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~ Dedication ~

To Georgia, A wonderful editor who has helped me not only with polishing up my story, but who has prepared me if I ever have to enter the Witness Protection Program.

Chapter One

The black Hummer seemed to crawl up the winding mountain road at a snail's pace. Josie leaned her head back against the seat and stared out the window at the same scene she'd studied for the last several hours. *Sheesh, how long does it take to get to this highly secretive place?*

They'd been driving since before sunrise, and every time she'd asked Donovan how much longer it would be, he'd turned away from her and muttered without giving her a straight answer. Blowing the bangs out of her eyes, she pushed the control to lower the window. She sighed with relief as the flow of cooler mountain air blasted her face. The tension between Donovan and her was enough to suffocate her.

"Put the window up. The glass is blacked out for a reason. We can't take any chances." He waited two seconds, and when she didn't immediately roll her window up, he pushed the control button on the door himself. "Look, Marie—"

"Josie. My name is Josie." She snorted. "Agent D."

"Not anymore, it isn't." He turned up the air conditioner, glanced over at her, and then turned his attention back to the road. "The trial is a week away. You can go back to your life, your own name, and forget about everything you've had to...suffer through. In the meantime, you'll not take any unnecessary risks, and I'd appreciate it if you'd follow the rules."

Turning her face away from him, she blinked to dispel the sudden rush of tears clouding her vision. She didn't want to go back to having no job, no life...no Donovan. *Damn him.*

"Marie..." He placed his hand on her thigh. "I know it's hard, but this *is* for the best."

She refused to look at him, but nodded. Her leaving and never looking back might be what he wanted, but all these months of just the two of them depending on each other had done a doozy on her. There was no happily-ever-after written in the stars for her.

Agent D and she were two very different people. Donovan had his high level of responsibilities, code of honor, and seriousness. She was more spontaneous, a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants, live-life-to-the-fullest kind of

gal. And against her better judgment, she'd thrown herself at him, fucked like it was going out of style, and somehow, during all the chaos, fell in love with an agent for the FBI.

But, he didn't return the feelings.

Donovan pulled the vehicle off the old logging road and came to a stop. Josie sat up straighter. A lone cabin nestled deep in the woods, symbolizing beauty, serenity, and vacancy, sat in front of her. This was no safe house. The whole scene belonged on a postcard depicting a national forest for tourists to visit. A reenactment of pioneer life. "This is where you are keeping me?"

"Yeah."

"There are other people here." She studied a rather large man slugging another equally big man in the shoulder walking around to the back of the cabin. Her chest tightened. He'd made it perfectly clear. No one was supposed to know where she was staying. Something wasn't right. Her chest tightened, and her breath seemed to lodge in her throat. Any one of these people could work for Renfro Jackson.

She pulled the door handle, but Donovan had control of the locks. "Let me out."

"It's okay. This really is a safe place for us to stay." He turned off the engine. "You've heard me mention Agent Tony. Bryce and Taylor, the agents that transported you after the incident at the casino, are also here. They're all here to double up on security. Tony's girlfriend even came to keep you company. You'll like her. I think you have a lot in common with each other."

"You've slept with her too?" She whipped around and glared at him. "Can we compare notes? Maybe we could even swap partners...Agent D?"

His black eyes narrowed, but he didn't deny it. His hand came up and rubbed the whiskered five-o'clock shadow along his jaw.

Shush, shush, shush.

It was a familiar sound lately, usually one that came when he was at a loss for words and had to think up an answer.

"Oh, whatever." She snorted, sat back, and waited for him to unlock the door.

He had her face encased in his hands before she could spew any more anger toward him. "Dammit. Don't be like that. And stop calling me Agent D. My name's Donovan." He exhaled. "Josie...Marie...Oh fuck it." He leaned over and claimed her mouth with his own. His tongue pushed past her lips. Hard, fast, and possessive, he just as quickly let her go. "Come on. Let's go get settled."

She sat with her mouth open, afraid to breathe, and stared out at the rustic cabin. There was no way she was going to believe that Donovan didn't love her. Not with a kiss like that. The man had more feelings wrapped up into his cold exterior than even he knew about.

Chapter Two

The love between Tony and Jolene was apparent to everyone, but especially to Josie. She turned her gaze away from the couple embracing and moved a few steps away from the crowd. Peering out into the distance, she noticed a path leading from the yard down a slight embankment.

She had more freedom today than any other time since being placed in a safe house because of the remote location. Not wanting to admit that she found the rustic setting quaint and charming, she kept her mouth shut and stayed out of the friendly conversations floating around the cabin all afternoon. Donovan had briefed her with the rules set up to protect her, but he'd forgotten to mention exactly how far she could wander around outside. She glanced back at her keeper. He was holding up a security camera while Taylor and Brice verbally told him which way to move.

Walking quickly away from the house, she jogged along the path and out of sight. She inhaled and let her body relax. She hadn't had any space to herself since the night Bryce and Taylor drove her away from the casino after the shootout and straight to the safe house to live with Donovan.

Yesterday Donovan informed her that their current location had been compromised, but she knew the truth. He'd wanted someone around to keep them apart. She was growing too dependent on him. There was no danger. He only wanted to stop their sexual affair.

"Oh." She stopped. The most beautiful river lay in front of her, and on the bank a deer and her baby were drinking at the water's edge.

"They come down to the river every afternoon, along with bears and elk. I think I could watch them all day long."

Josie turned and found Jolene standing beside her. She crossed her arms. "I didn't hear you following me."

Jolene laughed. "Yeah, well...I'm sneaky like that." She shrugged. "Donovan was coming after you, but I told him I'd bring you back." The woman stepped in front of her and faced her. "Are you okay? I'm not usually this nosy, but I know the guys can be pretty intimidating. It's all those G-man hormones...they bounce off each other."

"G-man?" She chewed on the inside of her cheek.

"That's what I call the guys on Tony's team." She winked. "It's a much easier title to say than Federal Bureau of Investigations Special Agent."

Josie lifted the corner of her mouth. "You're right about that."

"I take it you've been sleeping with Donovan..."

She raised her brows, but something about the woman had her nodding. "I'm that transparent?"

"No." Jolene rubbed Josie's bare arm. "I've just been in your shoes. I know the look. It's hard not to fall for them. They're like the last of the alpha males."

Josie shrugged. "It's all one-sided though. Donovan...Agent D is all business, all the time...well, except when he's screwin' me." She tried to hold the tears back, but after staying strong and having no one to talk to, the friendly conversation undid her resolve. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't be blabbing about my troubles."

"Aw..." Jolene reached out and wrapped her arms around Josie. "You're going to spend a week here with us, and we'll talk more later. Right now, let's get you back to the house before Donovan has all of the G-men stomping down here with their guns drawn."

She let Jolene turn her around. She lifted her head and pulled back. Donovan stood in the path frowning. *Uh oh.*

"I was coming back. I just wanted to see where the trail led..." She shut her mouth. That sounded like a lie even to her.

Donovan ignored her excuse for running off and nodded to Jolene. "Thanks, but I'll bring her back."

Jolene squeezed her arm before walking back up the trail. Josie stared at Donovan. "I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't—"

He held up his hand. "It's okay. You don't have to explain" He stepped toward her. "Let's walk." He motioned off to the side. "We'll leave the deer to enjoy their moment."

They strolled down the river in silence. Her head spun with questions. Why wasn't he taking her back to the cabin? Did something happen and he was trying to give her the bad news? Maybe she'd pushed him too far.

Unable to take the suspense any longer, she touched his arm. "Donovan, stop, please." She dropped her hand. "What's going on? There's something wrong, isn't there?"

He shook his head. "It's not what you think."

"Well, I'm thinking the worst." She wrapped her arms around her waist. "Is it about the trial?"

"No." He held out his hand. "Let's sit down."

She moved over to the grassy knoll overlooking the river and waited. Donovan sat beside her and gazed out to the water. *Please, don't break my heart...*

"I want to apologize." He turned toward her. "I've treated you unfairly."

She drew her legs up and laid her head on her knees. Her anger melted away. It was so easy to believe him. A man of few words, he always said exactly what he meant. No bullshit radar was needed around him. "It's okay."

He smiled. "You're always so forgiving. We're in a difficult situation. We both are." He leaned back on his hands and crossed his legs. "I was trying to wait until the trial was over to have this discussion with you." He paused. "It goes against everything I believe in to fall for the woman whose life I'm responsible for. I've pledged my word to the agency that I would not become emotionally or physically involved with someone under my protection, and with you, all the rules flew out the window."

"I know." She sighed. "I wish...gah!"

"Tell me."

"I wish we'd met at a bar or through a friend, instead of *this*. I hate the circumstances I'm in." She sighed.

"Yeah, me, too, but there's no going back." He leaned forward. "I've fallen in love with you."

She lifted her head. "You have?" Wrinkling her nose, she shook her head. "Why are you telling me now? Why not last week, or even on our way out here?"

"I don't know...there's something about being out here where you start reflecting on your life. The important things become essential and the insignificant problems practically melt away. The cabin seems like home, Tony and Jolene are happily in love, and all I want to do is shout to the world that you're my woman." He leaned over and lifted her onto his lap. "I'm sorry I put you through hell. If everything happens according to our plans next week, we can live normally."

"Oh, Donovan. I love you so much." She wrapped her arms around his neck. "It's killed me thinking you'd grown tired of me."

"Don't ever think that." He kissed her. "I'll never stop wanting you. I've fallen in love with you." His hands stroked the inside of her leg. "I want you. Right here. Now."

"Yes."

He laid her gently down in the tall grass, unbuttoned the front of her blouse, and spread it open. With a quick flick, he'd opened her bra in the front, and her breasts fell free. He groaned. "You're beautiful. Just thinking about all that dark hair spread out on a pillow, your brown eyes begging me to join you, has me tied up in knots." He drew his finger around her rose-

colored areola. "I want to whisk you away and never let anyone hurt you again." He lowered his head and captured her nipple.

Her back arched. "Don...o...van!"

He sat back and unbuckled his belt. "You're a greedy woman..." Chuckling, he unzipped his jeans. Getting up on his knees, he pulled his pants down far enough on his hips he could remove his cock.

She squirmed out of her shorts and panties. Laughing, she tackled him to the ground. "I've wanted to do this all day long." She straddled his hips and cupped her breasts. "Help me. I want to feel you all the way inside of me."

Donovan fisted the base of his cock and ran it along her slit. "Damn, you're wet. So juicy and sweet." He licked his lips. "So hot."

She waited until the bulbous head teased the opening of her cunt, and then plunged down on top of him. "Oh, yes..." She moved back and forth, rubbing her clit against his body. The pleasure was instantaneous. The pressure in her lower stomach grew and constricted. "I need you," she moaned. "I'm going to explode."

"Do it." Donovan reached up with both hands and cupped her breasts. "Damn, that feels good." His big hands covered every inch of her. He squeezed, pulled, jiggled, and she lost herself in his touch.

The constant caress on her clit sent her careening out of control, and pleasure burst into a million pieces, spreading throughout her body, wave after wave.

Donovan shuddered underneath her, and hot pulses of cum filled her body. She slumped over his chest and laid her head in the soft crook of his neck. "I love you so much," she whispered.

"I love you too, baby."

She lay in his arms long after his spent cock slipped out of her pussy. Too tired to move, she luxuriated in the closeness Donovan offered. It took a lot for him to admit his feelings. She understood it went against everything he believed in. He did things by the book, and falling in love with her was a huge no-no.

"You won't get in trouble...because of us being together, will you?" She lifted her head.

"I don't know. I won't hide what happened anymore." He kissed the tip of her chin. "It'll be okay. Whatever happens, we'll get through it."

"You've got about two minutes, and I'm coming over to see if you're dead or alive." A voice yelled in the breeze.

She hid her face in her hands. "Donovan! He's going to catch us."

Donovan laughed. "We're okay, Bryce. We'll be up at the cabin in a minute." He rolled her off him and sprang to his feet. "Let's jump in the river and clean up before we have to face the others."

She rose. "This is going to be the longest week of my life."

"Mine too." He motioned over his shoulder to the water. "Wanna swim?"

"That depends. Can I stop calling you Agent D in front of the others?" She grinned.

"Sure." He pulled her close. "I'm sorry, but you're still going to have to use the name Marie around everyone, okay? We can't forget why we're here."

She nodded. Despite the declaration of love, the present risks she was living with required her to always be on guard. "I understand."

Chapter Three

A distant drone of conversation woke Josie up. She stretched her arms out and lifted her ass to soft caresses. She mewed and spread her legs wider. Donovan was drawing light circles around her anus with his finger.

Wanting to stay in bed all day, she refused to open her eyes and face reality. The voices in the other room belonged to all the agents, and as soon as she and Donovan walked out of the bedroom, Donovan's attention would veer away from her to whatever case needed to be analyzed, planned, and worked on.

"I know you're awake." Donovan rolled closer and slid his thigh between her legs.

"Mm..." She wiggled her ass. "I wish I wasn't. I want to go on enjoying this dream."

"It's no dream, baby."

He dipped his finger in her slit and returned to tickling her anus. The juice pooling between her lips added a delightful sensation. She pressed against his hand. He'd taken her this way once before, but not fully. He'd stopped before thrusting his full length inside of her. She moaned. Her pussy dampened more. The thought of him possessing every part of her body appealed to her.

His cock pulsed against her hip, and she bucked her ass up in the air. Her fingers curled into the sheet. Donovan pushed his finger into her tight hole, and for how much her body wanted more, her sphincter muscles tightened, grasping his finger.

"Your ass is begging me to fuck it." Donovan nuzzled her shoulder. "So small and inviting." He thrust his hips, pressing his cock against her hip. "I want to bury myself in you and feel how much you enjoy me pumping my cock deep inside you."

She moved against his finger. Up, down, up, down. Amazed that she found so much pleasure without one touch on her clit, she continued the motion. If he kept this up, she'd orgasm in no time.

"That's it, baby, fuck my finger." His breath came heavy and warm against her skin. "This time, I want to watch your ass take all of me, every single inch, and when I'm about to come..." He spread his fingers and, without removing the one in her anus, teased her pussy with his pinky. "I want to pull my cock out, grab it, and shoot my load all over your fucked ass."

“Yes.” She buried her head in the mattress and raised her hips higher.
“Do it.”

Donovan withdrew his hand and moved off the bed. She groaned at the loss of him. Slipping her arms under her stomach, she slid her middle finger between her lower lips and pressed it against her clit. *Oh, God...*

The bed compressed beside her. A soft click came next, and she knew he’d brought the tube of lube with him. She turned her head toward him. “Hurry.”

He ran a dollop of lubrication over the condom he must have put on when he left the bed. “I’ll try to go slow.” Adding more liquid from the tube to his hand, he slid his fingers between her cheeks and over her anus. “Damn, you’re ready.”

“Please...”

Moving over between her knees, he held himself up by his arms and rubbed his cock up and along her ass. She lifted her hips in the air every time his hardness passed over her anus.

“Damn, you are so beautiful.” He leaned on one hand and guided his dick with the other. “Real easy, baby.” He popped through the tight ring of her anus. “Oh, fuck.” His body quivered. “I wish you knew how this feels for me.”

“I do.” She pushed back. “More, Donovan. I’m about to come.”

He growled low in his throat and thrust his length all the way inside her. The pressure was unbelievable. She took everything he offered. “Show me that you love me.” She squirmed underneath his weight.

Donovan started out slow and built up a rhythm. He’d almost pull out before sinking back in. Her pussy spasmed as if getting fucked itself, and it caused her to involuntarily tighten her anus. Her body rocked against the mattress, stimulating her clit enough that she felt herself reaching her peak.

“Oh, God...I—I’m going to...” Her body convulsed into one huge contraction. “Come!”

He rode her hard, fast, grunting through each aftershock of her orgasm as her muscles squeezed his cock. She clutched at the bed, trying to meet each of his thrusts. The energy she’d had earlier disappeared, and she flopped down on the bed.

Donovan grasped her hips and brought her knees up on the bed. Withdrawing from her pussy, he peeled off the condom and tossed it on the floor. “Oh, yeah, that’s what I want. I’m gonna shoot my load all over you.”

She got on her elbows and peered over her shoulder. Donovan stroked himself and gazed upon her ass. So fierce and determined, he beat his cock

against her anus. Sweat popping out on his forehead, he gave two more shakes, groaned loudly, and shot warm cum over her hole.

Not able to hold herself up, she flopped back down on the bed. Donovan stood up and moved over to grab one of his T-shirts. She smiled as he wiped between her legs. "We really are roughing it without a bathroom close by, aren't we?"

"Yeah." He leaned over and kissed the back of her head. "I'll get dressed and go distract everyone while you run down the hallway to take a shower." He moved off the bed.

"Hey, Donovan?" She rolled over onto her side. "Thank you. That meant a lot to me." She gave a little shrug. "I don't know exactly why, but it did."

"I know." He winked. "I feel the same."

* * *

Bryce and Taylor stood over in the corner of the living room, heads together, both trying to listen in on the satellite phone. Whatever conversation was taking place over the phone seemed to displease the two men. Josie jolted as Jolene plopped down beside her on the sagging couch.

"I see you had a good morning." Jolene flipped her blonde hair over her shoulder and leaned closer. "FYI. The cabin is small, and noises carry."

Her eyes widened, and she whipped her head around to find Donovan talking to Tony by the kitchen. "Oh, God..." She slumped against the back of the couch. "Me or him?"

"Both of you." Jolene patted her leg. "Don't worry about it. We're all so hung up on our own love lives, we barely noticed." She pointed over at the two men on the other side of the room. "Tony told me that Bryce and Taylor have fallen in love with the same woman."

"Aw, poor guys." Josie stuck out her lip. "With them being such good friends, I imagine that is hard for them."

Jolene shrugged. "Maybe not. Between you and me, I think they're trying to convince the woman to have them both."

"A ménage?" She studied the two guys more closely. "Interesting."

"You can say that again."

Both women turned toward each other, paused, and grinned. "Lucky woman," they said in unison.

“Marie?”

Jolene elbowed her arm. “Donovan’s calling you.”

She raised her gaze and stood up. “Gah, I hate that name. Half the time, I don’t know who he’s talking to.”

Walking over to Donovan, she wrapped her arms around his waist and tipped back her head. “All done with agent talk?”

He nodded. “Come outside with me.”

Holding his hand, she followed him past the others and through the door. He stopped and laid his hands on her shoulders. “We’ve got problems.”

“With me?” She tilted her head to the side and frowned.

“Yeah.” He gazed over her shoulder and scanned the edges of the woods. “Renfro’s found us. Tony found some tracks early this morning, and when he sent Bryce to check the road, there’s a stolen car abandoned about a mile and a half from here. Looks like they weren’t prepared for the deep ruts in the old logging road.”

“But that doesn’t mean—”

“He’s already linked the car to Renfro. His prints were all over the steering wheel. That’s what we were talking to headquarters about.”

She pulled his arm. “What in the hell are we doing out here, then?”

Donovan pushed her hair off of her forehead and tucked it behind her ear. “It’s part of the plan. Right now he knows we’re all up and on guard. We want him to see you here at the house.”

“Why?” She turned her head to scan the area, but Donovan kissed her before whispering in her ear. “Don’t act paranoid. I’ll explain more to you later. For now, you’re going to go back in the house and try to take a nap.”

“W-why?”

“Tonight, we’re going to use the darkness to our advantage and sneak out of here on foot. We can’t chance driving down the mountain. There’s only one way in and one way out.” He held her in front of him, sheltered from any danger that might be lurking in the yard.

“Hike down the mountain?” She pressed her hand to her chest. “I can’t do that.” Shaking her head, she lowered her voice. “We’ll be out in the open. Renfro or his men will kill us.” Her chest pounded, and she looked away. “I want to stay at the cabin...around all the others.”

He held her head in his hands and forced her to face him. “Do you trust me?”

“You know I do.”

“Then let me take care of this. All you have to do is follow my directions.” He opened the door to lead her back inside, paused, and frowned. “I’m sorry to say that you can’t tell Jolene about our plans. Bryce and Taylor will leave like they are going back to work, but will be helping us. Tony is staying behind to guard the house, because we hope to escape unnoticed. It wouldn’t be fair to leave Jolene unguarded if Renfro or his men come looking for you here.”

She nodded. Heaviness settled on her chest. She didn’t want any of them hurt because of her. It wasn’t even fair that she was paying the price for being an innocent bystander at the club. She’d had no idea she’d walk in and witness Renfro blowing someone’s head off, and the shipment of cocaine in his office. *Hell, it wasn’t even my night to work, but Sherri called in sick.* “Okay.”

Chapter Four

Knock. Knock. “Marie?”

Josie froze with her jeans around her knees and swung around to blink at Donovan. “I thought you said Tony was taking Jolene to bed early?” she whispered.

Donovan shrugged. “That’s what he said.”

She wiggled and pulled her pants up, and moved closer to Donovan. “What am I supposed to do?”

“Open the door.” He chuckled. “She’s not going to know what is going on. Be cool.”

“Easy for you to say, Agent D.” She stuck out her tongue. “You’re the picture of calm. I’m a nervous wreck.”

She inhaled, ran her fingers through her hair, and opened the door. “Hi.” Josie smiled and leaned against the door.

“Oh, good, you guys are still awake.” She stepped inside the room and shut the door behind her. “I need to talk with you.”

Donovan stood up and moved in front of the backpack he’d already packed and prepared to wear on their excursion down the mountain. “We were just getting ready for bed, Jolene. Maybe we can talk in—”

Jolene waved her hand in the air. “Don’t try to bullshit me, Donovan. Do you really think I don’t see the whispers and the meetings all you G-men have had today?” She scoffed. “Even if I did ignore all that, do you really think Tony would go to bed at nine o’clock without touching me once?” She shook her head and smiled. “I know something is up, and since you brought Marie to my mountain, and I really like her, I want to know what is going on. I don’t want anything to happen...to either one of you.”

Silence filled the bedroom. Jolene gazed at Donovan. He remained closed off and in agent mode. She nodded. Jolene was right. It wasn’t fair of them to put her life, her home, and the life of her lover at risk without telling her what was going on. The more she knew, the bigger the chance that they’d all make it out alive.

“There is a man...actually a mob of men, who would like to kill me.” She moved back and sat on the edge of the bed. “I worked at Castle Casino in Seattle, a real swanky place where I served drinks and once in awhile filled in at the blackjack table.” She stood back up and flung out her hands. “One night, I walked into the owner’s office to turn in my receipts, something I did all the time, but this time when I opened the door...he shot one of his goons.”

She dug the heels of her hands against her eyes. The picture of that night was branded in her head. "I tried to run away, but one of the men dragged me back into the office." She moved over and wrapped her arms around Donovan's waist. "I thought I was going to get away with just having them threaten me if I told, but the police busted in. The boss got away, but decided I was too big of a liability. Now I stand between him and prison."

"Oh, Marie." Jolene stepped over and smoothed her hair back from her face. "The G-men will keep you safe. I believe that with all my heart."

Donovan cleared his throat. "We're leaving tonight. I'm taking Jo-Marie down the mountain. Let Tony know that we've told you what is going on. He'll keep you safe."

Jolene nodded. "You're hiking?"

"Yeah."

Her face broke out in a smile. "See...there was a reason why I listened to the talks today." She slapped her leg. "Wait until I tell Tony how stealthy I've become." She laughed.

"Jolene..." Donovan frowned.

"No, really. I did really well." She crossed her arms. "If I hadn't found out, you two would be suffering from a seven-day hike into some of the roughest territory in the state. Now you don't have to."

"What are you talking about?" Donovan cocked his head.

"Think. I own a fishing charter company. I've got rafts, canoes, kayaks, even a row boat." Her grin grew. "You could be off the mountain in six hours...eight at the most. All you have to do is let the river float you downstream." She crossed her arms. "This is my starting point, and the rangers who use this cabin during open season let me store my supplies in the old shed. Everything is right here, ready for you to use."

Jolene stared at Donovan. He paced the small room, rubbing his stomach. "Donovan?" She moved to block his path. "It makes sense. Renfro and his men wouldn't have access to a boat right away, and by the time they stole one, we'd be even farther away."

"All they'd have to do is shoot at the raft, and our lives would be in a different kind of danger. No." He turned to Jolene. "Thanks, but no."

"Then don't use the raft. I've got two aluminum canoes. You'd only need one. Plus they're faster in the water than a raft."

Josie squealed and hugged her friend. "That's perfect." She turned to Donovan. "Isn't it? And you have to know I'm not really the wilderness type."

“Get Tony.” Donovan’s forehead scrunched up. “Fuck if you girls haven’t saved our ass,” he muttered.

Jolene ran out of the room, and Josie threw her arms around Donovan’s neck. “Thank you, thank you, thank you.” She peppered kisses along his jaw.

“Don’t thank me yet, baby. We both have to get out of here alive first.”

* * *

The sky was darker than anything she’d ever experienced. No streetlights, no neon signs, no blinding lights from headlights pointed in her direction from cars going home. Josie snuggled down further in the boat and laid her head on Donovan’s backpack. Thank goodness with the glow of the moon she was able to make out most of Donovan’s face or she’d go crazy.

The roar of the river seemed incredibly loud in the dead of night. In the day, the rush of water over rocks created a gentle lullaby that soothed and relaxed. At night, it could have been the background music for a low-budget horror flick with all its heavy footsteps and deep breathing.

“We just passed Bryce.” Donovan lifted the oars out of the water and gazed down at her. “He’s the last safety net. We’re on our own for the next hour or so.”

She chewed on her lip. Donovan was more than competent in his job. “How do we know when we reach the bottom of the mountain and what do we do when we arrive?”

He slipped the oars back into the water. “Once we reach the dam, we’ll walk about two miles to a little town called Yale. Bryce has arranged for us to have a car available to use.”

“Dam?” She shot up. The canoe wobbled, and Donovan lost control in the current. She shrieked and lunged over the bench seat for him. The dark, swirling waters frightened her more than toppling over the dam and killing herself did. “D-Donovan—”

A loud *crack* followed with Donovan’s *dammit* nearly stopped her heart. She let go of his arm and sunk down in the canoe. “What was that?”

“Lay flat.” He pulled the broken oar that was shot in half out of the ring holder and flung it in the water.

Afraid to move and rock the canoe more, she stretched out and tried to reach for Donovan. “Get down!”

“Don’t worry about me. We’ve got to get some distance between us and them.” He pulled the one remaining oar through the water before switching sides and repeating the action. “Get my cell phone out of the bag. See if it works yet.”

It wasn’t easy to turn around with the bench blocking her from the backpack. She wormed her way over and past. Her hands shook, and she struggled with the zipper on the side of the bag. *Come on, come on...there!*

She held the phone up in the air. “I got it.”

“Fuck.” He dropped the oar in the bottom of the canoe, dragged the pistol out of the holster under his arm, and kneeled down in the boat. “Stay down. I just saw movement up ahead.” He shoved the magazine in the pistol and pushed the safety off. “Take cover.”

The quick repetitive *pop, pop, pop* had her lying flat down on her stomach when the cell phone vibrated against her chest. She jerked back. Two bars showed up in the right top corner of the screen. She sat up, being careful not to rock the canoe. “It works!”

Standing up, she leaned over to hand their one lifeline for help to Donovan. Another blast came, she screamed, and her body pitched over the side of the boat.

Donovan!

* * *

The second he spotted Josie attempting to stand up, he lowered his shooting arm, threw himself toward her, and his right shoulder exploded in a shower of pain. A deep burn tunneled down his arm, leaving his hand useless. He scanned behind the canoe for any sign of Josie, but in the damn darkness he couldn’t tell a whitecap from a body.

More shots rang out, but he ignored the threat. Lowering himself into the water, he swam with one arm while trying to keep his head above the surface. He wanted to yell out for Josie, but hoped his silence would make the men shooting at them continue following the canoe downstream.

Diving under the water, he put all his energy into his legs to fight the swift current. He’d heard one shot at the time Josie toppled from the canoe, and the way his body screamed in agony, he wouldn’t give up the thought

that she was okay, and that he'd find her. He broke through the surface and scanned the area. *Where the hell are you, Josie?*

Donovan paused, and then took off swimming faster than a man with one usable arm should be able to swim. A shadow had moved farther up the river on the bank at the water's edge. His body cramped, and he sank under the water. He came up coughing. *Josie.*

He scanned the other side of the river, searching for anyone out in the open who would take this opportunity to take aim at their intended target, but his vision was blurred. Little sparks of light flashed in front of him, making it impossible to see anything. He changed directions and swam toward shore. Time was of the essence. He'd promised to protect her. She trusted him. He'd never renege on the deal of a lifetime.

* * *

Exhausted, cold, and with a growing lump on her eyebrow where she must have hit her head, Josie was too frightened to worry about someone shooting her. Donovan was still on the canoe and running right into trouble. She had to get back to the cabin. If she made it back, she could send Tony down the river to help Donovan.

Pushing up on her knees, she squeezed her eyes shut against the sudden onslaught of nausea. Why was she so dizzy? Not letting her body stop her, she stood up and wobbled over the river rocks. *Whoa...I can do this. I have to do this. I have to save Tony.*

Gunfire broke through the night. Josie fell. Sharp rocks pierced her knees and hands. Crying out, she curled on the ground and covered her head with her arms. *I'm sorry. Oh, God, I'm sorry. This is my entire fault. If I hadn't been—*

The weight of the world fell on her, and she fought to push it off. Her voice paralyzed, her movements stunted, her hearing blocked from the pounding in her ears. All she could do was scream silently in her head and push against the ton of pressure crushing her into the rocks.

"Josie...stop. It's me, Josie." The arm wrapped around her lifted her and brushed the hair out of her face. "Sh...stop fighting. I've got you. I told you I'd keep you safe, Josie."

The short, sharp blasts of gunfire continued. She loosened her arm enough to reach out and touch the hand by her face. She grasped the rough, large, familiar fingers. She'd know them anywhere. "Donovan?"

Letting go of his hand, she gasped as it flopped, lifeless. Pushing herself out from under his body, she stared in horror. Donovan lay unresponsive on his side. "Donovan?" She shook him, but he didn't respond. "Donovan!"

Pushing him off his side onto his back, she knelt down beside him. She could barely make out the rise and fall of his chest. *Oh, thank God. He's breathing.*

Running her hands over his body, she found his shirt ripped around his shoulder. Carefully fingering the area, she frowned. She lifted her hand to her nose and inhaled. Her nose could tell the difference between blood and water, and he definitely was bleeding from the wound.

She removed her sweatshirt, worked it around his upper arm, tied the sleeves together, and curled against his side. His clothes were soaked, along with hers, but she remembered the old adage of using body heat to keep each other warm.

Laying her head on his chest, she willed his heart to keep beating. If they were alive when the sun came up, she'd hike back to the cabin and bring help. She squeezed her eyes shut, continued to ignore the battle going on around them, and prayed. *Donovan can't die. Do not take him from me. It wasn't his fault.*

The gunfire continued for what seemed like hours. She kept sane remembering all the good times Donovan had created for her over the past few months. The time he'd cheated at checkers, and thought she wasn't aware that he moved her pieces around the board every time she turned away. The way she'd catch him staring at her in the early morning hours, and then pretend to sleep when she opened her eyes. Donovan had given her a lifetime of feeling cherished in the short time they'd been together. If good thoughts brought good things into a person's life, she'd keep him alive remembering every precious thing he'd done for her.

Eventually the gunshots stopped, Josie stopped shaking from the cold, and she'd lost track of how long she'd lain on the wet, rocky riverbank with Donovan. She had no idea if she slept, dreamed, or hallucinated, but she opened her eyes and the sun was rising. She pushed herself up into a sitting position, her muscles stiff and sore.

"Donovan?" She ran her hand down his cheek. "Oh, God, you are so cold."

He lay with his eyes closed as if he were sleeping, but his skin was pale, and his chest rose and fell with a rattling wheeze. Not wanting to disturb the blood-soaked sweatshirt she'd tied around his shoulder, she leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Listen to me, sweetie. I'm going to leave, but I'll come back. I need to get you help." She wiped the dirt on his chin. "Don't you die on me. You hear me? I need you. I-I love you."

Groaning, she struggled to her feet and peered out at the river. Last night the water had been flowing the opposite way. She rubbed her head. No. That wasn't right. When she fell out of the canoe, she must have swum to the wrong side of the river. *Shit*. She'd have to cross the current to make her way back up the mountain to the cabin.

Deciding to hike farther upstream before crossing over, she concentrated on putting one foot in front of the other. Each step brought her closer to helping Donovan. She'd gone one hundred and seventeen steps when she stopped. A *flop-flop-flop-flop* sound grew louder. She turned her gaze to the sky.

A black helicopter headed in her direction. A man dressed in camouflage sat on one of the runners with a rifle in one hand. Adrenaline coursed through her veins.

"Tony!" She jumped up and down, waving her arms over her head. "Tony! Help!"

The chopper kept coming. She turned around and ran back toward Donovan. Her shoe caught on a rock, and she fell. Scrambling to her feet, she kept waving and moving. "Help!" She reached Donovan and stood over him. "Look, Donovan... It's Tony. You're going to get help. He'll take you to the hospital."

Her arms cramped, but she never stopped waving. She screamed until she lost her voice, and she finally saw Tony being lowered by a wire. Kneeling down, she put her hands on Donovan's chest. *Oh, God...*

Chapter Five

"You should have seen her, Donovan." Tony shut the engine off. "Her head cracked open, one eye almost swollen shut, and covered in your blood." He rocked back on his heels. "She would have made you proud."

"She does." Donovan stepped out of the van. "Now where the hell is she, and why won't you tell me why *she* didn't pick me up?"

Tony laughed and hurried around to the passenger side. "If I tell you, the woman would kill me. I might be a G-man, but damned if I'm going to cross your woman." He motioned to Jolene's cabin. "Go ahead. Go in." Tony smiled. "I'll see you in a few days."

Donovan frowned. "I thought you were planning on taking the two weeks off the boss gave everyone after taking out Jackson and closing the case last month. Did you get called out again?"

"Gotta go." Tony waved over his shoulder and hopped back into the van.

He stared after the van pulling out of the driveway. Once the taillights disappeared, he strolled toward the cabin. The door opened the second his foot hit the concrete step outside.

"Donovan." Josie stood in the doorway in a slinky black dress that hit her mid-thigh and clung to every curve on her body.

His gaze lowered to the four-inch black stiletto heels on her feet. "Fuck, you're beautiful." He raised his chin. She'd done something with her hair. It now lay floating around her shoulders in soft layers. *Sexy*.

Her lips, painted ruby red, curled, and the dimple on her right cheek peeked out, breaking the shock. "I wanted to do something special for you, so I asked Tony if I could stay in the cabin while he and Jolene traveled to Boulder to see his parents."

Her smile grew. "You can have me...any time, any way that you want." She stepped back. "I even asked the doctor last week if it was okay, and he said he's released you back to light duty."

He paused beside her. "You did?"

"I did." She held out her hand.

Donovan slipped her much smaller hand inside his. Tears blurred her vision. She had been so afraid that he wouldn't survive their night at the river. Despite how critical his condition was, he'd bounced back rather fast for someone who'd undergone surgery, a blood transfusion, and four nights in the hospital.

Candles lit the cabin's interior, and the couch was pulled out into a makeshift bed. She led him over to the bed and pushed him gently down on the edge of the mattress.

She kneeled down and removed one of his boots. "Do you know why I'm dressed up?"

He shook his head.

"I wanted you to see me how I normally dress." She slipped off the other one. "By the time the FBI delivered me to you after the night at the Casino, they'd issued me a pair of someone's sweatpants, shoved a sack of used clothes in my hands, and I had nothing. None of it was mine. I was given to you, a stranger, and my life was turned upside down." She stood back up. "After I found out that Renfro was shot by one of your guys, they gave me permission to go back to my apartment." She reached out and undid the buttons on his shirt. "I found out something..."

"What?" He shrugged his good shoulder and slipped his arm out of the shirt.

She laid the shirt behind her on the chair and returned to him. "All those weeks when I thought I'd lost every part of my life, I'd actually been given a new life. One that is better, richer, and filled with so much love that most days I wonder if I'm dreaming." She wiggled out of her dress and kicked off her shoes. "Sometimes, like today, I'd like to dress up for you. Show you the city girl." She ran her finger along the top of the black thong she wore. "But the real me..." She placed her foot on the bed beside him and rolled down the thigh high stockings she wore just for him. "I'm someone who prefers to wear nothing at all." She removed the other nylon. "I want to bare my soul to you."

Donovan groaned. She raised her gaze, afraid she'd gone too far, and his shoulder hurt. She stepped up between his knees and ran her hands through his hair. "This is me. I want to touch your skin against mine...feel your heat."

He ran his hands up the back of her thigh to her ass and pulled her forward. His face nuzzled her breasts. "I love you like this. With nothing standing between us. Just you...and me." He fumbled with the buckle on his belt.

Josie leaned over, giving him an eyeful of her breasts while she undid his jeans for him. He lifted his ass and pulled them off. She caught her lower lip between her teeth. His cock stood up, hard and ready. She hooked her thumbs in the strap of her panties.

"No." He pulled her back between his legs. "Leave them on."

Turning around, she presented her back to him. He slid his finger down the thin material between her buttocks. Pulling the strap to the side, he urged her back. She straddled his legs and lowered herself down onto his lap. His cock slid into her pussy in a surge of pleasure. Her cunt stretched and spasmed around his hardness. She'd missed this. She'd missed him.

"Oh, Jesus..." Donovan's arms came around her and pulled her back against his chest.

Together they sat, connected, together, where they both wanted to remain. Neither one of them moved, but took the time to enjoy feeling complete.

"I love you." Donovan kissed her bare shoulder.

She laid her head back. "I love you too."

His hand slid down her stomach, her mound, and his finger centered on her clit. "Don't move, baby." He rubbed the sensitive nub. "I just want to hold you and feel you come on me."

She mewed. The stimulation warmed her insides, but it was his words that brought her to the verge of an orgasm.

"Your panties are damp." His free hand caressed her breast, pinching her nipple through the lace on her bra. "I'll never get enough of you." He kissed her neck. His tongue lavished the area below her ear.

"God, Donovan. I can feel every inch of your cock throbbing inside of me." She held her breath. She was so close to finding her release.

"Let it come, Josie." His heart beat fast against her back. His fingers pinched, rubbed, pinched, rubbed and set her body on fire.

"Oh...oh...oh." She closed her eyes and let her desire consume her body. "I'm coming..." Her lower stomach flooded with intense relief. Wave after wave pulsated from her core. Her pussy rhythmically constricted, milking his cock.

His arms tightened around her, and his thighs tensed before quivering underneath her. Warm liquid filled her insides. She inhaled deeply to calm her racing heart.

Donovan rubbed her stomach in a lazy pattern. "Thank you."

She slipped her fingers into his hand. "Thank you. I don't know what I would have done without you. You saved my life the night you jumped in front of me and got shot. The thought that I could have lost you keeps me awake at night." She sighed. "I've never had anyone who would put their life on the line to save mine."

“I’ll do anything to keep you safe,” he whispered. “Besides, if you remember, it was *you* who saved me. You slowed down the bleeding, stayed with me, and helped the agents find us. Every one of the guys has sung your praises. They were pretty impressed with what you did in your condition.”

She smiled. It was amazing how something so awful had brought her and Donovan together. “And I’d do it all again to keep you with me, Agent D.”

The End

~ About the Author ~

Abby Wood loves to surround herself with family, critters, and laughter. A huge animal lover, she's often found discussing story plots with the animals while mucking the barn in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. In between chores and raising a family, she enjoys trying out new recipes and adding more boots to her closet. She loves to write stories that allow readers to escape into a brand new world.

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