.” He much preferred Ram but hearing her say his full name would be refreshing.

“What about after work?”

“What about it?”

She was being coy now?

“What time do you get off? I’ll pick you up and take you home. Then you can show me your bedroom.”

“What makes you think we would make it all the way to my bed?”

Ram couldn’t help the growl that escaped at her words. The little saucy wench was treading on thin ice. His nickname wasn’t the Battling Ram for nothing.

Coming to a stop, he waited until she faced him.

“Make sure this is what you want Lexi.” Ram warned her. He gave her an out if she so wanted it.

“I get off at 6:00 pm. You need to be there at a quarter till. Don’t be late. I hate waiting.”

Ram watched as she got in to the passenger side of the SUV. He stood back as Alston kissed Audrey and said something to them. Probably warning Lexi off. He couldn’t blame him. If the roles were reversed he would do the same.

They watched as the silver SUV drove away. Ram waited for Alston to speak first.

“There’d better be a damn good reason why you’re here unannounced.” Alston didn’t bother to hide his displeasure.

Ram couldn’t remember a time there wasn’t any animosity between them. Over the years it seemed that they drifted further and further apart. The only time they were on speaking terms was in the presence of their mothers. And that didn’t happen often.

“There somewhere we can talk in private?”

Alston nodded his head and walked to a building across the street from the base commissary. They didn’t speak again until they were in Alston’s office. Ram took in the sparse office. It seemed they both had the same office décor. Alston sat behind his desk. Ram sat down across from him, knowing full well hell would freeze over before Alston offered him a seat.

“Speak,” his brother commanded.

“Somebody wanted you dead.”

“You’re going to have to be more specific than that. There’s a long list of people who want to see me dead. Not as long as yours,” he added.

“You don’t have to worry about it. I’ve taken care of the problem. Just thought you should know there was a price on your head. And someone tried to collect.”

“Cut the bullshit and give me specifics.”

Ah, there was the Hayworth impatience gene. Maybe that’s why they didn’t get along. They were too much alike. Twins. People always confused them for twins. Even Lexi and Audrey thought so. As he looked at his brother now he could see why. They both had the same military style cut, same colored eyes, even the same big muscular built. No wonder people always confused them for twins.

“Someone tried to kill me because they thought I was you. A million dollars for whoever delivered your dead body to them.” His brother still showed no outward reaction but Ram knew he was seething inside. Ram knew he would be if the situations were reversed.

“Well, did you find out who it was?”

“Didn’t have a chance to ask the assassin questions. But after I disposed of his body, I figured out who it was. It was an assignment you completed several years ago. Apparently the guy’s wife was not happy with you offing her husband. She’s been hunting you down for the past three years. She had deep pockets so she was able to buy the information she needed.”

“Had?”

Of course Alston would zero in on that small detail. “She had an accident. Really tragic.” Ram shrugged his shoulders.

His brother appeared stunned. Ram was offended. No matter how much he disliked his brother, he wasn’t going to let anyone else kill him. That would be his right.

“An accident?”

“Yes, I take care of anyone who poses a threat to me or my family.”

The silence was short lived.

“I need a name.”

“Xou Ling Ferrer.”

“I should’ve killed the bitch when I had the chance.”

Ram uncovered that the Asian woman wanted revenge on Alston for killing her sadistic husband. Ram understood why Alston hadn’t done so. Orders were only to kill Marko Ferrer, they didn’t think she was a threat. Felt like she was like their mothers, just in love with a rotten son of bitch. But unlike his brother, Ram saw through the bullshit. Ferrer was just as evil as her husband. She ran the sex slave side of his crime ring for a long time. Hell, she’d introduced her husband to the business. Ram regretted only that he wasn’t the one to personally kill the bitch. She came after him, even if she’d mistaken him for his brother. And she’d paid the price. Damn the consequences.

“I owe you one.”

Ram shrugged. Alston didn’t owe him anything, but he didn’t say so. Ram knew he wouldn’t appreciate it. “There’s more. Ferrer wasn’t the only reason why I came to visit. Turns out we have a long lost brother and step-sister.”

The only sign that Alston heard what he said was the tick on the side of his jaw. Ram had a similar reaction when he first met Gaebryn.

“Start at the beginning,” he ordered quietly.

“Ryan and Gaebryn Marshall. A friend called me up last week to help him get things organized for a woman who became guardian of triplets overnight. Long story short, she needed extra help because the kid’s mom took off and Ryan, a fellow jarhead, was out on a mission. So J’Kori got stuck filling

in as a manny for his brother and decides he's going to help her get situated, so he calls in favors."

"J'Kori, that's the guy who owns a gym, ex dancer?"

Ram nodded. "That's the one. After he called I drove up there and got cussed the fuck out when Gaebryn saw me. Apparently our younger brother looks exactly like us. Once she paused for air, she was able to see that I wasn't Ryan. Then she demanded to know who the hell I was. Our little sister has the mouth of a sailor. I'm getting sick and tired of people confusing me for someone else."

Ram paused to let some of the information seep through. He could still remember the shock of finding out that there was another brother out there. It wasn't until after the General's death in high school that he found out about Alston. Their father may have been a decorated war hero, but he was a lousy man and father in his personal life. The General, as they called him, had been seeing both of their mothers at the same time, impregnating them within months of each other. Alston was only three months older than him. Now there was another brother they knew nothing about.

"Should've known there would be other siblings we didn't know about. I take two things from this: A) you haven't you haven't met Ryan yet, and B) we're claiming this Gaebryn as family too."

"Wow you are smarter than you look!" Ram let out a laugh. "No, haven't met Ryan. After his return he was off again to find his missing wife and deal with her. Gaebryn has my number. So, she'll call when she gives him the news, and, yes Gaebryn has appointed herself our little sister. She let me know in no uncertain terms that she expects to meet us and that if we don't have moms her mom will be our mom. Like two mom's wasn't enough."

Ram watched the wince of pain trip across Alston's face. Yeah, his brother was all ready feeling the pinch of having yet another maternal figure to bend his ear.

Or maybe it was a look of disgust at the thought of how far their sperm donor's transgressions had truly spread.

"What else do you know about him?"

"That he's twenty-seven. Recently adopted triplets with his wife Ruby. Gaebryn and he share the same mother, Patricia, who is still married to John Marshall, Gaebryn's biological father. After speaking with Gaebryn I got the impression that the General didn't stay long and Patricia didn't wait around for him to return. She married and had Gaebryn."

Alston nodded as Ram continued to fill him in on what he learned about the family. So far nothing stood out. It seemed they had a good childhood, good education. It seemed the only blemish on the family was the General.

"Have you told your mother?"

"No, she would've rushed over, especially if she learned that there were three babies abandoned by their mother."

Both men laughed. Allison Montgomery was something to be seen. When she found out about Alston and his mother, Jonnie Hudson, Allison befriended the other woman. Allison argued that the only person responsible for their situation was buried, and a good thing too or else she would've have done him in, so there was no need for them to fight. The General lied to everyone. It was no reason to punish their sons by being hateful. Jonnie agreed. Both women tried and encouraged their sons to get to know each other better but somehow Alston and Ram always resented the fact that they were brothers. They saw each other and were reminded of the General's cheating and lies.

But now Ram thought, maybe things could change. They would have to put their differences to bed to deal with their new siblings. Not to mention the

fact that the one woman he was now interested in was close friends with

Alston's woman.

CHAPTER THREE

Lexi looked at the clock every chance she got. There were still two more long hours to go until she could see Ram again. She still couldn't believe her eyes when she turned around and saw who stood behind her. Lexi would've drooled on his shoes if he hadn't closed her mouth for her. She was seriously going to kick Alston's ass for not telling her about Ram. Wasn't she just talking about cloning him, yet he remained quiet.

Finished with the customer, she turned to Audrey. "Did Alston ever tell you about his brother?"

"No, every time I asked he changed the subject."

"Interesting," she murmured.

"They look so much alike though."

"I know." Now Lexi wouldn't have to settle for a clone. No, instead she was going to get her own marine. Just in time for New Years. Speaking of which she reminded Audrey, "We still need to finish shopping for our annual end of the year bash." Every year, since she moved in next to Audrey, they held a big New Year's party. The party was always held in Audrey's apartment because Lexi didn't want any drunk idiot breaking the glass on her display cabinet.

"Alston will take care of it. Gave him the list of last minute items we needed."

Lexi was relieved. She didn't want to venture out tomorrow after work. She knew that it would be hectic with people buying their last minute items. The rest of the afternoon went on without incident. At six o'clock she and Audrey walked out. Ram was waiting for her as promised. Alston stood beside

him. Lexi should've known that he wasn't going to stay away. He was probably still warning his brother away.

Making his way over to his truck, he opened the door for. She was able to get into the truck without too much help. It was a good thing she wasn't wearing a skirt or dress. By the time Ram came around to the driver's side, Alston and Audrey were driving off.

"Did you and Alston talk things out?"

"Yes."

He didn't elaborate and Lexi didn't push him. Instead she gave him directions to her apartment, and she remained quiet. There was an accident on Loop 410 so they slowed down as police crews cleared the scene. By the time they arrived at the apartment complex it was after seven o'clock.

"What are Alston and Audrey doing here?" He didn't know they were neighbors.

"Alston didn't tell you that Audrey and I live across from each other?"

"No."

Lexi could tell that he was upset at the news. Why? Because that would mean he would see his brother more often?

Opening the door, she let herself out. Ram followed. She made her way to her apartment, Ram close on her heels.

"We ordered dinner, should be here in thirty minutes," Alston commented. His voice left no room for argument.

"Okay let me change out of these clothes and we'll be over soon."

Lexi opened her door, inviting Ram inside. After she dropped her keys on the table near the door, she immediately slipped out of her pumps. Ram still hadn't said anything. When she looked up she saw that he was staring at her knife collection. She smiled as she looked over her pride and joy.

Ram was stunned as he approached the display cabinet. It housed an extensive knife collection. Not one, but three display cases occupied the far wall. Every type of deadly knife that someone could buy was on display. He didn't know of any other woman with a fascination with knives. She really was one of a kind.

"These are all yours?" he asked stupidly.

"Who else would they belong to?"

Who else indeed.

Glancing back down, he saw two knives he favored, a black Special Ops M9 Bayonet and a KA-BAR Serrated Fighting knife. Both were lethal weapons in the right hands. Something told him that Lexi did not just have them for show but knew how to use them.

Facing her again, he saw her looking almost loving down at her collection. Ram could picture her handling the knife with the same reverence as he handled his. Before he could stop it, an image of her hands touching his dick invaded his thoughts. She would use both her small hands as she squeezed him, moving her hands along the length of him. His dick twitched inside his pants at his lewd thoughts.

"What, you don't like them?"

"I like them." His voice had gone hoarse.

"Then why are you frowning?"

"Because I'm imagining you touching my dick the same way you handle your precious knives." The words were out of his mouth before he could stop them.

"Wait, how did you know I named my favorite knife Precious?"

"You named your knife Precious?"

“Yes, I thought it was appropriate.”

Ram couldn't think of a response.

“Now let's go back to my hand on your dick.”

Ram groaned at the words. She came closer to him, her hands on his chest. She pulled his shirt up and over his head with his help, it fell somewhere behind him. Her eager little hands touched him everywhere. Ram let her have her way. He loved the way she touched him, how she licked her lips. He wanted that tongue on his skin, his abs, then lower. Much lower.

“Every so often I take every single knife out for a thorough cleaning.” She followed her words by lowering her hands to the fly of his pants. Her quick hands made quick work of the button and zipper. “I love to hold the knife, weighing it in my hand.” Ram stood perfectly still as she took him in hand. Her fingers wrapped around him. They squeezed him tightly, once, twice, before she went back to explore the rest him. She smiled up at him before she dropped to her knees.

“Darling...” He forgot what he was going to say as her tongue reached out to take a swipe of the head of his cock. His hands reached down to entangle themselves in her hair. With her hands and mouth, every single of inch of his member was left untouched.

“I always make sure I get every groove.” Ram heard the words but didn't understand them. Her hot mouth felt so good. When her mouth sucked on him, his knees trembled. His hands tightened in her hair, his fingertips digging deep into her scalp.

“Lexi, darling, harder, squeeze me harder,” he pleaded. “Yeah, just like that.” Her mouth worked hard and fast, taking more of him in her mouth. Ram guided her head to his pleasure. When he felt his balls tighten, ready to explode, he warned her about his impending orgasm. “Darling I'm so close, if this is not what you want.”

“Shut up Ram,” Lexi instructed before she sucked him in deeper. He was large and thick. It took some time for her to get used to his size but somehow she managed to swallow more of him. She loved the taste and musky scent of him. He was so hard yet so smooth. She took her time learning the texture of him, learning what he liked. His loud groans of pleasure told her exactly how he liked to be touched. His large hands at the back of her head guided her, or maybe made sure she didn’t leave him. There was no chance of that happening. Not until she made him come. Lexi reached down to touch his testicles and gently massaged them in her hands.

“Oh, fuck yes, Lexi, just like that darling. Take all of me, I know you can.” And she did. Her busy tongue made sure that she caressed him as he worked his way all the way to the back of her throat. That was it. She could feel his orgasm descend upon him. His hands tightened unbelievably hard around her hair, as his hips pumped in and out of her mouth. She willingly gave him this. The control he needed. With a loud roar he came. The tight hold on her hair wouldn’t let her retreat even if she wanted to. Her mouth worked on him until he pulled out of her mouth. She swallowed every drop and then licked her lips slowly. His heated blue-green gaze burned into hers.

The loud knock on her door broke the spell.

“Who the fuck is it?” he bellowed towards the door. Lexi stood up.

“Dinner’s ready.”

Oh shit, the thirty minutes were up. “Okay we’ll be right over,” she answered hurriedly.

“You have five minutes before Alston is pounding on your door so hurry up.” Lexi couldn’t help but notice the humor in her friend’s voice. Audrey was enjoying this.

“Let me go change before you brother breaks down my door. I’ll be right back.” Before she could leave the room, Ram pulled her to him. One hand moved to the back of her nape to hold her in place.

“This is not over Lexi.” His mouth descended on hers. The kiss was hot, wet, and rough. If Ram was going to fuck her like this all night long, she might not leave her bedroom for a very long time. Suddenly, he stepped back. “If you want to make it to dinner you better leave now.”

His voice sounded so urgent and seductive Lexi was tempted to stay but she knew that their interlude would only be interrupted. So, she went into her room to change and freshen up.

Twenty minutes later they were seated in Audrey’s apartment. The boxes of Chinese food littered the table. So far Alston and Ram hadn’t said much to each other. Lexi couldn’t understand how the two brothers continued to ignore each other. She had had enough.

“Either of you going to say why you’re not speaking to each other?”

Two sets of aquamarine eyes stared daggers at her.

Audrey kicked her under the table.

Lexi kicked her back.

“I don’t know about you but I want to know why they hate each other. They are five feet away from one another and they still won’t say anything.”

After several long, tense seconds Ram answered.

“I don’t think it matters now darling. Seems Stone and I will always be at odds with each other.”

“It’s not right. Do you know I would kill to have a brother? And here you two are holding a grudge for whatever reason. It’s stupid and immature and sad, especially during the holidays when people should be happy and thankful for their families.”

Ram couldn't help but feel chastised after her little speech. Almost the same one their mothers gave him and Alston every time they talked to them. His mother would love Lexi. He wouldn't get a moment's peace with the two women, three if he counted Audrey, and by the looks of his brother, she was very much family. Eating more of his food, he looked across the table at Alston, and found his brother staring back at him. Ram put his chopsticks down. Only he and his brother used them. Audrey and Lexi used forks.

"It's ancient history," Alston responded.

"Apparently not, it's still causing a strain between you two."

Ram admired her determination but right now he wanted her to back off. He didn't want to deal with the reasons why. All he wanted to do was finish dinner so that he could take Lexi back to her apartment, where they could resume what she started. He wanted his turn to taste her body and drive her crazy. He still sported a massive hard-on, even after she sucked him off. He took a drink of his iced water. Ram tried to get his libido under control. By the time dinner was finished, with mostly the women talking, he was ready to leave. Ram would tell Lexi everything later. Talking was the last thing he wanted to do now.

It seemed Lexi was ready to leave too. She tugged him across the hallway to her apartment.

"Don't forget we have work tomorrow," Audrey reminded her before they went into Lexi's apartment.

As soon as the door closed behind them, he threw her over his shoulder and marched to the master bedroom. He noticed earlier which of the three doors led to her room. Instead of protesting she was busy feeling him up. That only made him more determined to strip her naked as soon as possible. He dropped her on the bed unceremoniously. She sat up quickly and moved to the

far side of the bed. He remained standing. Pulling his shirt up and over his head, he dropped it on the ground, his gaze never left hers.

“Lexi, don’t make me come over there and get you.”

“Or what,” she taunted.

His nostrils flared at her provocation.

“Or you’re going to learn how the flat of my hand feels on your ass.”

“I hope you have time, that’s a lot of ass to cover.”

“Even better. I love a nice full round ass.”

CHAPTER FOUR

If the man only knew how his words excited and turned her on, Lexi knew she would've found herself flat on her back. She wanted to feel the flat of his hand on her ass. Hell, she wanted to feel his hands everywhere, on every inch of her body. Oh yeah, Lexi was definitely loving pushing him over the edge. She was eager to discover more about his past and his relationship with his brother, but more than that she sensed his need to just be. This was a man who was constantly on alert. His body never truly relaxed. In the blink of an eye he could spring into action. That kind of stress would surely take a toll on any person. Tonight she was determined to help him relax. Tomorrow would be time enough to talk.

Staring the hulking Marine down, wanting to test his limits, she stayed away as she removed her shirt. Her bra came next. She swore she heard him growl. As she started playing with her breasts, the noise became louder. In a flash he was over the bed and pushing her down. She didn't know humans could move that fast. She soon found herself flat on her back, her arms raised above her head, his huge body draped over hers. Her generous breasts were squished flat against his very naked warm chest. Lexi could feel his harsh breath fanning her face.

"Darling be careful what you wish for. I'm not a gentle man. You'll do good not to provoke me."

"You can't hurt me Ram. No matter how much of a hard man you try to be, you could never hurt me."

"You don't know anything about me Lexi. Don't make assumptions you can't back up darling."

"Are we going to talk all night or are we going to move on with things." Lexi knew she was doing what he told her not to but she couldn't help

herself. Deep down she knew that Ram wouldn't hurt her. Just like she knew Alston would never hurt Audrey. It was a family thing. She trusted Ram implicitly. Silly? Yes, but she just felt a connection with him she didn't feel with anyone else. She would've never given a man she just recently met a blow job. But with Ram it was different. She needed to see him lose control, something that probably didn't happen often.

"Like this?" He rubbed his jean-clad erection against her wetness. She could feel every hard inch of him. Remembering how big he was, her eager pussy shuddered in anticipation.

"Yeah, just like that." Her hips moved of their own accord, wanting more. Lexi tried to free her arms but his hold was secure. She couldn't move her arms unless he said so. "Ram please I need to touch you, let my arms go."

"Darling you already touched me. If I close my eyes I can still feel your hot little hands touching my dick. And your mouth," he stopped speaking. Instead, he kissed her, letting her know how much he enjoyed her earlier antics. His kiss branded her as his. A kiss meant to dominate her. Lexi writhed beneath him. Again, she tried to break free. She wanted to get as close as possible as she could to him. "Settle down Lexi. We're going to do things my way now."

Well, fuck. His seductive voice alone had her pussy flooding. There would be no way he could miss that. One hand still held her captive as the other slid down to play with her breasts. Moving a little to give him access to her breasts, he began tweaking first one nipple and then the other between his fingers. The rough feel of his calloused hands on her sensitive skin felt so decadent.

"Ram, oh gods don't stop. Please." She didn't mind pleading because she knew it turned him on as well. Her hips kept undulating under him trying to find release. The whole day had been nothing but foreplay. Now she wanted him inside her. She must have said it out loud because he responded.

“If you promise to keep your hands above your head, I’ll give you what you want.”

“Promise,” she answered immediately, “now hurry the hell up.”

Lexi kept her arms above her head as he pulled away from her to finish. Her hands balled into fists as she tried to do as he said but it was difficult with every article of clothing he removed. She wanted to rake her hands down his big warm chest, sculpted abs, and feel his hardness again. She licked her lips in remembrance of his taste.

“Oh darling, you don’t know what you do to me.” But she did know. His thick erection was all the proof she needed. Finally, naked he came back over her. Taking a fleshy thigh in each of his calloused hands, he spread her open to his gaze. His eyes taking in every inch of exposed flesh. Slowly his head came down and his tongue swiped at the seam of her nether lips. Lexi almost broke her promise and brought her hands down as he got a taste of her. Her nails bit into her palms as she resisted.

“I’ll sample this delicious pussy later but right now I need to get inside you.”

Once he was settled, Lexi moved against him again. This time it was skin against skin. Lexi couldn’t get enough of him. She couldn’t stop the groans or noises that escaped her. He was so hot and hard and she was so horny.

His mouth sucked on her nipples. The hard suction sent wonderful sensations all over, her body was so alive. She held her breath as his cock teased her mound. She wanted nothing more than to reach down and fit him inside her but headed his command. When his cock finally slipped inside, she nearly came then and there. His mouth still sucked on her breasts. Her pussy stretched to accommodate him, she was so full. It was exactly what her body craved.

She raised her legs around his hips as he began to move. With a loud pop, he released her nipple. Lexi couldn’t keep her hands above her head any

longer. She brought them down and pulled his face up to hers so that she could kiss him. Her tongue dueled with his, similar to his cock pulling in and out of her pussy. She wanted to brand him as he had done earlier to her.

Ram let her have control a few fleeting moments before completely taking over the kiss. Lexi eagerly relinquished it. His hips moved faster and harder. His strokes deep and powerful, making sure to hit her g-spot as he moved above her. All too soon she felt her orgasm coming down.

She tightened herself around Ram. Her body flush with his.

“Oh fuck, yes Lexi, come all over my dick.” The dirty words pushed her over the edge.

“Tristram,” she screamed out his name as she came.

Hearing his full name on her lips as she peaked sent Ram head first into his but not before he heard it several more times.

“Say it again Lexi.”

“Tristram, oh my gods Tristram don’t fucking stop,” she rasped.

Never before had a woman screamed out his full name during sex. He never allowed

it. But hearing Lexi say it was right. He kept pumping into her until she came two more times in his arms, as she kept chanting his name. The last time he couldn’t hold it back any longer. With a loud shout he spilled inside her. After he spilled himself inside her, he landed heavily on top of her. He was totally spent. The woman affected him like no other.

“Who came up with ya’lls nicknames?” she asked after they both had a chance to catch their breath.

Ram laughed. Why she was just asking him now was beyond him. He personally couldn’t think of anything else but of her soft giving body under his.

Moving so that his lips reached her jaw line, he rained kisses on her until he reached her lips.

“Alston is one hard, mean son-of-a-bitch, Stone just fit him,” he said against her soft lips, loving the fullness of them. Taking her bottom lip between his teeth, he tugged playfully.

“And yours?” she asked, breathlessly.

“Mine is an abbreviation, nothing special.”

“Mmmm...I like that.” Ram wasn’t sure if she meant his name or the fact that his lips still tugged on hers. Then he didn’t care as she opened her mouth and let him in. He spent the rest of the night showing her how much he wanted her.

CHAPTER FIVE

Lexi woke up to the aroma of coffee. Still sleepy, she snuggled under the covers. She was not ready to face the day. She wished she had the day off.

“Rise and shine darling.”

Lexi ignored him until he pulled off the covers. “Unless you want to start the New Year with Precious, you better get the hell away.” She saw him laugh as she peaked over the covers at him. Dressed only in jeans, he had a steaming mug of coffee in one hand.

“It’s seven. What time do you have to be at work?”

Lexi groaned. Damn it. Throwing off the blankets, she sashayed angrily to the bathroom naked. She paused at the doorway. “Well, are you just going to stand there or are you going to rub my back? I don’t have to be at work till nine.”

No sooner than the words left her mouth, he was at her side. Turning on the water, she stepped into the shower stall. They took turns washing each other. Ram dropped down on his knees and lifted her legs over his shoulders. Lexi sighed with pleasure. Ram could eat pussy like no other. After bringing her to peak multiple times he finally stood up and fucked her hard against the tiles. The warm water rained down on them and made their bodies deliciously slick. When she screamed out her last orgasm, Ram followed her soon after.

An hour later they were dressed and knocking on Audrey’s door. Ram knocked hard several times, ringing the door bell for extra measure. A very irritated Alston answered the door wearing only a pair of unbuttoned jeans.

“We’ll be out in ten minutes.”

“See, I told you they wouldn’t be ready,” she laughed at Alston’s retreating back. “Might as well start breakfast. I’m starved.” Ram just grunted but followed her to the kitchen.

Epilogue : New Year's Eve

“No, you’re doing it all wrong.” Alston stood back as Audrey showed him how to properly set the table. Audrey and Lexi had been in a cleaning frenzy since they left work at three. They had five hours before people started showing up for the party. He and Ram just stood back and did as they were told. Risking a glance at his brother, Alston almost laughed at seeing his little brother in a frilly Santa apron as he washed dishes. The hem reached him mid thigh, the material stretched tight across his chest and waist.

“I’m glad you find it funny because I finally found my apron you could use.” He looked down to see Lexi hand him an exact replica of the apron Ram wore. He tried to hide his groan as he took it in his hands. “Well, don’t just stare at it, put it on,” she ordered.

Alston remained still as Lexi tied the apron strings around his waist. He heard his damn brother snicker but didn’t respond. They needed to learn to be more cordial to each other. It couldn’t be helped. They were dating women close as sisters, who lived across from each other.

“Alston, are you even listening to me? I want everything to be perfect and there you are with a blank look on your face.”

“Sorry, baby.” He paid close attention to what she was saying. He didn’t want to piss her off. In the mood she was in, there was no doubt she would bite his head off and serve it to the guests in one of those fancy platters Ram was washing. If his buddies saw him now they would never let him live it down. Or Ram for that matter.

After he finished setting the table, he was sent to vacuum and clean all the high areas. He wished he had booked that vacation down to Bahamas like he wanted.

“Next time we’re just going on vacation,” Ram whispered furiously behind him.

Alston turned back to look at his brother. "I know. Hell, I can't believe we're wearing these damn aprons."

They both looked down at themselves and sighed. There would be no peace for them. While the women were doing all the cooking, they ordered the guys to clean. Just as his mother did. Alston couldn't help but smile at how Audrey and Lexi completely transformed their lives. A flash brought him out of his reverie. He saw Lexi snapping pictures of them.

"You guys look so cute."

Alston's eyes narrowed in annoyance. Cute was not a word used to describe him. It sure as hell wasn't a word someone would ever think of using on Ram.

"Woman," Ram growled beside him as he started for Lexi.

Alston took the time to walk over to Audrey and wrapped his arms around her middle. He settled his face alongside hers. "Baby, you're driving yourself crazy. Everything looks great."

She snorted, "That's what you think. Traditions are very important. My *mami* would roll over in her grave if I didn't make sure everything was right and cleaned properly. I want to make sure everything is perfect since this is the first time we'll spend our first New Year's together."

Alston sighed.

Audrey turned in his arms. She wanted to make him understand how important it was for her to make sure everything was as perfect as it could be. It was a big deal because they were starting a new life together. While he hadn't proposed yet, Audrey knew that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. Ever since she and Audrey learned of their past from their friend Tracey Richards, they became determined to bring the brothers together, peacefully.

That meant celebrating the holidays together and doing things together as a family. Which was why she was being so anal about everything. After she learned about their moms, and their newly found siblings, Audrey wanted to start a family tradition for him.

“I’m sorry for being bitchy,” she apologized, placing her hands on his chest. “It’s just that growing up my mom made sure that everyone was together, decorating, and celebrating with all of our family when she was alive. Drove my dad crazy and me too but now I understand why she did it. It’s a way to keep them with me even though she and dad died three years ago.” Audrey couldn’t help her eyes from watering. She fought the tears back but one escaped and rolled down her cheek.

“Aww, baby don’t cry. I’m honored that you’re doing all this for me. For our future. Don’t cry.” Audrey nodded and tried to stop the tears from falling. Taking a deep breath she was able to get a hold of her emotions. Alston just tightened his hold on her.

“Ok, we still have lots of things to do. Are you done cleaning here?”

“Yeah, I just dusted the ceiling fans.”

“Okay, good, then you can go vacuum the living room and hallway.”

Lexi snickered beside her. Both she and Alston turned to look at her friend.

“What are you laughing about now?”

“Remember Audrey when I joked that I wanted a maid for Christmas?”

“I thought it was a marine?”

“No, I’ve always wanted a marine but it was after we had that last party and we had tons of shit to clean. And I griped the whole time I needed to get me a maid. And, voila, here they are. They can clean up all the mess from tonight.”

Ram really did love his woman but being called a maid was where he drew the line. He had already deleted the pictures she had taken of them in aprons. The last thing he needed was for her to send it out in a mass email to everyone she and Audrey knew. “Darling, if you don’t watch your mouth, I’m going to turn you over my knee.”

“Oh, yeah? Before or after you finish washing dishes?”

The woman loved to push his buttons. Until now he hadn’t gone through with his threat. Ram was about to change that. She needed to know that he wouldn’t be easily manipulated.

He began to take off the apron but was stopped short by Audrey.

“Oh, no you don’t, you still haven’t finished washing dishes. People will start arriving soon and I’ll be damned if there is something out of place because you can’t control yourself.”

Well, damn. Ram was not a man easily deterred but seeing that look on Audrey’s face, he’d rather be off fighting off some insurgents than piss her off. Cutting Lexi a look that promised retribution later, he went back to washing dishes. Drying his hands after rinsing the last dish, his cell phone rang. It was Gaebryn calling.

“Hello.” He spread the dish towel on the counter to dry.

“Hi, big bro, what you doing?”

Ram was still trying to come to terms that he had a sister and brother. Seemed Gaebryn didn’t have the same problem. “Nothing much,” he would be damned if he told her that he just finished washing dishes.

“Good, listen, Ryan is finally back. I haven’t had a chance to tell him about you and Alston yet. Things are still crazy and chaotic. But I was thinking that we can meet after the New Year?”

Ram looked around to see Alston vacuuming, Lexi and Audrey inspecting the table setting. He really wanted to meet his new brother but he also wanted to spend quality time with his current family. The last time he was stateside to spend a Christmas and New Year's with his mother was two years ago. Longer than that since the last time he spent the holiday with Stone. "That's fine, just let me know when and we'll drive up to see you."

"If I don't speak to you later, have a Happy New Year Ram. Give my love to Alston."

Like hell he was. "Be safe, Gaebryn."

"Was that your sister? Why didn't you let us talk to her? Is Ryan back?"

Both he and Alston looked at them in shock. "How do you know about Gaebryn and Ryan?"

"You guys are so stubborn and didn't tell us anything so we had our friend Tracey, a private investigator, dig up some background information."

"You mean snoop," a quiet Alston asked.

"Not exactly no," an indignant Lexi said from beside him, "we needed to know what was going on since you weren't saying anything. Besides, are you going to stand there and deny that you did a background check on me and Audrey?"

It never failed to amaze him how Lexi always turned the tables and put him on the defensive. Ram decided to keep the peace and keep his mouth shut.

"That's what I thought."

Turning on her heel the little witch walked out of the dining room with Audrey.

"Women," Alston muttered under his breath loud enough for Ram to hear.

Ram agreed but anyone who tried to harm his woman was going to meet an untimely and gruesome death.

Lexi and Audrey laughed as they went back into Audrey's bedroom. The look on Ram's face was too much for Lexi to handle. She expected him to come after her and give her that spanking he kept threatening her with. It was the reason she kept pushing and pushing. She wanted that spanking as much as he wanted to give it to her. Falling onto the bed with Audrey they at long last got control of their laughter.

"I can't believe you got them to wear those damned aprons Lex."

"Yeah, well I thought it was well deserved for not telling us anything. Ram thinks he deleted all of the pictures but I snapped a couple of them with my phone." She pulled it out to show her. There was one of Ram washing dishes, Alston dusting, and a frontal of them standing together with the silly aprons on full display.

That sent them off into another round of laughter.

"Email them to me when you get a chance. They could be blackmail photos."

"You read my mind."

Sobering up, Lexi rolled onto her stomach. "This is going to sound corny but I finally have everything I wanted."

"Me too, Lex. Who would've thought we would end up with brothers?"

"Not only brothers but marines, just like we always wanted."

Later that night, the Stroke of Midnight

Everyone gathered around the television as the countdown began. The firecrackers could already be heard all around them. The noise would only increase at the stroke of midnight. All the guests held a flute of champagne in one hand and a noise maker in the other.

Five, four, three, two, one.

“Happy New Year!”

The room erupted in chaos. People hugged and kissed. For two couples, the noise and celebration all around them didn’t interrupt their heated embrace.

RESOLUTIONS

BY

SHARA AZOD

CHAPTER ONE

“I’m going to do it.” Rayna squared her shoulders and straightened her spine, determined to finally follow through on her naughty, forbidden desire. She had to admit she probably looked silly seeing as how she was sitting, but she felt the need to buck up. “I’m going to go out here and find me a hot, hard Marine and have myself a screaming orgasm.”

Delilah, Rayna’s best and only real girlfriend compressed her lips tightly to keep from spitting out her drink as soon as the words left Rayna’s lips. As much as Rayna wished she could be offended by her friend’s actions, she really couldn’t blame her. They had been friends for five years. Never, in all the time Delilah had known her, had Rayna ever had a one night stand. In fact, the amount of times she had actually had sex in that time could be counted on one hand.

It really wasn’t that she was trying to be uptight. She just wasn’t what anyone would phrase as a free spirit. She was somewhat reserved at the best of times, preferring to curl up with a good book rather than to go out and sow her wild oats. Rayna didn’t have wild oats. And she didn’t have screaming orgasms either. Sex was nice, pleasant even. It was just nothing to write home about, as if she could. Growing up, she had always been caught between two extremes. Her father was a Navy chaplain, extremely conservative and strict. In his mind, all dresses and skirts above the knee announced you were a whore. There was no such thing as wearing tight or short clothing in his house.

He had shared physical custody with her mother after their divorce, not long after Rayna was born. If ever there was a polar opposite to her father it was her mother. Theodora had been married four times. She tended to trade in men like she would a wardrobe. She talked freely about her exploits, much to Rayna’s horror. Her mother really was a beautiful woman with a body of a woman half her age. She was still pulling plenty of admirers, and much to

Rayna's horror, she wasn't the least bit shy about sharing her adventures with both Rayna and her sister.

Roxy, Rayna's little sister was much like their mother. She was currently engaged to be married even though she was a few months past twenty. With her pecan colored skin and snapping hazel eyes, Roxy seemed to have an innate ability to wrap men around her little finger, and never hesitated to do so. Maybe it was the fact Roxy's father was nowhere near as strict as Rayna's, or maybe it was because Roxy had always lived with Theodora full time, but her little sister didn't have any of the hang ups about sex and relationships Rayna did.

It was depressing beyond belief to watch her little sister exploring her sexuality and having a damn good time doing so while Rayna only experienced wild, passionate love in her dreams and the books she read. Despite Delilah's constant prodding and pushing, Rayna just couldn't seem to let go. When anyone did come on to her, she got all insecure and confused. She wound up saying something bitchy or sarcastic simply because she didn't know how to handle it.

Not that there was anything wrong with her physically. She considered herself reasonably attractive all things considered. She kept her body in decent shape, though she really wasn't obsessive about working out or anything. She had a decent face, maybe slightly above average. She was just dowdy next to her sister and mother. That didn't do much for the ego. Plus, there were her father's constant sermons about Jezebels echoing in the back of her mind. All in all, her family life just didn't help to produce a woman secure in her own sexuality. At this point she just wanted to find it. She had no idea what it took to get her engines revved, she was always too afraid to ask for anything other than what her past boyfriends offered, and she had no clue if they were doing it right or not.

“Oh Lord, you’re serious aren’t you?” Delilah managed to choke out. “You are really going to have a hot, nasty one night stand? Oh, you have to let me tape it.”

“Are you insane?” Leave it to Delilah to push an idea to the extremes. “Look, all I am looking for is a decent orgasm, or least something better than average for once. Since I don’t seem to attract the type of men that can give me something other than...nice, I figured a one night stand might do it.”

“Trust me. It isn’t that you don’t attract ‘em. You just never seem to notice when a decent prospect is interested.” Delilah actually snorted as she downed her drink.

Outside the tiny room they were ensconced in music blared as revelers welcomed the coming New Year. It was a military party, so the ratio of men to women was somewhere along the lines of five to one. Surely there was a guy out there who could give her one wild night. It was a party full of Marines and even a couple of Navy guys. Surely they had enough “experience” to give her a good time, right?

“Whatever.” Rayna waved a dismissive hand and took a sip of the drink she’d been nursing since she arrived. “Just as long as I find someone to go home with tonight, which is where I need your help. I have no idea what I’m supposed to be looking for in a, er, whatever.”

“Fuck buddy? Pussy jockey? Buckaroo? Bronco buster?”

Rayna had to roll her eyes at her friend. Tact was something Delilah had never suffered from. “Um, I was just going for one night stand.”

“Look, you have never had the big “O”—at least with another person, right?”

Rayna’s face heated uncomfortably. Thank goodness her skin was the color of dark bronze. She didn’t want Delilah to see just how embarrassed she really was.

“No, I haven’t.” Admitting it wasn’t easy, even if they were the only ones in the room. “And yeah, just once I would really like to experience something hot and dirty. I mean, it can’t be that hard right? You can just point out someone that looks like they’d be good in bed, and I will go and...What the hell do you say anyway? Excuse me. I’ve never really had a really good orgasm with another person in the room. You think you can slip me the hot beef injection and make me like it? Ah, hell, maybe this wasn’t such a good idea after all.”

“Bullshit, you are not chickening out now.” Delilah was animated now. The woman was practically jumping up and down on the couch. Damn, Rayna wasn’t going to get out of this one. “You don’t have to say anything. Show them what you want. No man in his right mind would turn down a night of free sex. I’ll point out some prospects, all you have to do is bat those pretty eyes at them, simp a little bit, thrust out those boats of yours, and it’s a done deal.”

Rayna crossed her arms over her chest. She hated it when Delilah referred to her breasts as boats. Yeah they were a little above average in terms of size, but they weren’t that big! “That’s not going to work. I just don’t attract men like that.”

“You’ve got to be kidding. Rayna, men stare a hole in your clothes whenever you aren’t dressed in those shapeless sweats you seem to love to wear. Men have been tripping over their tongues since you walked in here. I even had to hit Mitch upside the head for staring at you!”

Even though it was said without a hint of heat and no jealousy whatsoever, the comment still made her feel uncomfortable. Delilah always insisted she was some kind of femme fatale when Rayna knew very well she wasn’t. She’d even let Delilah talk her into coming to, then dressing her for, this New Year’s party. Instead of the shapeless comfortable clothing she usually wore whenever she went out, tonight she was sporting a form fitting dress that

stopped mid thigh. She felt like she was on full display. She couldn't stop crossing her arms in front of herself, trying to suck in her chest.

Rayna might have felt a little better had they been somewhere else; some party that wasn't packed wall to wall with predatory Marines. The beach house was large and beautiful, located not far from the southern gates of Camp Pendleton. This house probably belonged to some officer who had chosen to open up his place for his unit and they invited their friends; that was usually how these things went. Due to her father's constant lectures on active duty men, Rayna usually stayed far away from gatherings like this one.

This one time, this one night, she was sick to death of hiding in her tiny apartment while the world went merrily on, celebrating life. She had let Delilah talk her into coming with her and her current boyfriend, though honestly, Rayna couldn't stand Mitch. She got the distinct impression Delilah didn't like him much either, but her friend stayed with the man for reasons Rayna couldn't even begin to understand. They had been here all of thirty minutes before Rayna had begun to panic. She just didn't like crowds in general; crowds of men far less. As much as she really did want to express herself in a wild and crazy way, just once, she was having a hard time getting over her fear of a crush of people and the insecurities she's lived with for so long.

Delilah was right in some respects. It was now or never. Who knew when she would up the nerve to do something like this ever again? Downing her drink with a grimace as the strong liquid burned its way down to her stomach, Rayna gathered the little courage she managed to find. "I can do this." Her voice sounded weak and scared even to herself, so she tried again. "Damn it, I can do this."

"That-a-girl," Delilah beamed at her. "Let's go find you some tail." But just as both women began to rise from their comfortable perch, a familiar voice began to echo in the hall outside the small study they had found unoccupied a few minutes before.

“Delilah! Girl, you better get your yellow ass out here right now! Where the fuck are you?”

“Shit, Mitch is drunk already. Stay here for a minute I’ll be right back.”

If Rayna had believed for one second Mitch was in anyway a threat to her friend, she would have stopped her. She had seen Delilah take down her constantly drunk beau on more than one occasion. Delilah was the daughter of an old time Marine; she could take out a man twice her size without breaking a sweat. Rayna still didn’t like the fact the man seemed to always get drunk and belligerent towards her friend. And why someone as seemingly together as Delilah put up with the constant drama was completely lost on her.

She plopped back down on the sofa watching her friend scurry away to smooth her man’s ruffled feathers with a tiny moue of distaste on her lips. Thank goodness she at least didn’t have to go through things like this. She wouldn’t have a clue how to handle it.

With a resigned sigh, she decided to take a moment to truly evaluate her situation. Here she was at a party choke full of potentials, yet she had the urge to run for the nearest exit. Who was she kidding? She would probably only embarrass herself. Unfortunately, Mitch and Delilah were her ride, and seeing as how she lived in south San Diego, she really didn’t see herself getting a ride from anyone so early in the evening. A cab was out of the question; it would cost her a fortune. She was well and truly stuck. No way was Delilah going to let her back out now after crying on her friend’s shoulder about being tired of being the “good girl” and wanting to have one night of wild, unattached sex.

Right. The only thing this night was going to bring was disaster. She would wind up being too nervous and self conscious to actually let go enough to enjoy anything, that is, if she managed not to scare off any man crazy enough to be interested.

“I might as well get drunk and just do it.” Seeing as how she thought herself alone, the last thing she expected was a reply.

“I’m sorry, sweetheart, but I’m afraid I can’t let you to do that.”

Rayna wasn't sure whether to scream or faint when a shadow of man emerged from an unlighted corner of the room. Apparently he had been sitting in a lounge chair the entire time. Oh God, he had heard the entire conversation with Delilah, and he hadn't uttered a sound. *Kill me now. Please someone kill me now*, she silently prayed, knowing that wasn't going to happen as he moved slowly into the light. The Fates would never be so kind as to strike her dead at the time when she needed them most.

By the time he stepped fully into the light, Rayna knew she should have passed out. She should've gone into a self-induced coma right there, if there was such a thing. It was bad enough the man had heard her most pathetic conversation, but did he have to be absolutely gorgeous to boot? Standing well over her five foot three inch frame, he had to be pushing six foot four, at least. His body was all corded muscle, sleek and powerful like some feline predator. His skin was a light gold, kissed by the sun, setting off his greenish-gold eyes to perfection. It was impossible to tell what color his natural hair was; being as how he sported a high-and-tight, the Marine name for a buzz cut. The ends looked blonde, but too much time in the sun could do that to hair sometimes.

Oh, this was bad. Not only was the man devilishly handsome in that dangerous, modern warrior kind of way, he also seemed to be able to make Rayna cream just by looking at him. As if this situation wasn't humiliating enough, she had to go and get the hots for the guy?

“I don’t suppose there’s any chance you just walked in here is there?” Maybe there was an extra door somewhere she hadn’t seen. It was such a small, tiny wish, but too much to hope for. She knew it before she asked.

“Sorry. Been here the whole time.” He sent a crooked grin that made her knees all weak and watery. If she hadn’t already been sitting, she probably would have collapsed in a heap at his feet. The irritating man actually had the audacity to sit right next to her, his gaze holding her captive. Great, make it worse why didn’t he?

“Well, you could have said something. Cleared your throat, announced the room was occupied. You didn’t have to listen in you know.” Luckily she could still do snide no matter how embarrassed she felt. “Eavesdropping is low, even for a jarhead.”

There, she had just issued a straight out insult. Surely he’d get all huffy and leave her the hell alone in her misery. But no, that would be too simple, wouldn’t it? His grin got bigger as he pulled her hand into his much larger one.

“Well, honestly, I thought about announcing my presence, but I found myself fascinated. And when I heard your little plan I knew I had to step in. I’m sorry, sugar, but I’m afraid I can’t let you go through with it.”

Lord, did he have to have one of those deep, sexy southern drawls too? Heat and moisture pooled at her core, making her squirm uncomfortably. She had managed to make it through twenty-seven years without feeling anything like this. The man had her more turned on than any boyfriend she had called herself having. And he hadn’t even done anything. Well, nothing but giving her a prelude to a crushing blow. She didn’t really know why he was saying she couldn’t go through with her plan, but she did know she wasn’t going to like it. It was all just a little bit too much to take. Why the hell couldn’t he *let* her go through with it? And who the hell was he to try to stop her?

Feeling a bit better now that she had a spark of anger to nurture into a full blown tizzy, she tugged at her hand. He wasn’t letting go.

“Look, buddy, I don’t know who the hell you think you are, but you have no right to think you can let me do a damn thing. And let go of my hand. I find the room suddenly a little too crowded for my liking.”

And did the bastard let go? No! He just had the nerve to grin at her like she was...well, amusing or something.

“I think you misunderstand what I’m saying.” He didn’t say it harshly, there was no threat, yet there was something in his tone that stopped her struggles to be free. “I can’t allow you to go out there and get yourself drunk because I don’t want you to forget a second of what we’re going to do. I can’t let you go and pick out some poor bastard to spend the night with because I fully intend to be the only man you’ll be spending your nights with for the foreseeable future.” Rayna’s breath caught in her throat at the soft-spoken declaration. There was no overweening pride in the statement, no machismo or bragging. Just a quietly uttered declaration of intent that was deadly serious. Damned if that wasn't the sexiest thing she'd ever heard. “If you go out there and start chatting up one of those men out there, you would only be getting him hurt. Now, do you understand my meaning?”

CHAPTER TWO

Kord hadn't been sure how much longer he could have stayed silent in the corner. He had started to announce his presence when the two women had snuck into the place where he thought he could drink his beer in peace, but the words that had come out of that all too kissable mouth he was currently staring at had stopped him cold. He had a clear view of who had been speaking, and he quite frankly couldn't believe his ears. "*I'm going to go out here and find me a hot, hard Marine and have myself a screaming orgasm,*" she'd declared, looking like she was getting ready to face an executioner rather than find herself a temporary lover. His eyes had travelled down her figure, his mind balking at the very idea this woman had never been loved properly.

Some men just needed to be smacked upside their heads. He knew from the conversation she wasn't a virgin. Taking in the figure of a goddess, he wanted to swallow his own tongue. She had the kind of body that made a man worth his salt stand up and beg for just a little taste. How was it possible she had only experienced duds? Who the hell was she dating? At first he was all for volunteering before she had a chance to leave the room, but then he had stopped the foolish words before they tumbled from his mouth.

He couldn't put his finger on the exact moment he decided he needed to know more about this woman, but he knew he had no intention of letting her get away. Maybe it was the way he could tell she was blushing despite her dark complexion when she described to her friend how she had never experienced true ecstasy in the arms of a lover. Or, perhaps it was the banked need he saw in her eyes when she talked of what she never had. He wanted to be the man to set that desire free. He wanted her to come apart in his arms, to let go of all those hidden inhibitions, whatever they were, and just feel.

Her friend had called her Rayna. He wasn't letting his little Rayna out of here without him firmly planted by her side. Instinct. It was what had kept him

alive for so long. It was something a decent Marine honed. His instinct told him that this woman was special; at least she could be to him. There was something about her that called to him on a base level. Like now, as she stared at him all wide-eyed with an expression that was mixed between acute embarrassment and genuine shock, all he wanted to do was to kiss her until she was soft and pliant against him.

“Look, I know what you heard, but I think I’ve changed my mind.” She kept alternating between biting at her bottom lip and swiping at it with her tongue. Kord found the action fascinating. He wanted to bite that succulent lip too, and then soothe it with his own tongue. “I think I should just go and find my friend.”

“Delilah will no doubt be busy calming that idiot she’s dating down for a few minutes.” He knew Mitch, First Lieutenant Trainer, quite well. The Marine community in Oceanside was tiny really despite their impressive numbers. Everyone knew most of everyone else’s business. His buddy Shannon had the hots for Rayna’s friend.

Usually Kord would want no part of a man trying to poach on another’s female, but this was not a usual case. Shannon had been chasing Delilah for over a year now. She had hooked up with Mitch while running from the man who was determined to catch her. Mitch was still hung up on his ex-wife. It was something everyone, including Delilah knew, but no one dared mention out loud. The dude had a serious anger management problem, which was how he lost his wife in the first place. Kord had agreed to host this party in part because Shannon had begged him to. Not only was his beach house a prime location, with few neighbors to lodge noise complaints, but there was no way in hell Mitch would ever consider taking Delilah to a party at Shannon’s place in Carlsbad.

Oh, how fortune smiles.

“In that case, I’ll go mingle.” She made to stand, and he stood right along with her.

He kept a grip on her hand, determined not to let her go. He was deadly serious. He wanted her. And not just for the one night she was after. He had made up his mind, laid out a game plan in his mind. She wasn’t leaving this house tonight. If he had his way, she wouldn’t be leaving the next night either.

“By all means,” he swept his hands towards the door. “Let’s go mingle.”

She looked at him like she was going to say something, probably along the lines of changing her mind, but one look back to the small confining couch had her stomping determinately towards the door. His grin grew as he stomped right along with her, refusing to relinquish his hold. As soon as she reached out to open the door, he subtly pulled her back and opened it for her, placing his free hand on the small of her back as they went through the portal.

“You can let go of me now,” she hissed under her breath as he led her towards the main living room where the majority of the party-goers had gathered.

Good, she had a temper. That showed she had spirit. What an interesting mixture of innocence and sauciness she was. His dick was already hard, had been since he heard her dilemma; it was now pushing insistently against the zipper of his pants. The woman just did it for him, mentally and physically.

He needed to get closer. It was way too soon to escort her upstairs. She was too jumpy, her distrust of him obvious. He needed her to relax, without the false assistance of alcohol. He steered her through the living room, ignoring the curious looks they garnered as they went along. He could feel her body tensing under his hand. He didn’t let it stop him. Of course they were going to stare; he

was a unit commander. It was beyond unusual for him to be seen by the men he led with a woman.

Unable to resist the predatory urge, his hand crept from her back to rest suggestively on her curving waist. He didn't want any misunderstandings tonight. Marines understood possession. They understood claims of ownership. He just wanted to be sure his intent was crystal clear.

"Do you see them watching you?" He had to lean down to whisper in her ear, but the effect was exactly what he was looking for. Her body shivered ever so slightly against him, giving him the perfect excuse to pull her against him. "Look how their eyes follow you, look how hungry they are. Every one of them wishes they were standing in my shoes right now. But you won't let any of them touch you, will you, sugar?"

The words seem to flow from him out of nowhere, but he found he meant every syllable. He could see men watching her, taking in the way the sweater dress she wore clung to her hourglass shape. It wasn't even risqué, yet it was a hell of a lot sexier than the barely there outfits some of the women scattered around the room had on. It made Kord's chest expand just a bit. Those looking could eat their damn hearts out, he found her first, and he was keeping her.

"Don't worry, baby, I won't let them anywhere near you." The promise was as darkly uttered as it was true, accentuated with a tiny bite right above where a smallish black crystal earring swung from her ear. "You're all mine, aren't you?"

Her nipples tightened, pressing against the soft fabric of her dress. His cock jumped in approval.

"For tonight, maybe."

It was said so low, if he hadn't have been leaning down he would have missed it. A strange warmth gathered in the pit of his stomach and spread

throughout his limbs. Oh, hell yes. She had a bit of feistiness hidden underneath that cool exterior. He was going to thoroughly enjoy helping her set that free. Sweet, heady anticipation was making his heart race, the palms of his hands itching to spank that full, tight ass showcased by the way the dress conformed to her shape.

“Keep that up and I’m gonna have to spank you.” Her step faltered slightly, but he steadily guided her toward the game room. The lights were dimmer down there, a small dance floor set up by the bar. It was the safest activity for right now. He wouldn’t be as tempted to sling her over his shoulder and carry her up to his room around so many other people, but he would be able to hold her as they got to know each other a little. He could have sworn he heard a soft moan at his warning though. It wasn’t helping his intention to have her get to know him better before informing her she would be staying the night. The party could go on without him, as long as no one burned the place down, he could care less what happened once he got her upstairs.

“You know you’re kind of cocky.” She waited until they were on the dance floor before she spoke again. Her eyes spit fire at him when she said it, but not all of those flames were because she was pissed. In fact, given the way her pulse was racing and the way her nipples got even harder, he would hazard a guess she wasn’t altogether that pissed at all.

“Of course I am baby. I’m a United States Marine.” She was trying to wiggle her cute little self back from his frame using a sexy little twist of her hips. The woman just didn’t know how freaking alluring she really was. How was that even possible? “Come on, admit it. It’s a tiny bit of a turn on isn’t it?”

She pursed her lips as if she was considering something, her eyes moving away. Kord took advantage of her lowered guard to pull her closer to him. She felt so right in his arms. Did she even realize how she melted against him, allowing his hands free reign to move up and down her back?

“Tell me a little about yourself, Rayna. What do you do? What’s your last name? What do you like for breakfast?”

That got a little chuckle out of her. “There’s very little to tell. I am a computer programmer. My last name is Porter, and you don’t need to know what I like for breakfast.”

Rayna Porter. Nice. Not as nice as Rayna Schroeder, but it was way too soon to introduce something like that into the conversation. She wouldn’t believe him anyway.

“That’s where you’re wrong, sweetheart. I need to know what to feed you.” He bent down and rubbed his cheek along her much smaller one, pulling her hips closer against him.

Because she was so short, his dick was actually rubbing against her belly, but that wasn’t his purpose. Making sure he maneuvered so that there was no one behind them, he slid his thigh between her legs. She jerked, but didn’t move. A surprisingly little fact that made him want to grin as wide as a Cheshire cat.

“You don’t have to feed me anything. I’ll be leaving with Delilah and...what’s his name.” Oh, she would never know how pleased he was that the name of another man escaped her, or how the little hitch in her voice as she spoke let him know how turned on she was. Not that he wouldn’t have known it already. The heat from her core was burning his leg, practically daring him to press against her just a little harder.

So he did. Her hips rocked forward involuntarily, her eyes going to half mast as he relentlessly pressed against her pussy. Fuck, he wanted her! But according to the conversation he had unwittingly been privy to, she needed to be shown sex was a hell of a lot more than insert peg A into slot B. Even if it killed him, he was going to give her that.

“Would you like for me to help you find them?” A little more upward pressure and her breaths started to come out in quiet pants. Her eyes drooped even more, her mouth slightly open. He used his hands that were still cupped on the gentle swell of her ass to grind her down into his naughty movements, bending down to nip that bottom lip that had been driving him crazy. “I’m sure they have to be around here somewhere.”

“What?” Rayna opened her eyes but they weren’t focused. “Who?”

“No one, baby. Never mind.” He had to kiss her. That mouth was just too distracting.

He had to let go of her hips to frame her face in his hands. Fuck, she was beautiful. It was an honest, open kind of beauty that couldn’t be achieved through makeup or surgery. Her eyes slanted faintly upward, framed by long, thick lashes. The clear, deep brown orbs were glazed with passion and a touch of confusion. He held her stare as his head lowered, not daring to close his own eyes until their lips touched.

Though her lips had already been parted just a fraction, she didn’t open for him on contact. He had to nibble at her lip, tugging her head back with a firm grip on her braided hair. She gave in with a small whimper, opening for his tongue to invade and take charge of her sweet mouth. She was intoxicating. He couldn’t help but deepen the kiss, demanding more, needing to taste every bit he could.

His hands traveled back down to her ass, lifting her against his painfully swollen bulge. One leg wrapped around him without prompting, giving him leverage. He let one hand wander up and down her raised thigh, pausing briefly at the edge of the thigh high boots she wore. Aw, hell, she was going to have to keep those on. The image of this incredibly sexy woman wearing nothing but those boots and a smile in his bed made him feverish. His hips rocked against her more insistently, careful to keep the dress pulled down in the back though there was still no one behind them.

He had to let her lips go. He didn't want to, but they would both need to breathe. "Damn, baby you're so hot." A sob not much louder than a whisper was the only response he received. It was all he needed. Her chest was heaving now, her hands curled into fists at his shoulders. She was close. "That's it, sugar. Grind that sweet pussy against me. Show me what you want." He dipped down again, sucking against her arched neck.

"Oh, God. I'm going to... Oh, God!"

Nothing in the world was sexier to a man than a woman in the throes of passion, especially if the man in question was the one taking her there. Kord felt like king of the universe watching her get off so quietly in the corner of his game room. The swarm of other dancers around them didn't matter, the drunken calls and laughter that floated on the night air made no difference. Of course he was careful to keep an eye out to ensure no one was watching. It was child's play for a good Marine. The majority of his focus was on the woman in his arms, however. He was determined to ensure she had everything she ever fantasized about. There was a burning drive, a need he couldn't explain to be the man who did this for her.

"Not God, baby, Kord," he whispered hotly in her ear. He needed to hear her say it. Needed to acknowledgement he was the one giving her what she needed. "Say it. Call my name when you come for me."

He felt the tremors before she realized what was happening. Her eyes widened, looking at him with absolute awe before his mouth swooped down to drink in her gasp of completion.

Fuck yeah, that was hot! It was nowhere near enough, though. He needed to get her away from the crowd and into his private domain.

"Do you still think you want to look for someone else to give you what you want?" His question came out a little harsher than he intended, but he was walking a tightrope here. His dick was so hard he could pound a rock into dust.

He was throbbing with need, and there was still so much more he wanted to explore before burying himself deep inside her. There were just unlimited things to show her. “I’m telling you right now, sugar, you leave with me and we’re going to be busy for the rest of the weekend.” Probably longer. Hell, if he could get her to call in sick for the rest of his leave time, which was all of the next week, he would. He couldn’t imagine ever wanting to let her go. “Yes, or no, Rayna. Are you coming with me?”

She had to say yes. Kord wasn't sure he would let her go if she said no. Not that he would force her into anything she didn't want. But he would damn sure glue himself to her side until she gave him a chance. There was no way in hell he would ever allow any of the knuckleheads here to touch her.

She was biting her lower lip again, slowly straightening to her full height. She was such a short little thing. He could scoop her up and jog up the stairs without even breathing hard. Even with those three inch heels on her boots she didn't quite come up to his shoulder. He found his heart beating so hard in his chest it hurt as he waited for her answer. It had to be yes. *Please God, let it be yes.*

“Yes, I will go with you. But I need to call Delilah and tell her where I’m going.”

He didn't wait to argue. She could call from his room. Ushering her out onto the patio and around the house, he gave in to his earlier urge and swept her into his arms, as he practically ran up the outside stairs that also led to his bedroom. He hadn't wanted to go through the crowd again. He didn't need the curious eyes watching them. He was a man on a mission after all, and it was no one else's damn business.

CHAPTER THREE

The last thing Rayna expected was to be carried up an outside staircase to a room in the same house. Oh God, this was his house! She had thought she had hooked up with a regular enlisted guy. She would have never agreed to this had she known he was an officer.

“You’re an officer,” she accused backing up from him as soon as he set her down.

“Is that a problem?” He didn’t even try to deny it. Instead he approached her in a slow, steady pace as if she would bolt at any second.

She considered it. If she really wanted to leave, she had a feeling this man would let her go. But is that what she wanted? No, she wanted more of what he had given her downstairs a few minutes ago. It was the most scandalous thing she had ever done, grinding on the dance floor surrounded by people until she came. And damned if that wasn't one of the best orgasms she had ever had with the assistance of another person. Hell, it even rivaled the self-induced ones she’d experienced, and she thought she had at least understood how to get herself off.

“Rayna? Do you want to leave me?”

Oh God, she couldn’t think with his lips on her neck, his arms surrounding her, pulling her closer to him. Her nipples were so hard they hurt. The fabric of her bra felt abrasive against her sensitive skin. The sweater dress Delilah had talked her into wearing felt far too warm suddenly. It had seemed like a good idea at the time. It was chilly in the beach at night, even in Southern California. Now, it seemed the damn thing was making her way too hot. She wanted nothing more than to take it off.

“You haven’t answered me, sugar.” His drawl seemed to have gotten deeper. It flowed deep and dark like molasses all around her. “Do you want me

to let you go?” His hands were pulling her dress up slowly from the hem, giving her ample time to stop him if she felt so inclined. She didn’t. She generally stayed away from officers, not that she dated military men at all, but she definitely gave officers wide berth. Any one of them could know her father. Somehow she doubted very seriously Kord did.

She still didn’t answer him though. She wanted to know what he would do if she didn’t.

“If you don’t answer me I might have to punish you, baby.” Her clit jumped at the dark promise, her mind bombarded with all sorts of delicious disciplinary actions he might come up with. Cool air wafted across her upper thighs as her dress continued to rise.

One thick digit pressed against the apex of her thighs. Her thong was wet, but she didn’t even think to be embarrassed about it. Odd, she should have been. With anyone else she would’ve been.

“I think you like the idea of a little punishment.” His voice was harsher now, not much beyond a growl. Hell yes, she liked the idea. She wanted to tell him, but she had no idea what to say. She just stood there, allowing him to do with her what he willed.

Unfortunately he seemed to be in no hurry. She didn’t understand the sudden ravenous hunger that pulsed underneath her skin, didn’t comprehend the growing ache that began in her core and spread throughout every nerve that was snapping and alive. She just knew he could heal it. He could fulfill that need.

“Please, Kord.” She couldn’t stay silent anymore. His finger had left her slit and continued disrobing her with agonizing deliberation. He hadn’t gotten any further than her stomach, taking his sweet time to kiss and suck on her neck and ears. She shifted from one foot to another, trying to think of something that would make him hurry.

It happened by accident. Rayna inadvertently pushed back, her ass smashing against his impressive bulge.

“Shit, baby,” he hissed back at her, pressing his crotch hard against her. “You are just begging for me to spank you, aren’t you?”

“Maybe.” Good, she wasn’t the only one affected. Wiggling her ass, she pressed back again. “Are you going to do it, or are you going to just talk about it?”

Wow, where had that come from? Instead of shocking him though, he gave a little chuckle, finally pulling the damn dress off. Rayna tried to bend down to take off her boots, but Kord stopped her.

“Oh no, baby girl. Those are gonna stay right where they are.”

She would have argued, it didn’t seem comfortable, but Kord had other plans it seemed. He cupped her breasts from behind, using his forefinger and thumb to squeeze down on her nipples and twist them. It stung, but beyond that, an intense burn shot from the diminutive nubbins and blazed a trail straight to her cunt which wept in a combination of pleasure and need.

“Oh, shit!” Rayna blew out a tortured breath, her head falling back against the tall, hard man behind her.

“So fucking responsive. I should look up every man you ever dared to let touch you and beat the shit out of them.” He added a love bite with the comment right where her shoulder joined her throat, making her buck back against him.

Apparently, that was an erotic pulse point because it sent a fresh wave of juices to her pussy. She pressed her thighs together tightly, rocking against air to try to relieve the gnawing ache.

“Kord! I need!” It wasn’t as if she didn’t know what she needed. She just couldn’t quite bring herself to say it. Not out loud anyway.

“Tell me what you need, sugar, and I’ll give it to you.”

The bastard. He knew damn well what she needed. How did one ask for a man’s dick? Everything she could think of seemed so silly and trite. Why couldn’t he just do it already?

“That’s alright.” His chuckle was a tad on the dangerous side. Like he had something planned. She felt slightly apprehensive, but not enough to open her mouth and tell him to fuck her. “Let’s see if I can get it out of you.”

She barely had time to take a deep breath before he whipped her around and took her mouth in a full frontal assault. It was the only way to describe the kiss he laid on her. Demanding, consuming, his tongue twirled around her own, commanding a complete and total surrender. Rayna had no intention of *not* submitting, but then, he didn’t give her a choice. Just when her head started to spin, her body melting against him, his lips were gone.

They traveled down her body, setting her skin on fire with each touch. Down across the gentle swell of breasts above the lace border of her bra, down her tummy, across to her hips, then stopping at the edge of her thong. Her lungs began to burn from the panted breaths she managed to take as she stared down into glittering green/gold eyes. He was really gorgeous in a deadly, dangerous kind of way. His direct stare held her captive, refusing to allow her to look away as he hooked one leg at her knee and brought it over her shoulder.

Was he going to taste her through her underwear? Oh, shit, he was! Still staring directly at her, he stuck out his tongue to swipe at her slit right over her panties. The lips of her pussy responded immediately, feeling all at once puffy and heavy. The leg left standing shook ever so slightly in anticipation of deeper contact. And of course, he had to drag that out.

“Have you ever had anyone kiss you here before? Kiss you, lick you, make you scream until you pass out? Cause that’s what I want from you, baby. I want you hoarse by the end of the night.” His words caused hot puffs of air to

caress her slit. Her hips moved forward on their own accord, desperate for him to just take her in his mouth already.

“Yes. I mean, I’ve had someone go down on me before.” Not very well. It had lasted all of one minute before she was tugging the male in question away from the area completely. It was worse than unpleasant. It was cold and wet and disgusting. There was nothing disgusting about what Kord was doing to her now. “It wasn’t very...pleasant.”

She didn’t know why she had a need to add that last part. Did it even matter that she hadn’t enjoyed it? He didn’t ask her that. Something made her want to assure him that no one else could make her feel this way, which was really insane now that she thought about it. This wasn’t a relationship kind of thing. This was a one night stand. It didn’t matter if she had ever enjoyed anyone going down on her or not. That wasn’t the point.

“Poor, baby.” He said it with glee, not the least bit sad about yet another embarrassing confession from her. “We must do something about that.”

Yes, she liked that idea a lot. If only he would get to it. But no, he had to play with her, driving her up the wall. He used his teeth to pull the scant material of her thong to the side, swiping quickly before retreating again. Through it all, he held her gaze in a steady, unblinking stare. After exposing her, he skimmed his lips over her nether lips, a bare whisper of a touch, but it was electrifying.

“Please, taste me Kord. Lick me, make me love it.” Forgotten was her uneasiness in asking for what she wanted. That wasn’t important right now. All that mattered was getting his mouth on her, as soon as humanly possible.

“Good girl,” he murmured approvingly, his eyelids dipping as his tongue swirled over her needy pussy.

Her breathing stilled, her hands clutching helplessly on his shoulders. Oh, good Lord he was fucking her with his tongue, pushing inside as deep as he could go before curling that devilish tongue up to circle her clit. Just when she thought she would surely detonate from the inside out, he switched it up on her, sucking her clit into his mouth and nursing on it until Rayna was sure she was going to pass out.

The climax blindsided her, knocking all the air from her lungs. She would have screamed if she could've, but all that managed to come out of her mouth was a high-pitched squeak. Her body bucked, her hips smashing against his mouth without her consent. She was helpless to do anything but ride that devious tongue, wordlessly demanding every lick, every suck. Have mercy, but that was good!

“Umm. Sugar you taste delicious. I think I’m going to have to have some more. I find I’m a little ravenous tonight.”

Good for him, but she wasn’t sure she could take much more. Thankfully, he lifted her in those corded, muscled arms of his and laid her gently in the center of the raised platform bed. He didn’t join her right away. Stepping back, he slowly stripped off the black button-down shirt, revealing a lean, hard muscular frame. The slacks went next, sliding off well shaped legs with ease. Rayna studiously avoided looking toward his crotch area. She wasn’t sure she could handle actually seeing the log that had pressed against her so recently. Apparently, Kord preferred to walk around commando. She had felt something incredibly long and thick; it would surely freak her out if she were to witness it in its bare glory.

“Look at me, Rayna,” his husky, Southern, honeyed voice demanded. “Look what you do to me, baby.”

She had no idea why his voice compelled her, but it did. Her eyes went directly to the hard, fierce looking organ currently being stroked by Kord’s hand. It was every bit as big and thick as she’d been afraid it would be, but

instead of fear, she was swamped by longing unlike any she'd ever felt. She wanted him now. She opened her legs in blatant invitation, canting her hips forward toward him. She loved how he looked at her, his face a perfect reflection of the hunger that raged through her.

"I need you, Kord. I want you to put that cock inside me. I want you to make me feel it. I want you so deep I never forget how it feels to be possessed by you."

"Never doubt it, sugar." He climbed the bed slowly, pausing as he loomed over her. His hot eyes trailed over her body, his tongue swiping at his bottom lip. "But I'm still hungry. Why don't you offer those beautiful breasts to a starving man?"

Feeling more wanton than she would've believed possible, Rayna slid her fingers inside her bra, pulling the cups down to completely expose her breasts. She could have sworn her nipples puckered even more in anticipation, though he didn't give her much time to anticipate anything. His mouth engulfed one breast sucking up hard until all that was left in his mouth was the very tip held by his teeth.

"Kord!" More nerves came alive and lit up her body. Her thighs clamped down on his body, trying to move him closer. She never liked anyone touching her breasts before, much less putting their mouths on them. But of course that wouldn't be the case with this Marine. He seemed to know more about her body than she did.

When he repeated the action with the other, Rayna felt tiny quakes rock her body. Not as explosive as the orgasm he had given her licking her pussy, but an orgasm nonetheless. That would make three, and he hadn't even started to fuck her yet! Would she even survive to make it that far? Letting go of her breast with a little pop, he rolled away, reaching into the bedside table drawer and retrieving not a couple, but a box of condoms.

Had any other man done that, she would have laughed outright at the implied boast. With Kord, it didn't seem so much like a boast at all. It was a promise. Even though he ripped a packet off, he didn't put the condom on. Instead he moved back between her legs, scooting down until his face was right at her crotch.

"Such pretty panties," he murmured, lightly tracing the delicate lace with one finger. "But I'm sorry baby, they have to go." One tug was all it took, and her thongs were history. It didn't even look like it took much effort at all for him to rip them off her. "It would probably be best not to wear underwear around me, sugar. They get in the way between me and what is now my favorite meal."

As sexy as that sounded, she knew she couldn't take it deeper than face value. This was a one night stand, not some kind of declaration. No matter how hot and intense it got, she had to remember that no matter what he might say. Hadn't Delilah told her men say all kinds of stupid things in the heat of the moment they didn't mean.

Before she could dwell on it too deeply, he was lapping at her cunt again. This time he alternated right from the beginning, licking, sucking, and burying his tongue inside her at a pace that had her gasping for air. His hands lifted her to him, using his teeth to gently tug on her clit. His face was completely buried, making her wonder if he could breath, but only briefly. She couldn't think at all when he slid two wonderfully thick fingers inside her while sucking down on her clit.

"Damn, baby you're tight against my fingers," Kord lifted his head only a fraction to murmur. She could feel the vibrations of his words against her most sensitive inner skin. "You're going to suck my dick inside you just right, aren't you, Rayna. This pretty pussy is going to hold me to you so tight."

"Yes! Oh please, Kord, now? Put your cock in me now." She didn't give a damn if she was begging. All this foreplay was going to kill her.

“I will, sugar, I promise. First, I want you to come for me one more time. Let me taste that sweet honey.”

He dove back down; eating her like his life depended on it. His fingers and his mouth were all too much. As if it she had only been waiting for his command. Rayna screamed out a bone shattering orgasm, her back coming completely off the bed. It seemed this climaxing thing got more and more intense with each one. Surely any more would kill her.

“I think I’m going to need that at least once a day,” Kord drawled as he rose to his knees. His cock stood out proud and strong in front him, all reddish and purple with pearls of precum seeping from his slit.

Rayna licked her lips, rising forward with an impulsive urge to taste him. Reading her intent, he stopped her, pushing her back down.

“Not tonight, sugar. You touch me and it’ll be all over before we even get started.” Tearing open the condom package she forgot he had, he rolled the rubber on with one hand, never taking his eyes off her.

Well, of course he was good at this sort of thing. What other kind of man kept a box of condoms in his bedside table? He no doubt had excessive experience with this kind of thing.

“No, I don’t do this kind of thing often.”

“What?” Snapping her eyes off his cock she searched his face, wondering if she had said anything out loud.

“I saw the look on your face. I don’t bring women here often. The condoms were there by happenstance. A friend thought it would be funny to give me a box for Christmas. I just threw them in the drawer and forgot about them until now.”

“It’s none of my business.” Plus, she really didn’t want to hear it. He had no reason to lie to her, but she understood a man’s need to make excuses. She didn’t need that. After tonight this would all be a pleasant memory.

“I want it to be your business, Rayna. I want you to know this is not what you think it is.”

She could’ve asked him what it was, if it wasn’t what she thought. Could’ve and perhaps should’ve but the broad head of his shaft was pushing insistently against her labia, stretching her wide for his final assault. Everything around her, every issue she could’ve had disappeared. All she could do was feel; feel the exquisite pleasure/pain of his cock pushing slowly inside her, filling up every available inch of space. Her thighs spread wider, her pelvis lifting to welcome more.

It was going to be a long night indeed, and Rayna was going to enjoy every second of it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Kord was breaking out in a cold sweat. Holy hell, she was so tight. He had to use shallow thrusts to work his way inside, inch by excruciating inch. His own thighs were trembling by the time he made his way completely inside.

“Is it too much? Am I hurting you?”

He prayed she would say no. She felt so damn good cocooning his dick in a veritable bear hug. He could feel her walls constricting slightly around him, felt her wet heat bathing him. It felt like heaven, it felt like home. He never wanted to leave.

“You’re not hurting me. But Kord, please, I need you to move. I need more.” Her voice was a soft breath, but it sounded off like a shout in his ears.

His hips began a slow dance, savoring the fiery friction as he slid out until only his tip remained, then rolled his hips forward again. Aw, fuck, it was good. He tried to keep the pace slow and steady, but she wasn't making it easy on him. She rode him to perfection, matching his every thrust with delightful rolls of her own hips. Yep, every ex-boyfriend she ever had needed to hunted down and taken out. Not that he wasn't glad they had all been fucking disgraces to manhood. But this woman deserved to be thoroughly loved, from the bottom of her feet to the top of her head.

“You feel so damn good, baby. That’s it, ride my cock just like that. Take all of me.”

The heels of her boot pressed into his ass cheeks. The small pain helped to keep him grounded, but it wasn't enough. She just felt so damn right! He tried to keep his strokes slow and measured, but she was choking the hell

out of his dick. He was moving faster, rolling deeper inside her in minutes. Shit, he wasn't going to last.

“Oh my God, Kord!” Rayna’s grip became impossibly tighter as her cunt began to tremor around him. “What are you doing to me?”

Aw, he found the spot. That’s what he was looking for. Digging his toes into the mattress he surged forward again in the exact same place, relishing the way the tremors quickly escalated into quakes. The dig of her heels pressed harder, sure to leave one hell of a set of marks by the morning. He could care less, all that mattered was being inside her, taking her over with him.

“I’m loving you, baby. Like a good man should.” He had to speak between clinched teeth as he fought to hang on. Just a little bit more.

Two more hard, deep thrusts and she was finally there. “Kord!”

The scream was music to his ears, a symphony of perfection. Her pussy clamped down even tighter, demanding that he come. There was no way to stop it; her core sucked him in like a steamy mouth, requiring every drop of his come. And he gave it to her; sorry for the first time ever he was wrapped in latex. One day he would be able to bury himself inside her and have nothing between them. It would be some time in coming, but he swore to himself to make it a priority. He wanted this woman on a level he didn’t understand, a base instinct that insisted he claim her permanently. With a roar of pure male satisfaction, he came so hard his head swam. Clutching his prize to him.

“Wow, I never knew it could be like that.” The soft exclamation made Kord want to beat his chest and declare victory. Instead, he rolled them over so he could cradle her in his arms.

“I’m kinda glad you didn’t.” It was simple truth, but she only snorted at his confession.

It was cool. He expected that. She didn’t really know him at all. It would take time to convince her he was interested in far more than one night.

Until then, however, he had every intention of taking full advantage of this night. His dick was still painfully hard, even though he had just come harder than he had in a very long time. Just looking at her made him hot and ready.

“Stay right there, I’ll be right back.” He needed to clean up a bit so they could try again, for longer this time.

Before he could move, her boot started to ring. It took a minute for him to realize that’s where she had her cell. Of course, she didn’t have a purse or a jacket on her. Where else would she put it?

Seeing her fumble to try to fish it out, Kord deftly removed the footwear, allowing the phone to tumble out. He had forgotten all about calling her friend. He moved to remove the other so she could be more comfortable and waited while she started her conversation.

“Um, no,” she was saying. “I’m actually still here, at the party. I’m just, um...”

“Tell her you’re busy,” he whispered, sliding up beside her, kissing her neck. He seemed to be addicted to the soft, flowery scented skin.

“I’m busy.”

Kord smiled against her skin. “Tell her you have a ride home.”

“I have a ride home. You can just leave my purse and coat, uh...” She looked over her shoulder at him with the question clear in her eyes.

His dick jumped, going from merely hard to raging with that one look. She was starting to trust him. At least this far. “Tell her to have Mitch give them to Captain MacQuire.” Shannon would either place them in a safe place or bring them up here. Either way, this would mean she was staying for at least the night. Plus, it would force Delilah to at least talk to the man who’d been after her behind for longer than either of them would care to admit.

“Give them to Captain MacQuire.” Kord could hear the screech in response loud and clear. It was time for Rayna to end her phone call.

“You have to go now, sugar,” he whispered softly in her ear, nipping it before he slid off the bed and into the bathroom. He was gone for less than a minute, rolling another condom on as he strode back into the room.

Rayna was off the phone, her bra had been removed, and though she had gotten between the sheets, she didn’t demur or look away as he approached her. Her eyes reflected all the desire he felt, her lips slightly parted as if waiting for his kiss. He didn’t hesitate to give her just that. He took her mouth until she was breathless and panting, they way he was beginning to enjoy seeing her.

“Turn around for me, baby. Get on your knees.”

Maybe if he wasn't watching the beautiful display of emotions dance across her face he could last a little longer, though he sincerely doubted it.

Sliding back inside her from behind, he knew he had been dead wrong. She was even tighter like this. Watching her back arch into a graceful slope down to the generous globes of her ass, he would be lucky to last half as long. When she started moving back in time with his forward thrusts, his eyes crossed, his breaths coming in harsh puffs in between clinched teeth.

“Fuck yeah, baby, move back on me. Fuck me back.” She was going to kill him, and he was going to die a happy man.

“Kord, it’s so good. Please, harder. I want more.”

Who was he to deny the request of his woman? Maybe she didn’t know she was his, but he would be damned if he was letting her walk away. His pelvis powered inside her, one hand reaching down to play with her little nubbin. He pinched it, then petted it, making her rock back harder against him.

“Oh, yeah, please don’t stop,” she begged in a broken cry.

“Rayna, sweetheart, I’m going to come,” he warned, unable to stop the inevitable. “Come with me, baby. I want you to come all over my dick.”

He felt it before the muffled scream left her body. Her walls contracting, squeezing him so tight he had to fight for every drive. He came harder than he had before, plastering his body to her much smaller frame.

“I don’t think I can do that again.”

Kord had to smile at the groaning complaint that wasn't a complaint at all. It was proof positive he had done his job. It was also untrue, but he didn't mind it at all. He had just had one hell of a night proving just how wrong that statement was.

Kord woke with the rising of the sun. It was an ingrained habit he couldn't kick even when he was on leave. He felt better this morning than he had in ages, thanks to the utterly delectable woman snuggled at his side. He didn't want to leave her, but he knew he had to. The cleaning crew he had hired to come in after last night's bash would be here soon, plus, he wanted to order some pastries from a little bakery down the street before Rayna woke up.

Placing a soft kiss on her brow he reluctantly left the cozy nest in his bed and pulled on some sweats. She looked so peaceful sleeping silently in his bed, so right. At least a half a dozen condom wrappers littered the floor around where they slept, prove positive this woman was far from frigid. She was wonderfully responsive, completely sensual. Despite the multiple times he had came the night before, his dick was getting hard just watching her sleep.

Shaking his head he hurried through taking care of the little things to get back to Rayna before she woke. He wanted to be there when she first opened her eyes. It took less time than he hoped. Placing a box of still warm pastries on the table on her side of the bed, he threw off his clothes and slipped

back into the bed next to her. Her body turned, curving to his side, naturally seeking his body heat.

A man could get used to this. She felt so good all cuddled up to him, her head resting on his shoulder like it belonged there, Kord did something he never did, he went back to sleep.

Oh my God, I actually did it! Rayna didn't want to open her eyes. It was too soon to let go of all the fan-freaking-tastic new sensations she'd experienced last night. Last night, this morning, and unless she was mistaken, there was something hard and hot resting underneath her thigh at this very second. What made it worse was she was getting wet thinking of all the wonderful things that massive weapon could do.

She had to get out of here before she made a complete fool of herself. Guys liked it when their nighttime snack quietly disappeared with the light of a new day right? Maybe she could just slip out and call a cab from her cell down the street. Cracking open one eye, she tried to scan the room as best she could without moving to try to locate her clothes. No such luck. Her head was on Kord's shoulder, his own body twisted slightly towards her. All she could see was one seriously rock hard chest.

To be honest, she probably could have seen a little more had she been able to look away, but the smooth planes of his skin were fascinating. She was reaching out with her hand and running her fingers down the sparse hair before she caught herself.

"Good morning."

The low rumble made Rayna jump in surprise. How could she have forgotten just that quickly the chest was attached to someone? Burying her face in the crook of his arm she mumbled the greeting back. She couldn't face him just now. He had other plans however. Rolling them both over, he was suddenly

hovering over her, his eyes a hell of a lot more green than gold in the morning light.

The man was just too sexy to be real. And, he didn't look at all put out that she was still there. Maybe he wanted a quickie for the road? She wasn't sure how to interpret the intense stare he was laying on her. It was different from the way he looked at her last night; this look was searching, like he wanted to see deep into her mind or something.

Now you're just being fanciful, she chided herself, almost laughing at her inner voice. She really needed to stop reading regency romances. Who the heck said things like fanciful anyway?

"What were you thinking just now?"

The question surprised her. She wasn't really sure how she should answer, so she played it off. "Oh, nothing. Just how you look all bad ass Marine this morning."

He did too, that wasn't a lie. But she just had to pick up the one dude in the universe who was more perceptive than the average person.

"And, what was it that almost made you laugh?"

Dang, he was good. She thought about not answering, but what the hell? She wasn't going to see him again. Who cared if he knew she had a thing for dirty romances, or that she talked to herself in her head? Let him think she was crazy. Maybe she could get out of here a little faster.

"My inner voice was chiding me with a Victorian English accent." He didn't even bat an eyelash, so Rayna went on. "I read a lot of romances." There, that should have him shuffling her out of his house.

Only it didn't. He lifted one eyebrow, not moving as he considered her for a second. "You'll have to read one to me one day...with the accent."

While she lay there with her mouth wide open, he reached across to grab and pull a pink pastry box over and laid it on her stomach.

“I didn’t know what you liked, so I just ordered a variety.” He opened the box and tilted up so she could see, handing her a napkin so she could make her choice. He didn’t seem to be in a hurry to get rid of her at all. Delilah hadn’t told her about the kind of man that was comfortable with his one-night stand hanging around. She had no idea what to do with this new development. “I didn’t know if you liked coffee in the morning, but I made a fresh pot downstairs. I also have orange juice and some cran-grape juice. What’s your poison?”

“Um, coffee would be great but, don’t you want me to leave?”

He didn’t answer her right away. He rolled off the bed all gloriously nude and yummy looking. He didn’t even attempt to cover himself.

“You take cream and sugar?” he threw over his shoulder as he walked toward the door. Lord, the man was deadly with that body.

“Are you going to answer my question?” Normally she wasn’t that daring but these weren’t normal circumstances.

He stilled for a minute, standing there like he might be considering something. She couldn’t really tell; she couldn’t see his face. When he finally did turn, he stalked straight for her. There was purpose in every stride. He moved the pink box off her and swept her into a sitting position right on his lap in a move so smooth it looked like it had been practiced. It was hot as hell, all dominate and commanding. The pulsating hard-on under the cheeks of her behind was a definite plus.

“Does it feel like I’m in a hurry to get rid of you, Rayna?” He pushed up so there was no confusion as to what he was referring to. Even if she hadn’t felt his erection, the heat in his gaze coupled with the roughness of his tone would’ve clued her in.

“Uh, no. I wasn’t trying to insult you or anything. I just didn’t want to assume more than you are willing to give.” Oh no, that sounded like relationship talk didn’t it? Maybe he wanted more than one night. Maybe he wanted a fun filled weekend. That still wasn’t a relationship. She was going to have to have a little talk with Delilah. The woman hadn’t prepared her nearly enough for this.

“And what are you willing to give, sugar?” The man was actually purring at her. Not some cute kitty purr either. A full on, man purr, the kind that made her all kinds of moist and tingly. “Cause I am thinking I don’t want you to leave. At least not for the rest of the weekend. I have a week’s leave left and I would love to spend that time getting to know you better. Among other things.”

The way his gaze traveled down her body left no mystery what “other things” he was talking about. Going from never really getting off to getting all hot and bothered by just a look was quite a feat, but Rayna was beyond glad she had made the trip.

“So what do you say? Stay the weekend with me? We’ll see where the rest of the week goes after that, okay?”

There was no way she was saying no. She liked being with Kord. Sure, so far that only consisted of time in bed, and a quick dry hump while dancing, but she found in the light of day, she kind of liked him. At least so far.

“I don’t have anything to wear.” It wasn’t a no, right? Surely he understood she couldn’t just come right out and agree. That went against every female rule she knew, even if she admittedly didn’t know a lot of them.

“I don’t think you’ll need all that much for this weekend, do you?”

Funny how in less than the twelve hours Kord had known her, he had become adept in moving her body just where he wanted her to be. Rayna found herself turned facing him while straddling his powerful thighs. Clothing for the

foreseeable future was indeed optional, but the raging passion he'd ignited in her wasn't. She had no idea where he had been hiding the condom that seemed to come out of nowhere, but she was never so glad to be in the company of an ever-ready Marine.

CHAPTER FIVE

Seven months later...

Kord gripped the steering wheel trying to dispel the anger bubbling deep within his gut. It was too soon to go back to war. He felt like he was beginning to get to know Rayna, and there was still so much more to learn. True, he had spent every available moment he could with her, but for the last month he had taken his unit out for intense training so their time together had been scarce. There seemed to never be enough time. After convincing her to stay with him that first initial week after New Year, he felt a gnawing ache whenever she wasn't by his side.

The memory of that first week made him smile despite the anger. After convincing her to stay for the weekend, extending it to a week had been easier than he'd expected. Of course, he had been sure to keep her mind off going home. She'd spent the week wearing nothing more than his t-shirts, and that was only to eat or watch a movie together. He'd preferred to keep her naked, which had been a harder task than he'd imagined. Someone had taught her that the female form was evil and her sexual nature something to be ashamed of. Just when he thought he was finally making headway into getting her to see nothing that happened between them was innately bad, he was being thrust back into the shit, leaving her to close herself off again.

In a way, he was kind of glad for Rayna's conservative bent. She wouldn't be out there partying while he was gone. Even if she wasn't so damn closed off, he trusted her unlike he'd ever trusted anyone outside his unit. But could he convince her that he was for real when he told her he wanted her permanently? Sure they were seeing each other, and she would be true to him

while he was away, but he was tired of waking up without her by his side every morning. He wanted her wearing his ring, carrying his name. God help him, he wanted her belly full with his child.

The woman was driving him crazy. No matter how much he pressed her to stay with him for longer than a few days at a time, she just wouldn't. It wasn't like she had to be in San Diego; she worked from home. Every time he tried to broach the subject of her moving in, she'd shy away, or sadly repeat some bullshit someone had beaten into her head. The only reason he hadn't marched her down the aisle before now was it was too soon. Not for him, but for her. She had no idea how tightly she'd managed to wrap him around her little finger, and didn't believe it when he told her. Maybe now at least he could move her into the house. The marriage part would have to wait until he returned from the latest mission.

Kord led a small Marine Reconnaissance unit, specializing in covert strike ops. He wouldn't even know the mission until they landed in Afghanistan. Because of the sensitive nature of what they did, they were never deployed for any set length of time like a regular unit might be. They were always on call; got in and got out on their own timetable. There was one person above Kord in his command structure—his best friend Shannon. They both reported straight to the Pentagon, no one else. Because he didn't know when he'd be back, he would simply ask Rayna to stay at his place to keep an eye out for him.

Usually he'd ask one of the commanders that weren't leaving on this particular mission to swing by and check things out, pick up the mail, or various little things like that. He had an account set up to pay the household bills automatically, for which he stopped and placed Rayna's name on the account. If he could get her to live there, take care of things while he was gone, it would be that much easier to keep her there when he got back.

At least that's what he was hoping. He had no idea how she would respond, and that bothered the fuck out of him. As close as they may have

gotten, there was still a part of Rayna that she kept deeply locked away. Maybe this time away would be good for them. He knew she cared for him, if not as much as he did, then somewhere close to it. Maybe giving her time and space to think would help her see how good they were together. With any luck this would be a quick strike, hit and run; he would be back before the summer ended.

He sat in his car a minute after pulling up to her apartment complex. Rayna didn't have a car, so he parked in her assigned spot. Taking deep breaths he went over all the arguments he had planned. She was damn good at the counterpoints of any discussion. Woman should have been a lawyer. He needed to make sure he had all the bases covered. Only when he felt somewhat confident did he get out of the car and make his way to her door.

"Kord!" Damn, he loved how she greeted his unannounced visits. Dressed in oversized sweats with her hair pulled up into a braid, she was so cute, she took his breath away.

"Hey, sugar." He had meant to get straight to the point, but he had to kiss her.

And of course, just a quick peck wasn't going to do it. No sooner had the door closed than he had her pinned against it, one hand possessively grasping her hip while the other reached under the sweatshirt to cup the most beautiful breasts God ever created. He would never stop loving the way her legs wrapped around his waist, trusting him not to let her go. He knew she wasn't even aware she did it.

"I missed you like crazy," he confessed, nuzzling her neck. Whatever scent that was she wore drove him insane; all light and slightly floral without being overwhelming. She always smelled so good. "Ah, sugar I just want to eat you up."

The confession brought a low moan from her, causing her hips to move seductively against him. Maybe the house sitting talk could wait. It had been too long since he was last inside her. Kord cupped her ass, pulling her closer as he turned to move toward the bedroom, when the door opened with enough force to send them both sprawling to the floor.

On pure instinct Kord rolled his body over Rayna's, protecting her with his body. His mind went through a series of take down strategies before a smooth contralto voice froze him in place.

"Really, Rayna, why on earth were you standing by the door? And to knock over this nice young man...."

He didn't know whether to get up or stay exactly where he was as a tall, coffee colored woman swept into the apartment, a trail of cloying perfume in her wake. He felt Rayna stiffen underneath him, a muffled curse lost somewhere in his chest. Ah, the mother. Rayna never talked about her much, but Kord got the distinct impression they didn't get along.

He moved slowly, pulling Rayna's now stiff form up and tucking her firmly by his side. The older woman's body language told him a hell of a lot more than anything she had ever confessed to him. Unless he was way off, he expected verbal barbs to fly any second now. Rayna's stilted movements and frozen face practically screamed she was just waiting for the first blow. She didn't have to wait long.

"Oh! A Marine! Are you here about Rayna's father? I told him it was foolish to go off with that Marine unit, but who can talk to the man?" The woman looked him up and down, making him feel undressed despite his jeans and t-shirt. "I'm Theodora, hun. Rayna's mother. All is well I hope? The foolish man didn't run off and get himself killed did he? Of course not, you're not in uniform. He must be hurt then. Well, I'm here with Rayna now. I'm sure such a virile young man such as yourself has better things to do than to comfort my poor daughter."

It had been impossible to get a word in edge-wise while Theodora talked. She never seemed to pause to draw in a breath. When the words finally registered in his brain, Kord went from cautious to furious in seconds. How could the woman just assume he wasn't here to actually see her daughter? Was she blind or just willfully ignorant? Rayna was one hell of a sexy, wonderful woman. How dare anyone insinuate anything else, mother or not!

"He's not here to tell me anything about Dad." Rayna stepped forward with a fierce scowl marring her usually serene face. "This is Kord, my...my boyfriend."

That's my girl! Kord's chest expanded with pride, a wide grin splitting his face. But no, that wasn't exactly right. That was his woman.

"Boyfriend?" The loud guffaw Theodora let loose grated on his nerves. What kind of mother was this woman? And what would Rayna say next? He followed his woman to the couch, sitting next to her as she dropped heavily on the cushions. Her jaw clinched, she looked at her mother who was far from done trying to humiliate her, however unwittingly. "Come on now, Rayna. We both know this young man isn't your...your boyfriend." The older woman clutched her chest in a gesture completely lost on Kord. She sat on the edge of the smaller loveseat facing where he and Rayna sat, leaning forward with wide eyes, like she was waiting for some big punch line. "Come on now Rayna, dear. Introduce me. You don't have to tell me why he's here. You're a grown woman. As happy as I would be to see you finally out and about instead of living like an old spinster, I seriously doubt..."

He was probably projecting his anger because Theodora's sentence trailed off as she cast a quick glance in his direction. Her mouth hung open, but no other sound escaped as she stared in apparent awe at his hand which had crept behind Rayna to rub her back. It was an unconscious gesture he hadn't even realized he did until he noted her gaping at his actions.

He squirmed a little in his seat, but refused to lift his hand. Let the woman gawk; he would comfort Rayna any way he could. He was about to say something, but Rayna once again surprised him.

“Are you done, Mother?” Theodora didn’t reply, so she went on much to Kord’s absolute joy. “I may not be as...vivacious as you and Roxy, but I am still a woman; a woman with real feelings and real needs. Perhaps if you spent a little time encouraging me instead of putting me down and making me feel like less than the two of you, I would have found someone like Kord sooner. Thanks in large part to you and my father, I have spent my life confused and unsure of myself and my womanhood. There is no reason for you to be so rude or condescending to me in my own home. I love you, but I don’t have to accept the way you treat me. You need to leave now.”

And he had thought he had been proud before. His chest tightened as his heart swelled. It may not have been physical at all, but it was every bit as real as if it was. Rayna didn’t get up; her eyes didn’t waver from staring her mother down. Her back was ramrod straight as she stood her ground, relatively speaking. Theodora pulled herself up, head held high. Kord couldn’t be sure but he could have sworn there was a sheen of tears in the older woman’s eyes. Without a word she sailed to the door, quietly closing it behind her.

Rayna slumped at the soft click that heralded her mother’s departure. Kord pulled her into his arms across his lap and silently held her. Now wasn’t the time for words. He needed to simply be there for her. Later, he would talk her into staying at his home. Maybe he could even talk her into giving up her apartment. But not now.

They didn’t make love, or even move for a long while. Kord had never really felt as content and needed as he did right then. It was only proof positive that he was right. Rayna was perfect for him. All he had to do was to get her to see it too.

CHAPTER SIX

Five months later...

Maybe my mother was right. The night Rayna had finally found the nerve to tell her mother off seemed like a lifetime ago. At first, she hadn't heard from her parent for two weeks. Finally, Theodora had called her to grouse about how poorly she'd treated her, in front of a man no less, and to tell her how disappointed she was. Even though that time Kord hadn't been by her side, she found the courage to reiterate everything she'd said that night. She was sick to death of her mother putting her down and making her feel like some ragamuffin, mousy, poor relation.

It had taken a while, but finally Theodora was realizing the many things she had done over the years to tear down her daughter's self-esteem. At least that's what Rayna hoped. Their relationship was still rocky at best, but at least Theodora appeared to be trying. It helped that Rayna no longer felt the need to cover herself from neck to ankle like she was some kind of nun. Even though Kord had been gone for four and a half months to God knows where, Rayna was slowly but surely coming into her own. She didn't have a bad body all said and done, she looked pretty decent. Not that she flaunted it. She didn't want to attract other men. She no longer yearned for the sexual freedom so many other women had. She just wanted Kord.

She had been reasonably certain that whatever this thing was between her and Kord was real. He had convinced her to move in to his beach house, supposedly to take care of the place while he was gone. As hard as she tried to keep things in perspective, she could easily see herself staying here for good. The letters that had come on a regular basis had only encouraged that tiny hope

she tried to squash. He had written to her like he planned on the two of them building a life together.

That coupled with the gifts that had arrived with each letter fueled her hopefulness of something real and true with Kord. Though both her mother and her friend Delilah had warned her not to count her chickens before the eggs had hatched, Rayna believed in Kord. The way he expressed in each letter how much he missed her, how he was looking forward to holding her again, holding her forever...A man wouldn't write that if he didn't feel it, right?

But the letters had stopped coming. She still got packages from time to time, but all of them without anything personal from Kord. She told herself that maybe he was just too busy. He was Recon after all. Maybe he was in the middle of some intense mission that didn't allow him the time to get a letter off to her. She tried to stay steady, to be confident in the man he had shown her he was, but the doubts keep creeping into her head, if not her heart. With Delilah and Theodora constantly warning her that men who were going off to war often said things they didn't really mean, it was getting increasingly harder to stay optimistic. They kept up with drones of how when faced with death everyday men often tried to hang on to whatever they could from home and it didn't necessarily mean forever.

She wanted to scream at them both, not Kord. Not her Marine. This wasn't his first mission. He was trained to look death in the face. He wouldn't use her as a crutch to make it through. But she kept such things to herself. In her heart of hearts, she believed in him, in them. It may have started off as a one night stand, but she liked to think their connection was deeper.

Maybe he couldn't write her. Maybe he was hurt. That thought hurt a hell of a lot more than thinking he was using her. No matter what, she didn't want Kord to be harmed. Realistically she knew the risks. Warriors went to war, and sometimes they got hurt. Rayna would rather have her hopes of being with Kord crushed than to see him seriously wounded.

“Come on, Ray-Ray. Come to the New Year’s party with me. Maybe lightening will strike twice and you’ll find a new hottie to spend time with.” Delilah nudged her on the shoulder trying to break her out of the doldrums. “Come out with me. Shake your groove thing. Kord wouldn’t begrudge you that would he? I mean, did he tell you to stay in the house and not have any fun while he was gone? What he doesn’t know won’t hurt him.”

Rayna loved her friend, she really did; but Delilah couldn’t stick with one man longer than a month to save her life. As soon as a man was out of sight, he was out of mind in Delilah’s world. Her friend would say she was only acting the way guys acted in general, but Rayna believed it was something deeper than that. Delilah had been hurt, badly when she was very young. Rayna believed her promiscuous ways were in some part a defense mechanism. It was a way to keep men at a distance so no one could get close enough to hurt her again.

“No, he didn’t mention it at all.” Rayna shook her head. There was no way Delilah was going to see this her way, but she had to at least try to make her understand. “It isn’t about whether or not Kord would like for me to go out or not. I honestly think he would be happy to see me get out and enjoy myself.” If only that was all Delilah was suggesting. “The one thing I *won’t* do is go fuck around just because I can. I don’t *care* if he found out or not. I would know.”

Delilah scoffed, just like Rayna knew she would. “Look it’s not like you two are married. All I’m saying is you need a little something-something. You are way too uptight. Besides, he hasn’t even written you in forever.”

“A month is not forever.” Damn, but that hurt. She wished she’d never mentioned it to Delilah.

“Yeah, but did he ever say you were exclusive? Did he make promises? He isn’t exactly acting like you’re a couple.” Delilah tossed her new sister locs over one shoulder. “All I’m saying is don’t put all your eggs in one basket. I don’t want you to get your hopes all up and then he comes back and-”

“Just stop it, okay?” She just couldn’t hear any more of this. Damn it, she believed in Kord. If he hadn’t written, then he had a good reason. Something in the way Delilah insisted otherwise just seemed to make all the time she had spent with Kord crystallize in her mind. He cared about her; this was real. She wasn’t about to let other people’s insecurities make her doubt anymore. “Kord isn’t like the guys you hang out with. Just maybe, if you took the time to try out someone who isn’t full of shit, you could find something real yourself.”

Just as Rayna suspected, Delilah jumped to her feet and gathered up her coat and purse. Delilah didn’t like talking about her choice in men. Rayna knew she chose dudes that weren’t serious about relationships on purpose. Every last one of the guys Delilah dated were the exact opposites of what anyone would look for in a boyfriend.

“Well, I’m going. Sit and mope by yourself if you want to.”

Rayna curled up on the couch after seeing her friend off. Even though she’d made up her mind that she wouldn’t doubt Kord, she couldn’t help but worry. Where was he? What was he going through? Not knowing was pure hell. All she could do was hope and pray Kord was alright and would be coming back to her soon.

The house was cold. Kord wondered if maybe he should have called first before taking a cab from the base. He had wanted to surprise Rayna, but what if she wasn’t here? All he had been able to think of since boarding the C-130 that had carried him from Landstuhl Regional Medical center in Germany back to Camp Pendleton was holding her again. It had become a single-minded

mission since getting shot to hell and back in the forbidding mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The mission had been FUBAR from almost the beginning. The intel had been bad, the terrain close to impossible to traverse. They had been sent in to rescue three C.I.A. operatives that had been double crossed by their contacts. The bad guys had been expecting a rescue, making getting in and out a hell of a lot more harrier than it should have been. They had damn near lost three men getting in and out, not including him. He had taken a slug to the shoulder and the leg right above the knee after a vicious slice to his gut from a wicked sharp saber. Who the hell fought with a fucking saber anymore? His days in the field were done.

Funny he expected to be more upset than he was about that. His entire adult life had revolved around being Recon. He had secretly gloried in the prospect of secret missions and danger. He found his taste for it had dramatically diminished. He loved being a Marine, he probably always would; but the idea of going off to fight didn't lure him the way it once had. He found himself longing for home and the woman that waited for him there. He wanted to sleep by her side every night, see her face every morning when he woke.

The place looked a hell of a lot homier than when he had left. There were lush green house plants scattered about the place. New throw pillows in vivid colors on the sofa in the formal living room. Even the kitchen looked a hell o f a lot more inviting, like someone was actually using it for something more than to store beer. A wry smile graced his lips as he silently walked through his house that finally begun to look like a home. She'd even put up art on the walls. He knew this had been a good idea.

He found Rayna curled up on the couch in the den, the television watching her as she slept fitfully. Kord's smile turned into a frown. She'd been crying. The blanket she had probably curled up under lay halfway on the floor as she tossed and turned, soft moans escaping every now and then. Silently

making his way to where she lay, Kord was stopped cold when he got close enough to hear what she was whispering in her sleep.

“Kord, I miss you so much. I need you.”

He watched in stunned silence as her hands moved up her torso to her chest, her small hands cupping her breasts. She wore a female version of a wife beater and panties and nothing else. Her body writhing as her fingers pinched down on her nipples then rolled the nubbins between her thumb and forefinger. Her hips lifted as if to hump the air around her, seeking something more. Seeking him.

His dick had been in a state of constant arousal since the doc had released him. All he could think about was Rayna. Getting back here, burying himself deep inside her, forgetting about everything but the two of them lost in a world all their own. Apparently she had been thinking of him too. His hard-on went into overdrive, painfully pressing up against the zipper of her jeans. Releasing it, he sat on the coffee table right next to her, unable to take his eyes away.

He remembered a time when she wouldn't even dream to touch herself this way, unconsciously or not. His baby had come a long way in a year. That she seemed to be dreaming that it was his hands doing this to her made it that much hotter. God how he's missed her. And it wasn't even a long deployment, but he felt like he was dying a little every day away from her sweetness.

“Kord, please, please touch me. I need you inside me.”

“Oh, hell yes, baby. Show me.” His harsh whisper was more a prayer than instructions, yet Rayna's hands wandered, one drifting to the waistband of her bikini panties. “Touch yourself, Rayna. Touch yourself like I was touching you.”

A low, needful moan was her only reply. Of course, she believed herself to be dreaming. She might have heard him, but she would think it a part of her

fevered imagination in the unconscious part of her brain that processed the order. Her hand slid into the skimpy underwear, her legs parting as did exactly as he told her. He watched in rapt fascination as her hand curled, her mouth opened in a desperate whisper. He wished he could see all of her, that he could watch the soft folds of her pussy open as she stroked her clit, as her fingers pistoned in and out of her core. Kord's own hands gripped his cock, using his own pre-cum as lubricant, he stroked himself as he watched Rayna pleasure herself.

Caught in the heat of her passion, Rayna had managed to push her shirt up exposing her bountiful breasts to his hungry eyes. She worked one luscious mound after the other, kneading it, tweaking the long pointed nipples. His mouth watered at the sight she made. A bountiful feast all spread out and waiting to be savored. If only he could see all of her.

Taking a chance, Kord moved to kneel right next to the sofa, reaching out and easing her underwear down her legs. Rayna was so caught up in her dream, she assisted his efforts, raising her hips as he worked the flimsy piece of cloth away from her body.

Damn, she looked so fucking good! The memory of the way her honey tasted teased his tongue, the soft scent of her arousal made him ravenous. He wanted to sink his tongue where her hands vigorously rubbed. He was going to wait though. He wanted to watch her come first. He just hoped he could make it that long.

"There you go, sweetheart." Kord's eyes were glued to her glistening cunt. "Make that pretty pussy come for me."

Her hand moved faster, rubbing frantic little circles around her clit before dipping her fingers into her tight hole. Her hips moved upward with her own thrusts, soft mewling sounds falling from her lips. He couldn't help but resume stroking his cock as he watched, his balls drawing up so tightly they

ached. Five long months was too fucking long to be without her. How the hell had he managed to survive?

“Oh, God, Kord I’m coming!”

If he wasn't careful he was going to come right along with her. He forced himself to let go of his shaft, watching her writhe as she got herself off. He threw his clothes off, not caring where they landed. As her hand slowly slipped from between her thighs he captured it, bringing her fingers to his mouth to lick up every drop of her juices. It wasn't nearly enough to slake his thirst. He needed to drink straight from the source.

But first, she needed to be awake. He wouldn't take her in her sleep; he wanted her conscious, looking at him while he drove her as crazy as she'd driven him.

“Rayna. Sugar, wake up.” Kord kissed her closed eyelids before moving to her lips. Without waking her mouth opened to his, welcoming him without thought. “Come on, baby, wake up.”

Her eyes fluttered before opening slowly. “Kord? What are you...Is it really you?”

“Hey, baby.” He grinned like a loon as the last vestiges of sleep left her face. “Miss me.”

“Kord!” Rayna flew into his arms, knocking them both backwards on to the floor. “I was so afraid something happened to you!”

He couldn't hold in the small grunt of pain as her full weight slammed into his body. She stared at him in shock a split second before moving off him and probing his chest and torso.

“You're hurt! Where? What happened? Oh my God, Kord,” she gasped when she saw the still healing wound from the saber across his gut. Her fingers skimmed over the red gash, her touch so light it sent tiny chill bumps straight

down his spine. Even when she was being nurturing she turned him on. “I’m so sorry. Did I hurt it very bad?”

“Just a scratch.” It was lie, they both knew it, but he didn’t want to talk about the damn cut. “Come here, baby, and tell me how much you missed me.”

Pulling down he kissed her again, this time a full-bodied kiss, probing, questing. He loved the way she melted in his embrace, how she gave every bit as much and as good as she got. He would thank God every day that he had been the one to listen in on her conversation with Delilah, that he was the one to help her see the vibrant, passionate woman that was always there under her reserved exterior.

CHAPTER SEVEN

At first Rayna didn't want to believe it was real. How many nights had she dreamed of Kord's return only to wake up wanting and alone? But this time she wasn't disappointed. This time, when she opened her eyes he had been right there, kissing her, holding her.

"I missed you so much," she whispered against his lips, melting into his embrace.

He might have been hurt, but he held her as tightly as he had before he'd gone. His kisses were every bit as passionate, in fact more so now than ever before. The way he took her lips, demanding yet seeking at the same time simply took her breath away.

"I missed you, too." His lips traveled all over her face, down her neck, only breaking to lift off her scanty t-shirt. "I thought about you every day. Wanting to be with you, inside you."

"You stopped writing." It was grossly unfair, she knew that. He had been badly hurt, and here she was complaining about not getting any stupid letters. "I didn't know..."

She couldn't finish the sentence because so many thoughts had gone through her head she didn't know how to put them all into words. She had hoped, despaired, believed, was afraid. All of it wrapped in the anxiety of not knowing if he was okay. In the end, she knew he would come back eventually. But she couldn't help but let him know she had been hurt when the letters stopped coming.

Hurt, but not without hope.

All in all, Rayna was a different woman than she had been when she first met Kord. She didn't doubt that he desired her, or that he cared about her.

That didn't mean he could disappear without a trace and she'd be okay with that. As long as he could write, he should have.

Kord gently gripped her chin, lifting her head to meet his gaze. "I'm sorry, Rayna. It was boneheaded not to let you know I was okay."

"But you weren't okay, Kord." Softly trailing her fingers over the cut across his lower stomach she shook her head. "You were hurt, and it looks like you were hurt very badly. Don't you think I deserved to know that?"

Damn it, she wanted to know what was going on with him. She could have flown to Germany, where most of the soldiers, Marines, sailors, and airmen went when seriously hurt in the wars. She should have been by his side. Or at least she should have been aware.

"You're right, baby." He kissed her so tenderly it almost made her cry. "Forgive me?"

As if there was ever a question she wouldn't. She didn't say it, but rather showed him, letting her body melt into his insistent mouth and hands. Her head dropped back as his tongue and teeth manipulated her sensitive flesh, sucking down hard on her nipples before backing off to swirl his tongue around her areolas. Her pussy clenched and unclenched, growing moister as it sought the one thing that could fill it to perfection.

How she had missed the way he caressed her skin. His hands skimmed over her shoulders, down her sides to rest at her hips. She didn't know what had happened to her underwear, she couldn't be bothered to care; all she knew was there was nothing at all between her and the hot, smooth skin of his cock. Straddling his lap she ground down on his shaft, trying to force the mushroomed head past the lips of her labia.

Kord was having none of that however. Moving with a dexterity no wounded man should have, Rayna found herself underneath his large body

staring up at him in wonder. How had he done that so quickly without hurting her?

“Not so fast, sugar. I haven’t tasted my sweet little pussy yet.” Her pussy wept at the harshly whispered words.

Kord grazed his teeth lightly over her skin as he worked his way down her body. Every nerve in Rayna’s body felt as it were on high alert, her breathing hitched and briefly paused as she waited for what she knew was coming. Oh, God she was going to explode if he didn’t do something soon!

Then she finally felt it. The first leisurely swipe of his tongue was like heaven and hell combined. It was so good but nowhere near enough. She cried out grabbing on to his head to try to force him closer. She wanted more. Kord seemed to be determined to take his time and make her crazy.

“Damn it, Kord! Do it already!”

“Do what, honey? Tell me.”

He did that a lot, forcing her to say in blunt words what she wanted from him. In the beginning it had embarrassed her to no end. Not anymore.

“Lick my pussy. Make me come.”

His only reply was to delve his tongue deep inside her, making love to her with his lips, tongue, and even teeth. He held her wide open while he ate her like a man possessed, and in a way she supposed he was. He had gone through one hell of an ordeal while he was away. She didn’t need to know the details to understand that. She gave him everything, not holding back a single reaction as he loved her so totally she thought she wouldn’t survive to the main event.

“Ummm, now, sugar, that’s the meal I’ve been dreaming about,” Kord murmured as he placed small pecks against her thigh. “You made me so hot watching you play with yourself in your sleep. I want you to do that again for Rayna, but I want you to be awake next time. Watching me watching you.”

She gasped as he pulled himself up and settled in between her thighs. She thought it had been a dream. Had she really touched herself while dreaming of him? Although she couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed, she also felt a thrill that it had obviously affected him so much.

"I wanted so bad to replace your little hand with my dick, baby." Kord ran the tip of his cock against her wet labia up to her clit. She rocked her hips upward to invite him inside, but he didn't take the bait. "I wanted to taste you, to put my cock where your naughty little fingers were. But as bad as I wanted you, as much I need you, it was too damn hot to interrupt you."

Finally, the fat, mushroomed head slid inside her. Not nearly enough for her piece of mind, but just a touch. She was going to kill him, that is, if he didn't kill her first.

"Kord, if you don't make love to me I think I might hurt you." She would have been surprised at the ferocity in her own voice, had she been able to care. As it was, she couldn't care about anything else but getting him inside her. It seemed paramount to anything else at that moment.

"Like this?"

They both let out a harsh hiss as he worked his way deeper inside. Rayna had no idea that a cunt could tighten from lack of use. That is obviously what happened because he felt like he was stretching her every bit as much as the first time.

"Shit, baby, it's so tight." Kord was panting by the time he had worked himself completely inside. "I'm sorry baby, but it's been so long, I don't think I will last too long."

"I don't care, just move!" She bucked her pelvis upward, forcing movement. She needed him to move! She needed that delicious friction of his thick shaft moving against her walls, filling her up to perfection.

Thankfully he appeared to be beyond playing games. She could tell he was trying to keep his movements slow and measured, but it wasn't working out that way. With a little help, he was soon powering inside her, giving her what she really needed. She wrapped her legs tightly around him, arching her back as wave after wave of sensual bliss washed over her. Her nails clawed his shoulders as his hips moved harder, choppiier, pistoning her core over and over again.

"Oh God, Kord, I can't hold back." Her body felt like it was aflame. She could feel something powerful building in the pit of her belly, threatening to burst apart at any moment.

"Don't you dare hold back, sugar. I want it all. Give it to me."

His pelvis was slapping against her, smashing her clit against him with every down stroke. It was too much. Rayna couldn't hold back. Although she tried like hell not to, she screamed as she came, convulsing around him as her nails bit into his flesh.

"Fuck, yeah, baby! Just like that."

She didn't have a chance to come down from her climax before another one built, threatening to drown her in the waves of pleasure so intense her chest hurt from it. Starbursts exploded from behind her closed lids as once again she flew apart. She heard Kord's responding howl, felt him burst inside her setting off smaller triggers of delight deep in her cunt.

She couldn't move. Even as Kord shifted them, rolling onto his back without disentangling them, she didn't move. Her body left completely boneless. It may have been quick, but making love had been more intense than ever. She doubted she'd be able to move for some time.

"Rayna?"

"Ummm?" She really didn't want to talk right now. All she wanted to do was to feel. Even now, mild aftershocks warmed her from the inside out.

“Did you like staying here? Were you comfortable?” Kord sounded unsure of himself, like he was afraid to say what he really meant. That was odd. She had never seen him afraid of anything.

“Yes.”

“Do you think you might want to stay?”

Rayna smiled against his chest. Hell, yes she wanted to stay.

“Yeah I think I might like that.” Who the heck was she kidding? She would love it.

“As my wife?” Rayna popped up and stared down at him in shock. Completely oblivious to her surprise, he lifted her hand and slipped a ring on her finger. Bought this before I left. I wanted to ask you then but I didn’t think that would be fair if something happened.”

Rayna was afraid to say anything. She forced the tears that had sprang to her eyes down ruthlessly, staring at the ring, then back at Kord in complete disbelief. It was beautiful, perfect.

“Rayna? You don’t have to answer now-”

“Yes! Yes, I will live here. Yes, I will marry you. Yes, yes, yes!”

And to think she had believed she would have to start the New Year all alone.