



Sam Cheever

*The Shadow
of a
Honeybun*

HONEYBUN COUSINS BOOK 1

Red Rose™ Publishing

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Honeybun

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Chapter One

Dolfe Honeybun grimaced as the cold coffee hit his tongue and dumped the dregs of it outside. The warehouse building was still and dark, its broken windows like black scars on the side of the massive building.

A well-known meth lab, the building had been under near constant surveillance for weeks. But the cops had been unable to catch the principles and were beginning to suspect that somebody on the force was tipping them off. So they'd hired Dolfe, a successful private detective, to track them down.

He'd staked out the warehouse for several nights and had seen mostly vandals and hookers moving around the shadowed streets.

Not a single meth cook.

An active man by nature, Dolfe hated the waiting part of his job the most. Each night had been getting successively harder for him until, at that moment, his nerves jangled with the need to take action. His foot tapped against the floorboard of the car. His knee bounced. He'd been sitting for far too many hours in that car. Six cups of strong, black coffee weren't helping. His butt screamed for relief and his right leg jerked uncontrollably, the muscles unaccustomed to such long inaction. Dolfe rolled his shoulders and groaned as pain spiked between his

shoulder blades.

He decided he couldn't sit there a moment longer. Putting his hand on the door handle, he opened the door and climbed out, closing it quickly to shut off the light.

He'd parked in a dark alley between two buildings, deep in the shadows created by the towering, brick and concrete structures. Dressed in black from head to toe, including a black stocking cap to hide his bright, blonde hair, he was all but invisible standing there. He took a blessed moment to stretch his long body, groaning softly as things creaked and cracked and moved back into alignment.

At barely thirty years of age, Dolfe suddenly felt old.

He checked the nine millimeter Glock he had tucked into his jeans at the small of his back and took off running toward the darkened building across the street.

Standing back and watching hadn't netted him a damn thing. It was time to take a closer look.

His butt was telling him it was way past time.

The shadows swallowed him whole as he skimmed silently along the soot stained brick walls. His nose twitched from the faint, almost sweet smell of smoke, which he quickly identified as marijuana. Probably from the Mustang full of college boys he'd watched cruise by a few minutes earlier. They had no doubt been

looking for one of the hookers who frequented the spot.

He shook his head. A car full of testosterone rather than brains. And they were drugging themselves up as a bonus.

Stupidity, thy name is young-adult male.

By contrast, Dolfe had been old since the day he'd navigated his way out of his mother's womb. With his personality, he figured he'd probably looked for shortcuts on the way out...hoping to cut a few minutes off his time down the birth canal.

He'd never had a problem with his work ethic. It was more a matter of hating to be told he *had* to do anything. That was why he'd pursued a career as a private dick.

Well, that, and the fact that he got to kick ass once in a while.

Headlights skimmed the brick in front of him and Dolfe ducked around the corner. He pulled his Glock and waited as the car purred to a near silent stop in front of the warehouse.

When nothing further happened for a couple of minutes, he risked a glance around the corner.

A long, black limousine sat idling quietly in the street, the windows privacy darkened to hide the car's pampered occupants. It was a full two minutes before one of the doors opened and a woman's high pitched giggle cut a swath into the

silent night.

The first thing to emerge was a leg. A really long, slender, truly delectable leg. On the end of the leg was a naked foot, the toenails neatly painted a bright red.

Next an arm emerged, the hand holding two strappy shoes with deadly looking heels on them.

The hand waved in the air for a long moment as the foot tried to get enough real estate underneath it to support the emergence of the body.

The giggle split the silence again and the body shot outward, apparently having received a little help from whoever was still inside the car.

She teetered on the cracked sidewalk for a few seconds, spilling some of the golden liquid from the tall, thin glass she clutched in one hand.

The complete woman was even more impressive than the leg had been.

She was tall, narrow hipped, and round breasted, with smooth, ebony skin and wide, pillow-like lips. She wore her hair in a huge afro, which framed the perfect oval of her face nicely, its oversized exuberance the perfect backdrop for her delicate features and small, pointed chin.

The dress she was almost wearing was red, to match her lipstick and the vibrant polish tipping her fingers and toes. It barely covered the entire curve of her fine, round backside.

She was a dark goddess, perfection in the female form. A gorgeous, ebony

skinned Amazon. And she was obviously drunk as a skunk. She stood on wobbly legs on the sidewalk and sipped from the champagne flute in her hand.

The car rocked slightly and a man emerged. Dolfe forced his attention away from the woman and looked at her companion. His eyes widened. The man wasn't quite what Dolfe had been expecting.



Blaise Runa turned bleary eyes toward the tidy man emerging from the limousine. She squinted. When had he gotten so short? He grinned as he found the sidewalk next to her and took her elbow, rolling off his heels like one of those bop bag toys.

Blaise giggled at the thought.

Her partner's dark eyes narrowed under a suspicion that she was laughing at him. "Wha's wrong, Blaise?" He glared up at her, the slight slurring of his speech the only indication that he'd had at least two bottles of Champagne since she'd met him.

She reached out and patted the top of his sleek, dark head, which only reached to about her armpits. Grimacing, she pulled her hand away. Something sticky coated her palm. "You got syrup on your head?"

The narrowed eyes joined a frown on the surface of his coldly handsome face. His grip on her arm tightened. "C'mon. I got business to take care of in here.

Then we can party s'more."

For the first time, Blaise glanced up at the building looming over them. The dark, tattered structure felt cold and forbidding. It made her shiver with dread. Shaking her head, Blaise tried to pull her arm from his grip and back away. "I'll stay here while you do your business. I don't wanna go in there."

Her friend gave her arm a little yank, tugging her up against his side. Something hard poked Blaise in the ribs as she connected with his slick suited chest. "I need you to stay with me." He told her in a gruff voice.

The bottle of Champagne appeared, seemingly from nowhere, and he topped off her fluted glass. Blaise smacked her lips. "Thanks!"

He wrapped an arm around her waist and started walking. "Let's get this done so we can have some fun, Chica."

Despite her alcohol fogged misgivings, Blaise allowed herself to be pulled toward the warehouse. "I wanna go back to the party." Even in her drunken state, Blaise hated the whiny tone of her voice.

"Shut up, Chica. We're gonna make our own party in a few minutes."

Blaise frowned as he pulled her through the door. She didn't like the sound of that. The air inside the warehouse smelled strongly of nail polish remover tinged with cat urine. The floor was littered with toxic debris, rags, and plastic bags.

Blaise jerked to a stop, pulling her arm from his grip.

He expelled an exasperated breath. “Now what’s wrong?”

“I need to put my shoes on.”

He shook his head, flipping a small, well manicured hand in her direction.

“Catch up when you’re done. I’m gonna go have my meeting.”

Blaise ignored him. She was trying to balance on one foot and pull one of the strappy sandals onto the other foot. The straps kept getting caught on her toes. She lost her balance and had to hop sideways to keep from falling on her face.

Pain sluiced through her foot and she cried out, changing feet to hop in a different direction. Her foot hit a large, metal object and she jammed her toe. Blaise swore, and switched feet again, grimacing at the pain shooting up her leg when she put her weight on the injured foot.

Her knees buckled and she fell onto her butt. As she fell, her elbow struck the metal container she’d jammed her toe on and it rolled heavily away, clanging against a nearby wall.

From deeper inside the pitch black space a man’s voice swore loudly.

“Sorry.” Blaise called out. Then she concentrated on trying to see the slice on her foot, with only the dubious light of the limousine’s headlights to help.

She was still squinting at her foot when a gun went off deep in the interior of the warehouse.

Another shot pinged off the doorframe behind her and the limousine

screeched away from the curb, casting her into darkness. Blaise reached up to feel her hair. She was really drunk but she was pretty sure the bullet had grazed the top of her fro on the way by.

The sound of heavy footsteps pounded toward her from outside. Before she could react, a heavy leg connected with her back and a large body flew over her with a shouted curse. He hit the filthy ground in front of her and skidded several feet, scattering debris in his wake.

For a long moment the only sound in the warehouse came from the man sprawled across the floor in front of her. His breath rasped heavily for a moment before a small click sounded and a beam of light focused on her face.

Blaise squinted and flung up a hand.

The sight of a big, black gun stopped her mid motion. “Don’t even, fucking move!”

Chapter Two

Her wide, golden brown eyes blinked rapidly against the light. She sat cross legged on the grimy floor, holding one foot in her hand. He could see a dark smudge across the heel that might have been blood. Her soft lips drooped in surprise as she stared back at him, her gaze fixed on the nine millimeter Glock in his hand.

Pretty, white teeth showed between the kissable lips.

Still holding the gun on her, Dolfe climbed to his feet, the light of his flashlight swinging around the space as he used his hand to shove himself off the ground.

She sat like a statue, nothing moving except her chest, rising and falling in careful breaths. “Are you hurt?”

She just stared at him.

He shone the flashlight around the space before asking the question again.

She finally blinked and said, “I cut my foot.”

The Glock stayed focused like a laser beam on the space between her pretty eyes. “Where’s the gun?”

She blinked again. “Huh?”

“The gun. Where did you ditch the gun?”

She just shook her head and looked at her foot. “I’m bleeding.”

Dolfe adjusted the flashlight downward. She was indeed bleeding. A thin line of blood ran from the cut, over the heel, and dripped onto her hand. “You’ll want to get a tetanus shot. Once you get to jail.” He lifted an eyebrow as her gaze flew back in his direction.

“Jail! For what? It was just a tiny bit of pot. Come on, man. Haven’t you ever partied on a Saturday night? Jeesh!” Blaise dropped her foot and tried to stand.

The gun stayed focused between her eyes. “Stay right there, miss. Don’t move!”

She made a rude noise with her lips and shoved herself off the ground, turning her back to him as she stood. She came up butt first, the micro-mini skirt of her dress bunched up around her narrow hips.

Dolfe’s flashlight found the firm roundness of her butt and glued itself there. His jeans tightened at the view and he found himself licking his lips in appreciation.

As she wiggled her butt in an effort to stand, the alcohol wreaking havoc on her balance, he had to shake his head to regain his focus on the subject at hand. *Gunshots, drugs, suspicious female on scene.* He swiped a hand down his face and took a

deep breath.

He was back.

She finally stood sort of upright, teetering dangerously as she tried to keep weight off her injured foot. Brushing her hands down the sides of her dress, she turned to him with a grimace. "It's a pigsty in here. And it stinks!" Wrinkling her nose, she placed a hand on one hip and cocked her head, apparently oblivious to the fact that her sexy, lace thong, in pulsating, vibrant red to match her lips, was showcased below her bunched hem. "What was that gunshot earlier? Was that you?"

Dolfe stared at her. His focus was wobbly on the edges again. He was torn between reaching over and yanking down her dress...continuing to enjoy the view...and slapping her into handcuffs.

His jeans tightened even more on that last thought.

"You might want to pull your dress down. And don't worry about what I've been doing, we need to figure out what *you*'ve been doing."

Unbelievably, she grinned at him as she yanked on her dress. "Up until a few minutes ago I was having a great time partying." She grimaced, glancing around. "Things went way downhill as soon as I walked into this place." She covered a pert nose with her hand. "What is that smell?"

"Meth lab." The gun dropped slightly but the flashlight beam stayed put.

“Are you telling me you didn’t fire a gun a few minutes ago?”

Her pretty eyes widened. “Moi! Are you kidding? I’d probably put a bullet in my *own* ass if I fired a gun.” She nodded toward his Glock. “I have no clue what to do with one of those.”

“Where’s your friend?”

She blinked once, twice, and then frowned, her alcohol pickled brain apparently trying to remember who she’d arrived with. Then she flipped a hand toward the back of the dark space. “He went thataway.” She giggled.

Dolfe frowned. “Could you be a little more specific?”

“He said he had to meet somebody. That’s all I know.”

“Why did he leave you here?”

She lowered her brow and pursed her lips, mocking his stern manner. “I was trying to put my shoes on, sir.”

Dolfe glared down at her still naked feet.

She shrugged. “I was working on it.”

“Sprawled on the ground?”

Blaise placed both hands on her hips and hobbled a step closer. “I cut my foot and fell.”

“Mmm, hmm. It couldn’t have had anything to do with a blood alcohol level of about point one nine.”

She screwed up her pretty face, took another hobbling step toward him, and stuck a finger into his face, stabbing the air with it while she worked her mouth trying to come up with a witty rejoinder.

Dolfe turned away, starting off in the direction she'd said her friend had gone. "Stay here."

Blaise panicked when he walked away, taking the light with him. Her legs engaged before her brain did and she found herself running to catch up. He glanced at her as she came up behind him and placed a hand on his broad shoulder.

"Do I need to define the word *stay*?"

"I am not staying there in the dark all by myself. What if the guy who shot the gun is still in here?"

The hunk with the gun and flashlight expelled a breath, it smelled of mint and testosterone. A quiver of desire tightened low in her belly. The shoulder under her fingers was rock hard and impressively broad.

"You're probably safer back there than you are with me. But if you insist, I'd advise that you stay behind me, in case the shooter starts firing again."

Taking him at his word, Blaise took a step sideways so that his body covered hers. From her position directly behind him, she couldn't help noticing the bright curls escaping from beneath the black skull cap he wore over his hair. His neck was thick with muscle and the shoulder blades under the black t-shirt flexed as he

walked.

Her hungry gaze slid downward to a pair of fine, well rounded buns. He was probably six foot five, at least a few inches taller than she was, and looked like he weighed a solid two fifty. All muscle.

Yummy.

She was so busy checking out his fine attributes that she forgot for a moment what they were doing. When he swore softly and reached around to place a big, warm hand on her hip, stopping her, she shivered with unrestrained lust and pressed herself against him.

Dolfe sucked in a breath as her long, perfectly padded body pressed against his. His eyes nearly rolled back in his head under a wave of lust. Her scent rolled over him, warm and sweet and loin clenching, despite the stench of their foul surroundings.

But the body lying on the floor just ten feet in front of them put a definite crimp in the lustful thoughts his mind wanted to indulge in. He patted her hip. “Stay here.” He didn’t wait to see if she listened, but wasn’t surprised, as he leaned over the body to check for a pulse, to find her sweet smelling hair tickling his cheek from over his shoulder.

“Is he dead?”

Dolfe tugged the man’s suit coat to the side and found the bleeding hole

created from a bullet at close range. It had gone right into his heart. “*Stay*. The word means remain in one place...do not move...abstain from traveling.”

Blaise reached a finger toward the hole. He grabbed it before she could touch the body. “Is that a bullet hole?”

Dolfe turned his head. “Are you on medication?”

Blaise snorted.

“No, really. Your boyfriend was just killed right under your nose and all you want to do is poke your finger into the hole?”

Blaise’s skin tingled where his big hand wrapped around it. An answering pulse of delight throbbed between her thighs. She shrugged, standing. “I wasn’t gonna poke my finger into the hole. I just wanted to see if his chest was moving. Besides, he’s not my boyfriend, I just met him at a party tonight.”

“His chest isn’t moving. He’s dead.” Dolfe stood too, his green gaze spearing her with disdain. “You just met the guy and you let him bring you to a drug deal in an abandoned meth lab?”

Blaise frowned. “I thought we were going to the Pancake Palace for blueberry crepes.”

Dolfe shook his head and scanned the floor around the body, illuminated by the flashlight. It was filthy with discarded plastic bottles, overturned metal gas canisters, torn cat litter bags, rags, empty drain cleaner bottles, and plastic bags.

The filth both obscured and...if you knew how to look at it...highlighted the killer's path through the warehouse. Dolfe followed the obscure path toward a broken window at the back of the building. He leaned out and saw an overflowing dumpster, several pairs of glowing eyes, and not much else.

"What are you looking for?" When he turned around the woman was dancing from foot to foot, the strappy shoes still dangling from her long, elegant fingers.

"What's wrong with you?"

"I have to pee."

Dolfe frowned. "Pick a can and go for it."

"I can't pee in a can."

"Why not?"

Blaise frowned. The alcohol buzz which had been holding her up was beginning to desert her and the harsh reality of her current situation was starting to rise to the surface.

She shivered, realizing she was standing in a dark, deserted warehouse full of what looked like drug paraphernalia with a sexy but cranky man who had a really big gun.

"I can't pee in front of you."

"I promise I won't look. Just don't pee on the body."

She expelled an exasperated breath. "You'll hear me."

"I won't listen."

"You will. You won't be able to help yourself."

It was Dolfe's turn to expel a harsh breath. "Then go outside, dammit! I'm kind of busy here."

"I'm not goin' out there by myself. There's a killer out there."

Dolfe pulled a phone out of his pocket. "I need to call the cops. Go way over there and I'll talk really loud."

Glaring at him, Blaise turned away and started off, into the darkness. She quickly stepped on something sharp. "Ouch! Shit!"

Dolfe rolled his eyes. "Here, take this. I'll use the light on my phone. And put your damn shoes on!"

She snatched the flashlight from his fingers and hobbled a few steps before giving in and taking his advice. The next sound he heard as his cell phone started to ring was the click clack of her sexy stilettos on the grimy concrete.

By the time he hung up he was being serenaded by a husky contralto singing, "Nobody knows the trouble I seen...Nobody knows but me..."

Dolfe grinned. "It's 'nobody knows but Jesus'." He called out.

"Shut up." she shouted back.

A moment later he heard the click, clack of her heels again and the flashlight

beam worked its way back. She fixed beautiful golden brown eyes on him and frowned. "What now?"

"Now we wait for the police to get here."

"Aren't you a cop?"

He shook his head. "Nope. I'm a private detective. But I've been working with them to try to shut down this meth lab."

Blaise thought about this for a moment. "Do you think the police will give me a ride home?"

He shrugged. "You can always call a cab."

Blaise rubbed her arms and looked around, the reality of her situation finally settling onto her shoulders like lead weights. Tears filled her eyes, surprising her. She wasn't usually a bawler. It made her mad. She sniffed angrily and swiped at her cheeks, turning her face away so the cranky hottie with the gun didn't see them.

Dolfe saw the waterworks start and tensed. He took a step toward her, his hands twitching in desperation. He wasn't very good at the *there, there* shit and a woman's tears turned him into a babbling idiot.

As she squared her shoulders and frowned, swiping angrily at her wet cheeks, he relaxed and the tension that was his default reaction to tears gave way to much softer feelings. He shoved his hands into his jeans pockets to keep them

from reaching out to the woman.

“What is your name anyway?” She asked him in a slightly hostile voice.

“What’s yours?”

“I asked you first.”

“Do you have ID? The cops will want to see it.”

Blaise felt around in the spot where her tiny, over the shoulder bag usually hung and then swore, her face turning slightly gray. “I left my purse in the limousine.”

Dolfe shook his head. “You’ll probably need to go down to the station then.”

She frowned. “I don’t want...”

The large window behind Dolfe exploded inward and a green bottle, stuffed with a fiery rag, sailed in his direction. Standing with his back to the window, he was just starting to turn when Blaise screamed and flung herself into him, knocking him sideways just as the homemade bomb hit the concrete where he’d been standing.

The glass broke, shattering against the filthy floor, and a fireball exploded outward, capturing everything flammable in its path.

Skidding across the debris strewn floor, Dolfe and Blaise felt the heat of the fire on their lower legs and feet, and experienced the bite of the shattered glass on their arms. Before they skidded completely to a stop, he rolled her off his chest and

leapt to his feet, running toward the broken window.

He jumped through it without even slowing down.

“Wait!” Blaise hobbled toward the window, her heel throbbing and her shoes catching on cracks and rubbish on the filthy floor. She reached the jagged remains of the window and peered out, taking care not to cut herself on the glass. He was running down the alley with his gun drawn, following the hollow sound of heavy footsteps heading toward the street. She sighed, rubbing her arms and glancing back toward the growing flames in the interior of the warehouse. She shook her head, disgusted. “You’re welcome, cranky hottie. It was my pleasure to save your ungrateful self from the bomb.”

Chapter Three

Blaise used the light of the fire to find a door and went outside. Emerging from the building into the same alley where the sexy private detective had jumped, she squinted into the darkness, listening for any sound that would give her a clue where he'd gone.

She started down the alley, her eyes shifting left and right on a constant, terrified rotation. She opened her mouth and tried calling him in a husky whisper. "Here cranky sexy man...here cranky, cranky."

Nothing.

Blaise tried again, louder this time. "Yoo hoo, hunky man with a gun...come out, come out wherever you are."

She didn't hear him come up behind her. Didn't know he was there until a strong arm snaked around her waist and pulled her backward. She squeaked in alarm as he snugged her up against a long, hard body that smelled of mint and clean male animal.

"You think I'm hunky?"

His voice rumbled against her back, sending ripples of need spiraling

through her belly and lower, to the area between her thighs that throbbed for him.

She realized she should panic, he was holding her tight, showing no signs of letting her go, and she knew nothing about him. Nothing except the fact that he made her body go all melty with need when he touched her. Fear didn't have a chance against all the other feelings. It was easily swamped by a tsunami of lust and, amazingly, an irresistible feeling of safety when he was near.

The woman felt incredible in his arms. Her softly rounded butt curved against his hopeful shaft and made his mind cloud with lust. Her waist was tiny, her large breasts brushing the top of his arm where it encircled her. Against his better judgment, his lips found the warm skin of her neck and forged a soft trail downward, where the skimpy dress left much of her soft, ebony skin for him to explore.

She shivered as his tongue slid out to taste the spot where her pulse beat against his lips, sending her sweet, warm scent into the air to draw him in.

Her head dropped backward to lean against his chest, allowing him full access to her throat, and she made a little mewling sound as he spread one hand across her belly, rubbing it in gentle spirals.

The other hand lifted to cup an enormous breast, feeling the hard peak of a nipple under his palm.

She turned suddenly in his arms and captured his lips, pressing her

delectable curves into his body as she wrapped her long arms around his neck. Her lips were so incredibly soft and her breath was sweet with the remnants of Champagne and the underlying taste of woman.

Her lips opened and her tongue slid out to tangle with his, making Dolfe groan with need and press his fingers into her sweetly rounded butt. He held her against his groin so he could grind his hard shaft against her belly.

He knew they were reacting from an overdose of adrenaline. Channeling fear into sexual heat was a common phenomenon, understandable under the circumstances, but that didn't make the feelings any less real.

Something crashed down the alley and he jumped away from her, dragging her behind his body with one hand and lifting his Glock with the other.

Damn the bad guy! Blaise's brain was muzzy with lust and her sweet spot throbbed frantically, painfully. Her nipples were rigid peaks, tingling with expectation and clearly outlined by the soft cotton of her little dress. All she wanted to do was throw the sexy man standing in front of her to the ground and have at him. But *no*, the bad guy had to choose that exact moment to show up again. He was really starting to piss her off!

"Stay." He started down the alley with his big, black gun held out in front of him. She hurried to catch up, stuffing her fingers inside the back waistband of his jeans and shuffling along behind him.

With a sigh, he reached around and captured her hand, enclosing it in a large, callused grip. “Okay then. Stay close. You do know what close means don’t you?”

Blaise promptly pressed herself against his back, smiling at the sharp intake of breath this caused. “Yeah. You’ve got the close part down. We definitely need to work on stay though.” She could hear a smile in his voice.

They walked the entire length of the alley and stopped, looking both ways down the street. The sound of sirens split the night and his shoulders relaxed slightly. Turning to her, he took a step forward, pressing her into the dirty brick of the wall at her back. He lowered his head and took her full bottom lip between his teeth, nibbling it gently. “Dolfe Honeybun.”

In a lust-filled daze, Blaise blinked up at him and said, “Huh?”

“That’s my name.”

“Oh.” Her tongue slipped out and skimmed across the seam of his mouth. “Blaise Runa. Nice to meetcha.”

Dolfe groaned, tilting his hips to press his shaft against her and rolling them until she moaned. “Nice doesn’t begin to cover it. I think you and I need to go someplace quiet when this is all over and make some noise.”

The sirens were getting closer, screaming through the otherwise quiet night.

Blaise looked toward the sound, two lines of worry forming between her

wide, brown eyes. “Will I be a suspect?”

Dolfe slid his gun back into the waistband of his jeans. Reaching over, he grabbed her hand, lifting it to his lips and placing a lingering kiss on the silky skin. “Probably, at first. But when they find out about the bomb they’ll shift interest to whoever threw it into the warehouse.”

Three police cars screeched up to the warehouse. Dolfe took a step out of the alley, intending to walk over and meet the police.

The only thing he heard before the bullet slammed into the building beside his head was the near silent cough of a silencer. The brick exploded into tiny missiles, catching Blaise on the neck and one shoulder and drawing blood.

“Ouch!”

Dolfe yanked on her hand and started running back down the alley, keeping as close to the wall as he could as bullets pinged around them.

Blaise tried to keep up but she was suffering under the added disadvantage of her impractical footwear. She nearly went down to her knees as the heel of one shoe broke off. Dolfe caught her and shoved her behind a dumpster.

“Give me that shoe!” He dragged the unbroken shoe off her foot and smashed the heel into the asphalt, easily breaking it off. He gave the body of the shoe back to her. “This is better than nothing. Barely. You need to get better shoes.”

Blaise gasped, her brown eyes wide with horror. “Better shoes! Those were

Jimmy Choos.”

Dolfe stood up and peered around the dumpster. “You should have let Jimmy wear them. He deserves to break his ankles for designing such stupid shoes. You’d have been much better off wearing some nice, practical flats on your feet tonight.”

Blaise shuddered, repeating his words as if she couldn’t believe he’d called her expensive and sexy footwear stupid. She started muttering under her breath, her hands flying around her head angrily. She slapped his hand away as he tried to help her stand. Dolfe kept his eyes and most of his attention on the alley across the street where the gunfire had initiated. But he clearly heard her say, “flippin’ Neanderthal”.

He turned to grin at her. “Neanderthal? I’m good with that. In fact, when this is over, remind me to introduce you to caveman sex.”

Just like that, anger turned to raging lust. She pressed her knees together and peered around the dumpster with him, trying to ignore the picture of him bending her over a large rock and pounding into her, holding her hair as he plundered her hungry body.

“Good lord!” Blaise exclaimed as her panties dampened under the visual.

He glanced at her. “What?”

“Nothing.” Blaise said, way too loudly.

A bullet slammed into the metal dumpster by Dolfe's left hip. "Shit!" He dove behind it, pulling her down with him. She landed on top of him, her little dress bunched up around her hips.

Dolfe's hands just automatically landed on her firm, round butt. He couldn't help it. He was completely innocent.

Of course he didn't remove them.

His fingers twitched with the need to caress the satin skin of her behind. His eyes were locked on those soft lips. His groin felt as if it pulsed with every ounce of blood in his body.

He nearly vibrated with barely restrained need. It suddenly occurred to him that she'd be wise to leap up and run away screaming. Shooter or no.

"Oh my god! You're hurt!"

"Huh?"

She scrambled off of him and spread her legs to show him the blood on the inside of one thigh.

"Shit!" he gasped, feeling his lungs clench down on his air supply.

As Dolfe licked his lips and stared at the long, slender brown thigh she'd stuck in front of his face, Blaise frowned and slammed her legs together. "It's from your thigh. You're bleeding."

He blinked and glanced down. Sure enough, his jeans had a ragged rip in

them and blood oozed from where the bullet had apparently grazed his leg.

He hadn't even felt it. But now that he looked at it, it suddenly hurt like hell.

"Fuck!"

Blaise felt slightly faint. She'd never been good with blood. She started to stand up.

"Keep your head down! The shooter might still be out there!"

She ducked back down but did a slow turn from a crouched position, her eyes sweeping the area, searching.

"What the hell are you doing?" His handsome face was tight with anger and pain.

"I was trying to find something to press against your wound." She glanced down and blanched, gulping back the bile that rose into her throat. "It's really bleeding badly."

He shook his head. "It's okay. We need to get to the police."

"Why haven't they already come to help us? They're only a block or two away."

Dolfe sat up with a grimace. The movement pulling on his wound. "He's using a silencer. They don't even know he's there."

"Can we get to them?"

"No. There's no cover in this alley once we get beyond the dumpster. I

checked the buildings when I was looking for him earlier. He chose this ambush well. All of the doors are locked. The alleys between buildings are gated with chains, and the windows are eight to ten feet above ground level. There's no place to go."

Right on cue, the warehouse down the alley, where the body of Blaise's erstwhile date was lying, exploded in a whoosh of flames.

The shooter across the street sent several bullets into the dumpster as a warning.

A series of smaller explosions, one after another, peppered the ongoing roar of fire as it gained ground and spread. Windows exploded outward and flames shot through them, flashing into the alley and expelling wide, black plumes of acrid smoke.

The cops would be too overwhelmed by the fire to help them.

They were on their own.

Dolfe pushed himself to his feet. When he stood up the blood flow increased, running down his leg. He ignored the blood and looked at her. "I know you completely suck at taking orders." When she opened her mouth to argue he held up a finger to silence her. "I realize that you're scared and don't want to be left alone. But I can't have you following me when I do what I'm about to do."

Blaise grabbed his arm. "Where are you going?"

“I’m gonna go shoot this asshole.”

“You can’t! He’ll kill you long before you get to him.”

Dolfe’s gaze slid back down the alley, to the wall of poisonous smoke rolling toward them. The night was quiet and humid, buried under a dense cloud cover. The tall, brick and concrete walls of the warehouse buildings lining the alley were like giant conduits, funneling the toxic smoke in their direction. “I don’t have a choice. If we stay here we’ll be poisoned by the smoke and fumes from that fire.”

He turned away, pulling his gun from the small of his back. Peering around the edge of the dumpster, he glanced back one last time. “Promise me you’ll stay hidden.”

She shook her head.

“Blaise! Promise.”

She bit her lip and sighed. Tears flowed down her cheeks. She was fully aware that he planned to take a bullet or several to save her life. That was just not acceptable. “No. If you go out there I’m going out too.”

“Damn it, Blaise!”

She crossed her arms over her chest and shook her head.

Dolfe jerked around and gasped in pain. They both looked down at the bright trail of blood running from his leg.

“We need to stop that bleeding, Dolfe.”

“It’ll be okay, don’t worry about it.”

A sudden thought had Blaise reaching under her dress. Dolfe gulped, his eyes growing wide, as she stepped out of her panties, which consisted of a tiny triangle of red silk and not much else.

“Um, Blaise, I really do think you’re an incredibly sexy woman...I do...but this isn’t exactly the time...”

She ripped the back of the thong. “Shut up, you ass.” Then she positioned the small triangle over his wound and wrapped the strings of her panties around his thigh, pulling them tight enough to make him grimace and tying them off while he swore at her. “Don’t be such a baby.” She leaned back against the wall, feeling as if she were going to be sick. Between the blood and the smoke that was thickening in the air around them, her head was starting to feel a little light. “That takes care of the first problem. Now for the next one.”

“You need to stay behind this dumpster.”

“I’m not doing it.”

“Dammit, Blaise!”

She just shook her head.

They stood there for a long moment. At an impasse. The wall of black smoke rolled slowly but inexorably toward them.

Suddenly Dolfe grinned. “I’ve got it!”

She looked up hopefully. “Tell me.”

Dolfe glanced at the wall of smoke again. The fire in the warehouse had built to an inferno and the heat was becoming even more oppressive than the smoke.

He slid his gun into his waistband and leaned close so she could hear him over the growing roar of the flames. “This is what we’re gonna do.”

Chapter Four

“Have you found Dolfe yet?” Brita Muldane stuck her face close to the uniformed cop’s face and screamed to be heard above the roar of the fire.

The man shook his head. “He’s probably still inside the warehouse.”

Brita shook her head. Dolfe was too smart for that. If something hadn’t happened to him, he would have put the fire out or gotten the hell out of that warehouse.

The only question left was whether she should call Percy. If Dolfe was in trouble, his cousins should be called in.

“Detective Muldane?”

Brita returned her attention to the uniform. “You’d better hope he’s not in that warehouse, officer. His dad’s a US Senator.”

She walked away from the barricade, which they’d placed a block away because of the heat and smoke.

Brita’s cell phone rang and she looked at caller ID, her heart sinking. Senator Brick Honeybun would want to know ‘exactly’ what was going on with his son.

“Hey Brick.”

“Is Dolfe okay?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know?”

“He called to report a murder in the warehouse and I told him to wait with the body until we got here. There was a fire in the building when we arrived and no sign of Dolfe.”

“Did he get out?”

“The building was full of canisters of gas and flammable debris. It’s fully engulfed, Brick. Nobody’s been able to get inside yet. But I have to believe he got out. He’s too smart not to.” It was lame. But it was the only assurance she could offer him.

“Unless he was hurt.”

Brita bit her lip. “Yeah. Unless he was hurt.”

“Brick, did you call Stacey?”

“No. I don’t want to worry her.”

Brick’s ex-wife would be down at that warehouse, flinging herself into the flames if she thought her son might be in there. “Probably a good choice.”

“I’m on my way.”

“I’d rather you didn’t come, Brick. You know it will become a circus if you do.”

“Dolfe’s my son, Brita.”

“I know but...”

“The chopper’s already en route. I’ll see you in a few minutes.” Brick Honeybun hung up on her.

A fire truck rumbled down the street toward the fire, sirens blaring. It was the third truck to arrive in an effort to get the massive fire under control before it engaged the rest of the buildings on the street. She watched the truck as it approached from several blocks away. Movement caught her eye as the truck came within a block of the barrier and Brita turned just in time to see a large, green dumpster rolling into the street from the alley. A cardboard box, sticking up from inside the dumpster, exploded into tiny pieces and Brita’s peripheral vision caught the flash of something from the alley across the street.

A muscular horn blasted a warning into the night but the truck didn’t slow.

By the time Brita’s mind had registered the fact that someone was firing a gun at the dumpster, the fire truck had smashed into it and sent it crashing into the building across the street.

That was when she noticed Dolfe standing in the middle of the street with his gun. A tall, beautiful black woman stood next to him.



Dolfe stood there blinking for a second. Shocked by his sudden lack of cover.

“Holy shit!” Blaise muttered under her breath. “That fire truck smacked our dumpster away.”

Over the slowly dying roar of the warehouse fire, Dolfe thought he heard his name being called, but his gaze was locked on the alley across the street, where the end of a gun fitted with a silencer was barely visible at the edge of the light.

He lifted his Glock, pointing it toward the spot, and reached over to yank Blaise down to the ground behind him, knowing all the while that he would be too late. The shooter would get a shot off before he could. “Stay down!”

The fire truck’s siren cut off abruptly, exposing the drone of a chopper, which seemed to be approaching quickly, coming in low.

Dolfe squinted through the smoke and his finger squeezed the trigger, even as the sharp retort of another gun smacked through the thick silence. Dolfe blinked again, waiting for the white hot pain of a bullet in his chest. But it never came.

The shadows in the alley split and a short man, thick with muscle, staggered out holding his throat. Blood pulsed from between his fingers, matching the beat of his failing heart.

Bullets continued to ping off the walls and the dumpster. Some of them slashed through the fatigues the shooter wore, but he didn’t seem to notice. His entire focus was on Dolfe and Blaise. Even as his life’s blood poured out between

his fingers.

As the man lifted his gun, pointing it in their direction, Dolfe's surprised brain registered two things.

One, he knew the shooter and it was a cop. And two, the shooter wasn't aiming at Dolfe.

And then he realized a third thing. Blaise had forgotten what the word 'Stay' meant again. She had risen to her knees and moved sideways, her curious gaze focused with horror on the man with the gun.

She was fully exposed to the bullet with her name on it. Dolfe doubted the man would miss again.

He flung himself sideways, wrapping one arm around Blaise as he threw himself over her and lifted his gun toward the rogue cop in the alleyway.

Time seemed to stop as the bullet left his gun. Motion slowed. Sound deepened and came to him as if from a long tunnel. The flash of his opponent's gun was almost buried behind smoke and shadows.

The drone of the copter overhead grew louder and debris from the dumpster sailed out, whirling around their heads and down the street.

Dolfe's shoulder snapped back as if someone had smacked him with a two by four. He landed on something long and warm and soft in all the right places, hearing Blaise's soft expulsion of breath as he crushed her.

From the sky, the snap, crackle, pop of small arms fire sifted through the drone of the chopper and the cop who'd shot Dolfe jerked like a marionette on twisted strings before falling in a heap to the ground.

Dolfe tried to push himself to his feet but his shoulder gave out and he fell backward, hitting his head hard on the grimy asphalt.

The world grayed to charcoal, threatening black.

A soft, husky voice found his ear. Silky hands smoothed the hair back from his face. And the sweet, spicy scent of woman flowed over him as he closed his eyes. He wondered if *his* bullet ever even found the guy. He'd like to think he had something to do with taking him down.

Chapter Five

Blaise put the finishing touches of decadent orange smoothie polish on her big toenail and held her foot up, examining the results. Not bad. She closed the bottle and stood up, pacing to the window to look out at the cold rain falling outside. It was a lazy day, quiet as only a Sunday could be, and she was feeling lonely and kind of sad.

Her emotions had been all aquiver since she'd met Dolfe Honeybun and she seemed to have lost some of her former *joie de vivre* because of him. She wondered how he was feeling. Though his bullet wounds were healing right on schedule, he still complained of stiffness and pain in his shoulder.

Blaise felt each complaint in the center of her gut. He hadn't said anything to her. Hadn't blamed her or been nasty about her part in his getting shot. But she knew damn well it was her fault.

Aside from the fact that the bullet had been meant for her, if she'd just stayed behind him, maybe the shooter wouldn't have taken that shot so quickly. Even a small delay while he tried to get a better shot might have saved them. Detective Brita Muldane and Senator Honeybun's bodyguards would have

probably gotten the guy before he'd even gotten off the shot.

Blaise sighed and plopped down on the couch. She'd acted on impulse, without regard for the consequences. Only this time it had come back to bite somebody else on the ass.

Somebody she really liked.

Someone who was really hot and sexy.

Somebody who probably wouldn't ever look at her the way she wanted him to look at her because she was such a shit.

Then she remembered his phone call from the night before and smiled. They'd spoken on the phone nearly every day since the shooting. At first *she'd* called *him* because she felt guilty, and she wanted to find out what the hell had happened that night.

He'd been very patient in explaining it all to her. And she'd learned that she'd just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Apparently the shooter had been sent to get rid of her 'date' and would have killed her on the spot except that Dolfe showed up on the scene. At that point, Dolfe speculated that the shooter had been forced to get creative in his efforts to kill her.

Fortunately for her, Dolfe kept getting in his way.

They'd figured out that the dirty cop had been co-opted by a local thug named Mr. Bigg. A guy who'd had his lily-white hands in all sorts of filthy dealings

for years, but the police had had trouble pinning anything on him.

Shooting a US Senator's son had been a big mistake for Mr. Bigg. Hopefully it would be the mistake that finally put him behind bars.

Even knowing that it hadn't been personal, Blaise was fully aware that she shouldn't have been there at all. If she hadn't let an impulsive decision, fueled by excessive amounts of alcohol, guide her into what could have been a deadly situation, Dolfe probably wouldn't have gotten shot.

But Dolfe didn't seem to hold a grudge. When she'd stopped calling him because of her guilt over causing his injuries, *he'd* started calling *her*. And he'd made it a daily thing for the last two weeks. They usually talked about the case, but sometimes they just talked.

She'd become accustomed to those daily calls from Dolfe and felt almost panicky if they didn't happen when she expected.

Like right at that moment.

It was getting late, a good three hours past the time when he usually called her, and no phone call. Blaise picked up her cell and looked at it, hoping she'd somehow put it on mute and missed his call.

Not likely since she'd checked it only five minutes earlier. It rang as she was setting it back down. It was Dolfe.

"Hey, Dolfe."

“Hello, beautiful.”

She grinned. He sounded happy, almost giddy. He was usually kind of quiet and serious, definitely not giddy. “Don’t you sound chipper?”

“I am. My shoulder feels great today, despite the damp weather. I even managed to get my run in.”

“You went running in the rain?”

“It felt great. I’ve missed running.”

She laughed. “You’re crazy.”

“Highly likely.”

“Did your bodyguards run with you?”

It was his turn to chuckle. “You should have seen them trying to keep their guns dry. It was priceless. I managed to lose them after a couple of miles. They’re probably still looking for me.”

Blaise sat back on the couch and felt her world settle into place. His husky chuckle made her nipples hard. “Your dad’s gonna kill you.”

“He’ll get over it. I told him I didn’t need guards anyway. I’m thirty years old. I can take care of myself.” He sounded just a tetch defensive. Blaise thought it was kind of cute.

She bit her lip, wanting to say something she suspected she shouldn’t. Finally, she decided to risk it. They’d known each other for almost a month. They’d

faced death together. Surely she could get just a tiny bit personal. “I...um...I was afraid that you weren’t going to call.”

Silence met her statement and Blaise panicked, sure that she’d gone too far and scared him.

“I almost didn’t.”

Her heart dropped to her stomach. She jumped as someone pounded on her front door. “Oh. That’s okay. I know you’re busy.” He *had* gone back to work the week before. But her chest hurt as she realized he might stop calling her soon.

The doorbell rang. Whoever was out there was dammed impatient. She glared at the door.

“You gonna get that?”

She frowned. “Yeah, hold on.” Blaise headed toward the door with scattered thoughts, worried that he almost didn’t call her, wondering why. Had she done something to make him mad? Had he finally realized they had nothing in common?

She pulled the door open and gasped. Her fingers twitched and she almost dropped her phone.

“I almost didn’t call first because I decided I was just gonna show up.”

Dolfe stood on her front step, his longish blonde hair curling around his square jaw and water dripping off his long, straight nose. He was dressed in soggy, gray sweats that molded his muscular frame closely, and wet, black sneakers.

His intense, green eyes slid over her, taking in the skimpy belly shirt and the butt hugging short shorts. “You look...delectable.” He grinned. “And dry.”

“Oh my god! I’m sorry. Come in, get those clothes off, you’re soaked.” She grabbed his hand and pulled him inside, closing the door behind him.

Then, realizing what she’d said, Blaise turned to him with a gasp.

He was grinning. “If you insist.”

Before she knew what he planned he’d grabbed her, pulling her into his cold, wet body and hugging her close, amid an array of shrieks and giggles. “You’re soaked through and freezing!” Blaise shoved at his wet shoulders until his lips lowered to hers and the heat of his breath bathed her face. She stopped moving, caught in the sudden heat like a deer in headlights. His lips hovered a breath away from hers, his chest heaving with emotion.

Blaise waited, her lungs clenching with expectation. Her thighs tightened on a wave of pure lust and her nipples pressed against the damp fabric of her wet cami, tingling with need.

“I had to come over. There are some things I’ve needed to say to you. Things I couldn’t say over the phone.”

Blaise stared into his eyes, willing him to say the right things. Terrified that he would destroy her world with his next words.

“I think you’re incredibly sexy, Blaise Runa. You make me hard and fill me

with lust. I want to lay you down and bury myself inside you for hours. I'm praying you feel the same way... 'cause if you don't I'm gonna have to do a lot more running in the rain to get rid of all this sexual frustration I've been feeling for the last month."

Blaise made a tiny sound in her throat, afraid that she was dreaming. She was scared to move for fear she'd wake up. His lips were so close she could feel their heat. Her tongue came out to sweep across her own lips, imagining his taste against her skin.

His hands rested on her hips, his legs pressed against hers. She could feel him, long, hard and ready against her belly.

It was a surreal feeling, incredible, and too good to be true. She was frozen in place, happy just to inhale his scent and feel his hard heat against her.

"Blaise? You're killin' me here, woman."

Blaise blinked, expelled a soft breath, and closed the distance between their lips. She gently settled her mouth against his, not pressing, just barely touching. She didn't move and he took his cue from her, though he nearly vibrated with the effort. His muscles were rigid beneath her fingers.

Closing her eyes she inhaled deeply, immersing herself in his incredible smell, the musky heat and taste of his lips. She opened her mouth against his and said, "I thought you'd never ask."

Dolfe groaned and reached up to place a large hand against her neck, pulling her in for a deep, hungry kiss. His tongue speared between her lips, tasting her and moaning against her mouth as her body pressed his.

Blaise slid her hands under his wet sweatshirt and around to his back, reveling in the smooth skin and the hard play of muscle under her fingers. Dolfe slid the thin straps of her cami off her shoulders and pulled them down her arms, baring her breasts to his hungry gaze.

“I’ve waited weeks to taste you.” His lips found her nipples and covered them, bathing them in heat. They responded by growing even harder, almost painfully so, and tingling with desire.

“Wait a minute.” Blaise extricated herself and hurried to a small table beside the couch. She opened the drawer and pulled out a foil wrapped square, holding the condom up for him to see.

Dolfe lifted an eyebrow but smiled as she hurried back to him, tucking herself right back into the circle of his arms.

Blaise kissed his shoulder, nibbling the rigid muscles, and moaned as his teeth closed gently on her tender nipples, tugging them gently. “Oh god, Dolfe, that feels so good.”

Her hands slipped down his hips, peeling the wet sweats downward, until he sprang free, hard and long between them. He did the same to her, dragging her

thin, cotton shorts down her thighs with ease.

Blaise arched her hips and pressed herself into him, enjoying the play of textures against her belly. Hot, silken skin, soft bristle, and the touch of moisture that showed just how much he wanted her.

Her fingers found him, eager and ready for her, and she swept a fingertip over the bead of moisture there, lifting it to her lips.

Dolfe groaned as her finger slid between her lips and her eyes closed with delight. Her scent, which before had been only a promise of future delights, mixed with her sexual musk to create an irresistible drug. He was inspired with a single, inescapable goal.

Make her his.

Blaise ripped the packet open and took him in her hand. Palming the condom, she pressed her palm into the head of his shaft, draping her long fingers over his hard flesh and compressing it with silken fingertips. Her long fingers pressed the rounded edges of the condom and slipped it over him, using gentle nudging motions that felt like contractions on his shaft. Dolfe groaned from the sheer pleasure of her talented touch.

Suddenly, unable to wait a moment longer, he lifted her off the ground and held her above his expectant flesh, his mouth worshiping the sweet, warm column of her throat.

“Do it!” Her voice was husky with need and her hands pulled his head to her breasts. Her dusky purple nipples were impossibly long and hard, filling his mouth when he suckled them. Each pull of his mouth on the hungry peaks caused an answering shiver in her body.

Dolfe lowered her onto his aching flesh, burying himself deep. Pressing her against the wall, he stopped moving and waited, buried to the hilt, with her nipple still filling his mouth. His shaft jerked in delight as her heat and the pressure of her tight walls embraced it.

She dropped her head back, expelling a breath. Her body pulsed around him, hungry for more.

The tension built between them. His lack of movement creating heat, causing his muscles to tighten in anticipation.

She bathed his thighs with moisture, rolling her hips in an unconscious plea for movement.

But Dolfe suckled her nipples and held on, knowing the tension would only make the ultimate release all the sweeter.

Outside, the wind built and raindrops pelted the windows, creating a cocoon like feeling inside the darkening house.

Inside, only the frantic beat of their hearts and the quick rasp of their breath eased the silence.

Blaise pressed her hands against his shoulders and lifted herself, whimpering with the need to feel him driving hard inside her.

“Shhhh. Don’t move, Blaise. Hold on honey.”

“Oh god, Dolfe. Please!”

Her body tugged on him, wept on him, and emitted a sweet musky scent that was all woman...all Blaise.

Dolfe held his breath until she cried out, rolling over into a knee buckling orgasm that broke his control completely. He pressed her hard against the wall, looped his arms under her thighs, and drove himself deep, picking up a spine pounding rhythm that pushed a range of delighted cries from her throat.

Blaise wrapped herself around him and held on, her beautiful golden brown eyes rolling back in her head as he pummeled her hard and fast.

Her soft mouth arched up at the corners, her teeth capturing the full bottom lip. Dolfe buried his face in her throat and tasted her silken skin, inhaling the spicy scent of Blaise as his body built toward the point of no return.

Blaise tilted her head, giving him free access to her throat. A moment later she screamed his name and tightened around him again, drawing release from him in an almost painful surge. He groaned, his muscles tightening in release, and went over with her, filling her body completely as she met him pulse for pulse with her own spine bending release.

Dolfe touched her lips in a tender, lingering kiss, and then lifted her, carrying her toward the big, soft couch in the center of the room. He settled her on the arm of the couch and tucked her long legs around his hips, burying his nose in her sweet smelling hair as he fought to catch his breath.

Blaise's tongue swept over his pecs, enjoying the sweet, salty taste of his skin and the smell of clean, sweaty man that teased her senses. She tweaked his small, brown nipples and rubbed her face in the triangle of curly, blonde hair between them. "That was incredible." Her body still throbbed and wept from the sexual encounter and she found herself wanting him again, despite the fact that she was fully sated.

"Amazing," he rasped.

When he started to move inside her again, Blaise grinned and pulled his sexy mouth down to hers. "How about we do this in a more conventional spot this time."

He nodded. "Kitchen counter?"

Her husky laugh was all he needed in the way of inspiration for round two. He captured her sexy mouth in a hungry kiss as he carried her across the house, toward the door she indicated was her bedroom.



An hour later, her doorbell rang again and, knowing who it was, Dolfe

reluctantly left her to answer it, pulling on his still damp sweatpants before he opened the door.

The soggy man standing outside handed him a bag. “You left this in the coffee shop where you ditched us.”

Dolfe grinned. “Thanks.”

“The Senator wanted me to give you a message.”

Dolfe’s grin faded. “Yeah?”

The man’s dour expression suddenly brightened in a grin. “He said to tell you there would be a discussion later.”

Dolfe shook his head. “See ya at home later, Smith. Tell Wesson I’ll be expecting to beat him at chess again.”

He closed the door and turned. Blaise was standing just outside her bedroom door, a thin bedspread wrapped around her body and a smile on her face. “Smith and Wesson?”

“I give them all nicknames. I always have, since I was five.”

Blaise nodded. His tone was determinedly carefree, but she sensed sadness beneath the easy words. It couldn’t have been easy growing up with a Senator as your father.

He walked over and handed her the wet bag. There was a shoe box inside.

“What’s this?”

He shrugged. "I owe you a pair of shoes."

She squealed when she saw the Jimmy Choos logo on the box. Yanking it open she frowned at first, and then started to laugh. Inside the box was a plain, white pair of sneakers, with a red lace thong wrapped around them.

"I owed you panties too."

Blaise lifted the panties from the box and held them in front of his face, dangling between two long fingers. "Shall I model them for you?"

His smile was decadent, filled with irrepressible naughtiness, and it made her tingle in all the right places. "Absolutely. The shoes too." He waggled his eyebrows at her. "I've had dreams about you wearing those shoes."

Her laughter filled the night, chasing away the last of the chill caused by a cold, driving rain, and creating a permanent warm spot in the center of his heart.

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Author Bio

Award winning author Sam Cheever mixes in a little fun, a little adventure, and a little real-life spice to create her sexy fantasy and romantic suspense stories. Sam's fictional peeps fight their way through a dizzying array of dangerous challenges without letting little things like mean tempered ex girlfriends, dangerous villains, or angry, manipulative gods dampen their zest for life and hot love!

To find out more about Sam and her work, please pay her a visit at any one of the following online hot spots: her [website](#); her [author page](#) on Facebook; her [MySpace](#) page; or her [blog](#). She always loves to chat with readers.

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