

SAMHAIN publishing, llc



COMMAND AND CONTROL

SHELLI STEVENS

He's afraid of losing his grip. She's about to untie his last knot...

Holding Out for a Hero, Book 2

Megan Asher has a thriving career, looks, self-confidence to spare. It all means little without the love of her life. Trevor has returned from deployment in Afghanistan a haunted man, emotionally distant and unwilling to connect—except in bed. Then even that fragile thread snaps. Brokenhearted, she is forced to call off their wedding and, after a few months' separation, try to move on.

With every aspect of his life spinning out of his once-legendary control, Trevor Wyatt convinces himself that Megan is better off—and safer—as far away from his demons as possible. Until he comes back to town for his brother's wedding, and discovers Megan is dating.

Suddenly realizing what he's thrown away, he vows to breach the fortress she's built around her heart. They come together in a cataclysm of rekindled passion that unleashes the very demons he never wanted her to witness.

Back to square one, Megan realizes she must take the ultimate risk to slip past Trevor's defenses. Give him control in the one place she can. The bedroom. The seductive move is one she prays will be the first step in helping heal him and their love.

Warning: This book contains a tormented military hero and the sexy woman he's determined to win back. Mild BDSM and kink, and blow jobs of the beverage and non-beverage kind.

eBooks are *not* transferable.
They cannot be sold, shared or given away as it is an infringement on the copyright of this work.

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the writer's imagination or have been used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, actual events, locale or organizations is entirely coincidental.

Samhain Publishing, Ltd.
577 Mulberry Street, Suite 1520
Macon GA 31201

Command and Control
Copyright © 2010 by Shelli Stevens
ISBN: 978-1-60928-271-4
Edited by Tera Kleinfelter
Cover by Scott Carpenter

All Rights Are Reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

First Samhain Publishing, Ltd. electronic publication: December 2010
www.samhainpublishing.com

Command and Control

Shelli Stevens

Dedication

Thank you to my family and friends for your support of my writing, and to those who are my beta readers and critiquers. To my readers, whom I adore and who've picked up my books over the years. To my editor, Tera, for making my books all sparkly goodness. Special thanks to my friend Patricia for sharing your experience with the military and the time you spent in Iraq. And most importantly, for this book, thank you to all the military heroes out there who've given their time, and sometimes their lives, for their country. My characters are fiction, but you're the real deal. And you don't get thanked nearly enough.

Chapter One

What the *hell*?

Trevor Wyatt froze, one foot already outside the coffee shop, his mind echoing with what he'd just overheard.

Megan was getting married.

His chest tightened, almost crushing his ability to breathe as the blood pounded harder in his veins. He moved out of the entryway and back into the store, stepping to the creamer station to slowly add three packs of sugar he didn't even want to his coffee.

"Bev, I swear to God I saw it with my own two eyes," Lisa, Wyattsville's most notorious gossip, proclaimed. "Not even five minutes ago Megan was picking out wedding cakes down at Kate's Cakes."

Five minutes ago? That meant she might still be there. Trevor didn't need to hear another word, just strode out the door—coffee forgotten on the counter—and hurried toward Kate's shop. The fact that he needed to be at his parents' house in twenty minutes had just slipped on his priority list.

His fists clenched and his head pounded with sudden tension. How the hell was it even remotely possible that Megan was getting married? Damn it, he hadn't even realized she was seeing anyone.

Maybe if you came back from Fort Lewis on the weekends as much as you used to, you'd have figured it out.

But coming back to Wyattsville meant facing Megan and the fact that he'd failed her. Failed them. Coming back drove a hot poker into another emotional wound he couldn't seem to heal, that'd he'd begun to realize would probably never heal. He was a fucking mess. Megan didn't deserve that. He'd kept telling himself that until he'd finally driven her away.

Right into someone else's arms it seemed.

"Hey, Trevor, didn't know you were back in town!" one of his friend's called out as they passed each other on the sidewalk.

Trevor nodded, unable to form a response to his friend. With each brisk stride he took, familiar faces rushed to move out of his way, their eyes widening, even as more people called out a greeting or welcomed him back.

An image of Megan flitted through his head. The same vision that usually came to mind when he let himself really think about her. An image from two summers ago. She was lying in the grass over on Evergreen Hill, her red hair sprawled out with the wildflowers as she smiled up at him through her lashes.

Her blue eyes twinkled with amusement and intimacy, her breasts rising gently with each seductive laugh she made.

Frustration seeped through his pores and into his blood until he let out a snarl of frustration as he spotted the shop with the pink overhang that was supposed to resemble frosting. The shop Megan was hopefully still in.

She was never supposed to marry anyone else. She was supposed to marry *him*.

He shoved open the door to the shop and strode inside, his gaze sweeping the small confines until he found her.

She stood by the display case full of cakes, dressed in a skirt suit that hugged her curves, laughing as she spoke to Kate, the owner of the shop. But the moment he entered the store, her laughter had died and her lush mouth had parted just enough to show her surprise, even as her gaze remained unreadable. She was always so damn good at that. Keeping her emotions under control. They were one in the same that way.

Longing slammed into Trevor's chest, hitting him like a two-by-four, clenching his heart with an almost physical pain and stirring his blood with a hot arousal that had become somewhat a novelty.

Beneath his jeans his cock twitched, recognizing the only woman who could just about make him come in his pants when she gave him *the look*. The only woman who could affect him on such a primal, sexual, male level.

Megan marrying someone else?

Like hell.

Megan's mouth went dry and her heart rocked against her rib cage, but she kept her features carefully schooled as she stared at the man who'd once captured—and then crushed—her heart.

She hadn't even known Trevor Wyatt was back in town. Had begun to wonder if he'd show up for his own brother's wedding. There'd been a time when the oldest Wyatt brother would return every weekend from Washington State to spend time with his family...with her. But those days were gone. The citizens of Wyattsville—the town named after his ancestor—were lucky to see Trevor once every couple of months nowadays.

But he was obviously back now. He'd stormed into Kate's Cakes, slamming the door behind him, with an expression on his face one that could make most people draw back in alarm. And Kate, the owner of the shop, was no exception, with her rounded eyes and gaping mouth.

Megan turned her attention fully on Trevor again, trying not to let her gaze meander over his tall, solid, soldier's body. Telling herself it was better not to linger on the dark eyes or hard mouth that could reduce her to a puddle. Even if that mouth was taut with anger right now. The question was, what was behind that anger?

“Trevor,” she finally managed in a neutral tone that shocked the hell out of her. “Nice to see you back in town.”

But it wasn’t nice. Not really. Seeing him again had her heart twisting like someone wringing out a towel. It made her stomach bounce around like she was on an amusement-park ride. Seeing Trevor again made her take another step back in her attempts to get over him. And she was trying. Dear God in heaven how she was trying.

Trevor took a step toward her, but Megan held her ground, refusing to retreat any further, even as her pulse jumped with alarm. Was he angry with *her*?

She finally met his accusing gaze and her breath caught as the air seemed to sizzle between them.

“What’s this I hear,” he began, his voice low and unsteady, “about you getting married?”

Megan’s jaw hit the floor. Whatever she’d been expecting, it hadn’t been that. Behind the counter, she heard Kate gasp.

“Megan?” Kate squeaked. “You’re not seriously marrying *Henry*, are you?”

Trevor’s attention swung to Kate. “His name is Henry?”

Megan straightened and sucked in a breath. “Now hold on a min—”

“Oh no.” Kate shook her head and stepped back, lifting her hands. “I’m *so* not getting involved in this. In fact, I think I hear the phone ringing.” She nearly ran to the office of the shop.

Megan ground her teeth together. *Marrying Henry*? How had Trevor even heard she was dating anyone? Oh wait, that whole small-town thing. She’d only lived in Wyattsville for five years, and sometimes it was easy to forget how quickly news spread. She just hadn’t thought it would spread all the way up to the Fort Lewis army base.

“Is it true?” Trevor asked.

“No. I’m not marrying Henry,” she finally said, even as resentment rushed through her. Her fists clenched at her side and she lifted her chin, meeting Trevor’s steely gaze with one of her own. “Though I don’t see how it would be any of your concern if I was.”

Only the ticking of the loud cupcake clock on the wall broke the silence. As she watched, Trevor’s nostrils flared and a tiny tic began on his jawline.

“Who is he?”

“*He* is none of your concern.”

“Maybe he is.”

Was Trevor jealous?

Her stomach churned and she had to snuff out the tiny spark of hope that flared in her heart. This happened every time she saw him. The spark threatened to become an obnoxious flame that wouldn’t die—that would ensure she was miserable loving the one man who couldn’t seem to love her anymore.

“He isn’t,” she said resolutely. “You lost the right to be concerned about what happens in my life when you walked out of it.”

Trevor took another step toward her. “If I recall correctly, you’re the one who ended our engagement.”

Pain stabbed through her, tightening her throat with tears she couldn’t shed. Why was he bringing this up *now*? After months of shutting her out. Abandoning her and his family. After she’d finally tried to move on. Key word, tried.

She opened her mouth to argue. To point out that he’d ended their relationship way before she’d made it official. But why bother? If she argued that he was a year too late, she’d just end up crying. And she’d sworn she was done shedding tears over Trevor Wyatt. They just didn’t help anything.

Self-preservation had Megan closing her mouth again and adjusting the strap of her purse higher up on her shoulder. “I need to go. If Kate returns, please tell her I’ll just come back this afternoon.”

“Wait,” Trevor pleaded, blocking her exit with his large body. A body she was entirely too familiar with, a body capable of giving so much pleasure.

His gaze sought hers, and the mix of frustration, anger and tinge of desperation in his eyes had her throat tightening with emotion.

“What?” she choked out.

“If you’re not getting married, why are you looking at wedding cakes?”

Megan blinked. Was that where he’d gotten the idea she was getting married? Because she’d been looking at *cakes*? Of all the ridiculous...

“Because—in case you’ve forgotten, Trevor,” she sputtered. “Your brother’s getting married in a week. And seeing as I’m the maid of honor to your future sister-in-law, that puts me in charge of the bachelorette party this weekend. And at this kind of party, women like to eat cake. Got it now?”

“Got it. The cake is for Ellie,” he muttered, relief flickering in his eyes. He stepped away from the doorway to let her through.

Megan held her breath, moving past him. She was almost out of the shop when he asked, “So then you’re not serious about this Henry guy?”

With her back to him, she closed her eyes and drew her bottom lip between her teeth. She thought about being honest. Telling Trevor that Henry was just a guy from the next town who occasionally asked her to dinner. Seriously debated telling Trevor that *he* was the only man she wanted. Would *ever* want.

But she didn’t. Instead she walked away from him and got into her car.

Chapter Two

Trevor set the empty shot glass back onto the counter and savored the familiar burn of whiskey down his throat. It always numbed him a bit. His emotions, and the pain in his shoulder that was more phantom than real now. He tried not to drink too often, because he'd seen how alcohol could become a soldier's crutch. And though many times he'd been tempted to just hit the bottle as a way out, he'd found the strength not to.

He reached for a peanut out of the bowl in front of him, snapping open the fragile shell and digging out the nuts inside, before placing them in his mouth. The crunch of him chewing seemed loud enough to echo in the quiet of the bar.

It wasn't quite noon and he and Evan—the bartender—were the only ones inside the dimly lit Oceanside Tavern. The smell of beer and grease lingered in the building.

"Didn't realize you were back in town already, Trevor," Evan said, wiping down one of the beer taps. "Suppose you're helping Tyson get ready for his big day?"

Trevor managed a nod, but that was all. It was the third time Evan had tried to engage him in conversation, and finally he seemed to realize it was hopeless.

"I'll just turn on some music," Evan muttered with a sigh. "We usually don't get folks in this early."

A moment later the twang of a country song came on, and then the bar filled with a soft crooning.

Trevor reached for another peanut. God, he hated country music. He'd always preferred the harder stuff. Give him Metallica any day over the latest Johnny Cash knockoff.

Megan had always been trying to covert him to *the dark side*, as she'd liked to tease.

His gut twisted and he closed his eyes, reaching blindly for the shot glass again. *Megan*. God he missed her. She'd always been the only one who truly understood him.

"Can I get another one of these, Evan?" he rasped.

"I think you've probably had enough, Trev."

Trevor's shoulders went rigid and he opened his eyes, drawing in a slow breath before swiveling on the bar stool to face the newcomer.

"Tyson," he acknowledged with a grunt. "Is that your opinion as the town sheriff, or—"

"That's my opinion as your brother." Tyson gave a brief smile and crossed the bar to sit at the stool next to him.

"Little brother."

“By two years.” Tyson grabbed a peanut and snapped the shell in half. “The parents missed you at lunch.”

Shit. The air seethed out from between Trevor’s teeth and he shook his head. How could he have completely screwed this up? He was staying in their house while he was in town. He’d left briefly for coffee at one of the shops and then forgotten all about the scheduled lunch the moment he’d stepped into Kate’s Cakes and spoken with Megan.

“I’ll apologize when I return,” he said quietly and then lifted his shot glass, gesturing again to Evan for another.

From the corner of his eye, Trevor could see his brother watching him with a frown.

“Everyone’s still up at the house, Trev. Nobody’s left yet. They sent me looking for you since you’re not answering your phone.”

“Turned it off. I’m not good company right now.” He nodded his thanks to Evan as the man refilled his shot of whiskey.

“Yeah? Well, you haven’t been good company for a while now, bro. Think it’s fair to keep letting them down?”

He let everyone down. His family. Megan. His soldiers... Trevor’s mouth twisted into a bitter smile as he lifted the glass and downed the contents.

“I don’t know what the fuck is fair anymore, Tyson,” he finally muttered.

Tyson ate the peanut and sighed. “Talk to us, Trevor. We want to help you.”

Trevor stood and pulled his wallet from the back of his jeans. He tugged a twenty out and tossed it on the bar counter.

“I’m beyond help. Tell the parents I’m sorry and I’ll be back later.”

Turning on his heel, he strode from the bar, stepping out into the end-of-summer sunshine that had his eyes blinking to adjust.

The town was small enough that nearly all the businesses were strewn around Main Street. His gaze moved down a few shops to Kate’s Cakes, searching the curb next to it, even knowing the red convertible left over a half hour ago.

“I shouldn’t have said what I did.”

Trevor hadn’t heard his brother approach again, but then Tyson had always had a quiet way about him.

“You had every right to.” He paused and then glanced at Tyson. “I saw Megan this morning.”

Understanding dawned in his brother’s blue eyes and he gave a sage nod.

“How’d that go?”

“Not well.” Trevor rubbed a hand over the back of his closely shaved head. “She’s seeing someone I guess.”

“That’s the word going round.”

The weight in his gut doubled and Trevor’s jaw flexed. He didn’t want to think of Megan with anyone else, especially some prick named Henry.

“Don’t think it’s very serious though, Trev,” Tyson said quietly. “In fact, I’m wagering she still has feelings for you. Get your shit together, bro, and try and get her back.”

Get her back? How many times had he thought about the idea? Told himself to swallow his god damn pride and admit he was a fuck-up. But the truth of it was, as much as he wanted her back, he knew he didn’t deserve her. Megan deserved to be put on a pedestal and damn near worshipped. The woman was smart as hell, sexy, determined...any man who’d ever had her would be an idiot to have let her go. So that put him at the top of the idiot list. He’d not only had her, but he’d been months away from making her his wife. And still, he’d let her slip right through his fingers.

“It’s too late for us,” Trevor said tonelessly. “I messed it all up.”

“Why not try? You have a week and a half, Trevor. Ten days to try and make things right before your leave is up and Uncle Sam gets you back. If you can return to Fort Lewis and not regret not trying to fight for Megan, then by all means, walk away.”

Walk away. His stomach knotted and he bit back a sigh. He’d already let Megan do that a year ago when he’d pretty much pushed her into calling off the engagement.

It should have been him and Megan getting married right now; instead it was his little brother and the woman he’d proposed to after knowing her only a couple of weeks. A twinge of jealousy slid through him at the undeniable love and happiness Tyson and Ellie shared.

But not everyone was guaranteed happiness in life. It certainly wasn’t in *his* destiny. It should’ve been enough that he was alive. There were a lot of people who weren’t as blessed...

“Think about what I said, and let me drive you back to our parents’ place, Trev,” Tyson offered, pulling his keys from his jean pocket. “We need you. And whether you want to admit it or not, you need us.”

Trevor glanced away, looking out at the Pacific Ocean peeking between the buildings at the end of the road. He rubbed his shoulder unconsciously. Part of him wanted to just walk away and be alone, but then another part of him—smaller, yet determined—knew he’d already been alone far too long.

With a short nod, Trevor followed his little brother back to his car.

Megan refilled her coffee cup with hands that weren’t quite steady and cursed Trevor Wyatt for the fifth time that morning.

It was his fault she’d tossed and turned all night, so it was his fault there were dark circles under her eyes and her head felt like it was full of cotton. Fortunately a little cover-up helped the eyes, and the two pots of coffee were almost keeping her awake.

She sighed and crossed the floor of her office to peek out the window. Main Street was just a few blocks to the right and up the hill to the left was the road that led to the Wyatts' home.

Her pulse quickened and she bit her lower lip, shaking her head. She needed to get over this. Get used to being around Trevor again—at least for the next week. Because he was going to be very much involved with all the little details of the wedding, seeing as Tyson had made him best man and she was the maid of honor.

"Shit." Her hands clenched around the mug in her hand and she pressed her lips tightly together to try and stop the flood of emotions threatening.

He hadn't touched her yesterday, but when he'd stood so close, staring down at her, the need and possessiveness in his gaze had ripped her ability to breathe away.

It had been all she could do not to want to press herself up against him and wind her arms around his neck. To lift her mouth to his for the kiss her body and heart craved.

But sex with Trevor was a bad idea. Maybe if she wasn't in love with the man and she could look at it as *just sex* it would be okay. But this wasn't some random guy she'd dated for a few months; this was Trevor, the man she should have married.

The office phone rang, snapping her thoughts back to work. She returned to her desk and lifted the receiver.

"This is Megan Asher."

"Meg, how are you?"

Henry. She bit back a sigh, recognizing the man she'd been dating for almost a month now.

"Hello, Henry. I'm all right. How are you?"

"Great. Was just checking to see if we were still on for dinner tonight?"

The bell above the office door jingled as someone entered the building.

"Dinner? I—"

Her mind went blank as Trevor closed the door behind him and crossed the room in a couple easy strides, before furling his tall body into the chair in front of her desk.

"Meg? You still there?"

"I'm...yes," she said huskily, her gaze locked with Trevor's darker one. "Dinner."

"So that's a yes?" Henry asked, confusion entering his tone.

Trevor's mouth curved into a slight smile, but there was no humor in his eyes.

"Henry, let me call you back in a few minutes." She replaced the receiver before he could answer.

Leaning back in her chair, Megan crossed one leg over another and watched Trevor calmly. Even if her heart was racing a mile a minute, she prided herself on her control. Her ability not to react. Having the upper hand was not just a benefit for her, it was a requirement.

"Trevor," she finally greeted cordially. "How can I help you?"

“Now there’s a loaded question, angel,” he said softly as his gaze slid over her, lingering on the silk camisole beneath her open blazer that hugged her breasts. “I’ve got a few ideas on just exactly how you could help me.”

Chapter Three

Megan's breath hitched at his not-so-subtle implication. Her breasts swelled beneath his gaze and a liquid heat seared through her body and gathered heavy between her legs.

Keep the control, Megan. You can't let him see how much he affects you still.

"Perhaps you could be more specific?" She arched a brow. "And if this is legal advice, you realize I have a fee."

He laughed, the deep, sexy sound sending a wave of shivers down her back.

"I'm not here for legal advice, Megan."

"No? Then what are you here for? Because, in case you haven't noticed, Trevor, I'm working. And I can't spend my time—"

"Planning dates with a guy named Henry?"

So he'd heard that? A flush worked its way up her neck, but she kept her expression impassive.

"Why are you here, Trevor?" she asked again.

"You'll have to tell him no."

Megan stilled. "Excuse me?"

"Henry boy. You'll have to tell him that you can't have dinner with him tonight."

This time she let out a slow, throaty laugh that had his eyes darkening further.

"And why is that?" she asked.

"Because you're having dinner with me."

The hell she was. Megan let the smile on her face become a bit sympathetic.

"I find it best not to go to dinner with my exes," she murmured and pushed back her chair to stand. "Now if you'll excuse me—"

"Because there's so many of them? Exes?" Trevor asked, standing as well and blocking her escape from where she'd been about to slip past him. "We were together for two years and before that, I remember you saying there was no one serious."

Annoyance sparked in her belly and it pricked her to realize she probably wasn't hiding it from her eyes now. "This is all a bit irrelevant, Trevor. I'm not having dinner with you."

He slowly made his way around her desk, and she took a few steps backward, her pulse quickening and her mouth going dry.

"Come on, angel, just admit it," he said softly, advancing upon her. "The idea of dinner with Henry does nothing for you."

"Henry happens to be a very nice man," she said quickly, her back literally against the wall now.

Oh God, if he came any closer—and there, damn it he did! Their knees were nearly bumping now. She drew in a sharp breath, but it only filled her head with the scent of him. His shampoo and soap that was painfully familiar. The faint hint of his cologne. Megan had the urge to nuzzle his neck, to flick her tongue and see if he still tasted the same.

You're crazy, Megan, get it together.

"Tell me about this Henry guy," he commanded softly, his gaze sliding over her face, searching her eyes. "Does he wear starched suits and bowties?"

"Actually, he doesn't." They were just regular ties.

Her heart thumped wildly against her rib cage and the proximity of his body to hers had every tiny hair on the back of her neck lifting up in awareness. Why oh why didn't she share an office with anyone? Most of her days were spent on the phone with clients, answering e-mails or doing paperwork, but very rarely did anyone come in.

She was alone with Trevor unless she forced him to leave. And right now—though her brain was screaming at her to throw him out on his cocky ass—her body was begging him to stay. To stop just looking at her and to touch her. Because she missed him so much. She missed being held in his arms and kissing him. Touching him. Talking...though the talking had ended long before the kissing had.

Every muscle in her body was coiled with tension. With need.

"I've always loved you like this, Megan." He reached out and traced the lapel of her blazer. "But you know that, don't you? All prim and proper in your trim little suits."

"Trevor—"

"Nobody could possibly know by looking at you just what a little animal you are in bed," he muttered thickly, his fingers gliding back up her lapel and then inward, to trace the neckline of her silk camisole. "How when you come hard you can scar up a man's back with those claws of yours."

His words had her biting back a throaty moan. Even as her nipples tightened and dampness gathered in her panties. She could see it in her head. Could almost feel his cock pounding into her again as the weight of his body pinned hers to the bed.

No, sex won't fix anything.

"Remember that time when we first started dating, when I fucked you in this office?" he asked. "When I bent you over that desk right over there, lifted your skirt, pushed those tiny panties you love to wear aside and just took you?"

Her sex clenched with an ache to be filled, because she did remember. But she shook her head, trying to make him stop verbalizing such a sensual memory.

“Remember how you begged me, angel?” He smiled. “Cause I sure do.”

“Please...”

“Does Henry make you feel like this? Does he know that kissing the small of your back makes you whimper like a bitch in heat?” His voice dropped an octave as his finger dipped under the neckline of her top to caress the swell of her breasts.

Push him away. Tell him to stop. But she couldn't. Didn't want to.

“Or when he's sucking on your tits, are you biting your tongue not to call out my name?”

“Trevor,” she pleaded huskily, arching into his touch.

“Yeah. Just like that.” And then his head descended, his mouth slanting across hers.

Megan couldn't have resisted even if she'd wanted to. She cried out as his lips plundered her, as his tongue thrust fiercely against hers as if to remind her just who was kissing her. As if she could ever, ever forget.

Trevor gathered her close, his hands sliding up her back to jerk her hard against him. Jesus, he'd missed this. Missed her. The feel of Megan in his arms. Her breasts pressed hard against him and the throaty moans coming from the back of her throat. It'd been over a year since he'd touched her like this. An entire fucking year.

Her hands slid up the back of his neck, over his closely shaved head and triumph surged through him. He wanted to wipe out any thought of another man from her mind, shake the visual from his own head of anyone but him touching her.

Damn it, Megan was his. How had he ever been stupid enough to let her walk away? To give up on this? To give up on them?

With a growl low in his throat, he deepened the kiss, tasting her thoroughly. Unable to get enough of her, Trevor slid his hands over her hips and pulled them flush together, loving the softness of her belly against his cock.

And then it wasn't enough. He needed to touch her everywhere. Feel the most intimate part of her that couldn't lie about how much she wanted him.

Trevor moved his hands lower again, catching the edge of her suit skirt and dragging it up to her hips. He slid his hand between her legs, finding the soaked lace covering her pussy.

The whimper Megan let out was the exact one he'd been waiting to hear. Too long.

He tugged aside the silky panties she wore and brushed his knuckles over the wet, swollen folds of her pussy. His cock lurched against his jeans and he hissed out a breath between clenched teeth, trying to keep himself from just taking her here and now. She deserved more than that.

Megan's mouth slid from his, her head falling back as she gasped, and her hips thrusting into his touch.

Trevor's gaze slid to the pulse in her throat that pounded with arousal. The furious beating mimicked the blood raging through his veins. With a groan, he lowered his head to the curve of her neck and shoulders and flicked his tongue over her, tasting her sweet flesh.

Megan, Megan, Megan.

He pressed a finger slowly into her heat, felt the wet grip of her pussy around him and just about came on the spot.

Megan did come. She let out a choked scream, her nails dragging down the back of his neck as her body jerked against him.

Trevor's mouth curved in a small smile of dismay as he buried his face into the curve of her breasts above her top, breathing in her perfume and perspiration as she continued to tremble.

She'd always been so damn responsive, but she'd never come that fast. Usually she needed her clit played with, liked lots of foreplay before she climaxed.

Part of him hoped like hell she'd been saving it all up for him. That the tension had been building and not just anybody could've made her orgasm like this.

But what were the chances she hadn't slept with anyone in a year? He cursed himself again for ever letting her go in the first place.

Trevor gradually became aware of the tension that seeped into Megan's body. She wasn't clinging to him anymore, but it almost seemed like she was trying to sink through the wall behind her.

Lifting his head, he stared down at her and his heart clenched at the dismay and regret in her eyes. Then her thick, black lashes swept down, shielding her gaze.

"Could you please move off me," she asked tightly, her tone void of expression.

Fuck. She hid it well, but Megan's emotional retreat was as methodical and rapid as any unit backing out of an ambush.

Trevor bit back a sigh and pulled her panties back into place, lowering her skirt again. Disappointment clogged thick in his throat as his cock throbbed against the denim of his jeans.

He wouldn't be sleeping with Megan. Not today anyway. But he would have her again. The way she'd melted into him just a few moments ago lit a small spark of hope in his heart. Fragile, but strong enough that he knew he had to fight like hell to get her back.

Stepping away from her, he shook his head. "I didn't mean for it to get that out of hand, angel."

Her lashes swept up, the anger in them brilliant. "The hell you didn't. You knew exactly what you intended the moment you walked in here, Trevor Wyatt."

Maybe he had. But he hadn't let himself hope for one moment she'd be that responsive.

"I won't apologize, Megan," he said quietly. "I can't. Not for something that's so right."

"It's not right anymore, Trevor. Don't you get that?" she almost shouted, frustration causing her brows to draw together. "You don't have a right to touch me. I stopped being your fiancée last year."

“Maybe I want you back.”

Megan went rigid, the shock in her eyes twice what it had been a minute ago.

“Get out,” she whispered. “Get the hell out of my office and don’t come back.”

Trevor’s jaw clenched. What the fuck had made him make that declaration aloud, without any finesse or plan in his head? Megan had every right to be livid.

“I should go,” he agreed with a nod and headed toward the door. “I’ll see you tonight at dinner.”

“I am not having dinner with you!”

“Yes, Megan, you are. With me and with the rest of my family. So you’d better call that Henry guy back and tell him your date is off.” He stopped at the entrance and turned to give her a tight smile. “Ellie asked me to drop by and remind you. She thought you might’ve forgotten. Guess it’s a good thing I stopped by. For more reasons than one.”

“Oh, you son of a—”

Trevor slipped out the door, shutting it again before he could hear the rest of her curse. Amusement slid through him, and for the first time in a while he felt a genuine smile slip across his face. Megan had always been sexy as hell when she got pissed.

He strode past the window, feeling her glare on him until he disappeared to where his car was parked on the corner.

He climbed into his truck and slammed the door, let his head fall back against the headrest. His dick was hard as a rock, but he felt better than he had all year.

Tyson was right. He needed to try and get Megan back. Because a lifetime was just too long to live with the regrets if he didn’t.

Chapter Four

Megan stepped out of the shower and grabbed the towel folded neatly on the toilet.

She'd been in there for almost a half hour, trying to scrub away the smoldering encounter with Trevor this afternoon. Good God, how had she lost all control around him? How was it that he simply had to decide *he* wanted her again and she was a puddle at his feet?

It was like Pavlov's dog. Only she wasn't a dog and there was no damn bell. Just a sexy soldier who would always have her heart.

Which made her wonder how she was going to ever get through this week. Having to finalize the details of Tyson and Ellie's wedding with Trevor standing by? But she had to get through. Had to keep her head on straight and not get involved with Trevor again. It had been over a year since they'd broken up, and she was finally making steps to get over him.

Tears stung her eyes as she brutally scrubbed her body dry with the towel.

She wanted Trevor to be happy, really she did. She'd been praying for his heart, mind and body to heal since that day she'd received that horrific call from Afghanistan that he'd been hurt.

Just thinking about it now had the ability to make her stomach contents roll and her head spin with terror. She dropped the towel and gripped the counter, shaking her head as she sucked in a great big lungful of air.

Trevor's body had eventually healed, but his heart and mind had never seemed to fully recover. They'd never kept secrets from each other before. But when he'd returned, everything about him had been different. There'd been nothing *but* secrets. And even though the sex between them had still been incredible, she'd always felt like he was holding back. That he was fighting demons while making love to her.

She'd begged him to open up. Begged him to get help. Because they hadn't been a couple anymore, they'd become two people who only came together to have sex. But he'd refused to seek help, to even talk about it. He'd even stopped any planning of their wedding. Retreating more into himself until that chasm between them became so great that not even amazing sex could bridge it. And that's when she'd left. Because staying would've only destroyed her and the love she'd always hold for him.

Megan crossed the bathroom that was still full of steam, and reached for her dress hanging on the door. She slipped into it and then her heels, then made quick time drying her hair and putting on makeup.

When she finally climbed into the convertible, there wasn't enough time to appreciate the summer sun beating down. How the hell had she forgotten about dinner tonight? She'd promised Ellie last week she'd be there.

It was Trevor. He'd returned to town and thrown her entire life for a loop. She wasn't stupid, she knew why he'd tried to seduce her today. The phenomenal sex and chemistry between them had always offered him that brief distraction, moments of happiness where he could just forget. But the price to her heart and own sanity was just too expensive...

By the time she arrived at the local Italian restaurant, the Wyatt clan was already there.

Megan strode to the back of the dim restaurant, inhaling the delicious smell of garlic and olive oil. She kept her head high and avoided looking at Trevor, who sat with the small group of people at the table. Though she knew exactly where his muscled frame was furling into a chair in the back corner.

"Megan," Ellie called out and rushed to her feet. "I thought you might've forgotten. So good to see you."

"You too." Megan embraced the other woman briefly then gave a small smile. "Don't you just look fabulous? Must be that pre-newlywed glow."

She really did look great, Megan thought, taking her seat. Ellie's eyes were full of love and laughter, so unlike the woman Megan had first met over a month ago when Ellie had come to Wyattsville to disappear from a trial she was subpoenaed to testify on.

"Thank you. We're so excited," Ellie said sitting back down and sipping a glass of wine. "And we can't thank all of you enough for helping out and arranging your schedules to be here. Especially you, Trevor. I know the army doesn't just let you run off any time you want."

Tension slid through Megan's muscles and she couldn't help herself from lifting her gaze to the other end of the table. Trevor was already watching her. Their gazes locked and Megan felt the air leave the room.

"No worries," Trevor replied to Ellie without looking away. "I already had the two week leave scheduled for my vacation. So you and Tyson picked a fine weekend to have the wedding. Glad to be here to help."

Megan wanted to look away from him, knew everyone was watching them with open curiosity, but it was impossible.

"Well I'm so glad you said that, Trevor," Ellie went on cheerfully. "Because I'm putting you and Megan in charge of food."

"What?" Megan snapped her gaze back to Ellie and Tyson, whose arm was draped around her. She felt the blood draining from her face. "You want—"

“Well, we’re divvying up all the areas that need tending to,” Tyson explained lightly. “Since we’re keeping this a simple, small wedding with just the big barbeque for the reception. We were hoping to trust you and Trevor to plan an easy menu and then make a Costco run a few days before.”

“They put me in charge of the alcohol.” Todd, the youngest Wyatt brother, grinned from where he sat in the middle of the table and lifted his beer. “Hell *yeah*.”

Megan’s teeth snapped together. Costco was like two hours away! Spending that much time alone with Trevor in a car? Planning the menu with him?

She let her gaze slide around all the people at the table. Tyson and Ellie were doing their best to look innocent enough, but she didn’t miss the spark of mischief in Tyson’s eyes.

Sharon and Dan Wyatt, the brothers’ parents, were avoiding looking at her. Instead they studied the restaurant’s menu as if this was the first time they’d seen it. Which was ridiculous seeing as they ate here at least once a week.

And then there was Kate, not family, but going to be a bridesmaid in the wedding. She was making no attempt to appear unconcerned, but kept shifting her wide gaze back and forth between Trevor and Megan like they were in some tennis death match.

“I have no problem with that,” Trevor said finally, his tone casual.

Right. And if I say I do have a problem with it, I’ll be written off as a hard bitch. Though with her reputation in the legal field, it wouldn’t be the first time.

“No problem at all,” Megan agreed with a forced smile. “Seriously, anything we can do to make this easier on you guys. I’m just surprised you wouldn’t want to pick out your own food for the reception.”

Ellie waved her hand and laughed. “This is all going to be so casual. I’m sure whatever normal type of barbeque foods you choose will be fine. Besides, I picked the only thing I care about. *Cake*.”

“Nice.” Todd ripped a slice of bread off the loaf in the middle of the table, grinning over at Kate. “Kate’s of course?”

Kate laughed and rolled her eyes. “Umm, I’d have to hurt someone if they didn’t go through me.”

“As if there’s anybody else I’d choose,” Ellie scoffed. “You make *the best* baked goods. You hooked me with those damn cinnamon rolls.”

Kate tucked a strand of blonde hair behind her ear and smiled. “Thank you. Those do seem to sell pretty well, too. And the cupcakes. Though my cakes are still what keep me in business.”

“I’d come to your place for cupcakes any day of the week, baby.” Todd winked and took another swig of beer.

Megan watched as Kate’s cheeks filled with color and she resisted the urge to kick Todd under the table. Poor Kate had been nursing a crush on the youngest Wyatt brother for years. Everyone seemed to know *but* Todd. And it didn’t help that Todd flirted with every female within fifty miles of Wyattsville.

With a sigh, Megan shifted her gaze and cursed when it connected with Trevor's again. He lifted his beer in a salute and then gave her a slow smile. Probably making a little toast to their unwanted partnership.

Her stomach danced with butterflies and she resisted the urge to press her hand against it to ease the sensation.

Damn Ellie and Tyson for their matchmaking. Didn't they realize how much this was going to just about kill her?

Tyson cleared his throat. "Now as for dinner tonight, what are you all getting? And remember, Ellie and I are paying. It's the least we can do to thank you all."

There were a few token protests, but Tyson waved them away.

Megan glanced down at her menu, knowing she had to keep her wits about her. Now more than ever.

Trevor ate his dinner in silence, speaking when needed, but happy to remain more of a silent observer on the planning of the upcoming wedding and reception.

It was pretty much what he was used to now, though. Lingered back in the shadows, trying to disappear and be alone with his thoughts.

By the time dinner had arrived everyone had been assigned their tasks, and most of the wedding and reception details had been finalized. It really was a small wedding, which was exactly what Tyson and Ellie had wanted. And Trevor couldn't blame them. It's what he and Megan had once wanted too. Though their dream had always been a quiet ceremony on a beach.

Trevor drew in a painful breath, his fingers clenching around the fork in his hand.

The fact that Tyson and Ellie had paired him up on a project with Megan really didn't surprise him much either. And maybe a week ago it would've pissed him off, but now...now he needed all the help he could get convincing her to give them another chance.

Trevor hadn't even realized how badly he wanted that second chance until he'd thought Megan was about to marry someone else. The memory of this afternoon, what had happened in her office, was still sharp in his mind. Hell, his cock was probably still blue from wanting her so badly.

But then he kind of enjoyed the feeling of being aroused again. Of the need to fuck so badly it felt like he could hammer nails into a board with his dick. He hadn't felt like this since before she'd left him.

He glanced over at Megan, who was seated nearly as far away from him as possible. She also seemed to be avoiding conversation, and instead was focusing on her spaghetti. Sucking a long noodle from her fork and then licking the trace of sauce from her full lips.

She reached for her wine, and her gaze slipped over to him almost stealthily. But he'd been watching, waiting, and he saw it.

Her fingers tightened around the stem of her glass and color stained her cheeks slightly before she jerked her gaze away again.

And just like that he remembered how it felt to have his finger deep inside her body. To feel her squeezing tightly as she trembled through an orgasm.

Trevor took another drink of wine, his gaze sliding over her face. God, he wanted to watch her come again. Watch her lose all control when she climaxed. He'd always loved that. Megan was a confident woman in bed who wasn't afraid to ask for what she wanted.

He remembered one time when she'd shown up at the base just in time for the weekend. She'd been dressed in a familiar tan trench coat, but surprised him by wearing nothing but a g-string underneath. They'd barely made it off base before she'd told him to pull over and fuck her in a small wooded area.

He watched Megan now, the way she shifted in her seat, a sign of her awareness that he was watching her. And Trevor was all too familiar with the way she would trace her fingers low over her neck when she was aroused. Just like she was now.

Her gaze lifted again and then dropped immediately. He watched her mouth move in a silent curse.

Biting back a laugh he turned his attention to his food once more to give her a little peace.

When the dinner was finally over and everyone was saying their goodbyes, he made his way over to Megan, who was edging toward the door.

"Let me walk you out?" he asked softly.

Her mouth tightened and for a moment he thought she would refuse, then she gave a slight nod.

"Megan, I'll see you tomorrow," Ellie called out. "The bachelorette party, baby!"

"Oh, right." Megan nodded and Trevor stifled a laugh at her tight smile. "I'll be there."

He knew she hated the party scene and rarely drank. Though when she did get a few in her...look out world. Because anything went.

Tyson had tried to refuse a bachelor party, but Todd had convinced him to at least hang out at his place tomorrow night with the guys to watch the baseball game, grill some brats and have a few beers. Trevor figured Ellie wouldn't do anything too much crazier with the girls tomorrow.

When they stepped outside a few minutes later, the night air was significantly cooler and Megan shivered, wrapping her arms around her.

Out of habit, Trevor started to shrug out of his light jacket to offer it to her, but she shook her head and stepped back, her expression pinched as she looked him over.

"Let's just be clear about this," Megan said. "I'm not really happy being buddied up with you, Trevor. I'll do it because I care about your family and this wedding, but don't be getting any ideas about us."

Had she been practicing that little speech in her head all through dinner? He arched an eyebrow. "Ideas, angel?"

"Don't call me angel anymore. And yes, ideas. What happened this afternoon was a complete mistake. A fluke." She turned on her heel and started toward her car.

"You coming on my finger wasn't a fluke, Megan."

She spun around in an instant, her palm arcing toward his face. He caught her wrist before it connected, barely blinking at her sudden attack.

Beneath the streetlamp he saw the anger and humiliation blazing in her eyes.

"Whether your mind is ready to acknowledge it or not," he continued softly. "Your body still wants me."

"Yes, well my body would also love to eat a half dozen cupcakes a day, Trevor. Fortunately, I have a brain to overrule its bad instincts."

His lips twitched. "Hmm. Guess it wasn't working this afternoon?"

Megan let out a growl and tugged her hand free. "My original point was—and still is—I'm not sleeping with you again."

"Why not? Would it really be so bad?"

"For one, I'm dating Henry."

He shook his head and called her bluff. "Henry means nothing to you. You're barely dating him. I bet you haven't even let the guy kiss you."

The way her cheeks went red made him realize he was likely right. A wave of relief and triumph swept through him, easing some of the tension from his muscles that had appeared when she'd thrown Henry in his face.

"Regardless of what I've done with Henry, I *am* still seeing him."

Something about the way she kept throwing the other guy up as a barrier made his blood pressure kick up a notch.

"So call it off," his suggested tersely.

She stared at him. Hard. Until Trevor felt heat stealing up the back of his neck now. He knew it was an asinine request.

"Answer me one question, Trevor," she finally said, her gaze searching his face. "Are you getting help?"

Trevor's abs clenched as if she'd just kicked him. All the emotional doors slammed shut inside him and his expression become flat. Stoic. He went to that place in his head, where everything was automatic and disciplined. It was easier just to be in soldier mode.

"I don't need any help."

He couldn't tell if it was a trick of the light or if her eyes shimmered briefly with tears. Then she blinked and gave a short nod.

"Right. Then a year's gone by, but we're still at an impasse." She turned and unlocked her car door. "I'll contact you soon about us planning a menu for the reception barbeque. Good night, Trevor."

He didn't make any attempt to stop her this time as she climbed into her sports car and revved off into the night.

Chapter Five

Sweat poured down his face as the Humvee rolled across the deserted road. Though it wasn't quite empty, up ahead they could see the burning vehicle of their interpreter.

Trevor's gut twisted as he called out for Burton to stop the Humvee. When the vehicle rolled to a stop, he climbed out, yelling instructions to his soldiers as he crossed to where Housyar lay bloody and motionless. Beyond him, the bodies of three more Afghan men, the acrid smell of flesh and car burned together.

God damn it, not again. Housyar had been with them for three months. Had risked so much, including his family, to travel with them.

Trevor adjusted his M16 and turned back to his soldiers, mouth open to call out more instructions. No. He stilled, and the hairs on the back of his neck rose.

"Get back!" he screamed, rushing away from the car and bodies.

Everything exploded. Metal, dirt and bodies flew in all directions. Trevor landed hard, his helmeted head smashing into the ground as a fist-sized shrapnel slapped into his upper arm. Pain ripped through him, making him see stars as he struggled to sit up.

Dazed, he became aware of the sound of small arms fire. He heard the pings of rounds hitting the Humvee and knew they were in deep shit.

There was no time for fear, no time to hope that his soldiers were still alive. Trevor crawled on his belly over the dirt road toward the Humvee, seeing body parts and car pieces littered everywhere.

He spotted the uniform of one of his men lying ominously still a few feet away. Nausea threatened, but he shoved it aside as he spotted Washington and Foster defending themselves.

"IED. The bodies were booby-trapped," Trevor screamed. "Don't think Burton made it."

"Bastards. Fucking bastards!" Foster shook his head, still firing off rounds.

"Call for backup, Washington," Trevor ordered tersely to the younger soldier. "You tell them we're being ambushed and to get their asses in here now."

"Yes, sir!" Washington yelled and climbed back into the Humvee.

Trevor used the door to the Humvee for cover, drew in a deep breath, then lined up his assault rifle and started returning fire. Aiming for muzzle flashes he spotted from the buildings around them, Trevor kept firing, adrenaline rushing through him.

The familiar whistle of an RPG sounded over their head, the only warning, before it hit far to their right.

Damn it, they were going to die out here. He prayed like hell Washington was getting in that call for help.

Another whistle of an incoming RPG sounded, closer now.

“Get back!” He jerked Foster away from the Humvee, just as the second RPG slammed into the front of the vehicle.

Trevor heard the roar, felt the flash of heat, and then everything went black.

Trevor jerked upright in bed, reaching for the weapon he wasn't holding as his unfocused gaze swept the room for an enemy who wasn't there. Sweat pooled from his forehead as he dragged in a lungful air.

The choking, acrid smells in his dream were gone, instead replaced with the salty sea air from his window being open.

His heart slammed around in his chest and he kicked the sheets off his body, pushing himself out of bed.

He went straight to the bathroom and turned on the sink, cupping his hand full of icy water to splash on his face. Each douse rinsed away a little bit more of the nightmare. Brought him back to reality. Or at least the current reality. Until he stared at himself in the mirror and only the haunted look in his eyes gave away the hell he'd just relived in his sleep.

He gripped the counter of the sink and lowered his head, his shoulders quaking with the shuddering breath he let out. *Damn.*

The dreams had become less frequent in the past year, but they still came.

Trevor turned off the water and walked back into his room, letting his alert gaze slip around it. It was the room he'd grown up in; his parents hadn't changed it when he'd left for the army at eighteen. Since he was often being relocated to different bases, or sent overseas, it was the one thing that was constant in his life. The one place he could always count on to return to.

Getting stationed at Fort Lewis had been a stroke of luck, being just a few hundred miles away from Wyattsville. It made it possible to come back and be with his family. To ultimately meet and fall in love with Megan, who'd moved to Oregon from Los Angeles five years earlier.

She'd been planning to relocate to Washington after their wedding, they'd even been looking at houses, and then everything had fallen apart. Or *he'd* fallen apart. He'd held it together for a bit after returning from Afghanistan. But like a loose thread on a shirt, he'd slowly unraveled a little bit at a time...

Trevor slapped his palm against the wall. Damn it. He could fix this. Stitch his life back up. He was a fighter, it was the reason he'd joined the army. He wasn't afraid to face adversity. And he just needed to remember that. At least if he was going to have a chance in hell at getting Megan back.

Grabbing a change of clothes, Trevor went to hit the shower and start the day.

Bachelorette parties. Geez, she usually tried like hell to avoid them. Megan cringed and followed the stream of ladies into The Oceanside Tavern. Ellie led the pack, giving a woot of excitement as the penis antennas on the headband she wore bobbed up and down with her bouncy steps.

They were taking over the tavern. Word had gotten around town about Ellie's bachelorette party and people had cleared out, ready to let the ladies rule the roost tonight. But there were a few guys, mostly in their early twenties, who'd showed up probably hoping for some action from the girls as the alcohol flowed and the inhibitions loosened.

Megan followed the near dozen girls to the counter and lined up with them.

"Round of blow jobs, Evan!" Ellie hollered.

Megan shook her head. "Oh, uhm, no blow job for me, Evan. I'll just have an orange juice, please."

Ellie swiveled to look at her, her eyes wide. "Orange juice? At my *bachelorette* party? No way, Megan! I still owe you drinks—if not my firstborn child—for representing me in court last month."

Clearly Ellie had already been given a drink or two before the party started. "Oh, it's just, I'm getting over a cold. And the citrus—"

Ellie snorted. "You're so creative when you lie. I love it." She turned to face Evan and slapped the counter. "Give her a blow job."

The other girls cheered and patted Megan on the back, hollering out things like *loosen up* and *have some fun!*

And here she'd thought she'd been loosening up by wearing a short flirty dress—because that's one thing Kate had encouraged her to do this morning when she'd swung by the bakery. After all, Kate had reminded her, one had to show up looking sexy as sin to these bachelorette parties. Who knew when the opportunity to flirt would come up?

Not like she had any intention of flirting with any of the boys in town, Megan reminded herself. And it wasn't like Henry would be there. Or Trevor.

Biting back a sigh, Megan accepted her shot when it came. But, unlike Ellie, she didn't take it with her hands behind her back and using only her lips to hold the glass.

She pinched the shot glass between her fingers and tossed it back. Hmm. That hadn't been all too bad. She licked her lips, enjoying the lingering taste of Bailey's and Kahlua.

"God, that was awesome," Kate said fervently. "I'm totally going to have to make a cupcake along these lines."

"I'd buy a dozen of those, Kate," another girl called out. "Can I have another one of those shots, Evan?"

“Me too.” Megan blinked in dismay, realizing the request had come from her. She bit her lip, ready to retract her request and then sighed.

Screw it. It *was* Ellie’s bachelorette party after all. What could a few drinks hurt?

“You mean you’ve never tried handcuffs?” Ellie asked, wide-eyed as she leaned forward on the bar stool.

Megan took another sip of her chocolate martini and then shook her head. Half the girls were out on the floor dancing and just her, Kate and Ellie were gathered around the bar chatting.

Everything felt kind of light and fluffy right now. She was on her third drink. Or was it fourth? There’d been at least two blow job shots...

“Never?” Ellie asked again. “Not even when you were with Trevor?”

Megan shifted on the stool and lowered her gaze, ignoring the pang in her heart. That familiar sense of loss she had when someone brought up Trevor.

“No, we never did handcuffs.” She tried to sound casual.

“How about being submissive? That whole being-dominated thing?” Kate asked with a sly smile. “I hear that’s awesome. Either of you ever do it? Give up control to a guy?”

“Not really my thing.” Ellie wrinkled her nose. “How about you, Meg?”

“No.” Megan’s mouth curved with amusement. “In fact if anything I tend to be the one in charge. Come on, you know me. I’m a control freak.”

“Oh my God, you so are.” Kate snorted and her gaze turned impish as she glanced toward the door. “What about with Henry? Does that therapist get your bells a ringing? Maybe fix up more than just your mind?”

“Ugh, no.” Megan snorted, the alcohol making her a little more honest. “And he’s not *my* therapist. I see his partner for that. You know, I don’t think I’ll ever be able to sleep with Henry. He’s just a little too—”

“Umm, Megan.” Kate’s face turned red and she shook her head.

“Boring? I don’t know,” Megan went on. “There’s just no chemistry. And I’m still all emotionally wrapped up with Trevor. I should probably just tell Henry, huh?” Megan finally recognized the distress on Kate’s face and how Ellie’s mouth was hanging open. “What? What is it?”

“You don’t need to tell me. I heard it all fine myself,” a voice clipped from behind her.

Oh shit. Shit, shit, shit!

Megan’s eyes rounded as she spun the bar stool around. Yes, Henry was really right behind her. Standing stiffly in his suit and tie, the light in the bar reflecting off his receding brown hairline.

Her smile felt so tight now, her face nearly split.

“Well, of all the people I expected to show up at Ellie’s bachelorette party, you’re not exactly at the top of the list,” she tried to joke.

“No. I suppose not.” His brows drew together in disapproval as he took in the scene. “I’ve been trying to call you, but you haven’t been answering your phone. You never called back about dinner last night. I finally dropped by your house tonight. Fortunately, or unfortunately, your neighbor noticed me and told me where I could find you.”

“Dinner. Oh, I did forget to call you, didn’t I? I’m so sorry—”

“Don’t apologize, Megan.” He gave a slight smile. “I don’t suppose it really matters anymore, does it? Seeing that there’s no chemistry and you’re still in love with your ex-fiancé.”

How did he know that? Or had she just admitted it? This was just weird going on weirder. And her buzz wasn’t helping her at all, because she had the sudden urge to giggle.

“Listen, how about I give you a call tomorrow,” she said, trying to sound professional. But Henry wasn’t a client, so why couldn’t she just talk to him—

“No, don’t call.” He waved a hand dismissively. “It’s why I wanted to talk anyway. I think it’s pretty much been laid on the table at this point. We’re better off not seeing each other anymore. Have a good evening, Megan.”

Megan watched him leave the tavern again, her mouth gaping open in dismay.

“Okay, did that just happen?” Kate asked on a wheezing laugh. She leaned forward and shook her head. “Did he just break up with you at Ellie’s bachelorette party?”

“He totally did!” Ellie guffawed and then lifted her glass of wine and nodded solemnly. “What a douche.”

Kate joined in the nodding. “He really is. Are you upset, Megan?”

“No. Not at all,” Megan replied, realizing she didn’t even need to think about the question.

In fact it was almost a relief it had been so easy. Maybe tomorrow, when the alcohol wore off, she’d feel a little guilty, but right now it was just liberating. She never should’ve started dating Henry in the first place, it was just that her therapist—his business partner—had kept telling her she needed to move on from her past relationship. When Henry had asked, it had seemed like the perfect solution. Hmm. Maybe the whole thing had been a setup?

“Seriously,” Kate patted her hand. “You could do so much better than him.”

Ellie wagged her eyebrows. “Yeah. You could do Trevor.”

Her chest grew tight and another wave of despondency swept over her.

“That boat has sailed,” she replied softly.

“Then flag it down and make it come back. Seriously, anything is possible,” Kate said earnestly. “You and Trevor are so right for each other. I think the entire town mourned when you guys split.”

She didn't want to hear this. Megan's fingers tightened around the stem of her drink. Oh God, she didn't want to be told how awful it was that she and Trevor weren't together anymore; she already *knew* this.

Taking another sip of wine, Ellie nodded. "I have to back Kate here. Though I never knew you guys when you were together, whatever you had is still there. You guys get together and the air just shimmers with electricity."

"Look, the past has passed," Megan said over-brightly and changed the subject. "I want to hear more about these other things, like handcuffs during sex? So Ellie's the expert?"

Ellie spun on her stool and lifted a brow, her smile secretive. "Well, I *am* marrying the town sheriff. I'll leave it up to your imagination."

They all let out another round of laughs, and Megan glanced at Kate.

"How about you? You ever try handcuffs during sex?" Megan asked.

Kate's face turned bright red and then she downed the rest of her drink and shook her head.

"No handcuffs?" Ellie asked. "I'm telling you, you guys need to try it."

"No. Just no sex." Kate lifted her shoulders into a big shrug. "I'm still a virgin."

Megan had to snap her jaw shut when it just about hit the bar. She glanced at Ellie, who was making no such attempt to keep her shock hidden.

"Shut the hell up!" Ellie finally cried.

"Are you...serious?" Megan asked carefully. Kate had to be close to twenty-five at least.

"I'm dead serious. And I'm only admitting it because y'all got me drunk." Kate wrinkled her nose and took another sip of her drink. "But if either of you ever tell anyone I *swear* I'll ban you from ever buying a cupcake from me again."

Ellie mimed zipping her lips. "My lips are sealed. Don't even try and blacklist me from your shop."

"Ditto," Megan replied, nodding. "But I think I've found my new purpose in life. To get you laid."

Kate snorted and rolled her eyes. "You let me worry about that. Which, speaking of..." She glanced toward the door. "Here he is."

"Who?" Ellie and Megan asked at once.

"The stripper I hired." Kate grinned and hopped down from her bar stool, her curvy frame striding toward the man at the door.

"I don't believe it," Ellie muttered in awe. "The virgin hired me a stripper."

Megan nudged her in the side and giggled. "Not so loud."

Another woman joined them at the bar and ordered a beer. "That's not just any stripper, that's Pete Haggerty. I used to babysit him and his little brother when Pete was ten. He didn't look like this a decade ago...oh my God, I feel so dirty."

Ellie let out a loud hiccup and grinned. “Maybe the boy needs college money.” She stood and whistled. “Come on, baby, take it off!”

Some of the men, the ones who weren’t dancing with the bachelorette crowd, made a hasty escape when they noticed the male stripper.

Oh, God. Megan shook her head and smothered another giggle. She really should be discouraging this. But after three drinks—or was it four?—it was kind of hard to care anymore. She downed the rest of her martini, spun on the stool and propped her elbows back on the bar to watch the excitement.

And it wasn’t long before things got really out of control. Megan watched in fascination as chaos ensued, finally feeling the first prickle of unease when one of the girls climbed onto the bar and started dancing.

“Charlotte, you really should get down,” she hollered as the woman began to sway in her heels. “Any second you’re going to fall and break—”

Charlotte yelped as her ankle went to the right and her body fell to the left.

“Something,” Megan finished on a sigh as the other woman began to scream in pain. “I really should have seen this coming.”

She slid from the chair and went to figure out the damage.

Chapter Six

“Can I get anyone another beer?” Todd asked, standing from the couch and stretching. “This game is kind of slow.”

Trevor shook his head at the suggestion to another beer. This baseball game wasn’t doing shit to distract him from his thoughts, which alternated between luscious ideas of what he wanted to do to Megan and darker memories of Afghanistan. Alcohol wouldn’t help his state of mind either way.

There were less than ten of them here at Todd’s house, watching the game and drinking beer. The Wyatt brothers, a cousin and a couple close friends. Not much of a bachelor party, but it’s all Tyson had wanted.

Trevor glanced over at Tyson and bit back a smile. His middle brother sat at the far end of the couch, his fingers clenching and unclenching around his beer. He’d look at his watch occasionally, then shift in his seat.

“You really should’ve had a bachelor party,” Todd muttered, returning from the kitchen with a beer. “You’re just sitting here thinking about Ellie all night anyway.”

Wincing, Trevor shook his head, thinking his little brother shouldn’t have brought up the reminder that Ellie was at a bachelorette party.

“I’m sure they’re just hanging out, Ty.” Trevor kept his voice casual as he gave Tyson a brief smile. “Probably just having lots of sugar from Kate’s place, some wine and gossiping.”

Tyson grunted. “They took over The Oceanside Tavern. I have a feeling it’s more than cupcakes and chatting.”

The tavern? Really? Trevor scowled and shifted on the couch. Hell...maybe it wasn’t quite so innocent.

The front door burst open and a man hurled himself inside, out of breath and wide-eyed.

Tyson came to his feet. “Jimmy? What’s going on?”

The just-out-of-college kid pulled his hat off and twisted it in his hands. “Sheriff, I just came from the tavern and it’s getting a little rough. A stripper just arrived, think it might even be the younger Haggerty brother. And I think one of the girls just busted her ankle.”

“Jesus.” Trevor joined his brother on his feet, hoping he didn’t sound too excited as he suggested, “Maybe we oughtta go calm things down?”

Tyson’s jaw flexed and he nodded. “Someone get me my keys.”

Trevor rode shotgun in Tyson's SUV, while Todd sat in the back. The three of them were silent as they made the two-minute drive down to Main Street where the tavern was located.

When they pulled up in front of The Oceanside Tavern the sound of music and women yelling could clearly be heard.

"Shit," Tyson muttered. "I'm surprised nobody called the station yet."

"No kidding." Trevor agreed and opened his door, stepping down from the vehicle.

Todd came around beside him and grinned. "I don't know, this could be fun. Lots of buzzed women, no men. Maybe I'll stick around for a while."

Trevor slapped his youngest brother on the back of the head and bit back a curse. Though the women of Wyattsville would likely love having the town's most notorious flirt—who'd also been labeled sexiest firefighter in Wyattsville—staying to hang out.

"Well," Tyson sighed and placed his hands on his hips, staring at the door to the tavern. "I guess we'd better do this."

Todd nodded, wiping the smile from his face, even though his eyes still danced with amusement. "Let's do this. Time to reel in the fiancée, bro."

Trevor fell back, let Tyson stride in first and do what he needed to do. He and Todd walked in a moment later to join the chaos.

"Holy shit balls," Todd muttered in dismay.

Trevor silently echoed the sentiment as he took in the scene. Jesus, he almost preferred hand-to-hand combat than having to face breaking up this.

All around them women were dancing and slamming back alcohol. Some were even dancing on the bar. In fact one gal, probably the one rumored to have busted an ankle, was sitting on the bar with a fat ice pack on her foot. Poor Evan and whoever else was on duty were standing far back behind the counter, watching with wide eyes as if they contemplated abandoning ship.

Trevor stepped farther into the tavern and slid his trained gaze over the crowd. Searching for any sign of real problems, but mostly searching for Megan.

He caught sight of the stripper—fortunately he wasn't quite naked—with half a dozen gals circled around him hooting and hollering. Ellie being one of them.

No Megan though. He slid his gaze beyond the group to the corner of the bar. Bingo. She was there, facing the crowd, leaning back with her elbows on the bar. Her breasts peeking over the neckline of the clingy blue dress she wore.

And she was watching him. Her blue gaze met his solidly over the madness inside the tavern. Trevor couldn't look away, almost like an invisible laser connected them. Even across the room he could see something had changed. He didn't sense resentment or anger in her eyes. Instead it was something else that

gave him a hell of a lot of hope. His breath caught, the muscles in his body coiled, and his dick leapt to attention against the denim of his jeans.

Not breaking her gaze, he pushed through the crowd of people toward her. Dimly aware of Tyson and Todd shouting out instructions for the stripper to put his clothes back on and the women to calm down.

Trevor reached the counter and sat on the empty stool next to Megan. Close up he searched her face, trying to tell if she was drunk or not. Her cheeks were slightly flushed, but her eyes lacked that intoxicated glaze. Instead they sparkled with heat. With need.

He arched a brow and took the almost full cocktail from her hand, setting it on the counter.

“You girls having fun?”

“You could say that.” She ran her tongue over her mouth and smiled slightly. “Though I suppose you boys will put an end to that?”

“I suppose so.” He tried, and failed, not to let his gaze slip from hers to explore her body. But the way she sat, her breasts thrusting against the clingy blue dress, made it impossible not to.

Megan was sexy as sin tonight, not just the dress, but the darker makeup and fuck-me heels. Her long red hair fell uncommonly loose in waves around her shoulders, so silky-looking and seductive. The question was, who had she been trying to impress? It was a bachelorette party full of women. Or had been.

He tore his focus from her to glance around the tavern. Already the women were dispersing and calling it a night. Tyson had wasted no time with Ellie, who was now cradled in his arms as he carried her out the door of the tavern. She wasn’t fighting too hard, instead snuggled against him looking half-asleep. Or maybe passed out.

“Todd, you’re spoiling all our fun!”

Hearing Kate’s sullen protest, Trevor glanced to where his other brother was shoos the stripper out the door.

“Fun’s over,” Todd growled.

“Well then you’d better give me some money, because I paid a lot of money for that guy.”

Trevor’s brows rose. Kate had hired the stripper? *Kate*? No way.

Todd seemed to share his shock, because he let out a few choice words as he pushed Pete—who fortunately was the older Haggerty brother—all the way out the door.

Trevor turned away and shook his head. “I can’t believe Kate’s behind the stripper.”

“There’s a lot of things about Kate that you wouldn’t believe,” Megan muttered almost under her breath.

“What was that?”

“Nothing.” She slid off the bar stool and grabbed her purse. “I suppose I should head out too. It’s getting late.”

“Did you drive here?” he asked, knowing full well she had, because her convertible was out front.

She nodded, digging through her purse for her keys. When she retrieved them, he effortlessly plucked them from her hand.

“I’ll be driving you home.”

He expected her to argue, but instead she stared up at him through her lashes, her expression contemplative, before she gave a slight dip of her head.

“That might be a good idea. But I promised Kate a ride home.”

The minute the words were out, Megan wondered if she’d lost her mind. Having Trevor drive her home could only be trouble. But right now, trouble was just a little too tempting.

“Hang on and I’ll ask if Todd can see her home.”

She watched as Trevor went over to his brother, who’d sat Kate back down at the bar and seemed to be lecturing her now.

Trevor leaned down, speaking near Todd’s ear and a moment later Todd gave a terse nod and waved him off.

Megan bit back a smile and shook her head. Kate certainly didn’t look like she was nurturing a crush on the youngest Wyatt brother right now. More like nurturing a grudge that her stripper had been taken away.

“He’ll take her home,” Trevor said. “Are you ready?”

She gave a nod and turned toward the door, her stomach suddenly full of butterflies. They stepped outside and she welcomed the cooler air. The inside of the tavern had been ridiculously warm.

Trevor unlocked the passenger door to her convertible and she climbed in, sliding onto the buttery soft leather seat.

Leaning her head back against the headrest, she slid her palms over the side of her seat. She loved this car. How fast it was. How the wind felt in her hair when the top was down. How sexy it made her feel when she was in it.

As Trevor slid into the driver’s seat, she glanced over at him through her lashes. Amusement simmered with the hot need in her belly. He was too tall for her car and had always bitched about the fact. He fit in it, but just barely. The man loved his truck. All the Wyatt brothers seemed to love their big cars.

The convertible purred to life and Trevor pulled away from the curb a moment later. With the top down, the wind lifted her hair from her neck and she gave a sigh of content, watching Trevor drive from the corner of her eye. Stared at his large hand closed over the gearshift.

Trevor had always been so good with his hands. With his mouth. God, with everything. Her gaze slid over to the thick bulge in his jeans and a heavy ache started between her legs.

A few minutes later he pulled her car into the driveway of her small rambler.

“How will you get back to your car?” she asked softly when he turned off the engine.

They sat in the darkness, only the starlight giving any hint of light. Megan became acutely aware of every breath he took. Every little flex of his hands as he played with the keys now in his lap.

“My car’s at my parents’ house. Tyson and I drove together down to the tavern. I don’t mind walking.”

Sucking in a slow breath, Megan shifted fully in her seat to stare at him. He waited a moment, before turning to look at her with an arched brow.

“Or,” she began slowly, “I can drive you back to your parents’ house in the morning. You could stay here tonight.”

Chapter Seven

The keys in his hands ceased their jingling as Trevor stilled.

“Not sure that’s such a good idea, angel,” he finally said, his words uneven.

Megan licked her lips, wondering if she was nuts but not really caring at this point. Right now she just wanted one thing. Or one person.

“You thought it was a good idea yesterday.”

“Yesterday you weren’t drinking.”

“I may have had a few, Trevor, but any alcohol in my blood has nothing to do with what I want from you right now,” she said with quiet determination. “I’m pretty sure I’d be asking even if I was stone-cold sober.”

Trevor closed his eyes and she could see him fighting to keep control.

“And what is it exactly you’re asking, Meg?”

“For you to make love to me,” she whispered, sliding a hand across her seat to touch his thigh. “For you to touch me like you used to once upon a time.”

His teeth clenched, even as she watched his cock stir beneath his jeans.

“And what about tomorrow, angel?”

She gave a throaty laugh. “Well tomorrow’s going to come whether you fuck me tonight or not, Trevor.”

His head fell back against the seat and the air hissed out from between his teeth. “Jesus, Megan, you have no idea what you’re doing to me right now.”

“I know what I’d like to be doing to you.”

He swore under his breath, and then before she could blink he’d reached for her, dragging her out of her seat and placing her on his lap so she faced him, her knees straddling his thighs.

“If I was a better man I wouldn’t be taking advantage of you right now, angel,” he muttered thickly, cupping her face in one hand, brushing his thumb over her lips as his gaze searched hers.

A pang of sadness flickered through her. And guilt. But she shrugged it away. She needed this way too much to walk away tonight. Needed Trevor.

“You’re not taking advantage, soldier,” Megan said softly. “I am.”

Then before she could let him talk her out of it, she lowered her mouth to his.

Trevor groaned and slid a hand into her hair, holding her head still as their lips met and parted, then his tongue slid deep to rasp against hers.

Heat exploded inside her, rocketing through her blood and making every one of her nerve endings tingle. She kissed him fervently, fumbling to undo the buttons on his shirt.

Tearing his mouth from hers, Trevor said, "We should go inside."

"That would take too long." She leaned down to bury her mouth against his neck. Her tongue flicking out over the pulse, finding the familiar salty taste of his skin she'd been craving for over a year. The taste of Trevor.

She closed her mouth around his flesh and sucked, wanting to leave her mark as if she were a sixteen-year-old girl claiming the quarterback. And maybe the idea of making love in a car was a bit youthful for someone pushing thirty, but right now it was a sensual turn-on.

"Damn, angel, are you sure?" he choked out, sliding his hands down to squeeze her ass.

His hips raised and his denim-clad cock ground against the heat between her legs. Her nipples hardened and moisture gathered in her pussy.

"I'm sure," she gasped, moving her hips against him. "Oh, God, I'm sure."

Trevor let out a low growl and abandoned her ass, immediately moving to pull her stretchy dress off her shoulders and down her breasts. He tugged the satiny cups of her bra down too, baring her to his eyes and touch.

For the briefest moment she wondered if maybe they *should* go inside. They were sitting in her driveway in her convertible with the top down. Anyone could see them. But it was past midnight and the moonless night was dark, so the excitement far outweighed the risk. Or maybe the idea of being seen was a bit titillating, if she let herself admit it.

Trevor's hands moved to cup her breasts and any ability to think period disappeared. His palms, calloused and large, had always brought her so much pleasure, and they didn't fail now.

Goose bumps broke out over her body as his thumbs swept across her sensitive nipples.

"Suck on them," she begged, cupping the back of his shaved head and urging his head down.

Trevor moved his hands to her ass again, lifting her body so her breasts brushed his face. His lips closed around one tip, sucking it deep into his mouth and flicking it with his tongue.

Pleasure sizzled through her and she let out a throaty moan, leaning back against the steering wheel. She stared at Trevor's dark head as he suckled her. The pleasure on his face matched her own.

God, it felt so good to be with him like this again. She'd missed him. Her throat tightened with the emotion of it all.

Maybe she'd wake up tomorrow and realize she'd made a terrible choice when her heart was once again breaking. But right now the only choice *was* Trevor and this moment together.

He was sleeping, and at any moment he was going to wake up. But damn it, if this *was* a dream, then he'd willingly sign the rest of his life over to slumber.

Trevor dug his fingers into the fleshy part of Megan's ass, adjusting her so he could have better access to her breasts. He couldn't get enough of the taste of her and hearing the throaty moans she made.

He wanted more than just her breasts in his mouth, he wanted to kiss and rediscover every square inch of her body.

The sound of a zipper going down followed with Megan's hands sliding into his jeans, finding him and stroking him free from his boxers.

"I can't wait," she pleaded. "I need you inside me."

His cock throbbed almost painfully in her hand and he let out a choked groan, lifting his head to look up at her.

"Angel, I don't have a condom on me."

"I never went off the pill." She lowered her head, brushing a soft kiss over his mouth. Then she hesitated and said, "And you were right about Henry. I haven't even kissed him. I haven't been with anyone since you."

Possessiveness ripped through him. *Mine*. He trailed his hands up her bare arms, loving the way she trembled. Megan would always be his.

She gave a laugh, but it sounded a bit forced. "So unless you're worried that you might have something."

"I haven't been with anyone either."

Megan stilled, he couldn't even hear her breathing.

"Please don't lie to me, Trevor," she finally said quietly. "It's been a year and we broke up. You're a man, you have—"

"Needs?" he rasped, toying with a silky strand of her red hair, brushing it over one of her erect nipples. "Yeah, I do. I need *you* in my bed. In my arms. I didn't want anyone else, Megan. Any needs I had were taken care of with my right hand while thinking of you."

"Thank you for admitting that," she whispered, her voice cracking. Then she gave an unsteady laugh. "So your right hand, hmm? I thought it felt a little more calloused than usual."

His lips curled into a smile, before he nipped the sensitive curve between her neck and shoulder.

Megan let out a throaty laugh and moved her fingers through his short hair and over his scalp, the gesture almost loving. His chest tightened and he pressed a trail of kisses up over her collarbone, to the rapidly beating pulse in her neck.

Her head fell back, once more an offering of pale flesh. He pressed his lips to her pulse again, while fumbling to push her skirt over her hips.

His cock hardened at the realization of the panties she *wasn't* wearing.

“Fuck me, Megan. What the hell were you thinking?” he breathed, already moving his hand between her legs to cup her hot little pussy. “Not that I’m complaining.”

“Mmm, I’m not sure. Maybe I was thinking of this? Subconsciously? Or consciously.” She moaned and spread her knees wider. “Please, Trevor, I need you inside me.”

“In a moment, angel.” He slipped two fingers inside her soaked channel and bit back a groan when she clenched around him. “Just want to make sure you’re ready for me.”

“I’m ready.” She panted, her inner muscles clenching around his fingers. “I’ve been ready for over a year. Take me, Trevor. I need you.”

With her hand still stroking his cock into a granite-like state, he abandoned any attempts to slow down. Wondered why the hell he was even trying.

After pushing his fly open a little wider for comfort, Trevor grasped her hips and eased her down onto his cock.

He watched Megan as she bit her lip, her fingers digging into his shoulders as he slid deep inside her. The hot, wet walls of her pussy gripped him as she sank to the hilt.

Home. God, it was like coming home.

Neither of them moved for a moment. Trevor needed the instant to absorb that this was really happening. To savor the ecstasy of being inside Megan once more. Her breathing came just as erratic as his. In fact the shuddering breath she’d let out when he’d thrust deep hinted that the intensity rocked her to the core as well.

“Incredible,” she finally whispered and began a slow glide back and forth. “You feel so incredible.”

“Yes,” he ground out and gripped her hips, thrusting up into her as she rode him. “Oh fuck yes.”

It didn’t even take a moment before they found their familiar rhythm. And then they moved together, breathed together, and then entirely too soon—when she kissed him hard again—they came together.

Trevor groaned as he emptied himself into her, again and again as the walls of her sex clenched around him, milking him dry.

Megan let out a choked sob, before she buried her face against his shoulder, her body trembling through the orgasm.

So fast. Jesus, they’d both gone off like lit explosives just moments after he’d entered her.

Trevor closed his eyes and slid his hands up and down her torso, feeling her slender curves, reminding himself what it felt like to have her like this.

“Oh, wow. That was so...” she whispered, the shock in her voice showing she was just as taken aback as he was. “It’s just been so long.”

“I know, angel.” He brushed a kiss over her forehead and gave a soft laugh. “Next time, I promise we’ll slow things down.”

Next time. He realized his words were more than a little presumptive, but when she didn't tense or correct him, he figured he was in the clear. And there would be a next time. Many next times.

"We should probably head inside," he suggested lightly. "In case your neighbors start filing out to discover what all that noise was."

Megan slapped him playfully on the back and then adjusted her dress again. "I wasn't that loud."

He laughed, while tucking himself back into his boxers and jeans, before pushing the car door open wide.

Megan slid off his lap and climbed out first, and then he followed after her, shutting the door behind him.

She set off toward the house, her legs trembling like a newborn colt. Smiling, Trevor swept her up into his arms.

"I'm too heavy for you to do this," she murmured, even as her head came to rest against his shoulder.

Trevor snorted. "I've carried weapons heavier than you, Meg."

"Mmm. Well thank you. My thighs are killing me after being in that position. Not that I'm complaining or anything."

When he reached the door, he set her down again to open it. Unlocked. His lips twisted into a slight smile. Some things never changed in a small town.

Megan moved inside and turned on the lights. "I'm going to pass out soon, but I want to shower first." She paused and turned to face him, arching a brow. "Will you be joining me?"

The vision of her naked and water sliding over her body had his cock stirring again.

"Absolutely."

Chapter Eight

In the shower, Megan's heart squeezed with the tenderness Trevor demonstrated with her.

He washed every inch of her gently, brushing off any attempts she made to get him to use her loofah, and instead used his hands.

It was wonderfully sexy. Watching his big, calloused hands sliding over her body, spreading the slippery body wash into her skin. And then he took the shower nozzle and pulled it from its holder, rinsing the suds from her body.

Each patch of skin he cleansed, he brushed a kiss over. Taking his time to swirl his tongue over her nipples and dip into the crater of her belly button.

And then he hung the nozzle back up, falling to his knees and bracketing her hips in his hands.

Megan leaned forward with a sigh, placing her hands on the wall above him as she shifted her feet farther apart. Thick curls of steam swirled around them, the smell of soap heavy in the air.

The damp pressure against her pussy had her gaze dropping and a shuddering breath escaping. And then Trevor's tongue didn't just dance over the folds of her sex, but slid between them.

A moan built low in her throat as she watched him. Trevor had always been so amazingly good at eating pussy. Their first night together had blown her mind, and unlike some of the men she'd dated before him, he seemed to really enjoy it. He'd always seemed to love the foreplay as much as she did. And as their time together had grown longer, that never faded.

He didn't even glance up at her as she watched him. Seemed much too intent on tasting her, on bringing her to pleasure. And dear God was he doing it. Trevor had always seemed to know exactly what she needed.

She let her eyelids flutter closed on a groan as he licked his way up her slit to find the sensitive pearl of flesh.

His mouth closed around her clit, ripping a gasp from her throat. She let go of the wall to clutch the sides of his head. Holding him against her, she rocked her hips against his mouth, needing to find that promised peak.

How had she lived without this for a year? Without Trevor? Living on a vibrator and memories of the man she loved.

The same way you'll get by again when he leaves in a week.

She brutally shoved the voice of reason away, having no place for it when pleasure was so predominant.

He gently bit her clit, and Megan climbed even higher toward that peak. When he slid two fingers inside her, fucked her with them, she exploded.

With her body still trembling, he came to his feet and lifted her, wrapping her legs around his waist. He plunged into her, sinking deep and filling her so magnificently.

Blind with pleasure, her nails dug into his back as her ankles locked around his waist. He backed her up against the wall of the shower stall, slamming into her and taking her mouth in a hard kiss.

Megan kissed him back feverishly, tasting herself on his tongue and thrilling at it. Trevor moved harder, deeper inside her, his fingers digging into her ass cheeks as he fucked her against the wall.

Water sluiced over them, running down her face and in her eyes, but it didn't matter. In fact it heightened the raw sensuality of the moment.

Trevor lifted his mouth from hers and let out a guttural groan, before she felt him spurting warm and thick inside her.

The sensation flung her over the edge again and she let out a ragged cry as she clenched around him. Her nails dug deeper into his back and she clung to him as her world spun.

Finally, reality returned as the water grew cold. She blinked, stunned to realize Trevor had slid to his knees and they were almost on the floor now. He was still imbedded in her, though she could feel him softening.

How long had they been in here? Making love?

She kissed the jagged scar on his shoulder and felt her throat tighten up. He'd returned from Afghanistan with it, and as of a year ago it had still bothered him a bit. Did it still now?

"I've missed you so much, angel," he muttered raggedly. "I can't tell you how God damn much I've missed you."

Smiling, she bit his shoulder lightly. "You swear too much, soldier."

He gave a soft laugh "I know. Sorry. It's habit from being around my men all the time. I haven't...been spending much time with ladies."

"Mmm. And you consider me a lady?"

"You're a classy as hell lady, Megan. Always have been." He lifted his head to smile at her. "I knew that when I came back to town one day and saw you for the first time. Wanted you like I'd never wanted another woman. I knew I'd have you, but realized it might take a little convincing."

"You were a little rough around the edges," she agreed, her heart quickening. "But you were a Wyatt. The sexiest Wyatt—"

"Damn right. Though don't let my brothers hear you say that," he said smugly.

She gave a throaty laugh. “Anyway, you made me realize pretty quick how hot a rough man can be. One night with you and I didn’t want anyone else...”

“Mmm. That’s because I made you come twelve times.”

Slapping his chest, she rolled her eyes. “Ten. But who’s counting?”

“I’m a guy, of course I’m counting.” Trevor joined her laughter and reached up to turn off the water. “It’s probably two in the morning, angel.”

“Good God. Where has the night gone? Thankfully tomorrow is Sunday.” She shook her head and yawned.

Maybe just saying the time made her a little sleepy. Or maybe it was getting screwed silly twice in the last hour.

“We should probably get some sleep,” he agreed. “Because pretty soon the sun will be rising and we’ll have to do some talking.”

Her breath caught and she was careful not to look at him. Talking. Did he mean long term? About them? A future? If there was one again? Or was this just a week of hooking up for old time’s sake.

The possibility didn’t settle well and had a lump forming in her throat. She closed her eyes, thinking of how things had been before she’d left him. That wasn’t settling well either.

“We have to plan that menu, after all.”

Some of the tension eased from her shoulders and she gave a small nod. Right. The menu. Apparently Trevor wasn’t thinking beyond tonight and maybe the wedding. Which was okay...wasn’t it?

“Let’s go to bed,” she said huskily and untangled herself from him. Jesus, her thighs were going to hurt in the morning. “I’m suddenly beyond tired.”

Trevor stood and exited the shower, grabbing a towel and then handing her one.

“If you want,” he began hesitantly, “I can sleep on the couch.”

She froze in the midst of drying herself and glanced up at him. Her pulse quickened and she wondered for a moment if he wanted to sleep on the couch. But once glance at his face showed he was just trying to be respectful. Give her space if she needed it.

Closing the distance between them, she cupped the back of his head and brushed her lips over his. “I’d prefer you sleep in my bed, soldier.”

The slow smile that spread across Trevor’s face was one that had always made her knees a little weak.

He winked and murmured, “Yes, ma’am,” before sweeping her into his arms and carrying her down the hall to her bedroom.

They’d slept in. Megan realized it the moment she opened her eyes and saw the sun coming through the blinds. That was, if Trevor was still here. Her pulse leapt as she sat up and looked at the other side of the bed.

Everything inside her went a little soft at seeing him sleeping next to her. The memories from last night floated to the surface of her mind, sending a warm tingling through her body.

Without the haze of nighttime and a few drinks, she still would've made the same choice and gone to bed with Trevor. And watching him now, she was tempted to do it again. It was as if the year apart hadn't even happened. Waking beside Trevor, making love to him, it was all so natural. So right.

He lay on his back, his brows knit from whatever he was dreaming about. The blankets were off his body, but the sheet still clung to his hip, leaving his upper torso naked.

And, oh yum, what a wonderful torso it was. His chest was smooth, the pectoral and abdominal muscles so defined she had the sudden urge to trace her tongue over the dips and ridges.

With a devious smile, she decided on just exactly how she'd wake Trevor this morning. Scooting down on the mattress, Megan leaned over his body and lowered her head to brush a kiss over his abdomen. He didn't stir and she gave a soft laugh. Well, she'd just have to try harder.

Her long hair fell over his chest as she let her tongue trace one square of muscle on his abs, loving the familiar taste of him as she moved lower.

The air left her lungs as her back slammed into the mattress—the massive arm pinning across her collarbone made it impossible to move and difficult to draw a breath.

Megan gripped Trevor's forearm, her legs kicking on the bed as she tried to throw him off. Drag in air. The eyes that looked down at her were unfocused and almost black with rage. She knew he wasn't seeing her, wasn't really even awake, but the lack of air going to her brain wasn't going to let her rationalize it.

Trevor blinked and just like that he was back. The rage was replaced with shock and horror as he jerked his arm away from her, allowing her the oxygen she'd been deprived.

"Megan?" he rasped and lurched away from her on the bed, thrusting his fingers over his head. "Fuck. Oh my God. *Fuck.*"

Even with her heart still pounding a mile a minute, Megan knew he was more upset than she was. She crawled toward him and reached to touch his shoulder, but he shook her off and climbed out of bed.

"I'm sorry," he ground out, reaching for his jeans and tugging them on, then the rest of his clothes. "Sorry's not even enough. *Shit.*"

She swallowed hard, following him out of bed. "Trevor, wait—"

"No. Not now, Megan. Not now." He shook his head and left her room, heading straight toward the door.

Her heart lurched and she rushed after him, grabbing his arm before he could leave.

"Don't do this," she pleaded, digging in her feet to stop him. "Don't you dare walk out like this."

He spun around and caught her arms, jerking her against him. His eyes were wild, his face pale.

“Don’t you realize I could’ve fucking killed you?” he asked savagely. “Without even being conscious of it?”

The bite of his fingers against her arms was going to leave bruises, but she didn’t protest as she slid her hands up to cup his face.

“You wouldn’t have, Trevor. I know you wouldn’t have,” she whispered. “Please, just talk to me. Tell me—”

“I can’t. Jesus, Megan, I *can’t*.” A shudder ripped through him and he looked down, his gaze taking in where he gripped her. His mouth tightened and he cursed, releasing her immediately.

“You *can*, Trevor. Don’t walk out of here right now.” She made sure every trace of fear was gone from her face, and she slipped into the woman she was during her day job. “If you walk out of here right now you’re risking whatever chance we had at making this work. Is that what you want?”

He shook his head, and opened the door, but she slapped her palm against it.

“Answer me, Trevor,” she yelled. “Do you want this to fail before it even has a chance again? Because if you walk out this door, that’s *exactly* what’s going to happen.”

His long fingers circled her wrist, but his grip was gentle this time as he pulled her away from the door.

“The only thing I know anymore, Megan, is that I can’t keep hurting you.”

After he’d left, Megan closed her eyes and slid down the door to the floor, curling her knees up to her chest and wrapping her arms around them.

She bit her lip fiercely, but it didn’t stop the sting of tears in her eyes.

Maybe it had felt natural waking up next to him this morning, and maybe every part of her begged to give them another chance. But with Trevor leaving, he’d just given her the brutal reminder of why she’d left *him* in the first place.

Trevor walked out this morning because he didn’t want to hurt her. The only thing he didn’t seem to realize was that every time he closed himself off and walked away, a little piece of her died.

Chapter Nine

Sunday on Main Street was quiet, with most of the folks in church or sleeping in. There were only two shops open right now. Kate's Cakes and The Oceanside Tavern. Any other day Trevor would've chosen Kate's Cakes, but today wasn't any other day. Today was the day he'd woken up nearly choking to death the woman he loved. His stomach roiled and his teeth ground together. Sweat broke out on the back of his neck and he shoved open the door to the tavern with unsteady hands.

He strode inside, his unseeing gaze moving over the man sweeping the floor and moving straight to the alcohol behind the counter.

"Morning," the man called out. "Cleaning up after a bit of a wild night. Bachelorette party."

Trevor didn't reply, just gave a slight nod.

"Oh, hey, didn't recognize you at first," the older man said coming around the counter. "Aren't you the oldest Wyatt boy? I heard a lot about you. I'm Sam, new in town. Evan was real nice to give me a job."

The idea of small talk wasn't settling well in the least. Trevor forced a slight semblance of a smile and a gruff, "Welcome to town. And yes, I'm the oldest Wyatt."

"And a soldier, I'm told. Army." Sam gave a hard nod and wiped down the counter. "Me? I'm retired from the Marine Corps. I've got nothing but respect for you, son. What can I get ya?"

"Shot of Jack Daniels."

Sam didn't even blink or comment about the time of day, just grabbed a shot glass and poured the shot, before sliding it across to him.

Trevor lifted the glass and knocked it back, letting the whiskey warm his belly before setting the empty shot down again.

"You been over to Iraq? Afghanistan?" Sam asked quietly.

"Afghanistan." He didn't want to talk about himself or about Afghanistan. Wanting to divert the bartender's attention he asked, "What about you? What kind of combat did you see back in the day?"

"First Gulf War. Somalia." He shook his head and sighed. "I think you boys got it worse though now. Like I said, you've got my respect. And you've got another shot on me if you want it, son."

Trevor thought about it, stared at the bottle on the other side of the counter and the amber liquid inside. Another shot wasn't going to solve anything. Hell, the first one hadn't even helped.

"Thanks, Sam. I'm good for now."

“No problem. Well, then that first one was on me.” Sam paused and then said quietly, “Time does help with the healing, son. I promise you. Now I’ll leave you in peace, but you holler at me if you need anything.”

Trevor nodded as the other man walked away. Staring into his empty glass, he wondered if Sam had come back from combat as fucked up as he was.

The army had offered him counseling when he’d returned from Afghanistan. He hadn’t thought he’d needed it, but now, sometimes he wondered if maybe he should’ve.

Being with Megan last night had been so damn amazing. He’d begun to feel whole again, like everything was finally going to be okay and maybe he’d get the shot at happiness that seemed so damn unattainable. Falling asleep with Megan in his arms, hearing her soft breathing as she’d snuggled against him, he’d had so much hope.

But as he’d fallen asleep, guilt had sliced through any attempt at letting the past go and moving forward. And then he’d woken up from another nightmare to find Megan pinned beneath him, eyes wide with terror, struggling to breathe.

He’d left. Gotten dressed and run like hell. If he was smart, he’d run like hell back to Fort Lewis, stay away from Megan and the potential of causing her any more pain.

The door to the bar swung open, sending blinding light into the dimness and Trevor squinted, glancing away with a scowl.

“Hey, big bro.”

For fuck’s sake. Really? Trevor bit back a sigh at the sound of Todd’s cheerful voice and turned on the stool to face the door.

Only it wasn’t just Todd. It was Todd and Tyson. They stood in the doorway, arms folded over their chests, staring at him like they were about to stage an intervention.

“Kind of early to be hitting the bar, don’t you think, boys?” he drawled with a slight smile.

“Funny, I was just thinking the same thing,” Tyson said, striding across the bar and sitting to the left of him.

Todd took the seat to Trevor’s right.

“Megan called us,” Todd explained.

Trevor’s mouth slipped from the forced smile back into a grim line and his chest tightened with regret. Had she told them about what had happened? That he’d damn near killed her?

“Did she now?”

“She’s worried about you. We all are,” Tyson said softly.

Trevor gave a short, humorless laugh. “You’ve got a wedding coming up, Ty, the last thing you need to be worrying about is me.”

"Yeah, well I don't have a wedding coming up," Todd said, his mouth curving into that wide smile that had probably charmed half the women in town out of their panties. "In fact I have no intention of *ever* marrying. So that leaves me plenty of free time to worry about my big brother."

"Good to know." Had his brothers always been this determined to drive him nuts?

Tyson leaned forward and grabbed his shot glass, setting it farther away. "You need to cut with the alcohol, Trev. You seem to be seeking out the tavern every time you have a problem."

The hell he did. He hadn't turned into the soldier that turned to the bottle.

Or have you?

Anger and frustration brought a slow flush up his neck. His jaw flexed. "I won't deny it. But I usually stop at a shot or two."

"Even a shot or two isn't the way to deal with whatever the hell's going on in your life," Todd replied, siding with Tyson. "You're better than this, Trevor. You know you are."

"How the fuck do you know I'm better?" Trevor finally snapped, letting all the anger at himself and his life explode. "Either of you? And what gives you the right to walk in here and tell me what I can and cannot do? If I want another shot of whiskey, who the hell's going to stop me?"

"I am." Tyson replied matter-of-factly, cocking his head.

"I'll take that second shot now, Sam," Trevor yelled, but kept his narrowed gaze on his middle brother.

Sam idled over. "Jack Daniels?"

"Actually, he's going to pass," Tyson said calmly. "And, yes, this time I am speaking as the sheriff."

The hell he was. Trevor turned to Sam and repeated his request for another drink.

Sam's gaze slipped between Tyson and Trevor and finally he sighed.

"Sorry, son," he muttered. "But like I said, I'm new in town. Last thing I'm gonna do is piss off the sheriff. Even if he is your brother."

Trevor saw red. Before he could think about what he was doing, he lurched off the chair at his brother, fists swinging. He got in one good punch before Todd jumped in, getting him in a headlock and pulling him off Tyson.

"Fuck you both," Trevor choked out, struggling in his brother's hold. "You have no right. No right to come in here and try and control me. Control my life."

Tyson rubbed his jaw and glared at him. "We're not trying to control your God damn life, Trevor, we're trying to help save it."

"Sorry about this, Sam," Todd called out. "We'll take it outside."

Humiliation warred with the rage as Trevor was dragged outside by his youngest brother. Already he planned on getting in a punch on Todd the moment he let him go.

A few minutes later they stopped on a path that led to the Pacific Ocean. The warm morning sun beat down on them and the only sound came from the waves slamming into the beach.

Todd let him go and took a quick step backward, obviously sensing his intent.

Trevor dragged in a lungful of sea air and glared at the two. They were smart, keeping their distance now. The urge to fight and destroy was ripping through him, and he had to remind himself they were his brothers. They were blood.

He glanced at Tyson, saw the red mark on his jawline and hoped it wouldn't be a bruise by his wedding day. Guilt pricked at him, not deep enough to make him want to apologize, but enough to make him regret not taking a deep breath before he'd attacked.

"You gotta calm down, Trev. I don't really want to fight you." Todd grinned. "Though, it might be a fairer fight now than when we were younger. Think I'm just about as big as you now."

"Might even be bigger," Tyson murmured.

Trevor muttered curses at them both and turned away to cast his glare at the ocean, anything so he wouldn't have to look at the amusement on their faces. But he saw beneath it, could see the concern lingering, and for some reason that bothered him even more.

"Megan loves you, Trevor," Tyson finally said tersely. "For the past couple of days you've been giving everyone hope that you two might be able to work things out."

"Mom and Dad have been giddy with the idea," Todd agreed with a sigh. "But you're fucking it up. Sure as the sun sets, you're fucking it up, Trev."

Good. He'd been stupid to think for one moment that he could make things work with Megan. What the hell had he been thinking? Sleeping with her had felt so right, so normal, but they could never have normal. Megan sure as hell couldn't if she stayed with him.

"Megan deserves better than me," he said wearily, the anger seeping from him like a tiny pinprick letting the air out of a balloon. "You know this. She knows. I know. Everyone needs to stop pretending that we're meant to be together."

Todd and Tyson both broke into laughter, like he'd just made a hilarious joke. Their amusement grew so loud that nearby seagulls took off into the air with a cry.

A moment later Todd shook his head and grinned. "That was a good one, Trev. Seriously. You and Megan go together like peanut butter and jelly."

Nice. Only Todd, whose main thoughts tended to lean toward either food or women, would compare him and Megan to peanut butter and jelly. His lips twitched with a reluctant smile, and unfortunately his brothers saw it and they beamed, their posture relaxing a little more.

Trevor sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. "You don't understand. What's between us, it's not what it once was."

“And it’ll probably never be. So you start over,” Tyson argued, glancing down and kicking a foot in the sand. “You’re going to have to do it with someone, why not Megan?”

Trevor didn’t reply, didn’t have the energy to keep up with an argument his brothers would never win. What was the point? But Tyson seemed to take his silence to mean he was thinking about it.

“You can earn her trust back, Trev,” he urged. “I know you can. She loves you. And I’m pretty sure you love her too.”

“Oh without a doubt he loves her,” Todd agreed.

Glancing out at the dark blue of the Pacific Ocean, Trevor clenched his jaw. The question wasn’t whether they loved each other. It had never been about that. Sometimes love just wasn’t enough. It was so much more complicated. He had to say something in response to his brothers. They wouldn’t leave him alone until he did.

“When the hell did my little brothers get so wise?” He allowed a fleeting smile. “Thanks for the talk, guys, but I’m going to head out. Skipped breakfast this morning.”

“Food? Great idea.” Todd slapped him on the shoulder. “I’ll join you. I’m starving.”

“I could go for something to eat, too,” Tyson added lightly. “I told Ellie to sleep in and relax and I’d grab something on my own.”

Trevor shook his head and gave a soft laugh. He shouldn’t have expected anything else. Maybe this was a good thing. Time with his family. If anything it would help keep him grounded.

“All right, guys,” he agreed with a nod. “Let’s go eat.”

Chapter Ten

Megan had just finished pouring herself a cup of coffee when the phone rang. She set her mug back on the counter and rushed over to answer.

“Hey, it’s Todd.”

She leaned back against the fridge, her fingers gripping the phone as she closed her eyes.

“Did you find him?”

“Yeah, we’re with him now at Kate’s,” he said quietly. “I took a moment to step outside and call you while we wait for our cinnamon rolls. He’s doing okay. Thanks for giving us the heads-up.”

“No, thank you. You and Tyson both. He needs to be with people right now...” She swallowed hard. “Even if it’s not me.”

“Don’t take it personally, Meg. Trevor’s going through some shit. Has been since Afghanistan. I honestly think if anyone can help him through this, it’s you.”

Her heart twisted and her stomach fell. “I don’t know, Todd. I just don’t know if I can go through this again. It about killed me the first time.”

“I know. Maybe we can figure out something. Find a way for you guys to spend a few days together alone. At least try and work things out. If I could arrange it, would you be up for it?”

Spend a few days with Trevor? Alone? Part of her thrilled at the idea. Images swirled in her head and her pulse quickened. But then the realistic side of her knew it could possibly end badly. She’d invest more of her heart over the few days, only to have it crushed again.

“I’m not sure,” she hedged. “It’s something I’ll really need to think about. Every time I reach out to Trevor, I inevitably get hurt in the end.”

“I know. And it kills me to see you hurt. But I’ve gotta say, he’s hurting too. Something fierce.” Todd sighed. “I want this to work out for you guys, Megan. I really do.”

Megan gave a sad little smile and glanced down at the mug in her hand, staring at the cooling coffee inside. Over the years she’d been with Trevor, his family had become like hers. They’d almost adopted her after her aunt died—the woman who’d been her last living relative, and the reason she’d moved to Wyattsville.

And Todd was a few years younger than her, but he’d always seemed too wise. All the Wyatt men did. There was a reason their ancestor was the namesake for Wyattsville.

“Ah, shit, gotta go, Meg. Trevor’s coming my way. Think about what I said though.”

“I will. I promise.”

Megan hung up the phone a moment later and went to add a little more coffee to her mug for a warm up. She took a sip and walked back across her kitchen to glance out the window, which had a view of the small town below.

She could see the roof of Kate’s Cakes, knew the Wyatt brothers were in there right now eating breakfast. Her throat tightened and she closed her eyes. After Trevor had left, she’d been tempted to go back to bed and pull the covers over her head and not come out until she absolutely had to. But she’d been there and done that. And until a few days ago, she’d thought she’d moved on from that point in her life.

And now here she was again, the morning after having gone to bed with Trevor and everything was once more completely complicated.

Which left her at a crossroads. Either she decided last night was a mistake and shot down any possibility of a future with Trevor, which meant definitely not sleeping with him again. Or...she threw everything and the kitchen sink into making their relationship work this time.

Her heart fought for dominance in the final decision, even if it was the one her mind rebelled against.

“Thank you for driving.” Megan fidgeted with her thumbs, casting a sideways glance at Trevor, who’d been uncomfortably silent since picking her up.

“No problem.” He didn’t smile, or glance her way, just replied flatly as he drove down the highway toward Costco.

“I don’t think my car would’ve held all the food we need or I would’ve driven.”

Again no comment, just a slight nod.

Megan bit back a sigh and stared straight ahead out the windshield. The sound of Metallica playing on his stereo at one time would have irritated her a bit, but right now it was a warm reminder of who Trevor was and all the good times they’d spent together.

“Whether you like it or not, Trevor, you did sleep with me last night. And not talking about it, or what happened this morning, isn’t going to change that fact.”

When he didn’t reply her stomach sank and she bit her lip, sneaking a glance at him out of the corner of her eye. His fingers had tightened around the steering wheel, his knuckles white from the grip.

“Trevor?” she prodded gently.

“Ribs.”

She blinked. “Excuse me?”

“I was thinking we could buy a bunch of ribs for the barbeque. Maybe some chicken.” His fingers flexed around the wheel. “Of course, if there’s some vegetarians at the—”

“Stop it!” she yelled, anger exploding hot in her belly. “We are *not* discussing food right now, we’re discussing us. Remember that part where you fucked me in my car? In the shower?”

“I remember, god damn it!” he shouted back tersely. “And I remember waking up nearly choking you. It shouldn’t have happened.”

The air rushed from her lungs, but she already knew the answer before she asked, “Which part?”

He shook his head. “Any of it.”

Megan stared at him, her jaw flexing as she fought the urge to get sick. “You’ve fought in a *war zone*. Maybe killed people and have seen people killed. You’re not a coward, Trevor, so stop acting like one now.”

She had to grab the *oh-shit* handle on his truck as he swerved to the side of the road and slammed to a halt. He grabbed her, hauling her across the seat so she was just inches from him.

“I *have* seen people killed. I *have* killed,” he raged, his eyes wild. “I hate that I don’t have control over anything anymore. What I am is a fucking mess, but I am *not* a coward.”

Tears sprung to her eyes, and she hated herself for hurting him, for prodding at his unhealed wounds. Hearing him confirm her fears only made the miserable ache in her stomach grow. But she couldn’t stop the honesty now that she’d broken the seal.

“But you’re being one when it comes to us, Trevor. I don’t even know how to talk to you anymore,” she said thickly, letting the tears roll down her cheeks. “I don’t know what to do. To say. Damn it, I don’t *know*. I’m not a therapist.”

Trevor stared at her and she saw the regret and pain flicker in his eyes, before his gaze hardened once more. “Yeah, well your boyfriend is. Maybe you should’ve spoken with him last night instead of sleeping with me.”

She flinched, but then looked away, out the window and into the mass of trees on the side of the road. “He’s not my boyfriend anymore. I’m not sure he ever was.”

“When?” he rasped. “When did it end?”

“During the bachelorette party. He showed up at the tavern.”

Strong fingers cupped her cheek, turning her head so she had to look at him.

“Good.” His head lowered and he kissed the tears that still lingered on her cheeks. “I hate the idea of you with anyone else, Megan,” he said raggedly, before his lips moved inward to brush tenderly over her mouth. A moment later he lifted his head and groaned. “But as much as I want you to stay with me—to choose me over any other schmuck out there, I can’t give you the life you want or be the husband you deserve.”

His words should’ve made her more despondent, killed any hope at them ever having a chance in hell at making it. But they didn’t. Her pulse was fluttering and optimism roared to life inside her. His words shed a bit of light on part of what had gone wrong with them.

I don't have any control over anything anymore. Her mind swirled a mile a minute with possibilities and she knew she needed to choose her words carefully.

Finally, keeping her expression unreadable, she settled on, "Ribbs and chicken sound great."

Trevor blinked and his brows drew together, his lips parting slightly. His eyes showed confusion and maybe disappointment. For a moment it looked like he was going to say something, but then he pressed his mouth tightly together and released her.

Letting her go, he turned forward once more, then shifted the gears and pulled off the side of the road.

Already making plans in her head, Megan closed her eyes and hoped like hell she could get through the next few hours without tipping her hand.

"Can I get you anything to eat, Trevor honey?"

Even though he was thirty-three years old and had been out on his own since he'd joined the army at eighteen, some things never changed. Trevor lifted his attention from the television and gave his mom a small smile.

"Thanks, I'm all right."

"You're sure? You barely ate breakfast, and you went to bed without dinner..." His mother sighed and sat on the couch next to him. "You're worrying me, Trevor. Me and your father."

He tried to stave off the irritation that threatened, because he knew his parents meant well. But, shit, maybe he should've just rented a room at the Wyattsville Inn for the time he was back. It was hard putting on a happy face day after day.

"I'm fine, Mom," he promised and wrapped an arm around her shoulders, brushing a kiss across her forehead. "You guys worry too much. Where is Dad anyway?"

"Out fishing. You know that man during the summer. Can't keep him out of the boat." She laughed softly and gestured to the television. "What are you watching there?"

Hell if he knew. He'd been staring at the screen for the last half hour, but hadn't seen shit. A knock at the door saved him from having to pull an answer out of his ass.

"Hmm. Wonder who that could be." His mother stood. "Be back in a minute."

Trevor scratched the back of his head and brainstormed ways he could get out of the house for a few hours. Ever since returning from the mini road-trip yesterday with Megan, he hadn't wanted to do much but sit around and keep company with his misery.

From the moment in the car when he'd told her he could never be the man she needed, she'd closed off. Oh, she'd spoken to him throughout their trip, polite and to the point, almost like they were just acquaintances. Two people who hadn't spent the night before screwing each other silly.

Deep down, he'd foolishly hoped she'd argue with him, do everything in her power to convince him that they were right for one another.

This was a good thing, he reminded himself harshly. It meant Megan was still the intelligent, practical woman he'd always known her to be. She'd probably regretted sleeping with him the moment the alcohol from the bachelorette party had worn off.

"Well, look who's here," his mother said brightly from behind him. "Megan dropped by."

Chapter Eleven

Megan what? Trevor blinked at the television before turning slowly to glance over his shoulder.

Sure enough, the woman who'd just been occupying his thoughts for the past twelve hours stood behind the couch with his mother.

Megan looked meticulous and sexy at the same time, wearing khaki pants that hugged her hips and ass so amazingly and ended at her calves, and a silky blue blouse that fell lightly over the curve of her breasts.

Thoughts of her riding his cock in the car the other night flitted through his head, and his jeans tightened as his flesh stirred to life.

"Good morning, Trevor," Megan said brightly, a wide smile on her face and a playful twinkle in her eye. "Or is it afternoon?"

"I don't have—" *any fucking idea what time it even is*, he'd been about to say, before remembering his mother was in the room. "I'm not sure honestly. What are you doing here?"

Her smile tightened and she gave a slight laugh. "Oh, now, don't tell me you've forgotten about our little outing?"

Outing? Was she serious? There hadn't been any little outing planned. Or had there? He scanned his memory, trying to figure out if it was something from before they'd slept together. Before—

"Well, come on, lazy butt. Get up." She strolled around the couch and grabbed his hand, tugging him to his feet. "I'll help you pack."

He tightened his fingers around her wrist, narrowing his gaze on her. "Pack?"

A slight flush stole up her neck and her gaze turned beseeching, before she glanced at his mom and gave an amused laugh.

"Must've had a wild time at that bachelor party the other night," she teased. "In one ear and out the other. Come on, Trevor."

Curious to see what the hell Megan was up to, he allowed her to lead him off to the bedroom he'd grown up in.

Megan released his hand immediately and began rummaging through his drawers, tossing a few items into his bag that sat next to it. When she bent over, her pants clung to her sweet heart-shaped ass and he bit back a groan.

Folding his arms across his chest so he wouldn't reach out and touch her, he demanded, "What's going on, Meg?"

"Oh, we're going to make a run down to your cousin's cabin over in Canyon Beach." She straightened from zipping up the bag and gave him a small smile. "I figure we can get some lunch there, swim and beach walk. So beautiful down there."

He shook his head. "Why are we going to my cousin's?"

She gave a slight shrug and licked her lips. "Because he asked if we could use your truck to haul back a couple extra barbeques for Tyson and Ellie's reception on Saturday. His car isn't big enough."

Taking a slow step toward her, he arched a brow. "And you didn't think to call me? Ask me if it would be okay?"

Megan lifted her chin and met his gaze head-on. "I knew you might try and get out of it. Or at least insist that I *didn't* come."

"Maybe you shouldn't."

She glared at him. "You're driving. I'm coming. Deal with it. Now we should probably head out since I said we'd be there at two."

"Hell," he muttered. "What the hell time is it?"

"Twelve thirty."

He found himself glaring back at her. They'd always been like this, each one struggling for power.

"Good thing I already showered," he finally said gruffly. "Let me use the bathroom and get my keys."

Triumph flickered in her eyes and she gave a smug smile. "Great. I'll go chat with Sally while you do that."

Twenty minutes later they were in his truck, driving down 101 toward Canyon Beach. Neither of them had said a word, and after a while he got tired of listening to music even, so he'd shut off the stereo.

He cast a sideways glance Megan's way. The oversized sunglasses she wore shielded her gaze, but her mouth was curved into a slight smile. She looked pretty damn proud of herself for some reason.

The sunlight filtering in through his truck windows made her hair seem even redder, shinier. So damn sexy as it curled over her shoulders and teased one breast. She'd unfastened the top button on her blouse after complaining it was too hot.

He jerked his gaze away from the curve of her tit, but it was too late to avoid the blood that rushed to his cock.

When he finally pulled up outside his cousin's house, it was a relief to get out of the truck. To escape the sensual smell of her perfume, and to keep resisting the urge to smooth a hand down her thigh...maybe trace his fingers inward to find out if she was overheated their too.

"Come on, Trevor." She winked at him and opened her door, grabbing their bags. "Time's a wastin'."

He swore under his breath. Why the hell was she so cheerful? She'd certainly gotten over the fact that he'd told her to move on to another guy fast enough.

Walking up the path to his cousin's house, his brows drew together.

"Hey, I don't see Ryan's truck here."

"Hmm. Yeah I guess it's not," she murmured and reached into her purse, pulling out a set of keys.

When she put it in the door and unlocked it, Trevor froze.

"Where the hell did you get those?" he demanded as she pushed open the door.

Before she could walk inside—and she'd been about to—he caught her wrist.

"Just what the hell is going on, Megan?"

She licked her lips and gave him a slow smile. "Todd gave them to me. Let's go inside and we'll talk."

He didn't release her or move. "*Todd* gave them to you? Where's Ryan?"

"Inside first."

His teeth snapped together, but he stepped over the threshold with a growl.

"Now, Megan, you need to tell me exactly what the deal is."

She followed him inside and then shut the door behind them, leaning back against it and watching him from beneath her lashes.

"The deal is we have this place to ourselves for the next few days," she said calmly. "You said you don't feel like you have any control anymore, Trevor. When you admitted that, you opened up to me. Even if it was just a little bit, it was enough."

"Listen, Megan—"

"No. Right now, you listen." She pulled away from the door and approached him, her heels clicking on the linoleum of the entryway. "I want you to open up more. Talk to me about everything. What happened in Afghanistan and why you won't let yourself be happy."

Trevor froze, felt all the emotional doors slamming automatically inside him as he started to shut down. He caught her wrists and pushed her away, shaking his head.

"I've already told you, Megan. I can't do that. So if this was all just a ruse to get me alone so you can play therapist, you'll have to find someone else to play with."

"Yes, about these games, Trevor? I haven't even told you the fun part." She tugged her wrist toward her, dragging his hand with it. Catching his palm, she turned it over and pressed a kiss in the center, watching him through sooty lashes. "*I* want you to open up to me and *you* want control. How about a fair trade?"

What the hell was she trying to say? It was hard to think with the little circles her tongue was tracing on his hand now. The thump, thump of his heart quickened, grew louder, until he was sure she could hear it.

“Maybe you’d better elaborate,” he said thickly.

“You open up, and for three days, Trevor, I’m yours to command. Yours to control,” she said in a seductive, breathless tone. “Whatever you want. Whatever you say. I’ll do it.”

Shock hit, but it was nothing compared to the lust that surged through him, making his cock rock hard and his blood heat.

What she asked for was impossible. For him to open up and talk about things he wouldn’t even talk to an Army therapist about. But the vision of her—of Megan, the woman who loved to be in control—being submissive kept flicking in his mind. It was an adult man’s fucking wet dream. But it was also a trade he couldn’t make. Would never be able to make. Megan asked the impossible.

He opened his mouth to tell her to pick their bags back up and march that cute ass of hers out to the truck again.

“Anything I want?” he rasped instead.

Her lashes swept up, revealing blue eyes full of arousal and excitement.

“Anything, soldier,” she said softly.

Trevor’s jaw flexed and his grip on her wrist eased as he moved his hand up her arm to cup her slender shoulder. He knew he’d have a devil of a time keeping his end of the bargain, but it didn’t matter as he pushed Megan to her knees in front of him.

“Well, angel,” he said softly. “You’ve got yourself a deal. Now why don’t you be a good girl and make it official by sucking my dick.”

Chapter Twelve

Megan's heart slammed against her rib cage and her mouth dried out. What on earth had she just gotten herself into?

Her knees bit hard into the cool linoleum floor and she shifted for comfort, swallowing with difficulty. She lifted her gaze from the unmistakable bulge now at eye level, to Trevor's eyes. His narrowed gaze was full of heated desire.

"Well, Megan?" he taunted. "Still think this is a good idea?"

Never, ever in her life would she have guessed that she could be the type to do this kind of thing. To *want* to be submissive to any man. But she trusted Trevor not to abuse the power she'd just given him. The expectation in his tone had a rush of excitement coursing through her veins and her nipples tightening, her body tingling, and moisture gathering between her legs.

She licked her lips and gave a slight nod to confirm her commitment, not trusting herself to speak.

The zip of his fly going down sounded in the quietness of the house and her pulse skyrocketed.

Though Trevor unzipped his jeans, he made no effort to do anything else. He was waiting for her. With hands that weren't quite steady, she reached out to pull the fly wider apart, then tugged his jeans down over his hips.

Beneath his briefs the thick curl of his cock strained to be free and her mouth watered with the realization that in a few seconds it would be in her mouth.

She curled her fingers under the elastic waistband of his briefs, brushing the coarse curls over his lower abdomen. A groan slipped from her throat as she gave a tug and he popped free, his erection waving proudly in the air just inches from her mouth.

Calloused fingers traced over her cheek gently, before Trevor slid his hand into her hair and maintained a firm grip.

"Show me, angel," he coaxed roughly. "Show me what a good little submissive you can be."

He pushed her head forward, but her lips were already parted, ready to accept him. The thick head of his cock slid into her mouth, moving deep in a commanding stroke to the back of her throat.

Megan's eyes widened, but she relaxed her jaw around him and released a soft moan of pleasure. Reaching up to cup his balls in her palm, she let her tongue flick across the underside of his erection. The musky and salty taste of his skin was so familiar, such a potent aphrodisiac that her pussy wept with need.

She slid her mouth back over the thick length of him, to the bulbous head, taking a moment to swirl her tongue over him. When she heard the air hiss out of his mouth, she knew Trevor had no complaints.

With a murmur of victory, she took him deep into her mouth again, and then established a rhythm. Though Trevor seemed interested in helping her with the pace. The fingers in her hair tightened, pushing her head up and down, as his cock explored every inch of her mouth.

She listened to the sound of his breathing become more ragged, felt the tightening of his balls in her hand and knew he was close.

"I want you to swallow this time," he commanded, his words almost guttural.

Her stomach twisted with nerves and she closed her eyes. She'd never swallowed before, had always assumed it would be too unpleasant. Usually Trevor would pull out before he came.

You made a deal. This was your idea.

Even while most of her was nervous to do it, a small part of her wanted to try. Loved that she'd taken any choice out of the matter by making the bargain. Though even still she knew that if she really didn't want to try it, Trevor wouldn't have forced her to do anything she didn't want.

She relaxed her mouth around him, let him take control as he climbed toward his climax. Her heart thudded loudly in her chest and she let out a murmur of pleasure.

"Fuck," he muttered. "I'm coming."

He thrust deep, to the back of her mouth and then held.

She barely noticed the first warm spurt of him sliding down her throat. Making no attempt to pull away, she instead kept sucking on him. Milking him to release it all. The salty taste of him finally registered, but it wasn't unpleasant. If anything it just heightened her excitement.

Opening her eyes, she stared up at him. Watched his expression that seemed almost like he was in agony, but the shudders that ripped through his body, and the low groan he made clearly indicated otherwise.

He continued making slow thrusts in her mouth, caressing the back of her scalp gently now instead of holding her still, until she finally felt his erection lessening. And then Trevor slid his cock past her lips, watching her through hooded eyes as he tucked himself back into his pants.

"That was amazing," he said softly. "I can't believe you let me do that."

Seeing the amazement and gratification in his eyes sent a thrill of excitement through her. Showing her that even when playing by his rules, letting him be in control, there was still so much pleasure to be had.

Megan arched a brow and ran her tongue over her lips, still on her knees as she stared up at him. "I made a promise. Anything, Trevor. I'm yours, however you want to use me, whatever you want to do."

His gaze heated once more and he reached out a hand to help her to her feet. When she stood in front of him, she reached out to play with the fabric of his black T-shirt, nibbling her lip.

“Just remember your side of the bargain, soldier.” She’d tried to make it sound playful, but she bit back a groan as Trevor’s hand tightened around hers and his expression became shuttered.

“You want to hear it right now?” he asked flatly.

She hesitated, uncertain how to go about this. She didn’t want the information to be pulled from him like she was extracting teeth. She wanted it to be more organic. And beyond that, right now, the last thing she was thinking about was a deep discussion. Her body was strung taut with the need for release. But if he wanted to talk now, of course she wouldn’t turn that offer away.

Finally, she went back to her bargain, and put him in the driver’s seat. “Whatever you want, then I want. These days together are about you, Trevor. You have control. Not only over me, but when and how you want to confide in me.” She drew her bottom lip between her teeth. “As long as you promise you *will* confide.”

He watched her quietly for so long, the air around them grew heavy. Her heart quickened and she bit down harder on her lip. *Oh God. He wasn’t going to be able to do—*

“I promise.”

Relief swept through her, weakening her knees and bringing a wide smile to her face.

“Thank you.”

“But for right now,” he continued, his gaze still unreadable as he pulled her toward him. “I want to watch you come.”

Her breath caught and heat stole through her body. The fine hairs on her arms lifted as he stroked the inside of her wrist with his thumb.

“Take off all your clothes, Megan.”

As she shed her clothes she watched him, saw the self-assurance back in his eyes that hadn’t seemed as constant lately. It confirmed that in its weird way, giving him control this way had been a good decision. When she stood before him in her thong and bra, he shook his head.

“Everything.”

Drawing in a sharp breath, she reached behind her and unfastened her bra, tugging it off of her breasts and letting it fall to the ground. Then, hooking her fingers on each side of her white lace thong, she shimmed it down her thighs and off her legs.

Her nipples tightened in the cool air of the entryway and she glanced beyond Trevor to the living room where couches and chair sprawled about. But she didn’t say anything, waited instead for instructions as her body hummed with need.

“What’s in the bag?”

Megan jerked her attention back to Trevor. “Pardon?”

“That bag next to mine that you brought in? The smaller one.” He jerked his head toward the doorway and where their bags still sat.

Her stomach did a little flip and she swallowed hard. “Things.”

Trevor arched a brow, his lips quirking. “Things, angel? Bring it to me.”

She turned to do what he said and jerked with a cry when his hand slapped across her ass. Eyes widening, she glanced at him over her shoulder, rubbing her burning bottom. *That* hadn’t been expected!

“What—”

“When I ask you a question, I expect a proper response. No ambiguity.” Amusement danced in his eyes and he gave her another quick swat to the other cheek.

Trevor bit back a laugh when he heard Megan mutter under her breath. So far she was doing pretty fucking amazing with this submissive thing. But the defiant, power-hungry woman he loved was still lingering beneath the surface.

Before she could move to grab the bag, he strode forward and slid an arm around her waist, jerking her naked body back against him.

“How much did you like that, Megan?” he murmured, nuzzling her neck and inhaling the scent of her expensive floral perfume.

“L-like what?” Her head fell back against his shoulder and he watched as her breasts rose as she jerked in a ragged breath.

“Did you like me commanding you to give me head?” He slid his hand lower on her stomach and felt it clench beneath his touch.

“I loved it,” she whispered.

A thrill raced through him at their little power change. Not that either of them had ever really claimed that much more than the other, but seeing as he would have complete power for the next three days... He still couldn’t believe she was doing it. And it was a bit of a relief. A sexy and fun distraction. A way to have some control again. Even—or especially—if it was in the bedroom.

His mouth curved into a smile. “You know, angel, my soldiers call me Sir. Why don’t you give it a try?”

She was quiet for a moment, before obediently murmuring, “I loved it, *Sir*.”

Trevor smiled against her neck and slid his hand lower to cup her pussy.

“I know you did.” He pushed a finger into her sheath and found her soaked. “Seems you liked it quite a bit.”

He fingered her clit, felt her body clench beneath his hand, and then set her away.

“Go get that bag, angel.”

She pulled away with a purr. “Yes, Sir.”

When she bent to grab the bag, his cock stirred to life again at the image she made. The angle showed her spectacular ass giving way to the folds of her pussy. Her long, smooth legs had images of him fucking

her in the shower racing through his mind. How it had felt to have those slender thighs gripping his waist when he'd plunged mindlessly into her.

Megan straightened again, breaking the seductive vision, and turned around to return to him. The front side of her was just as spectacular.

Her breasts, always a good handful, rode high on her body and her waist was narrow. Her pussy had always made him wild. Totally bare. Everywhere.

She'd loved to call him during the week, when they still had days before they could see each other, and tell him all about the Brazilian wax she'd just received. It would always make him so damn hard that when she showed up on base Friday evening, they usually wouldn't even make it home before they were fucking.

"Open it," he instructed when she stood before him with the bag.

He watched the muscles in her throat work and her cheeks turn slightly red. But she obeyed, unzipping the bag and handing it to him.

Trevor took it, holding her smoldering gaze for a moment before turning his attention to look inside the bag.

Holy shit.

Chapter Thirteen

Trevor's cock jerked as he sorted through the sex toys, creams, oils, lingerie and various restraints and handcuffs.

"Jesus," he muttered thickly and pulled an object out. "You really did mean anything, didn't you, Meg?"

She let out a husky laugh. "Yes, Sir."

He ran his gaze around the inside of Ryan's house, though he already knew the layout pretty well. Finally he spotted what he wanted and gave a slight nod.

"Over there. Go sit down in the recliner." When she went to move he caught her arm and halted her. "Actually wait here a moment."

He disappeared down the hall to the bathroom and snagged a towel from beneath his cousin's sink. When he returned Megan stood next to the recliner, running her fingers over the leather.

Trevor spread the towel down on the seat and turned back to face her, a slow smile curving his lips.

"Have a seat."

Megan lifted her chin and climbed into the chair, leaning back and placing her hands on the armrests.

"Let me help you get a bit more comfortable." He walked around the chair and took her hands, placing them above her and then reached for her feet.

"What—"

"Trust me."

He quickly arranged her legs so that each one draped over the armrest and her body was spread wide for him, so vulnerable, then stepped back to admire his handiwork.

Between slender thighs, the pink folds of her pussy were blatantly exposed. Cream shimmered in the shadows and he bit back a groan at the wonderfully seductive sight. He barely resisted the temptation to just unzip his fly and take her like that.

But the toys he'd pulled out of the bag were also a temptation, and one he didn't want to dismiss. He'd meant it when he said he wanted to watch her come. And this time, it would be without the focus of his pleasure to distract him.

He reached for the first one, something that looked a bit like a finger puppet, only it was a vibrator.

"You're going to make yourself come, angel," he murmured and handed it to her. "And I'm going to watch."

Megan's eyes widened, but she still accepted the small toy, sliding it onto her middle finger. She twisted it this way and that, before pressing a button on the side. A soft buzzing filled the air.

"Now play with that sweet little clit of yours," he commanded through hooded eyes.

With her legs splayed over the chair, Megan leaned back and closed her eyes, running her tongue over her bottom lip as she brought the tiny vibrator between her legs.

As he watched, her ass clenched and she sucked in a breath, her lower body undulating against her finger.

Damn, she was sexy as hell. Trevor's breath caught and his cock strained against his jeans. Walking in front of the chair, he sat on the edge of the coffee table. "Use your other hand and start fingering yourself."

Megan drew her bottom lip between her teeth, but obediently slid her hand down and pushed a finger into her pussy. Her brows knit together and she shook her head.

"How does that feel, angel?"

"It's not enough... Sir."

Trevor stood again, circling around the chair and leaning down to pinch one of her stiff nipples. She let out a ragged moan and her hips bucked.

"What's not enough?"

"My finger," she pleaded. "It can't go as deep as I need it."

He tweaked her other nipple and smiled when her head twisted against the chair.

"Hmm. Let me see what I can do about that."

Moving away from her again, Trevor found the toy bag and began digging through it. A long velvet bag drew his attention and he picked it up, pulling the drawstring top open to peer inside.

Well, well, well, wouldn't this be fun?

He pulled the glass dildo from the bag and turned back to Megan. She watched him through heavy-lidded eyes, the pleasure and frustration on her face so fucking sexy. Her gaze slipped to the object in his hands and her breasts rose sharply with the breath she drew in.

Trevor knelt down beside the recliner and leaned over her, pulling her fingers away from her pussy. Unable to resist, he lifted her hand to his mouth and licked her fingers, still shiny with her juices.

"Oh, God, Trevor..." she whispered, a shudder running through her and her eyes darkening to a stormy blue.

He didn't bother to scold her for not saying Sir, the sound of his name on her lips was too damn sweet. Almost as sweet as the taste of her pussy. He caught himself as he was about to lean down and fill her opening with his tongue.

No, this time was about the toys. There would be plenty of time later to go down on her.

Instead, he placed the tip of the glass against her moist opening and then slid it slowly inside.

Megan jerked against the chair with a gasp, her body clenched around the dildo so hard he could barely push it farther in.

“Relax, angel,” he murmured. “Just keep rubbing your clit with that vibrator and let me fuck you with this.”

Her muscles immediately went lax, and when he glanced at her again she was watching him. Her blue eyes shiny with arousal and trust. And then her lashes fluttered down as she began to rub herself once more. He smiled, his blood pumping a little harder as he pushed the dildo farther inside her body.

Watching the clear glass with purple swirls disappear between the wet folds of her pussy, he clenched his jaw, focusing only on her, not the reaction of his body.

As he began to slowly fuck her with the dildo, her stomach clenched and she let out a low keening moan. Still, she never stopped rubbing her clit with the vibrator.

“There you go, angel. Make yourself come.”

Megan rubbed faster, her breaths coming out in ragged puffs as she grew closer to her climax.

“Yeah...just like that,” he encouraged softly, moving the dildo in and out of her more rapidly now.

“Oh God!” she screamed, her head falling back against the recliner and her ass lifted.

Trevor struggled to keep penetrating her with the glass as her body clenched around it and she trembled through her orgasm.

When she finally went limp in the chair, her head lolling to the side as she dragged in a shuddering breath, he pulled the dildo from her and removed the vibrator from her finger.

He eased her legs back over the armrests and brushed a kiss across her forehead, then stood and went to clean the toys in the sink.

When he returned a few minutes later she was watching him, curled up in the recliner now, her blue eyes shiny with satisfaction.

“Thank you, Sir,” she murmured, as he sat on the arm’s edge.

“Mmm. Thank you for the little show. And the toys.” He shook his head and ran his finger over the smooth glass dildo. “Tell me what it was like having this inside you.”

Megan let out a little snort and then laughed. “It was freezing at first, and completely unyielding. It was nothing like having you inside me,” she admitted on a sigh. “I mean it wasn’t bad...but... Hmm. Put it this way. Having that glass dildo inside me was probably what it feels like to fuck Edward Cullen.”

Trevor stilled, pushing back the flare of jealousy. “And who the fuck is Edward Cullen?”

Megan laughed even louder. “You don’t even want to know. But he’s not real.”

His mouth curled into a smile as he leaned down to scoop her up. “You worry me sometimes, Megan.”

“As well I should,” she nearly purred, rubbing her cheek against his chest. “Where are we going?”

“To the shower,” he replied. “I want you again, angel. I haven’t been able to get the other night out of my head, and I want a repeat performance.”

Megan kissed his shoulder. “That sounds like a damn fine plan to me. Lead on, soldier. Err... Sir.”

Trevor let out a soft laugh of his own. God, this woman was amazing. She’d kept up her end of the bargain and he knew she was waiting for him to follow up on his. But she wasn’t pushing. And that’s what made her so incredible.

His jaw flexed and his stomach roiled at the idea of talking about it. Of exposing Megan to the horrors of his past. But he’d made a promise and at some point, he’d have to fulfill it.

But for now he was only thinking about slick bodies under the shower and being buried deep inside Megan again. Adjusting his grip on her, he made his way to the bathroom.

Megan poured a little olive oil into the frying pan and then went to the fridge to pull out the chicken, setting it on the counter.

Every muscle in her body ached at least a little bit, if not a lot. But it was a delicious, wonderful feeling. Her thighs fell into the seriously aching category, and remembering what Trevor had done to her in that recliner this afternoon had the ability to make her legs tremble. And then the wonderfully amazing slow sex in the shower.

“I’m starving.”

She glanced up as Trevor entered the kitchen. His hair was still damp and he hadn’t put a shirt on, the only thing he wore was a pair of black board shorts.

Just seeing his naked chest and his languid stride had her pulse quickening and her tongue going thick in her mouth.

“I’m cooking up some chicken with pasta,” she said with a brief smile. “Your cousin left us a stocked fridge. And seeing as it’s about dinner time and we didn’t eat lunch...”

Trevor crossed the floor and brushed the back of his fingers across her cheek.

“I thought I gave you a snack earlier.”

His wicked smile had her cheeks heating with the reminder of her being on her knees in the entryway.

She turned her head and nipped at his fingers. “You’re so bad, Trevor. But don’t worry, that’s part of why I love you.”

He didn’t step away or laugh with her, and she faltered at the sudden seriousness in his gaze.

“Trevor?”

“We were ambushed,” he said quietly. “In Afghanistan.”

Megan blinked in shock. It was happening, he was finally confiding in her. A lump formed in her throat and her heart began a steady thumping. She turned off the stove, pulled the pan from the burner, but didn't say anything, just waited for him to continue.

"Our translator had gone missing and when he finally called for help, we didn't arrive in time. He was dead. I let my soldiers get out of the Humvee, realizing too late it was an ambush."

He cleared his throat and then leaned back against the counter, staring straight ahead.

"The body of our translator and the men who'd been in the car with him were on the road. They were rigged as an IED."

Improvised explosive device. Loving a military man who'd been in a war zone, especially Iraq or Afghanistan, she'd learned really quick what dangers were out there for them. IED's were one of the biggest ones.

Her heart tripped and she felt the sting of tears in her eyes.

"Knocked me out cold. When I came to I found one of my soldiers almost dead, and two others trying to defend themselves against a small arms attack from insurgents."

Megan clenched her fists, wanting to throw herself into his arms, reaffirm that he'd made it out alive. He was standing here today—he'd survived, but hearing the harrowing story made her realize how close she'd been to losing him.

She resisted the urge to touch him, though, knowing if she did he might stop talking. Might shut down like he'd done every other time.

"We fought back, shooting at anything that moved. All I wanted was to keep my men alive," he said stoically. "It was my fault, I should've realized it was a trap and never let my soldiers get out." He was quiet for a moment. "I'd just sent one soldier back into the Humvee to call for help when the bastards started shooting rocket-propelled grenades."

"Trevor..." she whispered, unable to keep silent anymore or maintain her distance. She stepped in front of him and took his hand, squeezing it gently. "I'm so sorry."

He shook his head, his gaze haunted, and he kept swallowing, like he was trying not to get sick.

"One of my soldiers lost his leg that day, another lost his life."

Her heart pinched and she pressed her lips together to stifle her cry of pain for him. Lifting her hands, she cupped his cheeks and brushed her mouth against his.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm so sorry, Trevor."

He closed his eyes and nodded. "I think...this fulfills part of my side of the bargain."

Megan froze, disappointment sinking through her as she watched him close himself off again, and then literally step away from her.

"I'm going to get dressed and take a walk alone," he said quietly. "I'll be back in time for dinner."

She watched him leave and a wave of sadness swept through her, leaving a heavy feeling in her body, and her mind exhausted.

It was a start, she told herself. He'd opened up a little, and now probably needed some time alone. Though she'd known he'd been hurt in an attack, she'd never known the details.

Now she did, and they were horrific. How had he lived, keeping that locked inside him? She sniffed and blinked the tears from her eyes, and then dragged in a deep breath.

Cook dinner.

Needing the distraction, to not think about the tortured look in Trevor's eyes, she flipped the stove back on and turned her attention to something she could control for the time being.

Chapter Fourteen

Megan brushed her teeth in the bathroom and her stomach roiled with nerves. Who knew what the rest of the night would hold? Earlier today she would've expected some more fun with the toys she'd brought.

But Trevor had been too quiet since he'd confided in her. He'd returned from his walk emotionally distanced, he'd barely spoken and he had made no effort to touch her.

She'd watched him as they ate, seen the rigidity in his muscles and tightness in his jaw. He'd been so uncommonly tense and quiet, she got the distinct impression he was angry. Maybe resented her for making him promise to have the conversation.

She set her toothbrush back in her plastic travel bag and sighed, grabbing her hairbrush before she looked up at herself in the mirror. Her face was pale—but then that was genetics, even the sun failed to help with that. She'd left her hair down more often lately, because she knew how much Trevor loved it that way. He'd always claimed fascination with the red strands.

Megan drew the brush over her hair, brushing it until it crackled with life and shined its brilliant color. She winced. God how she'd used to hate it as a kid. But growing up had made her realize how it was actually kind of cool to have the unique color and not have it come from a bottle.

Setting the hairbrush back down, she pulled a silky green negligee from her bag. She grimaced and tugged it on. It had seemed like a good idea at the time, but who knew what she'd find when she left the bathroom. Maybe Trevor would insist on sleeping on the couch.

The idea made her gut twist and her throat tighten. Oh well, no more putting it off.

Grabbing the door handle, she turned it and pulled the door open, stepping into the bedroom.

Her steps faltered and her mouth fell open. The slow thump of her heart turned to a fast gallop as she stared at Trevor sitting naked on the edge of the bed.

He dangled a pair of pink fur-lined handcuffs from his index finger and in his other hand held the small flogger she'd bought.

Oh sweet Jesus. The handcuffs had seemed like a good idea, especially after that conversation with the girls during the bachelorette party. But the flogger she'd just kind of thrown into her basket randomly. Not for one moment had she expected Trevor to use it. It was more just to complete the kinkiness of the bag.

Clearing her throat, she tried not to look at the toys and gave him a brief smile. "Hey."

He didn't reply, just used the same finger that was dangling the cuffs to beckon her over.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit. Why had she come up with this anything-you-want submissive thing again?

She drew in an unsteady breath and approached him. “Trevor, about—”

“Sir,” he reminded her through hooded eyes. “And no talking unless I tell you to.”

Game on.

He stood and she inhaled sharply as her gaze landed on his hardened cock, just inches from her hip. “Take off your nightgown and underwear. You won’t be needing them.”

Heat slid through her body and her pussy clenched as cream gathered in it. *This was why you agreed, because it’s such a turn-on.*

Megan pulled off her negligee and slid out of her panties, then stood naked and unabashed as she waited for his next request.

His nostrils flared and his gaze darkened. “Climb onto the bed and lie down on your stomach.”

Her pulse jumped and she licked her lips as she moved to obey. The coverlet had been removed and so she crawled across the sheets on her hands and knees toward the pillows. She lay down, folding her arms and resting her forehead on them.

Firm hands gripped her ankles, pulling them apart and spreading her legs wide. The air in the room brushed between her legs, making the sensitive flesh tingle and her folds dampen further.

What would he do now? She only had the handcuffs, it wasn’t like—oh! Something silky wrapped around her ankle. There was a small tug and when she instinctively jerked back, she found she couldn’t close her legs.

The crack sounded before she felt the burn of his hand that smacked across her bottom.

“Stay still, angel,” he warned with amusement. “Unless I tell you that you can move.”

Megan bit back a groan, her ass still smarted from his reprimanding swat, and she knew it was only the beginning. She stayed as immobile as possible as he secured her other foot to the opposite side of the bed frame. Again she realized how much she trusted him, because being tied up wasn’t something she’d do for just any guy. But her love for Trevor pretty much meant she’d try anything. Do anything. At least once.

“Nice,” he muttered and then the mattress dipped as he sat. “Very nice.”

His palm closed over the cheek he’d just swatted, and squeezed the flesh.

“I like this position. I can see how wet your pussy is for me.” His hand slid inward and then he cupped her, sliding two fingers into her aching slit. “Oh yeah. Drenched.”

There was more movement and then she felt the leather of the small flogger trace over the back of her thighs. “I’m surprised you bought one of these, Meg. You realize they can sting, right?”

She nodded, without lifting her head from the pillow of her arms. The first wave of unease slid through her. It could very well hurt like crazy. And she’d just allowed Trevor to tie her down, while giving him permission to do whatever he wanted.

"I've never done this kind of thing," he admitted, his tone curious. "But I think we're supposed to establish some kind of safe word. How about marshmallow."

Marshmallow? What were they, sitting around a campfire? Her lips almost curved into a smile, but she held it back and gave another nod. *Marshmallow it was.*

"Your ass looks really pretty," he murmured. "Flushed from my handprint. I bet it'll look really hot in a minute."

How badly would it hurt? And would she be one of those girls who kind of liked it? Or would she be screaming marshmallow the moment the leather connected with her skin. She braced herself, lips parted to scream the word.

There was no warning before the first crack of the leather slapped across her butt. She gasped in surprise, her eyes widening. Despite the sting, a small tingle of pleasure sizzled through her. *Well this was interesting.* Wanting to see if it would continue to grow, she closed her mouth without protest and waited for the next slap to fall.

"You okay, angel?" His gentle question, showing his concern even through the play, had her heart squeezing with her love for him.

She gave a small nod and closed her eyes, almost embarrassed to admit how much she'd actually *liked* it.

"Good to hear." His voice thickened, just before the next slap came.

The leather strips flicked across the same buttock. Once, and then twice. Harder the second time.

Her pussy grew wetter and her nipples stabbed into the mattress. The intense pleasure combined with the amount of trust she had in Trevor had tears glazing her eyes.

"Shit," he whispered raggedly, before his fingers slipped inside her body again. "You really like this, angel."

He slapped her other buttock with the flogger, lightly and then harder as he continued to finger her aching channel.

A guttural moan ripped through the air and it took a moment for Megan to realize it came from her.

When his fingers left her she cried out in protest. But then, a second later, the leather flashed oh so lightly across her pussy.

"Oh God," she cried out. "More. Please, Sir."

Trevor groaned, before the leather hit harder against her sex.

The sting of pain mixed with the building pleasure. Her legs instinctively tried to close, but whatever he'd tied them with prevented her from shutting them. Her legs and thighs were spread wide for the unrelenting slaps.

Her eyes crossed from the sensation and she couldn't hold back the throaty moans and pleas spilling from her lips.

Something thick pressed against her opening and she gasped as it pushed inside her. It was the handle of the flogger, she realized a moment later, as Trevor began to fuck her with it.

“I love looking at your body like this, angel. Hearing your cries and seeing your body all flushed.”

His hand slapped against her ass, alternating cheeks as he thrust the handle in and out of her body.

Pleasure had her entire body throbbing and she climbed the peak toward climax steadily, moving higher and higher. Her ass and thighs clenched as she fell over. A screamed ripped from her throat as white lights flashed behind her closed eyes. Her pussy clenched around the handle, gripping it as the spasms rocked her body.

A couple of tears leaked down her cheeks and she blinked them away, shocked at the intensity of her orgasm.

“So beautiful, Megan,” Trevor said thickly, pulling the handle from her and placing a kiss on her ass cheek. “You all right, angel?”

Again she gave a weak nod and he sighed before she felt his tongue slide between her ass cheeks and rub against her tiny hole. She gasped, but didn’t protest.

He lifted his head and murmured, “Good, because we’re not done.”

She felt the tension that kept her legs spread ease up and then she was free to draw her legs together once more. Her body, still weak, trembled from her climax.

A moment later Trevor closed a large hand over her hip and urged her onto her back. His eyes, full of lust and possessiveness, sent warmth sizzling through her already heated blood.

“Nowhere near through,” he murmured again and then leaned down, pulling something black from the bag.

A blindfold. Her pulse quickened as she ran her tongue over her dry lips. Just when she thought it couldn’t get more intense, he proved her wrong.

She almost regretted the fact that she wouldn’t be able to watch what happened next. He was already such a sexy man and when he made love he never held back the emotions from his eyes.

But she trusted him. Trusted him to bring her pleasure and to never take things further than she was comfortable with.

He winked and slipped the mask over her head, and then everything went black.

“Stretch your hands over your head, Megan.”

Trevor watched as she immediately moved to obey and his tongue went thick in his mouth. He almost wondered if Megan had been involved in some kind of kinky relationship in the past, because she was awfully good at this. And the fact that she’d given him so much trust and power still took his breath away. Was the most potent aphrodisiac he’d probably ever experienced.

He looped the fur-lined cuffs around one of the vertical poles in the headboard and then secured each of her wrists in a cuff.

He tugged her hands, testing the restraints and found them good. Turning he went back to refasten her legs to the corner posts.

She didn't protest, but nor did she stop the small moan that came out of her throat. Trevor smiled and stepped back to admire his handiwork.

Her hair spilled over the white pillowcase in a lush red wave, her eyes shielded with the black mask, and her lips parted with anticipation. His gaze slipped down her body. In this position her breasts thrust higher with the pink nipples rock hard. He moved his attention lower to where her legs were forced wide open. Between her slender thighs her pussy was pink and swollen, the dark channel of her entrance creamy with arousal.

His mouth watered to taste her and he swallowed hard. Jesus, she had to be the sexiest woman on the whole fucking planet.

Trevor reached almost blindly into the bag, searching for the object he'd seen earlier. He pulled out the long, thin, pink vibrator and turned it on.

Hearing Megan whimper, he glanced up to find her tongue sweeping over her lips. The black mask that kept her in darkness heightened the eroticism of the moment.

He climbed back onto the bed and settled himself between her thighs, so his face was just inches from her succulent pussy.

Taking the vibrator, he ran the tip over the edge of her pink folds and thrilled in the way her ass lifted off the bed. He circled her opening, again and again. Watched as she grew wetter and her breathing grew more erratic.

Then when she was biting her lip and he could tell she was struggling not to beg, he moved it to her entrance. Pushing it in slowly, he groaned at the sight of her wet flesh greedily sucking in the pink vibrator deeper into her channel.

Using his thumb and forefinger, Trevor parted the folds shielding her clitoris and then lowered his head to take the tender little nub into his mouth.

Megan's hips jerked off the bed as she let out a sharp cry.

The sweet, fresh taste of her arousal drove him to keep suckling her while rotating and pushing the thin vibrator inside her.

She tugged at her arms and tried to close her legs, but the restraints proved to do their job well. His blood pounded faster at the realization that she was completely helpless to do anything but accept the pleasure he gave her.

He flicked his tongue over the hardened nub, faster and then slow, all while her juices spilled onto his hand that fucked her with the vibrator. When her hips and ass moved, he followed, never abandoning her clit from his mouth.

Her whimpers grew higher, morphed into cries, and tears spilled down her cheeks from beneath the blindfold. Her pussy clenched around the vibrator and her ass lifted off the bed and held. When she finally came she was sobbing.

Trevor pulled the vibrator from her and moved himself over her. With his arms braced on either side of her rib cage, he thrust into her still-trembling body.

“Oh, you feel so good,” he rasped, sinking deeper into her hot, slick warmth.

She couldn’t move her arms or legs, but Megan’s hips lifted against his thrusts and she let out a soft moan.

As he stared down at her, into the black mask, irritation slid through him. He didn’t want it there. He wanted to see her eyes, shining blue and glazed with desire. He reached down with one hand and plucked the blindfold from her face.

Blinking up at him, Megan’s gaze finally lost the disorientation but none of the passion.

With a low growl, he braced his hands on either side of her again and increased the pace of his thrusts. His teeth ground together as he tried to slow his body’s urge to explode.

He closed his eyes, reveling in the hot suction of her pussy on his cock. How each time he sank into her he lost a little bit more of his soul.

When Megan’s cries grew more fevered and her inner muscles clamped around him, he knew she was about to come.

He slammed into her faster, making her body slide on the mattress as much as the restraints allowed. His balls tightened and when she cried out with her release, he was right beside her.

His biceps locked and sweat rolled down his back as he climaxed, emptying himself and the rest of his energy inside of her.

When the ability to think returned and his arms began to shake, Trevor slid from her body. Guilt hit him that maybe he’d gone too far, and he made quick time untying her and unlocking the cuffs.

Megan sat up and stretched her muscles, her expression a little shaky and unsure, and when she slid from the bed his chest tightened.

“Give me a moment,” she murmured and disappeared into the bathroom.

She was gone long enough to have his unease slipping into downright worry, but then she left the bathroom. Her smile was relaxed as she crossed the room and climbed back into bed.

She shook her head and curled up next to him in bed. “I don’t even know what to say. That was...incredibly intense.”

Trevor slid his arm around her, pulling her close to his heated body and then reached out to turn off the light.

They lay silent in the dark and his eyelids grew heavy. He knew he should stay awake and talk about what they'd done, see how she'd really felt about it, but her breathing was so steady he knew she'd fallen asleep.

And damn it all if he wasn't having a hard time staying awake himself. He let his eyelids drift shut and it wasn't long before he joined her in a deep, exhausted sleep.

When he woke in the morning, with the sunlight pouring in through the gap in the curtains, he knew his fears had been justified.

Megan was gone.

Chapter Fifteen

Megan whipped Trevor's truck into a spot outside Kate's Cakes and rushed out of the vehicle. By the time she pushed open the door to the shop, her pulse was jumping.

Inside Kate sat at a table with Todd, Tyson, another of his deputies and the owner of the hardware shop next to Kate's. When Megan entered, Kate glanced up and relief flickered in her eyes.

"Megan," she said softly and rose to her feet. "You didn't need to come. I shouldn't have even texted you."

"I'm glad you did, sweetie." Megan closed the few steps to one of her closest friends and gave her a big hug. "Are you doing okay?"

"I'm fine. Really."

But Kate's tone belied her words, and for the first time Megan let her gaze slide around the shop. The front window was broken and the brick that had been thrown through it still sat on the floor amongst shards of glass.

"Where's Trevor?" Tyson asked.

"Sleeping. The poor guy was out like a light when I got your message, and I didn't want to wake him. I'll send him a text in a few and just tell him I'm grabbing us some breakfast." Megan sighed and shook her head. "So who do you think did this? Teenagers?"

Tyson and Todd exchanged a long glance before Tyson gave a slight nod and averted his gaze.

"Possibly."

Hmm. She wasn't buying his nonchalant response in the slightest. But Kate didn't seem to notice, instead just went and grabbed a broom to sweep up the broken glass.

Megan crossed to where the men stood huddled like they were plotting defense at a football game.

"Okay, so what do you guys really think?" she asked quietly, folding her arms across her chest.

"Megan's front tire was slashed on her car last week," Todd answered discreetly, his brows drawn together and his expression dark. "Seems a little coincidental to me."

Tyson pursed his lips and shook his head. "Now we don't have any proof it was slashed. Kate said she could've run over some broken glass."

"Hmm." Megan nodded and glanced around the shop one more time.

Kate, who had just gone in the back to dump the glass, returned with a tired smile.

"You guys are all so sweet," she said with a sigh.

“Well, we’re worried about you.” Walt, the owner of the hardware shop said with a frown. He reached out and gave Kate’s arm a light squeeze. “Whoever did this should be held accountable.”

Kate gave him a grateful smile.

Megan watched the exchange with curiosity. Hmm. Perhaps Megan should consider dating Walt, he was a young widower in his late thirties, and he seemed awfully friendly with Kate...

“Gosh, Megan,” Kate said suddenly. “You really need to get back to Trevor. This is your time with him, don’t waste it on me.”

“You’re hardly a waste, but you’re probably right. I should get back,” she agreed and then gave them all a slight smile. “Though things are going as well as I hoped. Maybe even better.”

“Oh, that’s fantastic,” Kate cried, her face lighting up. “Breakfast is on me this morning, pick out whatever you want to take with you. After all, this is costing you like an hour roundtrip of driving.”

Todd grinned. “Jesus, I hope you’re getting through to him. Best news I’ve heard all day, Meg.”

“I’ll echo that,” Tyson agreed. “Keep us posted.”

Megan pulled out her cell phone and nodded, before she sent a quick text to Trevor letting him know where she was.

“Thanks for everything you’ve done for us,” Megan said, sliding her cell back into her purse. “All of you. I’m really hoping this time together has changed things. I owe Ryan big-time for lending us his house.”

“I’ll pass on your thanks to him,” Todd said with a grin. “We’re going drinking and wenching tonight.”

“Wenching?” Kate repeated, her eyebrows flying high. “Did you really just call it wenching?”

“Argh.” He threw an arm around her shoulder and squeezed. “Aye, I did, lassie. So batten down your morals and hide your virtue.”

Kate’s face went bright red and she shot a mortified gaze over to Megan, as if to ask *did you say something?*

Megan shook her head quickly and resisted the urge to kick Todd really, really hard. Was he seriously that clueless on how Kate felt about him? Wait, silly question.

“So, anyway,” Kate said over-brightly, untangling herself from Todd’s loosely thrown harm. “Megan, what did you say I could get you and Trevor for breakfast?”

Megan set the truck’s brake and drew in a nervous breath. During the drive back to Canyon Beach, she’d thought a little about Kate’s vandalism, but a whole lot more about Trevor and what had happened last night.

Her stomach flipped at the memory of being tied up and blindfolded and pleased in a way that had blown her mind. Who could've ever known she would've loved a little kink? The idea still took her breath away.

Trevor hadn't texted back and she wondered if maybe he was still sleeping. She grabbed the white bag from Kate's and breathed in another sigh of delicious danishes before climbing out of the truck and heading for the house.

The house was quiet when she entered, but a few steps inside she drew up short.

Trevor stood in the kitchen, leaning against the counter, and his expression was completely guarded. The tension in his body visible.

Oh, God. No, no, no. Megan swallowed hard and hoped like hell they hadn't just taken three massive steps backward in all the positive advances over the past twenty-four hours.

"Good morning," she said cautiously. "Did you get my text?"

He lifted his cell phone and gave a small nod that he had.

"Kate's shop was vandalized. Not too much damage and nobody was hurt, but I wanted to check it out."

Trevor's brows furrowed. "Was Tyson there?"

"Yeah, and one of his deputies. And Todd."

"I hope they find the punk." He nodded and then looked away again.

"Trevor, what's going on?" she asked and set the bag with their breakfast down on the counter.

"It was too much, wasn't it?"

It took a moment for her to realize what he was even referring to, and when she did relief swept through her, weakening her.

She let a small seductive smile flit across her face as she crossed the floor to him.

"Last night? Not at all," she said softly and wound her arms around his neck. She pressed a light kiss against his mouth. "I loved it. It was incredible, Trevor."

Skepticism flashed in his eyes and maybe a little relief. "Really? You're sure?"

"I'm still kind of shocked how much I *did* love it. Besides, we had a safe word. Even if it was kind of...fluffy," she teased and nipped at his bottom lip.

Trevor growled and slid his arms around her waist, jerking her flush against him.

"Thank God. When I woke up and you were gone...I thought." He kissed her forehead, her cheek, and then finally her mouth, before lifting his head. "Please, angel, don't do that to me again."

"I wo-oh!" she gasped as her feet left the ground and she found herself in his arms. "What are you—"

"I want you again." He strode back toward the bedroom.

"But breakfast...?"

"Can wait."

Megan laughed huskily and wrapped her arms around his neck. Yes. Breakfast could definitely wait.

An hour later, Trevor polished off the last bite of his danish and leaned back in bed. His gaze slid to Megan, who was still nibbling on hers.

Damn, she was just ridiculously sexy sitting naked in the bed with her hair still tousled from their lovemaking and her knees drawn up to her chest.

“Hmm. Maybe I should’ve bought you two of those,” she teased. “Are you still hungry?”

He shook his head and took another sip of coffee. “I’m fine. Breakfast in bed is awesome.”

Megan grinned and finished her danish. “It is, isn’t it?”

“Mmm.” He gave her another sideways glance. “So what I did to you last night, it really didn’t freak you out?”

She gave a soft laugh and kissed his shoulder. “No, I absolutely loved it. I want to try it more often. I mean I’m not saying we should do it every time we have sex, but it’s a fun way to mix things up.” She glanced up at him, her brow arched and her lips pursed. “Hmm. Maybe you’ll even let me try swatting your ass with that flogger thing.”

Trevor let loose a laugh from low in his belly at the image. “Not a fucking chance, angel. I like being in charge.”

“Mmm. I guess so. Well, I don’t mind giving up control every now and then.” She poked him in the ribs. “Well, in the bedroom at least.”

Trevor grinned and grabbed her, rolling her under him before she could protest. She snuggled eagerly against him, kissing his shoulder and wiggling beneath him. The position was so normal, one he’d missed more than he’d realized over the past year. He couldn’t imagine not having Megan in his life again all the time. Everything inside him rebelled at letting her go. But at that thought, his mind wandered down darker paths and his chest tightened with guilt.

“I shouldn’t be this happy,” Trevor finally muttered, nuzzling her neck. “I shouldn’t be thinking about being your husband, and your belly round with my baby.”

“You’re thinking about that?” she whispered breathlessly. “Because I have been too. You’re entitled to happiness, Trevor. Everyone is.”

“But you don’t understand. Nobody does.”

“What don’t I understand?” she pleaded softly, pushing on his shoulders so she could look at his face again. “Help me understand, Trevor.”

“What it’s like. What we go through. I mean, a soldier’s death might garner his name and age being flashed on the news for tens seconds,” he said harshly. “But people didn’t know the man himself--and I use that term loosely because he was only eighteen--like I did.”

“Oh, Trevor,” she whispered, cupping his cheek. “Tell me who he was.”

His heart thumped in his chest and he swallowed with difficulty. The urge to shut down was strangely missing. Instead, he wanted to talk. To explain.

“Darrell Washington,” he finally said. “He was one of my soldiers. It was his first deployment to Afghanistan. Hell, his first deployment anywhere.” He shook his head. “He loved to play video games and talk shit with the other soldiers. He had a fiancée waiting for him, just like me. We used to talk about you gals. Our women back home.”

Megan gave a small smile and cupped his shoulder, massaging lightly.

“A couple of times I mentioned to him that maybe he was too young to be settling down. Christ, he’d only just graduated high school. But he was dedicated to his girl... I’d never seen a guy look so in love, so determined and steadfast about anything. He had the same passion for being in the army.”

“What happened?” she asked, almost on a whisper.

“He was the one I sent back into the Humvee to call for help. He was the one killed when an RPG slammed into it.”

She was silent for a moment and when he glanced down at her tears shimmered in her eyes. “I’m so sorry.”

Bile rose in his throat and his gut twisted. “I survived, Megan. How is it fair that *I* should get to go home, marry my woman, when Private Washington, the soldier I should’ve kept safe, is dead.”

“You’re not invincible, Trevor. People die during war. It’s not fair, but would it have made it any more right if you had died?” she asked, her voice breaking. “You need to forgive yourself and *stop* feeling guilty that you didn’t die. Because you may not have been killed in Afghanistan, but I still lost you.”

The air seemed to suck from the room, he couldn’t breathe as he stared at the anguish in her eyes and the tears she battled. Something inside of him shifted and the wall he’d kept erected for over a year came crashing down. Reality, crystal clear and unforgiving, blindsided him. He struggled to breathe. To speak. But he couldn’t even blink.

Just how much had he lost by doing exactly what Megan had said—feeling guilty for surviving? How had he ever thought he could handle this on his own? Without seeking help?

“Trevor?” Her fingers tightened around his shoulder, her eyes widening in concern.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered dumbly, drawing her into his arms again and burying his face into her hair. “Oh my God, Megan, I’m so sorry. You’re right. About everything.”

“Trevor, you’ve been in so much pain...” Her arms wound around him, her grip almost vise-like.

“I love you. More than anything, and maybe I have been in pain, but I’ve also been so damn blind,” he said thickly. “How could I ever have let you go? When I return to Fort Lewis I’ll ask for the help I’ve been too stubborn to accept. I’ll talk to someone, Megan, I promise. But, I don’t want to lose you, angel. Never again.”

“You can’t lose me. Not this time. I love you so much, Trevor. I shouldn’t have given up on you in the first place.” Her voice broke through the tears. “And I blame myself just as much.”

Trevor groaned and lowered his head, crushing her lips beneath his and stopping her from pinning the blame on herself. Her arms looped around his neck and her body nearly melded into his.

This was his woman. She’d always believed in him, always loved him. Had always known that he just needed a little extra help to get through the darkness. It was just a damn shame it’d taken him this long to figure it out himself.

He lifted his head and brushed a tender kiss across her forehead. “You will make an excellent soldier’s wife, angel. That is, if you still want the position.”

Megan’s eyes glowed with tears and happiness. “Are you kidding? I’d take out any other bitch that applied. That spot is mine, soldier boy.”

An optimism and brightness that he hadn’t felt in years rushed through him and Trevor knew this was a new beginning. With Megan’s faith and love, the future looked damn bright.

He lowered his head again, claiming her mouth once more in a kiss that sealed their future and their love.

Chapter Sixteen

Kate clutched her glass of champagne and resisted the urge to tug down her dress. What had she been thinking, wearing this flowery tight little thing? She didn't have the same kind of body most of the girls here did, her curves were a little more...well, curvy.

Watching Tyson and Ellie dancing on the lawn of Tyson's parents' house, Kate bit back a wistful sigh. What a beautiful reception, and the wedding had been wonderfully sweet and romantic too.

They looked so happy. So in love. What must that be like? And apparently Tyson wasn't the only one finding love, because Trevor and Megan had just announced they were getting back together. Everyone, of course, had been ecstatic to hear the news that the couple would be marrying within the month in a small ceremony on the beach, before Megan moved up to Fort Lewis to be with Trevor.

Lifting her glass of champagne, Kate took a sip and swung her gaze away from the newlyweds. Unfortunately her attention landed straight on the youngest Wyatt brother.

Todd had brought a date to his brother's wedding. Some skinny, tall, fake-tanned brunette who had an annoying laugh and clung to him like a wet noodle.

She bit her bottom lip, ignoring the hollow ache in her stomach. Her mind flittered back to that moment at Ellie's bachelorette party, when Todd had shown up and thrown out the stripper. Or more so, what had happened *after* that.

Her pulse quickened and her body heated. She closed her eyes and shook her head, downing the rest of her champagne.

When she opened her eyes, she found Todd watching her. Her mouth dried out when he winked and then her heart did a little jump kick in her chest.

She was a fool to have a crush on a man who went through women like she went through flour in her bakery. And she *needed* to remember that Todd Wyatt was nothing but trouble. She could find plenty of other ways to get her heart broken, thank you very much.

There were plenty of other fish in the sea. Like Walt Chapman. The owner of the hardware shop next to hers. He'd taken her out for lunch after her shop had been vandalized, had insisted on paying and had been nothing but supportive and charming.

But he wasn't Todd.

Which is a good thing, she reminded herself. Turning away from his teasing grin, she sought out anyone besides Todd to talk to. Because with the recent vandalism at her shop, she already had her fair share of trouble without adding Todd Wyatt to the mix...

About the Author

Shelli's the author your mother warned you about! She read her first romance novel when she snuck it off her mother's bookshelf when she was eleven. One taste and she was forever hooked on romance novels. It wasn't until many years later that she decided to pursue writing stories of her own. By then she acknowledged the voices in her head didn't make her crazy, they made her a writer. Shelli writes various genres of romance and currently lives in the Pacific Northwest with her young daughter.

Email Shelli: shelli@shellistevens.com

Sign up for her newsletter at: www.shellistevens.com/contact

Look for these titles by Shelli Stevens

Now Available:

Trust and Dare
Theirs to Capture
Four Play

Seattle Steam
Dangerous Grounds
Tempting Adam

Chances Are
Anybody but Justin
Luck be Delanie
Protecting Phoebe

Holding out for a Hero
Going Down

Coming Soon:

Holding out for a Hero
Flash Point

One man wants her heart. The other wants her dead...

Going Down

© 2010 Shelli Stevens

Holding Out for a Hero, Book 1

Eleanor Owen needs to get out of Chicago and quick. It's not that she doesn't want to obey the subpoena to testify against her drug-trafficking ex-boyfriend. It's making it to the witness stand alive, should a dirty cop make good on his threats.

Tiny, remote Wyattville, Oregon, looks like the perfect place to disappear, but it's hard to blend into the woodwork when one of the town's infamous namesakes sends her heart racing. Worse, Mr. Tall, Hot and Packing is the town sheriff, which means she should stay as far away from him as possible.

Tyson Wyatt is positive the sexy new girl in town is hiding something. Question is, what? He vows to feel out her secrets—including what she feels like beneath him. Preferably naked. Until then, he's not buying the story she's selling.

Their chemistry is sheet-melting hot, and Ellie realizes much too late that the man with the badge is as dangerous to her heart as her ex is to her life...

Warning: A city girl on the run, and a small-town sheriff set to seduce. Explicit sex. Dirty talk. A hint of danger. Oral sex with a cupcake.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Going Down:

"Okay, you need to stop cornering me like this," she said breathlessly.

He slid his gaze over her, took in the hardened points of her breasts beneath the tank top, and her uneven breathing.

"I think you like it when I do, Ellie."

Instead of replying, her tongue darted out to trace over the mouth that was tempting the hell out of him.

His blood pounded harder and he knew he wouldn't be able to stop himself.

"You do like it. Don't you?" his voice dropped an octave as he curled his fingers around the swell of her hips.

"Tyson." His name on her lips was a breathy combination of plea and protest.

But when he lowered his head, there was no protest in her wide eyes. And before his lips could touch hers, her lashes fluttered down in submission as she leaned into him.

A wave of need washed through him, primal and potent. With a low groan, he closed that last distance, taking her mouth.

Her lips, pillowy soft and pliant, moved against his. The warmth of her breath teased him, ripped at his self-control.

He nipped her bottom lip with his teeth, using her gasp of surprise to thrust his tongue inside the hot cavern of her mouth.

He moved his hands around her hips and grabbed the firm roundness of her ass, squeezing, and then lifting her onto the counter.

Jesus. He was going to lose it. So much for being professional. But screw it, just like he'd told her earlier, he was off duty. And right now, his only duty was to see how far she'd let him take this.

And if he played his cards right, maybe all the way to the bedroom.

You need to stop him.

Ellie ruthlessly silenced the voice of reason in her head and moaned as Tyson pushed her legs wide to step between them. The only thing that mattered now was pleasure, and following the thread of temptation that Tyson had so carefully laid out for her.

The edge of the counter bit into her bottom, the angle and pressure adding to the intensity and spontaneity of the moment.

His tongue danced with hers, rubbing and sucking. Their mouths separated for just a second, giving them both enough time to gasp in air, before once again he claimed her lips.

His hands, confident and knowing, moved to her waist, gathering the tank top she wore and pushing it upward.

Cool air brushed her belly and her pulse quickened. If you're going to stop him, now would be the time.

Then it was too late, and she really didn't give a damn as the fabric lifted over her breasts and her nipples tightened.

His head lifted from hers again, and she refused to open her eyes, because she knew he was looking at her body.

"Oh, yeah, sweetheart," he muttered thickly. "You like it."

Wet friction rasped over her bare nipple and she groaned, pleasure rocking through her as she finally let her lashes flutter up.

The vision of Tyson's head bent over her breast sent heat exploding in her belly and a rush of moisture between her legs.

His tongue moved against the tip, teasing and exploring her, making her nipple lengthen and tighten for his touch.

With a soft laugh, he parted his lips and drew her into his mouth, suckling lightly.

So good. It felt so damn good. How could she possibly stop him when this moment was so exquisite? She was only going to be in Wyattville for a couple months...why not indulge in a little harmless sex?

Ellie squirmed on the counter, her breath quickening as she tunneled her fingers into his short, blond hair, holding him against her. Wanting him to suck harder, to use his teeth.

His free hand came up to cover the other breast, squeezing and massaging the flesh. Then he caught the nipple between two fingers and pinched lightly.

She jerked against him, crying out. More, she wanted so much more. Wanted his fingers buried deep inside her, and then his tongue, before finally, his cock.

The image of it skittered through her head, robbing her ability to breathe, making her wetter.

Tyson switched his mouth to the other nipple, sucking fiercely as he eased his hand down her belly. His teeth grazed over the tip over her breast, before he lifted his head.

"I want to touch you here," he muttered thickly, just before he cupped between her thighs. "Feel how hot your pussy is right now."

"Tyson," she moaned, her sex clenching at his erotic words. Jesus, it was like he'd known her thoughts.

"I bet you're nice and slick, sweetheart." He licked her nipple, moving his hand back up to her stomach. "Aren't you?"

Yes. Her heart pounded and her body wept for release. This man, almost a stranger, had aroused her more than any man she'd ever dated before. And more than anything, she wanted him to follow up and touch her like he'd just said.

She issued a husky, "Why don't you check for yourself?"

He lifted his head, possessiveness and desire flaring in his eyes. "No games. I like that."

Without breaking eye contact, he maneuvered his hand beneath the waist of her pants and thong. The brush of his strong fingers at the top of her mound had her biting her lip to hold back a groan.

"No games," she repeated and caught his wrist, pushing his hand lower. "No teasing either."

"Ah, but teasing is so much fun, Ellie," he muttered, before his palm cupped her sex completely. A second later, he curled one finger deep inside her sheath and Ellie's world went spinning.

When all eyes are on you, there's nowhere to run...except the truth.

Behind Blue Eyes

© 2010 T.L. Schaefer

Crime-scene photographer Sara Covington hides behind her camera from the otherworldly ability that's caused her nothing but grief her whole life. Yet denial doesn't protect her when she runs across a serial killer with an aural signature she's never encountered.

Suddenly she's without a job and with nowhere to turn...except to an enigmatic, sexy-as-hell detective with a disquieting talent for seeing right through her defenses.

Brian Roney's fascination with Sara compels him to bring her in on the case that ultimately gets her fired. Even though he senses her mutual attraction, something holds her back from stepping into his arms. He's as determined to find out why she's pushing him away as he is to keep her safe.

When the killer strikes again, Sara realizes the only way to stop the madman is come clean about her painful past—and embrace the gift she has so long denied. Before the grisly trail of bodies leads right to her doorstep.

Warning: A sexy alpha cop, a heroine with a past (and super spidey sense) and a maniac on the loose...what's not to love?

Enjoy the following excerpt for Behind Blue Eyes:

With a weary sigh, Brian finally stood. "The uniform will stay right where he's at until we know Burke has moved on to another city. It's probably a waste of manpower, but we've got to be sure."

I walked him to the door, admitting to myself he wasn't going to make it over the threshold. My quotient for being scared was up, and I wanted Brian Roney...bad. Did I feel guilty about using him for my own satisfaction? Yeah, a bit, but I could guarantee he'd leave here smiling. So I took the step I'd been anticipating—and denying—since the day I met him.

He leaned in for a brief kiss, and I latched on with everything inside me. He let out a surprised grunt, then returned my passion, his tongue teasing mine as his hands grasped my hips and pulled me close.

I wound my arms around his neck and kissed him for all I was worth, running my fingers through the hair at his nape.

"Don't send me home, Sara," he breathed against my lips, moved down, caressed my cheek, then the underside of my jaw with tender, hot kisses.

"I'm not." My breath hitched. My nipples pebbled against his strong, broad chest.

He drew back and searched my eyes. "Are you sure?"

"Damned straight." I met his gaze as I moved a hand down, tracing the vee his shirt made.

And still he hesitated. Could I be so lucky? “Stop thinking so hard about it.” I brushed my lips across his before pulling back. “You’ve got condoms, right?”

He chuckled, back in his own happy space. “Let’s put it this way... I’ve had them in my pocket since the first time I laid eyes on you.”

My breath caught. A girl didn’t need much more than that, now did she?

I grinned and returned for a kiss...a repeat of the tease we’d shared far too often. He met me stroke for stroke, his tongue tangling with mine. The sensation lit a trail of fire that streaked across my body, bringing my nipples to an almost painful point, and low, sensual heat coiling in my core. This was going to be so very good.

I stood on my tiptoes so I could meet him mouth-to-mouth, unrestrained, and it was everything I’d remembered and fantasized about on the plane, in the hotel room. And yes, before that. He took my mouth wholly, as if kissing me could sustain him for the rest of his life. It was heady, and the moment I thought I had him pegged, he broke away and turned me so I couldn’t see him. He pulled me tight against him, and banded his arms around me from behind, his erection a long, hard promise of strength and pleasure against my back. His hands cupped my breasts, learning their weight and fullness. I melted against him, heart thumping in my chest, my breath coming in sharp little pants, and I lifted my arms, looping them around his neck, allowing him free access.

His thumbs brushed across my nipples, and I gasped as pleasure streaked through me, then his hands were moving, sliding beneath my blouse. He spanned my waist, fingers ducking beneath my waistband for a scant, teasing second before they drifted up to my breasts again.

I stopped breathing as his palms covered me and his mouth dropped to my nape, delivering tiny little nips that made me quiver, head to toe.

“The things I want to do to you aren’t legal in most states,” he breathed in my ear, his voice low, guttural. Completely, over-the-top sexy.

My body stiffened in reaction. In anticipation. No aura to overwhelm me, no reading what my partner was feeling in his gaze. This was going to be so good.

I spun in his arms and met his eyes, which had gone turbulent. “Yeah? I could say the same.” I grasped his hand, leading him to my bedroom.

It was the one room in my house he hadn’t seen, and I was proud of it, even if my brain was clouded by a desire so strong I was amazed I could see at all. It reflected the hidden me, decorated in scarlet and sage, eye-popping royal blue and creamy taupe. Since I’d come to Dallas, no other man had seen it; every other sexual liaison had been in neutral territory.

Would he even notice? Why the hell did I care?

But notice he did, standing stock-still in the doorway, his hands settling on my waist, pulling me back against him once again. “This is the real you, isn’t it?” He leaned in to lave my ear, sending thrills through

my entire body. "It's beautiful, just like you are. I imagine what you see when you look at the world. But know how I see you. You're vibrant, a nexus of the colors that defies anything I could describe." His hand rested possessively on my belly and his voice had gone gravelly. "And when you come, I imagine the expression on your face because I know you'll be coming for me."

He spun me around to face him, and the look on his face was anything but easy. It was predatory and utterly male. "Now strip. I want to see you naked."

My breath clogged in my lungs at his audacity and how much it turned me on. How could he possibly know, I marveled, even as my body overruled rational thought. I'm a take-charge kind of girl when it comes to everything else, but in the bedroom, I want a man to lead, and somehow, some way, he'd intuited that. It'd taken me years to figure it out myself, yet he knew exactly how to play me in seconds. That knowledge made me impossibly hotter, wetter.

I locked gazes with him. Everything he made me feel was ours alone. No bombarding emotions, no aura to cloud my response, to anticipate his. My fingers shook as I pulled my blouse over my head, then loosened the clip at my nape.

He stood mere inches from me, eyes blazing as he watched each and every move I made.

My heart banged against my ribs. I stood in my bra and slacks, hair brushing against my shoulders, while he remained fully clothed, inspecting me.

"You're even better than I imagined," he breathed.

What he'd pictured, I couldn't possibly conceive of until he began seducing me with his words. Not that he needed to.

"You're lushier than I thought. You hide behind baggy T-shirts too often." His hands settled on my hips. "You're meant for tasting, for savoring all night long." He dipped his head to my breasts. "But you don't know that, do you, Sara?"

Any reply I might have made was completely annihilated by the sensation of his tongue on my lace-covered nipples. Instead I moaned. Not in surrender, but agreement.

His tongue flicked from one breast to another, his hands tightening against my hips until I was flush against him. He bowed me back as he loved my breasts, cradling me against his erection, rocking me gently until I thought I'd go insane. I began to fall into sensation and reached out blindly for something, anything to hold onto.

"Shhhh," he murmured, his breath warm and hot against my breast. "I've got you, Sara. Remember that." Then he was lifting me, settling me on the bed, his mouth still teasing my nipple even as his hands deftly unfastened my slacks, sliding them to the floor along with my panties.

His clever fingers teased my mons with feather-light touches as the pressure of his mouth increased and he applied his teeth. I jolted upward, into him, and felt him laugh against me.

“I knew you’d be like this, you know.” His voice was rough, needy, even though he was in complete control.

One big palm closed over my breast and squeezed as he dropped to his knees, his breath wafting in tiny little gusts along the inside of my thighs. His mouth covered me, tongue teasing me as one finger slid inside, then two, pumping in time to the delicious motion of his tongue.

I moaned, bowing on the bed as I grasped the bedspread in both fists as he devoured me. Pure, blinding fire flashed through me, setting every nerve ending ablaze, and I toppled.

Tender fingers unlatched my front-hook bra, and I jerked as his knuckles brushed across my nipples. Over the pounding of my heart and the rush in my head, I barely heard the rasp of his zipper, the crinkle of cellophane.

Then he was covering me, his mouth hot on mine, his big, wicked hands tilting my hips, and in one sleek move, he was inside me, sheathed to the hilt.

Let a terrorist take her? Not over his dead body and damned soul...

Collateral Damage

© 2010 J.L. Saint

Silent Warrior, Book 1

One thing makes Jack Hunter invaluable to his Delta Force Team. The same trait that makes him suck at relationships. Single-minded focus on his career—and honing his ability to never miss a kill.

After a terrorist missile devastates his team and leaves him with only partial memory of a FUBARed rescue mission, he retains only one clear picture no one believes: the last face in his gunsight belonged to a prestigious American businessman. The man's wife has to know something, but the only way to get to her is go AWOL.

After her husband trades his family to tango with double-Ds, Lauren Collins decides her dogs are better judges of character. She's unaware how far her soon-to-be-ex's web of deceit reaches—until the only thing between her, her sons and a killer is a wounded Delta soldier who activates her sorely neglected X-chromosome like nobody's business.

Their instant attraction is kryptonite to Jack's injury-dulled edge. Thrust into a world of peril, political treachery and treason, Lauren has no choice but to trust Jack with her life. Even if she and her sons survive, she's not sure her heart will...

Warning: Contains a warrior who doesn't hesitate to lay his body on the line, more than one emotional love story to tug at your heart, and chaos at Chuck E. Cheese.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Collateral Damage:

"Come in to the bathroom and let me clean you up, then we both can relax," she said past the emotion clogging her throat. What almost happened was still too fresh in her mind for her to be anything but overwhelmed.

"I can do it." He stood, coming so close to her that she had to take a step back. His nostrils flared as he inhaled sharply. He searched her gaze for a moment as if trying to assess her mood.

"So can I, and right now I need to make sure you're all right more than you need to be Mr. Invincible." She marched to the bathroom and pointed to the closed commode, determined to ignore the effects of his close proximity on her senses. "Sit."

The corner of his mouth quirked up as he sat. "What's next? The Terminator?"

"Sponge Bob Square Pants," she said briskly as she turned on the water.

He snorted and winced. "Can we stick with Superman?"

"Depends on how cooperative you are, Dudley Do Right." *More like Studly Do Right.*

He laughed, then groaned. "Okay. You win. Just don't make me laugh again. No more torture."

She opened the first-aid kit and he reached for the Ibuprofen, downing a handful of them before pulling off his stained T-shirt. The bathroom shrank to the size of a pea pod, a very warm pea pod. And the torture had just begun because ignoring him and the effect of his chiseled in stone physique became impossible. His every muscle was perfectly defined, supple and vibrant with life. *Thank God for that.*

This man had put his life on the line for their country numerous times. And he'd put everything on the line for her without question.

Taking the wash cloth, she gently cleansed away the dried blood then dabbed some antibiotic ointment to his wound and left it open to air at his insistence. She turned her attention to cleaning his neck and chest as well, lingering more than she had a right to, but unable to stop herself from relishing every touch. A touch he was clearly far from indifferent to, a reaction that filled her even more with want, with need, with excitement. He seemingly watched her every move with his heated gaze, but then she swore he'd stared at her mouth, her breasts, her sex so long that it was a wonder she didn't burst into flames.

She surprised herself on how quickly she finished, then again, he had a way of warping her perception of time. It could have been five minutes, it could have been fifty, whatever it was, it wasn't enough. She wanted more of him, needed to give more to him in so many ways.

That bullet had shot to hell any barriers or pretensions, leaving a raw need that only he could fill. She slid her palm against his hard-edged jaw and eased his gaze up to hers. His skin had become burning hot, his pulse raced beneath her finger tips, and his respirations had quickened considerably. "Are you sure you don't need the hospital?"

"The hospital is the last thing I need right now." His voice was like sandpaper, made her feel raw, vulnerable and that much more needy. He placed his hand against her hers and turned to brush his lips to the inside of her wrist. The simmering desire between them flared white hot and burned a path all the way to her core. She shivered with excitement. The connection between them was one that only a near-death incident could forge.

Her mouth went dry and she searched hard for the right thing to say to him. Her heart was so full, her need so great. She met his gaze. "I don't know that I've thanked you enough. For being there yesterday. Today. For keeping my sons safe. For keeping me alive."

He started to shake his head and she stopped him. "Let me finish. I want to thank you for what you've done every day, for the years that you've been there doing what has to be done so I can live the life I live. It means more than I can express or ever repay."

He exhaled. "Lauren, sometimes it's a job, sometimes it's more than that. It's everything I believe. But right now it sure as hell isn't—"

She pressed her finger to his lips, halting his words. “That being said, I want you to know this has nothing whatsoever to do with gratitude and everything to do with what’s in my heart.” She planted her mouth on his, ready to start this kiss where their kiss last night had ended.



SAMHAIN[™]
P U B L I S H I N G