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# *If You Can't Stand the Heat...Don't Start the Lickin'*

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As always to our Mr. Mes. To Dréa and Cowboy, may  
you soon have your dream home complete with walk-  
in refrigerator. –J and



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## **CAVEAT**

This work of erotica contains adult language and sexually explicit scenes, which are smoking hot. This book is intended only for adults, as it is defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase is made. Keep this book out of the hands of under-aged readers.



## Chapter 1: Turning on the Heat

It was fucking hot—not kind of hot, not somewhat hot, not a little bit hot. It was straight up, undeniably hot. It was the kind of hot where even old southerners who made it through summer with nothing more than one of those paper fans on popsicle sticks and a fan turned backwards in the window were declaring that it was hot. It was hot, and though she was a southerner, this was fucking ridiculous. She had a sweat mustache, her underwear was wallpapered to her ass, and her packet of Skittles was now a rainbow-colored beverage with candy shell chunks. She was so not amused. And she was going to kill, maim, and beat the shit out of Salacious Roraima, her best friend. Okay, his real name wasn't Salacious, but it sounded better than Salomão, his real first name. *What kind of name was that?* It was a good thing he was fine, because he needed all that fineness to overcome his first name.

“You already maimed me,” Salacious said. “Hence the ice pack and this little trip to the ER, and stop making fun of my first name, being I’m injured and all.”

She hadn't realized she'd spoken aloud until Salacious's voice cut into her bitchfest. Making a

sound of disgust and rolling her eyes, she looked over to where he sat sprawled in the passenger seat.

“If it wasn’t one hundred and eight fucking degrees, I might feel sorry for you, but guess what: not only is it one hundred and eight degrees, Dallas broke the hundred degree mark every day for the past month, so shut up and bleed quietly...and slowly.”

“Here is where I point out that it’s not even nine a.m., meaning that it’s nowhere near the hundred degree mark,” he said.

“Oh, it might not be one hundred eight fucking degrees yet, but you can bet your sweet ass it will be, considering it’s already ninety-two fucking degrees.”

“You’re blaming me for the weather?” he asked.

“No, I’m blaming you for not having air-conditioning in your truck. I know some of your ancestral lands are located somewhere around the seventh layer of the Inferno, but you couldn’t spring for some air-conditioning?”

“I’m going to ignore your slight to the beautiful Brazilian states of Amazonas and Pernanbuco, on account of I know how jealous you are that my family has a home in the most beautiful rainforest in all of the world and another on the most magnificent beach in all of the world,” he said.

Amazonas was indeed beautiful, but it was a rainforest, and not just any rainforest, but a tropical

rainforest deep in the interior of South America. Regardless of its beauty, it was hot and humid, and hot and humid did not go well with black woman's hair. What she couldn't dispute, however, was Salacious's claim regarding the beauty of Pernanbuco. The archipelago Fernando De Noronha was one of the most beautiful slices of nature she'd ever had the privilege of looking upon. It was the kind of beauty sight was created for.

"Whatever. Just tell me who you slept with in order to score digs that not only rival Do Sancho Bay, but put them to shame."

"Yep, still jealous." He chuckled.

She might be just the teensiest, tiniest bit jealous that his family owned their own fucking beach (that came complete with overwater bungalows like the ones at Tahitian resorts), but she wasn't about to admit it. Instead she just sucked her teeth.

"Point of information: being a spoiled little rich brat is not endearing, Salacious."

"No, but it's so fun, especially knowing much it annoys you. Plus it's not often I get to see you jealous."

"I'm so not jealous."

"The first step is admitting the problem, Pac."

"Actually, the first step is shutting the fuck up so the person who can kick your ass doesn't do it," she

said, knowing good and damn well she couldn't kick Salacious' ass on her best day and his worst. He knew it too, which was why he laughed his ass off right before bursting into an impromptu song of 'Pac is Jealous.' Asshole.

No way would she admit she was jealous. She wouldn't admit it even during the four weeks a year she accompanied him to Brazil. Hailing from a landlocked state, she'd always awaited vacations where her family would descend upon some beach—didn't matter which beach, any one that had water would do. She'd been only seven when she'd decided that as soon as she got big enough, she was moving to someplace where an ocean formed at least one border. She'd trekked to many a beach—including Nova Scotia's Bay of Fundy, Miami's South Beach, Texas' North Padre Island, San Diego's two mile Strand, Oregon's Cape Perpetua, and Hawaii's North Shore—and enjoyed them all. And then she'd seen photos of Salacious's home, and nothing she'd seen had prepared her for that.

After glimpsing Salacious's pictures from home, she'd made it her business to accompany him to Fernando De Noronha, and after experiencing the beautiful beaches, she'd got in good with the women in his family and scored a permanent '*you come visit anytime you want to.*' And she did—at least twice a

year. She loved Salacious for sharing his family and his beach with her; still, she was hot, and though it wasn't his fault—she was blaming him.

“Whatever, regardless of how beautiful your beach may or may not be, it still doesn't excuse you from not having air-conditioning,” she grouched.

“*Your* truck has air-conditioning,” he pointed out.

“Yeah, but you know what my truck doesn't have?” she asked, then answered before he got a chance to respond. “It doesn't have your blood all over it.”

Reaching over to adjust his ice pack, she snuck a look at her makeshift tourniquet, glad her best friend had given her that worst-case scenario book set as an Arbor Day present. Though bilingual (she spoke fluent Portuguese thanks to Salacious), she knew how to a) say ‘*may I use your belt as a tourniquet*’ in six languages; b) make a tourniquet; and, c) fuck people up good enough that they'd need one.

“If I didn't know how much you loved me, I might be offended,” he said.

“Well, you do know how much I love you, and even if you didn't, I don't give a damn if you're offended. And you'd better not even think about dying on me, or I'll kick your fucking ass,” she added for good measure even as she laid in on the accelerator.

She smiled, hearing the powerful V8 roar. She had to get his fine ass to the ER, or else risk having to explain to his momma and grandmomma and assorted aunts and female cousins why their darling baby boy/grandson/nephew/cousin was all fucked up, which would subtract from her lounging-on-the-beach time.

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Despite the pain, Salomão couldn't help but smile at Pac, better known as Pacifica Hampton, his best friend. Considering Pac's *'fuck somebody up'* reflex and his affinity for being in Pac's general vicinity, he wasn't surprised he was in need of medical attention. He had more scrapes, bruises and cuts from her hand than the first nineteen years of his life had given him. Being that he had two older brothers, a whole passel of male cousins, and a difficult time saying 'no' to a dare/adventure, that was really saying something.

He wasn't exactly surprised Pac had injured him; he wasn't even surprised she blamed him for the injury. He was surprised he'd gone so long in between injuries, as Pac was like a walking *'send somebody to the ER'* magnet. All good. He was definitely in need of a few stitches, but he'd live. Of course, one would



think he was about to die the way Pac had bandaged him up. The tourniquet was a bit over the top, but Pac was nothing if not over the top. She'd been that way since the first day he met her—six years ago. It'd been a rough ride, but ah, what a ride it'd been.

He smiled thinking about that day. It'd begun with him ogling the spitfire who'd unintentionally incited a riot and ended with her dragging him to the ER—key word 'drag.' He'd had more injuries (seventeen stitches) from her manhandling of him to get him to the ER than actual injuries (dislocated finger) from the riot. Feeling guilty for maiming him, she'd made a point to drop by weekly with food or an offer of a hot meal. He almost laughed out loud thinking of the one and only time he'd made the mistake of asking her if she was going to cook it. The resounding 'hell no' he'd gotten for his efforts was still ringing in his ears.

"I have an aversion to two things: pussies that aren't mine and stoves."

Despite knowing her for six years, he still hadn't figured out exactly what she meant by pussies...and he was too frightened to ask. Her parents might call Colorado Springs home, but Pac was first and foremost a southerner. For all their pluses, southerners just weren't wrapped too tight—not that he'd ever speak that aloud anywhere in the South.

Having spent the last seven years in the states of Georgia and Texas, he knew a little bit about southerners. People might say Texas was a southwestern state, but that was erroneous. Regardless of where it was located geographically, Texas was definitely part of the South.

He liked Texas, but he'd fallen in love with Atlanta. Atlanta was home to some of his favorite things: Coca-Cola, Popeye's Chicken, and his almae matres Emory University and Georgia Tech. Atlanta had been fun, especially with Pac as friend. While she didn't attend Emory, she was always hanging about because her uncle just happened to be the head football coach at Emory. If that wasn't impressive enough, then there was Coach Hampton's wife. Mrs. Sudana Bailey Hampton was the kind of woman who could've been carried about on a litter if she so chose. Not only did she throw down in the kitchen (much to his gastronomical delight); she threw down everywhere. That seemed to be the running theme for women in Pac's family, who all seemed to have that *'I'm the shit and **you** know it'* aura about them.

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Pac hated hospitals. Hospitals smelled funny, and not even the industrial antiseptic could mask the

smell of sickness and death, just as the fear that often filled the minds and bodies of those forced to visit the ER failed to block out the sounds of distress. Still, despite her feelings about hospitals, Pac was relieved when she pulled up to Baylor University Medical Center. There were other hospitals in Dallas, but only Baylor had been listed for seventeen consecutive years as one of America's best hospitals by U.S. News and World Report. She didn't give a shit how many hospitals, clinics and the like were between their house and Baylor Medical; if Salacious was going to the hospital, he was going to the best there was, and that was that.

Screeching to a halt at the Emergency Room entrance, Pac threw the truck in park and scrambled across the hood of the truck. She was pulling his door open and hustling him out almost before he'd realized the truck had stopped. Not even waiting for him to unfold himself from the truck, she yanked him from the passenger seat and hefted him over her shoulder in a fireman's carry. Having him firmly settled on her shoulder, she raced through the doors screaming for a doctor.

"We need help, STAT!" she said as she bypassed the help desk and barged down the hall. Spotting a bed, she laid him on it, pulled the blankets up to his chin and went in search of a doctor.

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Salomão thought he was smart. Having six years to get accustomed to Pac's driving, he made sure his seatbelt was on good and tight and he wasn't slouching in the seat. Slouching when Pac was driving was a good way to get whiplash, as she took off like she was in a Formula One race and stopped like she got a prize for burning a layer of rubber off of her tires—or in this case, *his* tires. Spying Baylor Medical, he was bracing himself for the rough stop he knew was coming up. Gritting his teeth, he sped through the Serenity Prayer. He'd barely finished the 'n' in *Amen* when he saw Pac fly over the hood. Before he could finish making the sign of the cross, she jerked him out of the truck, almost strangling him in the seatbelt he hadn't quite come out of and then almost dislocating his arm in the process. Before he could utter an 'ow,' he found himself tossed over her shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

If it had been any other person on earth, he would've planted his feet, but Pac wasn't any other person on earth. Sometimes he found it hard to believe she was from earth, but still, he'd learned over the years it was better not to try and foil her attempts to be a Good Samaritan. Trying to stop her led to

more injury than whatever indignity she unintentionally subjected one to. If he'd been preoccupied with trying to preserve his dignity, he wouldn't have seen the edge of the door and thus wouldn't have been alert enough to throw his hands up to protect his head from the accidental lobotomy she almost gave him.

Though the hospital had automatic doors, they were calibrated for normal humans, not for Pac. Pac was through those doors like the fucking Flash. She was so quick, he worried she would crash through the glass in her haste.

Once inside the hospital, he found himself holding on for dear life, which was a feat in itself being that Pac was at most five feet eight inches tall, while he was six feet five inches. Still, he held on as best he could and used his hands to shield his head. Of course she didn't bother stopping at the registration desk, although she did almost catch his head on the corner of it. He didn't see the staff or security guards running after her, but he sure as hell heard their demands for her to stop. Either Pac didn't hear them or she didn't care. That woman simply kicked on the jets and dodged everything and everyone in her way.

Despite his injuries and fear for his own safety, he had to take a moment and admire her run. For that matter, fans of track and field and coaches at the

Combine would've paused to admire her run, because Pac negotiated the ER like it was an international steeplechase event and in the process shook everyone chasing them out of their shoes. He doubted Barry Sanders in his prime could've done better.

In just a few seconds he found himself bouncing off of a firm hospital bed. Taking out his phone, he dialed the number of Ms. Loydia Dominguez. Though he'd only known her for a year, he knew juice when he saw it, and Ms. Dominguez definitely had it. She reminded him a lot of the women in his own family, and he couldn't help but like her—and being that he liked her, he treated her like all good sons treated their mothers. That is, he did whatever she told him to, which primarily revolved around keeping an eye on her daughter Jonica and her best friend Rachel. That was a full time job, being that the beautiful women garnered a lot of male attention. Still, he'd done it and thus remained in Ms. Dominguez's good graces.

And he was never so glad to be in someone's good graces as he was in that moment. Though he didn't know how many stitches he was going to need, he was pretty sure Pac was going to be spending a good deal of time doing some explaining. Having heard Pac "explain" something before, he counted on Pac needing an attorney and a priest...for starters. While he didn't have either in his hip pocket, he had

Ms. Dominguez's phone number, and she had all of Texas in her hip pocket. He didn't care what he had to give her (as long as it wasn't his firstborn, because that belonged to Pac) to secure Pac's safety. There was no way in hell Pac was going to be spending even one second in anybody's jail.

## Chapter 2: Simmer

Finished tending the teen who'd needed a cast on his arm, Dr. Forbes Donnchadh finished his notations and placed the chart in the 'done' pile. It'd been a rough shift, but one could expect that working in emergency medicine. He smiled thinking about his stint here. He was only supposed to be in Dallas for a month, but then Maverick (his best friend, housemate and pseudo-little sister) had up and married his cousin Caoin and moved to Vermont, which somehow translated into him being expected to uproot himself and move to Vermont with her. He would—later, after Maverick and Caoin had time to get used to being married, and the state of Vermont had time to get accustomed to having Maverick Storm Donnchadh as a resident.

The log cabin just wasn't the same without Maverick. After talking it over with her, he put their house up for sale. Within a week they'd had three offers; by the end of the month, it'd sold. Thinking he was going to find a house much more suited to a bachelor instead of the twenty-acre spread they'd had, he'd taken only two weekends to realize Atlanta wasn't the same without Maverick. His contract with the



hospital up for renewal, he'd opted out and headed back to Dallas. He had ties there and an offer to work.

He'd signed on for a temporary basis. That'd been almost a year ago. Now here he was, ready to move on. The truth was he'd been ready to move on two months after he moved into the brick ranch-styled house he'd leased. The only reason he'd remained was because he always kept his commitments. He'd signed on for a year, and he was going to stay for a year.

He racked up some serious frequent flyer miles going back and forth between Dallas and Rivé, Vermont, but he didn't care. He had a little sister whom he loved. He'd never known how much he appreciated having a little sister until she wasn't always underfoot with her constant demands ringing in his ears. Not that she let being half a country away stop her from demanding stuff.

"Little sister rights," she'd say moments before demanding Rice Krispies treats and asking when he was going to stop pussyfooting around and move his ass to Vermont.

"Later. I want to give you and Caoín privacy," he'd said.

"Maybe you missed this, but we live in a fucking castle that's teeming with people. So when are you coming, because I already picked out your quarters in the wing across the hall from ours?"

“Yeah, but you guys need an entire floor so people don’t hear you threaten Caoin’s life on a daily basis,” he joked.

He thought he’d done a successful job hedging until the day she and Caoin flew to Dallas to attend a Mavericks’ game. The Dallas Mavericks (or the Dallas Me’s, as she referred to them) were her favorite team, being that they shared the same name. In the middle of the third quarter, she dropped a bombshell on him.

“I see why you insist on remaining in Dallas when it’s clear you can’t live without me. Dr. Sohvi Ktunaxa Deror is one intelligent woman.”

He almost choked on his nachos. How the hell did Maverick know about his crush on her?

Though he didn’t ask his question aloud, she answered.

“I make it my business to know. Besides, you look at her different than you look at anybody else. She would make a worthy sister-in-law, so when are you going to stop pussyfooting around and throw the famous Storm mack on her?”

Recovering, he managed to talk around his shock. “One would think you’d call it Donnchadh mack, being that you’re married to one and all.”

“Puh-lease. I’m the one who threw my mack on your cousin. He’s my sub, just like you’re going to be Dr. Sohvi’s sub.”

“Just because I caved to all of your demands doesn't mean I'm anybody's sub,” he said.

“Really?” she asked.

*And of course he walked right into her trap.*

“Yes, really,” he said.

“Tell me how you plan to dom her when you're too scared to talk to her?”

*Why had he ever thought he preferred intelligence in a woman?*

She let him get away with his silence, but she continued her demand for him to come home for good. First there was asking, then pleading, then demands, finally threats, and then there were the twenty words that secured her victory:

“I'm pregnant. My baby needs its uncle to make its hot-ass momma Rice Krispie treats whenever she wants them.”

After that bombshell he knew he was moving to Vermont...and so did Maverick, as proven by her next words.

“Looks like you'd better step up your game and get that doctor to marry you, being that you're going to be up here in Rivé,” she smirked.

It didn't matter that he couldn't see her; he'd known her long enough to know Maverick was smirking around the Rice Krispie treat she was eating while talking to him.

“You got pregnant on purpose to make me move to Vermont,” he accused.

“Nope, I got pregnant because your cousin won’t keep his dick out of me,” she threw back.

He so didn’t need to hear that.

“Now stop being bitchy just because I’m right—as always—and think about ways you can get that woman to live in Vermont. And don’t be your normal mean-ass self. Use the Storm charm, and if that doesn’t work, then resort to using the Donnchadh motherfucker-ishness,” she said.

“Maverick,” he warned.

She knew that tone, but instead of being afraid of it like she should, she went in for the kill, knowing he didn’t strike women or cuss them out. “Fine, Forbes. I won’t say any more about it, although—” she began.

He knew he didn’t want to hear anything after ‘although,’ but he was a glutton for punishment. “Although what?”

“Although she’d look really good pregnant with your baby,” she said before throwing out another demand and disconnecting.

He wasn’t going to think about Maverick’s words. He wasn’t going to think of Sohvi Deror anymore. He wasn’t going to wonder if her chocolate skin tasted like dark chocolate. He definitely wasn’t

going to think of Sohvi spread out beneath him with those lovely, thick thighs wrapped around his waist as he plundered her lush body. He wasn't going to think of how she'd sound gasping his name as he gifted her with a litany of orgasms. He wasn't going to think of how good her finger would look with a diamond-studded platinum wedding band on it. He wasn't going to think of her pregnant with his children.

Of course, that was a damn lie. He already thought about Sohvi all of the time, but thanks to Maverick, he'd be thinking of Sohvi forever. She'd look good in his arms, and in his bed, and in the family castle in Rivé.

Realizing it was time to go home, he gathered his stuff. Stretching, he was about to walk out when he saw a flash of yellow come hurtling towards him.

"You a doctor?" the harried-looking woman asked.

"Yes," he said and before he could finish saying the word, he found himself being dragged a short distance down the hall and shoved into a room. He didn't plan on meeting her demand, but that was before she threw him in a wrestling hold. Having his air supply cut off by her chokehold changed his mind quickly.

“Fix him,” she demanded as she shoved him in the direction of a strapping kid of about twenty-five years of age.

His first thought was that he was so glad the walls of the room weren’t constructed of cinder block. His second thought was that he was glad for his fast reflexes. His third thought was that his first thought should’ve been to protect his head, and his second thought should’ve been to watch out for the supply cabinet. His fourth thought was along the lines of *‘I hope my ribs not broken, but if it is, I hope it’s not puncturing my lung.’* His fifth thought was to thank the kid on the bed who had jumped to his feet and prevented him from smashing in his face and getting head trauma. His sixth thought was that he was never going to live this down. While the other doctors might snicker, it wasn’t them he was worried about. It was Dr. Sohvi Deror. Sohvi was not only going to laugh, she was never going to stop laughing. He had a shitload of credentials behind his name, yet Dr. Deror only considered him fodder for her personal amusement.

“You okay, Doc?” the kid asked.

Shaking off his unrequited admiration of his colleague, he returned to the task at hand.

“I think so, and if I’m not, I don’t exactly think your lady cares about how I feel,” Forbes said as he helped him back onto the bed.

“You’re probably right, but she’s a great woman. She’s just accustomed to getting her way—when she wants it, all of the time.”

“Ah, I have a sister just like that.”

Their banter was interrupted by said great woman’s admonition. “Hey, how about a little less chitchat and more stopping Salacious from bleeding!”

*Yep, just like his sister Maverick.* Instinctively knowing not to laugh, they shared a smile. Forbes should’ve been all kinds of pissed, but noticing the apologies in the kid’s eyes and the look of absolute terror on the woman’s face, he just couldn’t bring himself to work up any anger. Even if he could’ve, the pain in his ribs would’ve prevented him from dwelling on it. Then his contemplation was interrupted by security, who ran into the room like they were storming the beaches of Normandy.

Two things happened next. First, the kid went into full battle mode. Despite being battered and bleeding, the young man jumped from the bed and before security breeched the room, the kid was in front of the woman shielding her with his body. Second, before he could ask security to stand down, none other than his nemesis entered the room.

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It'd been a long shift, but in fifteen minutes it'd be over, and her vacation would officially begin. Sohvi didn't know where she was going, or for that matter, if she was going anywhere. What she did know was that she was going to indulge in a long soak, spray on her favorite perfume, slip into some silky lingerie and spend some much needed time with...her bed. She and her bed needed to get reacquainted.

Though she was long out of residency, the last few months had been hectic. Her parents had given her a love of medicine; still, she knew it was time to move on. Dallas was too hot, too hectic, and the ever-changing rules meant she spent more time practicing CYA (cover your ass) than medicine. She was tired of practicing good public relations, good paperwork. She was tired of towing the fucking line. She wasn't a politician or a secretary. She was a doctor, and she just wanted to go about her craft. She wanted to be able to use all of the tools at her disposal, including her first-rate education, her imagination, and her belief in patients being involved in their treatment and having agency over their lives. She wanted to take an innovative approach to medicine, wanted to attempt unorthodox techniques, wanted to invest more time



and resources on her patients. Instead, she got regulations, greater restrictions, and increasingly dissatisfied with her job.

Though she had a great townhouse, good friends and felt that she'd done a lot of good, in her heart, she knew it was time to move on. *But move on to where?* She was a surgeon, and thus she needed a hospital to ply her trade.

As she was knee deep in her thoughts, a flash of yellow caught her attention. She couldn't be seeing what she thought she was. Doing a double take, she realized her eyes weren't deceiving her. That really was Forbes Donnchadh being dragged down the hall in a sleeper hold...by a woman. It might be time to go, but she definitely had to see what the hell was going on. It wasn't every day one saw Forbes Donnchadh being 'handled.'

Forbes didn't look a thing like the typical doctor. Though he wasn't hard to look at, there wasn't nothing pretty about Forbes Donnchadh. He might always have a smile on his face, but there was a hint of danger in his startling gray eyes. If the warning in his eyes didn't scare you off, then the thought of what his big, hard body (not that she'd noticed) could do to you gave you pause. Well, it gave males pause. It made women fantasize about the many ways that body could bring them to pleasure.

Tossing her pen onto the table, she ran down the hall after the commotion. Not being one to run unless something was chasing her—and even then, she'd have to think about it—she wasn't the world's fastest person. She arrived in the room just in time to see security storm it. Wading her way through, she got an eyeful of a tall drink of water of hotness. Bronzed skin stretched over what had to be six feet seven inches of prime male. Wearing basketball shorts, an Emory t-shirt, and that glossy mane of hair, he was a sight to behold. Hotness was too damn fine for security to be shooting, so she shouldered her way to the front and stood right in front of him.

It was then she noticed the woman behind him. Hotness wasn't a threat; he was simply defending his woman. Wearing khaki shorts, a yellow t-shirt and a whole lot of pissed off, the woman didn't look dangerous. Still, Sohvi knew looks were deceiving. That chick just had four of the baddest motherfuckers pointing nine mm's at her, and chick didn't even flinch. Nope, she wasn't going to try her. And even if she was in a mind to, she doubted anything could get past the man in front of her. He stood before that woman like the Aurelian Wall guarding the city of Rome. Being that the Bersaglieri weren't anywhere in sight, little mama was pretty damn safe.

Sohvi wouldn't describe herself as shallow, but she wouldn't have thought a man like him would've gone so ape shit over a woman like that menace behind him. Though the woman wasn't bad-looking, there was nothing supermodel-ish or centerfold-ian about her. Her kinky twists were in a neat ponytail, her Carolina blue-rimmed glasses were slipping down her broad nose, and her hands were balled into fists. She had more than her fair share of ass, hips and boobs, but damn if she didn't wear them well—not that she looked like the type of woman who gave a shit what others thought about her body or her looks. Sohvi couldn't help but like her...and couldn't help but like the man defending her so beautifully. Something about them gave her hope. If a man like that could love a woman like her, then maybe women like her had a chance.

Before she could get a chance to shoo security out of the room, Forbes was already doing it. There was just something about that man that got to her, and she hated him for it. How dare he command her attention when Hotness was in the room? Biting down on her lip, she watched while Forbes convinced Hotness that nothing was going to happen to his woman. Yeah, good luck with that.

"Israel, can you give us a moment?" Forbes requested.

Hotness didn't relax until security retreated, and even then he remained in front of the woman.

"Forbes Donnchadh," he introduced himself. "The lady over there is Dr. Sohvi Deror, and the gentleman heading security is Mr. Israel Bellamy."

"Salomão Roraima," Hotness returned.

It didn't go unnoticed that he didn't introduce the woman behind him. Sohvi smiled at his continued protection of her.

"Thanks for introducing me, Salacious," she said right before introducing herself. "Pacifica Hampton. Why is it that we have two doctors in the room and Salacious is still bleeding?"

"We're trying to—" Forbes began.

"You're not doing shit. You're just standing there. Help him," she pleaded.

"Pac, it's okay," Hotness tried to calm her down.

"No, it's not fucking okay. You're bleeding, and Mr. Talk All Day and Not Place a Stitch is just standing there looking all first-year med student."

Sohvi bit her cheek to stop her laughter from spilling out. Pacifica obviously had no idea just how credentialed up Forbes was. He had damn near an entire alphabet behind his last name. Sohvi bet that even if the young lady knew, she would fail to be impressed.

“Damn, just give me the suture kit and I’ll fix him up,” Pacifica offered.

Sohvi couldn’t help but smile at the resounding chorus of “no’s” that met her offer. Pacifica took it in stride but turned to her.

“You’re a doctor, and even if you weren’t, you look way more capable than dude over there. Hell, for that matter that hot officer over there looks more capable. Can you fix him?”

Sohvi officially liked Pacifica. “Yes,” she began before Forbes cut her off.

“I’m Mr. Roraima’s doctor, I’ll see to him.”

“Well, can you get to it?” little mama asked.

Pacifica would’ve walked up on him if Hotness would’ve let go of her. Considering the thunder on Pacifica’s face and the tic in Forbes’ jaw, she knew she needed to intervene before Israel had to try and halt an in-progress smack down.

“Hey, why don’t I take Pacifica over to chat with Israel and his team while you see to him?”

“That’d be a good idea,” Forbes said.

“Does that ‘chat’ involve handcuffs, the back of a police cruiser, being slapped with a misdemeanor, or jail time?” Hotness asked.

“No,” Forbes said. “Unless she commits any additional crimes while here.”

Forbes' stress on 'additional' was duly noted by everyone.

"Not that I'm admitting to doing anything wrong, but I'll be good—but you need to fix Salacious."

"I'll fix him," Forbes promised, or was in the process of promising when Hotness interrupted.

"Would you trust Officer Bellamy and Dr. Deror with your woman?" Hotness asked.

"Believe it or not, despite being handsome, intelligent and a damn fine cook, I don't have a woman. I do, however, have a little sister who likes to bust my chops. I would trust them with her, although I'm not sure I'd exactly trust her with them. She's...not known for having the best people skills."

Hotness turned to her. "You're going to stay with Pac the entire time?"

She was surprised he trusted her to guard his woman. Smiling, she answered. "Yes, I'll stay with her the entire time."

"You couldn't have made a better choice. Dr. Deror will watch out for your woman," Forbes said.

"I'm not his woman," she said.

Of course both the young man and Forbes ignored her. *Ah, little mama was so cute thinking she wasn't that boy's woman.*

"Nothing can happen to her," the handsome young stud said.

She couldn't help but shiver at the way he said it. Those words were torn from his soul. That was one lucky woman.

"Salacious, I'll be okay. I'll use my one call to call your friend Jonica so she can drive you home, okay? I know you're hurt, but don't forget to come bail me out. If you let me rot in prison, I'm going to tell," she said as she slid out from behind him.

She didn't get more than half a step before he snagged her. Despite his pain, he gently enfolded her in his muscular arms and held her to his chest. "You are not going to jail," he said.

He didn't yell. In fact, his words were barely above a whisper. Still, everyone in that room knew them for what they were. The truth. He meant those words. If she somehow did end up in jail, Sohvi had no doubt he'd personally break her out and by nightfall have her tucked up someplace where no one could get to her. Yep, that boy's nose was wide open for that chick. They needed to get him patched up so he could get her home and explain that to his woman.

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Pac hadn't wanted to leave Salacious' side, but considering the group of men with nine mms strapped to their sides, she figured it'd be best to go. Besides,

Dr. Deror was accompanying her, and sister gave off a cool vibe. If she was going to be arrested, she was sure she'd already be in handcuffs, despite what either doctor said. Officer Bellamy might have that laidback look, but she wasn't buying it for a second.

"Ma'am, is that your truck blocking the ER?"

"No way, my truck is way cooler, but I did drive that truck here," she admitted.

"A member of the staff moved it out of the way, but we're going to need you to park it in an appropriate space."

"Okay. I didn't mean to," she started.

"I understand," he said. "Can I trust you to move it and come back, or do I need to send an officer with you to make sure you don't make a run for it?"

"I won't make a run for it," she promised.

"All right then, I'll be standing right here waiting for you to get back."

It'd only taken her two minutes to find a space, but of course it was all the way to hell and back, so it took her fifteen minutes to walk back. She was so not amused, being that it was so fucking hot. Still, Officer Bellamy had been really nice to her, so she wouldn't complain. He and Dr. Deror were right where he'd said they'd be. He didn't cuff her when she returned; he simply offered her a bottle of ice-cold water, and sister offered her a clean towel.



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Although he already had a pretty good bruise going from where Pacifica had grabbed him, a knot on his elbow from where she'd run him into the doorframe, and probably at least one broken rib, he couldn't help feeling protective of the menace. Catching Israel's eye, he gave him the 'all good' signal. Being an Army dog himself and having swapped stories over some football, he and Israel had developed a deep respect for each other. Knowing the badge hadn't gone to Israel's head, he turned to the kid in front of him.

Despite his decade of experience dealing with Maverick, and despite using his heavy-duty convincing voice, that kid wasn't convinced. That was when he knew that whoever this woman was, this kid loved her. The kid might be young, but the look in his eyes said he was all man. Despite what that little lady with him said, she was definitely this kid's woman. Watching Sohvi accompany her out of the room, he got down to the business of caring for his patient.

Quickly assessing him, he noted that a few stitches and some observation for the head wound were in order.

"How are you feeling, Mr. Roraima?"

“As good as I can feel under the circumstances,” he answered.

“What happened?” he asked as he snapped on some gloves.

“I made the mistake of not making enough noise while walking into a room with her.”

“And?” he said as he attempted to untie the tourniquet from around his arm. Okay, that wasn’t coming loose in a hurry. Looking around in one of the drawers, he grabbed a pair of scissors and cut off the tourniquet.

“And she leveled me with the cutting board.”

“That explains the bump on your head, but how’d you get the wound?”

“In her effort to try and catch me before I slumped to the ground in an undignified heap, she tried to catch me—while she still had a knife in her hand. Being that the knife was perilously close to my man region, I threw my arm up to block it, figuring at the most I’d lose a finger, which would be inconvenient but still better than losing a testicle.”

He couldn’t help it, he burst out laughing. Inspecting the cut, he guessed that it’d need about fifteen stitches. The stitches weren’t what worried him—the bruising from the tourniquet did. “I’m guessing she’s responsible for the tourniquet.”

“That and almost every other bruise on my body. She almost killed me twice in the span of a hundred paces.”

“I have to ask. Are you a victim of domestic abuse?”

“I understand you having to ask, but I assure you that I’m not. Pac is my best friend. My *mamá* loves her; my *tias* love her; my *abuela* loves her. Hell, my dog loves her, even sleeps in her room and gives me the stink eye if I get too close. Pac is a good woman. She’d never intentionally hurt me, although it’s a rather dangerous thing staying safe while she’s busy trying to ‘help’ me.”

Forbes couldn’t help but like the kid—even though he’d made Sohvi look twice at him. He didn’t like any man Sohvi looked at, especially considering the fact she wasn’t looking at him.

Closing the final stitch, he checked the kid’s arm again where the tourniquet had been. Satisfied that there wouldn’t be any long-term damage, he checked out the knot on his head and asked a series of questions.

“I think you’re going to be okay, but to be on the safe side, I want you to take it easy. If in the next twenty-four hours you experience an increase in pain, I want you back here. Got me?”

“I got you.”

“I’m serious. I know at your age you think you’re invincible, but you’re not. Heed my words, and if not because I—with all my fancy medical training and worldly experience—am telling you to, heed it for that little lady of yours. Someone has to watch out for her, and ain’t nobody else going to watch out for her like you.”

Hearing the kid sigh, he knew he’d gotten his message across. The kid would take his words seriously.

“Hold tight and let me talk Israel out of arresting her, because I’m sure she’s done something arrest-worthy in the last twenty minutes. You’re going to need someone to watch you tonight, just to be on the safe side,” he said as he walked out of the room.

He wasn’t surprised to find her sitting quietly in the security office. As soon as he stepped through the door, she jumped up, catching one officer in the gut with an elbow in the process and then catching him in the eye with her fist when she went to help him up. He had to bite his lip to stop from outright laughing, especially upon hearing the officer beg her to stop trying to help him.

“Is Salacious okay?!” Pac rushed him.

“Yes, he’s going to be fine,” he answered even as he grimaced at the sounds of retching coming from the officer she’d just hit. Of course, Ms. Hampton didn’t

pay the man a bit of attention, for which he was probably eternally grateful.

“You want to tell me what happened?” he asked.

Not surprisingly, she repeated the same story—kind of. Trust her to see it from a whole different perspective.

“I was standing in front of the fridge, enjoying the blast of cool air. Sure, our air-conditioning is on, but being that Salacious calls the Brazilian rainforest home, he is quite happy with the air conditioner being set on ‘brimstone.’ So anyway, there I am enjoying the blast of cool air when I feel someone behind me. Being that it’s like one degree hotter than actual hell outside and hot brings out the crazy in people, I wasn’t about to take any chances because being murdered definitely isn’t on my agenda, especially as all I had on was a wife beater with no bra. If I fall to the floor, a titty’s coming out, and how would that look to have a chalk outline with one titty flopped out? That ain’t cool, and my dad’s going to ask questions. That’s not true, I mean he’ll eventually ask questions, but first he’s going to do some beating, but how’s Salacious going to answer questions after being all jacked up? So I lean into the fridge and take out the cutting board.”

“You keep your cutting board in the fridge?”

“Not normally, but I couldn’t be bothered finding our actual platter, so I used that in a pinch. Grabbing it, I made like Griffey, Jr., when he played for Seattle—he never should’ve left that team, because he was never the same after that—anyway, I caught Salacious right in the temple. It was only after I fully turned that I realized it was Salacious, but it was too late. I hit him, but not that hard because he ducked, so he didn’t eat as much wood as I’d planned. Feeling bad that I’d hit him, I tried to catch him, but I forgot about the knife in my hand. Next thing I know, he’s hollering about his balls—like I want balls on our good kitchen knife. For that matter, I don’t want balls on our bad knives, not that we have any bad knives. I ended up cutting him, but I made him a tourniquet and an icepack, threw on a bra and a t-shirt, tossed him into the truck and rushed here.

“I was worried about the bleeding. I told him to bleed slower, but he’s a man, so you know he’s got to be contrary. He’d gone all quiet, so I drove faster. By the time we got here, he was praying. Figuring he was dying, I threw him over my shoulder and hauled ass inside. He can’t die, because if he does his mom’s going to be upset, and it’d be kind of tacky if I kept coming to his parents’ beach house after accidentally killing him.”

Neither he, Sohvi, nor anyone on the security team bothered attempting to hide their amusement. Poor fellow. Poor, poor fellow.

“For future reference, don’t tie a tourniquet so tight. Although I don’t want there to be a next time, my gut tells me that there will, so next time, stop at the registration desk. We have trained staff who can determine whether a patient is in dire need of care. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Alright. Give me a few more minutes with him and I’ll have him right as rain. He is, however, going to have to be watched since he has a head wound.”

“I can do that,” she said.

“And that’s what scares me,” he said.

It was only after he watched the fire light her eyes that he realized he’d spoken aloud.

“Salacious couldn’t hire anyone better to watch out for him. He’s in good hands with me,” she declared.

Everything in him told him to simply shut the fuck up, but yeah, Maverick had driven all of the good sense out of him a long time ago.

“Well, if you’re going to be watching out for him, then I’ll just send an emergency-response team over to your house so when you accidentally maim him with

your,” he stopped to make air quotes, “‘*care*,’ he’ll have a fighting chance.”

“Are you single?” she asked.

The question caught him off guard...and scared the shit out of him. He hoped like hell she wasn’t going to propose to him. “Yes,” he reluctantly admitted.

“Considering your sunshiny demeanor, I can’t believe some woman hasn’t snatched you up. Still, if you’re going to insist on subjecting the female population to your,” she paused and made air quotes, “‘*personality*,’ I’ll have a team of handlers on standby so when you get your mail-order bride from some fifth-world country, they can teach her how to walk upright.”

It must’ve been his air quotes that got her so riled up. He was going to throw back a verbal barb of his own, but the sound of something hitting the floor demanded his attention. Turning, he got an eyeful of Sohvi on her knees, laughing her fine ass off. Shaking his head in disgust, he took a deep breath and faced the young woman.

“Look—” he began, and before he could finish, he had a face full of Sohvi.

“Put your ‘*when I grow up I want to be a bastard*’ card away and apologize to her for being so, well, you. Anyone can see she’s been traumatized by



her friend's injury. Now go finish fixing him up so she can take him home," she ordered.

How the hell was Sohvi blaming him when the little menace in front of him was the reason for all of this? If he didn't have Maverick as a sister, he wouldn't know how to handle this; but he did have Maverick as a sister, so he handled it the same way he handled her. He walked out and did some talking to God.

If he'd been a little less frazzled, he might've realized that Israel had fallen into step with him. As it was, he didn't notice until Israel spoke.

"Not to intrude on your conversation with God, but you are talking aloud. Still, did you just compare that woman to the biblical plagues?"

"Not all of them, but at the very least, she's got pestilence written all over her," he said.

"I thought Maverick was pestilence?" Israel said.

"She was, but that was because I'd yet to meet Pacifica Hampton."

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"Did they arrest her?" Salomão apologized as soon as the doctor re-entered the room.

"No, but they gave her a pretty good lecture, and made her move her truck."

“Actually, that’s my truck.”

“You let your woman drive your truck?”

“Truthfully, I wasn’t really given a choice. Either I handed over the keys or she’d smash in the window and hotwire it, so yeah, I went with the lesser of two evils.”

“Actually, the lesser of two evils might’ve been you driving yourself to the ER,” he joked.

“You say that only because you don’t live with Pac.”

“I see you didn’t deny that she’s your woman.”

“No point in doing so. She simply is.”

“When are you going to let her in on that? At the rate she’s going at maiming you, might not be much of you left after too long,” he joked.

“She’s contrary. She’s going to take some convincing.”

“Well, I’d say your parents’ beach house is a pretty good first step.”

“It’s not so much the house; it’s the beach she likes.”

“I’d say she also likes the man whose parents own it. That woman was raising ten kinds of hell over you. I’d say she likes you a helluva lot more than the house. Did you perchance see her face when she was worried you were going to die?”

“No, I was too busy trying to save myself from her killing me on the way in,” he said. “And even then, I was distracted with all of her enticing curves.”

“Valuing life, I can understand your priorities, and liking women, I can understand you being distracted. Let’s get you out of this joint before your lady injures any more of the staff.”

### Chapter 3: Adding More Heat

“So you love him?” Sohvi asked quietly after Pacifica had a chance to catch her breath.

“Yeah,” the young lady smiled, probably thinking of Hotness.

“And he knows this?” Sohvi asked.

Pac frowned and looked at her before responding. “Of course he knows I love him. Just because I get him told doesn’t mean I don’t love him.”

“He knows you love *love* him?” she pressed.

Pac’s frown deepened. “He’s my best friend.”

“That may be, but Hotness love *loves* you,” she said with one of those all-knowing grins.

Sighing, Pac shook her head.

“I don’t think so. I’ve seen the women he dates, and they’re all really beautiful. They have long hair, fair skin, tiny waists, and meek attitudes—everything I don’t have. Plus, I’m older than Salacious.”

“How much older?”

“Two months, and it might not seem like a big deal, but I know for a fact he isn’t into dating older women,” Pac said with a look of resignation.

Sohvi was positive Pac didn’t realize she wore such a look. The doctor didn’t say anything; she simply continued to watch the young woman. Though she

seemed like the type of woman who knew what she was about, sister had no clue how she affected Hotness. She didn't say anything more, knowing that the young lady was probably thinking.

"When am I going to be able to see him, Dr. Sohvi?" Pac asked.

Though she asked her question softly, Sohvi knew the young woman was anything but calm despite her demeanor.

"As soon as Dr. Donnchadh finishes attending him. Give it some time—despite being a bit of an asshole, Donnchadh's a good doctor."

"Heavy on the asshole," the young lady said.

Sohvi couldn't help but smile. It wasn't every day one ran across a female who wasn't awed by Forbes. Even if Pac was a bit of a lunatic, she couldn't help but like her for that alone—that is, until she asked her next question.

"So how long have you liked the asshole doctor?" she asked all nonchalantly, as if she just hadn't thrown her for a loop.

"Dr. Donnchadh and I are simply colleagues who respect and—" she started.

Pac waved off her plausible explanation. "Want to get each other naked and do the horizontal tango."

Oh damn. Why did she have to say something like that, because now images of her and Forbes

flooded her mind? It was hard enough not to think of him when he was dressed head-to-toe in scrubs, but imagining him covered in nothing but a fine sheen of sweat and her covered in nothing but him had her mentally fanning herself.

“I admit he’s handsome in a dangerous kind of way,” she hedged.

“He’s no Salacious,” Pac interrupted.

Sohvi couldn’t help but smile. “Forbes and I are colleagues and nothing more.”

“I bet Dr. Donn’s probably pretty cut under those scrubs. Despite his minor personality disorder (meaning he has none), I bet he has all of the functions you’d need in a man. Besides, you could always duct tape his mouth shut. Why not give him a chance?”

“I’m unaware of what he needs or wants,” Sohvi said.

“*Really?*” Pac asked managing to look both cheeky and slightly dangerous at once. Something about that expression had her wondering if it was a good idea to start this conversation.

“Yes, really,” she said, now purposely avoiding Pac’s eagle-eyed glare.

“Yeah, right. I’m guessing all the good doctor wants is a chance with you, and all he needs is you spread out beneath him screaming his name,” she finished and smiled.

That wench had the fucking nerve to smile. Oooh, if it wasn't past time for her to go, she might've wounded that young woman, but as it was she should've already been halfway home. If she roughed her up a little bit, then she'd have to waste precious getting-home-and-kicking-off-her-vacation time on fixing her up. Damn Hippocratic Oath.

Her musings were interrupted by the curvy troublemaker. "Can I see Salacious now?"

"If it will stop you from giving me your opinion, I'll take you to him myself," she said as she got up.

No sooner had the 'if' left her than Pac was up and rushing the door like forty-niners to Sutter's Mill in 1848. Damn, and to think Hotness had the benefit of her company all of the time and wanted more of it. She was still considering whether or not to stop her when the doorway was suddenly filled with the young man Pac loved more than she was letting on.

Deciding the couple needed privacy, Sohvi slid past them. Though she wasn't trying to ogle, she couldn't help but notice how gently Hotness wrapped Pac up in his arms and how tightly he held her to him. Even as she swallowed her wistful sighs, she couldn't help but long to be held like that, to be loved like that.

Looking up, Sohvi caught Forbes' mysterious gray eyes watching her. She didn't know how to interpret that look, but damn if it didn't warm her up

all over. Damn, that man. Without even trying, he'd wreaked havoc on her body. Her body warmed up to inferno, and she felt a bit lightheaded as all of her blood seemed to race to her nipples and clit. Yeah, it was a good thing she was headed home, because now she needed to change her panties.

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“Are you okay?” Pac asked Salacious as she rushed him. Being careful of his arm, she made sure to touch him as gently as she could...and got lost in his blue-green eyes. Salacious wasn't having it and pulled her in close so her face was buried in his chest. Something about this position made her feel safe, treasured. Having received the metaphorical 'okay,' she hugged him as tight as she could. Despite hating hospitals, all she could feel was Salacious' strength as he wrapped it around her. All she could smell was his unique scent that made her panties wet.

Not until she felt the rumbling in his chest that indicated he was speaking did she recall that she'd asked him a question. “Now I am.”

If she'd been paying more attention, she would've heard her inner diva dibs him.

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As soon as the doctor gave him the all clear signal, Salacious was out of the door. It wasn't until he realized he had no idea where Pac was that he turned back to the doctor.

"Down the hall, second door to the right," he said.

Turning on the jets, he rushed down the hall, wanting and needing to see Pac. He got there just in time to see Pac's form in the doorway. Reaching out to her, he yanked her into his arms.

"Why are you always inciting a riot?"

"Because you're always in the middle of some shit," she said without missing a beat. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes, Pac. I'm fine," he assured her.

"Then why do you have all that bruising?"

"Because the tourniquet you put on was so damn tight."

"Your fault for needing one, but see, you didn't bleed out."

"There is that. Thanks for saving me," he said.

"You're welcome. Know that I don't make it a habit to save anyone but you."

"Ooh, does that mean I'm special?" he asked.

“Yep, but don’t let it go to your head, because I can always opt not to save you,” she said moments before apologizing. “I’m sorry I hurt you.”

“I know,” he whispered needing her closeness more than he needed her apology.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” she asked.

“Like what?”

“Like you’re about to kiss me,” she answered.

“Because I am,” he said moments before taking her lips.

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Because Salacious was sleeping, the ride home was silent. While she didn’t mind quiet, the silence made it impossible for her hold back the Salacious slide show that played through her mind. Despite having known each other for six years, today something had changed. It’d changed the moment Salacious had wrapped her up in his arms. And then he’d gone and kissed her. It wasn’t an x-rated kiss, but it was the most intimate thing she’d ever experienced. Salacious had held her so tightly—reminding her of a dark pirate she’d always hoped would come plunder her.

She'd been attracted to him from the first moment she'd laid eyes on him. And she had her brains to thank for being in the same place at the same time as Salomão Roraima. Having done well in school (like Vashti Fisk-Hampton and Banneker Hampton had given her a choice), she'd long ago narrowed down her list of schools she'd wanted to attend until finally only Georgia Tech, Emory, and Savannah College of Art and Design had remained.

As all those schools were located in the ATL, she'd moved in with her Uncle Carver and Aunt Sudana so she could establish Georgia residency. She'd tried talking her parents into letting her move into her own apartment, being that she'd been sixteen, but her parents had quickly and effectively hell no'd that idea. She would live with her aunt and uncle or she wouldn't live at all, was how her momma had put it. Once her momma decided upon something, she would not be moved, regardless of who was doing the moving.

Being that her uncle was Emory's head football coach, she'd haunted Emory's campus. Being enrolled in the Computer Engineering program at Georgia Tech officially made her a Yellow Jacket. While she rocked her yellow and black with pride, at heart she was an Eagle because family came first. Plus, Uncle Carver was so cool—as evidenced by his hiring of the only D-1

female defensive coordinator. It was on Emory's campus that she'd first laid eyes on Salacious. And after the riot that had broken out (she hadn't started it), it was to Emory's hospital that she'd dragged Salacious' fine ass, cussing him out the entire way for starting a riot.

Salacious still didn't believe her when she informed him he'd been the catalyst for the riot. Being August in Georgia, it'd been hotter than the hinges on the gates of hell, which meant that any and everyone had stripped down to next to nothing. Salacious had been no different. Of course if she'd had a body like that, her address would have to be the Garden of Eden, because she'd be naked for no good reason at all. He'd started off dressed in some Emory blue basketball shorts, a white t-shirt, and some white athletic shoes. She knew because she'd locked in on his fine ass as soon as he entered her line of vision. But shortly after, he'd stripped off his t-shirt, exposing that hard expanse of golden muscle. And then there was the hair. It'd been just like a shampoo commercial. He'd taken it loose from his braid and had shaken out the long, black tresses...and the world had stopped. All you could hear was the sighing of every female within a ten-mile radius. And then the growls of the males in attendance who'd wanted to

beat Salacious' ass for daring be so fine that women lost their damn minds.

The only thing that had kept Salacious safe was her. Okay, well, her and her two big brothers and her handful of badazz cousins and her uncle's stature as head football coach. Guys might've hated Salacious for his fineness, but they weren't trying to start a fight that would end with them in a pool of ass whipping. Salacious could hold his own, but when you added her twin brothers Andes and Everest to the mix, it was like the Wild, Wild West before law and order arrived.

She wasn't really sure exactly when she fell in love with Salacious, but she should've seen it coming. A heterosexual woman, she'd always been attracted to big, hot ripped men. Salacious was definitely big, hot, and ripped. And then there was his hair. And his intellect.

Her mother's daughter, she'd always been attracted to intellect. Salacious wasn't just good to look at, hottie had the intellect to match his looks. A student at Emory, he was in the dual program with Georgia Tech and thus had graduated (in four years) with a BA in Business Administration from Emory and a BS in Civil Engineering from Georgia Tech. Not even missing a beat, he'd completed his MS in Civil Engineering at Tech while she'd gone across the way to

the Savannah College of Art and Design and earned her MA in Interactive Design and Game Development.

While she'd spent summers and thus the year after graduating in Redwood City, California (home of EA Games), he'd spent summers in school so he could graduate early. They weren't all work and no play. There were the bi-annual trips to her Colorado, their Atlanta and his native Brazil. She wasn't even sure what she'd done/said/threatened to talk him into allowing her to tag along, but she was glad it'd worked (and real glad he'd passed her momma's vetting), because damn if she didn't love the beach his family lived on. If her parents had a different occupation (they owned their own accounting firm), or her momma had a different family (the Fisks from Shawner, Virginia), she might've been real intimidated by Salacious' wealth, but she doubted it.

Despite his wealth, Salacious didn't act like the stereotypical kid born with a silver mine (and yes, she meant mine, because make no mistake about it, Salomão Roraima didn't hail from new money; Salomão Roraima hailed from ancient money) in his mouth. Salacious was from one of the Portuguese families that hung out in the court of Prince Henry the Navigator and was present when his nephew King John II negotiated with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to move the Line of Demarcation 270 leagues

west to 46° 37' back in 1494. If he had been the least bit conceited, she would've had her brothers and cousins beat that out of him, because once she'd decided she liked Salacious, she wasn't about to give him up for something that was so easily corrected.

After getting to meet his family, she saw why Salacious was so down-to-earth. It was because the women in his family wouldn't have it any other way. While his maternal side was responsible for them living on such a kickass beach, it was his paternal side that was responsible for his being so down-to-earth—and his fineness. Descending from the Pemon Indians, every male in his lineage seemed as if they were chiseled out of the mountain that bore their surname.

That wasn't stretching the truth either. Having been told of the legend of the mountain (the Pemon Indians of Gran Sabana considered Mount Roraima to be the stump of a mighty tree that once grew all known fruits and tuberous vegetables, until it was chopped down by one of their ancestors) and having the privilege of knowing Salacious, she could say for sure he was appropriately named. In the language of the Pemon, *Roroi* meant “blue-green” and *ma* meant “great.” She wasn't about to go so far as to say Salacious was great, but his blue-green eyes reminded her of the skies above that mountain. And being that

she'd spent a week hiking that mountain, she'd been closer to the sky than most people, so she knew.

Just like she'd been closer to the sky on Monte Roraima, she'd been closer to Salacious than most people. That was how she'd ended up spending the last three months here. They'd flown back from their summer visit to her beach (yeah, she'd dibsed it, and she was allowed) and she'd spent one night, then another, and another, until she'd stayed so damn long she'd only gone back to Redwood City to tender her resignation. While she'd liked creating games, she hadn't liked making other people millionaires. Sure, that was the truth, albeit not the whole truth. Fine, dammit, the whole truth was that she hated not being where Salacious was. Though they hadn't lived together while they'd gone to school, she could see him every day—not that she did because school had consumed so much of her time. But that wasn't the point. If she'd wanted to see him, she could.

But now he'd touched her like he loved her. Scratch that, he always touched her like he loved her. Today, however, he'd touched her like he was *in* love with her. And her body wouldn't let her forget it...and neither would her heart...or her mind. She didn't want to forget it.



Salomão knew Pac needed time to adjust to that kiss. He was the one who'd initiated and he needed time to adjust to it, which was why he feigned sleep. Considering he hadn't slept a wink since she'd taken up residence in his house, he shouldn't have had to feign it. He was tired of feigning...feigning like it wasn't hard to keep his hands off of Pac; feigning like he wasn't ready to beat the shit out of any male who looked at her for longer than two seconds, or for that matter, have one of his female cousins beat the shit out of any female who looked at her for longer than three seconds. Yep, he was tired of feigning, and he was especially tired of feigning that he wasn't totally and irrevocably in love with Pacifica Hampton.

Sitting in the ER had reinforced two things about him. One, he didn't like waiting, but if he had to wait, he hoped he always had Pac there to wait with him. Two, you'd better be the type of person who had an aversion to the truth if you were in Pac's vicinity. And make no mistake about it, if you were in her vicinity, there was going to be some conversation whether or not you chose to participate. You'd learn a lot about yourself in a short amount of time, and it wasn't going to consist solely of things you wanted to hear. She was going to put it all out there and dare you to challenge her on her observations.

Of course, he hadn't known then what he knew now, so he'd ended up on the wrong end of their conversation. She'd given him a lecture concerning the dire consequences of throwing around his hotness willy-nilly. After taking a moment to appreciate her backhand compliment, he had to stop her and ask her to define willy-nilly. She had, and then she'd launched into a dissertation about fine guys. She looked her fill at fine guys (much to his great annoyance), but he also noticed that five seconds later, some other shiny thing caught her attention.

He'd made the mistake of commenting on that, which he'd later blame on the pain rather than jealousy. "You certainly seem to like looking at men."

"Like you don't like looking at titties. I bet you pay to look at them too...probably have a frequent buyer card at the strip clubs."

Her comeback had had the desired effect. That is, it shut him right the fuck up. What could he say? He did like looking at breasts, and though he didn't have a frequent buyer card at the strip clubs, the bouncers knew him by name.

"Do you have to make it so obvious you're looking at every man who steps through the door?"

"I'm a woman, so I know how to look without being obvious. The only reason you're noticing is because you're clocking me so hard, sitting over there

trying to be all sly about ogling my titties. Don't feel froggy because you're already sitting in the ER, because the next fucked-up thing that comes out of your mouth is going to be countered with some shit guaranteed to make sure you get an up-close and personal view of the ICU. Feel me, dog?"

He didn't feel her, but damn, he wanted to. Still, he caught her drift. Already suffering from two tellings off, he wasn't going to attempt to hit for the cycle, so he spent the rest of the time shutting up...and ogling her breasts. Hey, she had nice breasts, and they were accompanied by an equally impressive intellect. He discovered he liked her intellect and her snappy comebacks just as much as he liked her breasts. When he gave it more thought, he realized he liked her too.

Pacifica was the reason he'd changed his whole life. Being privileged enough not to have to work his way through university, he'd indulged in the Hotlanta nightlife (women, sports bars, and strip clubs). After meeting Pac—or rather the wrong end of her good intentions—his well-laid out life didn't fit anymore. Originally, his plans were to pick up his Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA) at Emory and return to Brazil to work in his father's company. He'd need more than a BBA for Pac to remain interested in him.

He might not have known exactly what he wanted back then, but he knew he didn't want to be

relegated to the pile of things she'd grown bored with. That Monday morning, he marched straight to the dean who advised dual-degree candidates and declared his interest. Luckily, his grades and standardized test scores were high enough that at the end of this sophomore year, he was one of the students Emory recommended for the dual-degree program. After emitting a fierce roar when he was notified, he raced to the dean's office and completed the application for Georgia Tech so she could forward it to them that day.

As soon as he learned he'd been accepted into Georgia Tech's Civil Engineering program, the first person he'd contacted was Pac, who was already a junior in the computer engineering program. She'd given him a fist knock and demanded he take her to his favorite restaurant to celebrate his good fortune to be a Yellow Jacket.

"My favorite restaurant?" he'd asked in surprise, being that their tastes in food weren't even in the same neighborhood. While he preferred European cuisine and Brazilian steakhouses, she preferred food that couldn't in any way, shape or form be described as cuisine. In the end, he'd tossed out the name of one of Atlanta's best restaurants.

"I'm driving," he said, knowing how much of a control freak she was.

"In your dreams," she replied.

"In my dreams, you're much more agreeable," he'd said.

"That's why it's a dream," she'd smiled.

"I really must insist on driving."

"And I really must insist on reaffirming my 'no.'"

"I have to drive; you don't know where it's at," he said.

"That's why they have GPS."

"Perhaps the restaurant isn't in the GPS."

"Then it's definitely not five-star."

"I've never had a woman drive on a date," he said.

"Then you've never had a woman," she laughed.

"We could do this all day."

"We could if I was in a mind to indulge you, but we're not."

"Can we compromise, then?"

"You drive to and I drive from?"

"Limousine," he'd countered.

"Only if I pay for half and you make sure the limo is stocked with chocolate-dipped strawberries," she said.

"Agreed. Since I'm taking you to my favorite restaurant, it's only fair that you wear a dress," he'd egged her on.

“Since I’m allowing you the privilege of myself for company, wear your hair loose,” she’d countered.

“Done, and no, you can’t play with it,” he’d amended. She’d been trying to finagle a way to play with his hair since the day she’d met him.

“You didn’t even give me a chance to ask before you said ‘no.’”

“Well, ask so I can go ahead and say ‘no’ then,” he’d said.

“Forget it—I don’t even want to play with it now,” she’d pouted.

“Lies,” he’d commented.

“Whatever, just don’t ask to play with my hair either, because I’m not going to let you.”

“The difference between you and me is that I wouldn’t ask,” he’d said, knowing it’d rile her up.

“Try that and the difference between us would be the blood you’d be peeing all week. And *nota bene*: your favorite restaurant better not be a titty bar, because I don’t need titties in my face when I’m eating now that I’m out of infancy. Actually, I probably didn’t need them in my face back then, being that I almost suffocated in my momma’s cleavage every time she tried to feed me.”

He’d laughed and then choked, and later, when he’d had the privilege of meeting Dr. Hampton, he’d made it a point to keep his eyes glued to the floor

because ogling Pac's momma was a guaranteed way to catch an ass whipping.

He'd prided himself on his negotiations. Pac in a dress was a lot harder to get than him with his hair down. Yep, he'd congratulated his ego right up until the moment he saw her step into the living room. Panicked that she dared look so fucking beautiful, he'd looked at her uncle.

"You're going to allow her to wear that?" he'd asked.

Of course, knowing she'd thrown him for a loop, she'd hit him with one of those 'don't fuck with me' looks before leveling him with her words.

"You can take me out, or I'll call your hot ass roommate...."

There was probably more to her sentence, but he hadn't let her get anymore out of her mouth. He'd simply grabbed her hand and hustled her out to the limo. Of course, later he'd had to find another roommate, because he just couldn't have Pac ogling any other man but himself.

Though his dinner was five-star, he'd spent the entire dinner admiring just how well Pacifica Hampton cleaned up. Her curves looked good in denim, but they looked damned good in a black silk wrap dress and three-inch pumps. She was the perfect dinner companion: witty, beautiful, engaging,

beautiful, affable, beautiful. He'd never had such a good time at dinner, just as he'd never had a woman pay for his meal. As soon as she'd opened her purse, he'd protested, and she'd promptly shut him up with a kiss...and backed it up with her words.

“Congratulations on getting into Georgia Tech, Salacious. I'm proud of you.”

He'd never felt more of a man, even with his woman paying for dinner. He knew right then there was no other woman in the whole of the universe for him. He'd gotten real serious about his studies, taking summer classes so he could graduate within four years and get to graduate school. He had to prove to Mr. and Dr. Hampton that he wasn't the type of man who was satisfied with living off of his parent's money—not that they'd allow such a thing. He had to prove to his own parents that he knew what he was doing. He had to prove to Pac that he was a man.

Being they'd both had rigorous schedules in grad school and they'd both interned in summers (he in Dallas and she in Redwood City), he wasn't worried about her finding another man. He wasn't worried because he'd wooed her with the most beautiful beach in Brazil. Pac wasn't going to give that up for some man. But eventually, they'd finished grad school and gotten proper jobs in different states. He didn't like her being so far away from him, and the last time she'd



come to visit, he'd plied her with lemon pound cake and peach ice cream and discovered that she wasn't feeling her job. That'd been the only opening he needed. When it was time to for her to leave, he suggested that she stay one more day...and then another. Before he knew it, one extra day had turned into one week; one week had turned into two; and one month had turned into three. And now, here they were. All it'd taken was almost dying at her hands—again—but it was worth it.

## **Chapter 4: Bringing It Up to a Boil**

Parking the truck in the garage, Pac blew out the breath she'd been holding for the last ten miles. They were finally home. There was nothing to stop her from jumping Salacious and riding him like the rapids in the Colorado River. Okay, there was his head injury, fifteen stitches, and bruising from her tourniquet, but that wasn't much when measured against six foot five inches of absolute hotness.

Reaching over, she gently shook Salacious. When he didn't wake, she shook him again. "Salacious!" she whispered louder.

Still nothing. Knowing she couldn't lift him, she attempted to make him comfortable, being it looked like they were going to be sleeping in the truck until Salacious woke up from his nap. Reaching over, she unbuckled his seatbelt. She was in the process of reclining his seat when she felt his hand grab her arm. Gasping, she turned her head and found his blue-green gaze boring into her. Immediately, she felt the heat beginning to sizzle between them—again—which had nothing to do with being in the middle of a heat wave (read: normal summer day) in Dallas.

"Were you perchance trying to take advantage of me?"

“You wish,” she said.

“Yes, Pacifica, I do.”

“You can’t handle me—even in your dreams,” she threw back.

He didn’t respond to that verbally; he just smirked.

“Wipe that smirk off of your face,” she demanded.

“You can always try and make me wipe it off of my face,” he said, his deep voice sounding all kinds of hot, which did nothing to slow her racing heartbeat. Ah, she wanted to, but the only way she could think to wipe it off was to throw her pussy in his face, and though he had a full-size truck, they needed way more room than was available in the interior of the cab.

“When you’re better, I’ll take you up on that,” she said as she exited the truck.

“Knowing you will take me up on my offer, I’ll make sure to expedite my healing,” he said.

Walking around to his side, she waited beside the door so she could help him out.

“I’m perfectly capable of getting out of a truck on my own, Pac,” he said.

“You’re going to be perfectly capable of lying in a pool of ‘just got your ass whipped’ if you keep taking that fucking tone with me, Salacious.”

She was about to say more, but then he unfolded all of that hotness from the truck and backed her against the garage wall.

“I thought we already determined that I am physically superior,” he whispered in her ear.

Damn. Though she should be mad at his arrogance, she was too busy trying to convince her hips not to arch up into his hardness.

“Nothing to say?” he challenged her.

“Oh, I’ve got plenty to say. I’m simply searching for small words so you can understand what I’m saying,” she said.

“Ah, so feisty,” he said as he picked her up and headed to the door.

Did this motherfucker just pick her up...and make her nipples hard and pussy wet in the process? Oh, yes he fucking did. Being all benevolent and all, she decided to wait until they were in the coolness of the house before telling him off. That was her intention, but when they walked into the house, he didn’t put her down. Well, he put her down, but he didn’t let her go. Setting her atop the counter, he got all up in her personal space.

“Your eyes are flashing. Go ahead, Pacifica. Tell me off like you want to so I can spank you like you need,” he challenged.

“Da hell?” Why are you suddenly coming on to me left, right and center? Did that quack job give you some kind of narcotic?”

“I’m not under the influence of anything, Pac. I’ve been coming on to you for the longest time. You simply haven’t noticed.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t have been half-stepping with the come on, because if I’d noticed it I damn sure would’ve commented on it.”

“Perhaps you did notice but were too intimidated by my raw masculinity to do anything but run.”

“Well, maybe if you were a real man, you wouldn’t have let me run.”

“Do you know how much your spiciness turns me on? Most women are interested in pleasing me.”

Did this motherfucker just bring up other women? Oh, hell no. He did not make her wet and then talk about other women. Shoving him, she got pissed all over when he didn’t even have the decency to move back. If anything, he got closer. “I don’t want to hear shit about your other bitches, Salacious.”

“There haven’t been any other women,” he said.

“Since when?” she asked. “Yesterday?”

“Since the evening we went to my favorite restaurant.”

His admission stopped her cold. “That was five years ago.”

“Believe me, I am aware of just how long ago it was.”

“You’re kidding, right?”

“No.”

“No hand jobs, no blow jobs, no heavy petting, no—”

He cut her off. “Nothing but my hand on my cock, wishing it was your hand, your mouth, or your tight body I was pleasuring.”

*Oh shit.* He wasn’t lying. And she was going to need two showers...one to wash off the sweat and another to get her coochie under control. Gathering herself, she wondered if the air-conditioning was working, because Salacious had a sister sweating.

“I’ll let you run...for now,” he said.

“I don’t run from shit, Salacious, especially an injured opponent.”

“Injured or no, I am still more man that you are accustomed to handling,” he said as he lifted her from the counter and set her on her feet.

“Please,” she said as she marched from the room. Even though she needed to put distance between her and Salacious in the worst way before she found herself spread-eagled on his bed and stuffed full

of hot, Brazilian cock, her conscience wouldn't simply let her run. Turning, she asked if he needed help.

"Do you need help showering?"

"I can manage the shower, but I might need help with my hair," he admitted.

"Sweet, I've been waiting for a chance to play with your hair. If I'd known all I had to do was brain you with something, I would've done it a long time ago," she said.

"Which is exactly why I didn't tell you."

"Spoilsport. Give me fifteen minutes and I'll meet you in your room."

"Make it twenty. I'll be there with..."

"Bells on?" she finished.

"With nothing on," he corrected her and gently squeezed her ass.

Oh shit. She was in trouble—and for once, the prospect of getting into trouble didn't bother her at all. She couldn't wait to get into that shower with Salacious and in the bed with Salacious and into Salacious...just like he'd gotten into her.

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Salomão watched the natural and sexy sway of Pac's hips as she walked away from him. Though he wanted to follow her, he forced himself to remain

where he was. He'd spent the last six years waiting to make this woman his, so he could be benevolent and give her a few minutes. He needed to give them both a few minutes. Though he'd enjoyed working her up, he'd worked himself up in the process. Smelling her arousal, watching her nipples harden, watching her struggle to keep her composure had him harder than he'd been in the last five years. Besides, as much as he wanted her, he wasn't going to take her tonight.

He had last-minute details to see to before he entered her body. Yes, he could hold on for just a little bit longer. He'd just gotten his cock under control when the vixen turned around and gave him a saucy wink. Stroking himself, he growled in response. Yep, that woman was definitely made for him.

Snagging the phone, he waited to hear the sound of her shower running before dialing. He made two calls. One to Mr. and Dr. Hampton and the other to his parents. He had a seduction to plan and a woman to claim, and he wasn't taking any chances that he'd fuck it up. That seen to, he padded to his room. Hitting a button on the remote control, he started his shower, glad he'd sprung for the luxury master bath. Stripping out of his clothes, he stepped under the massaging spray and sighed in pleasure.

After scrubbing the sweat and smell of hospital off of him, he got to his hair. Having such long hair



was a pain in the ass, but seeing Pac's eyes glaze over whenever she eyed it was the reason he'd kept it long. He'd been anticipating the day he'd finally allow her to have her way with his hair. And that day was coming soon, he thought as he exited the shower.

Squeezing the excess water out of his mane, he quickly dried his body. Applying deodorant, he tossed the towel across the bathroom and adopted an arrogant pose. All that was left to do was wait for Pac to come running in. Thirty seconds later, she came sprinting into the room. Dressed in thin cotton shorts and one of his t-shirts, she never looked sexier. She'd look even sexier wearing nothing but him.

"I haven't changed my mind, so there's no need to run," he said as he caught her to him.

"I was running to make sure you were okay— Oh my goodness. You're naked," she said as she searched around for a towel. Finding one, she threw it at him.

"Put that on," she demanded.

"Why?"

"Because."

Ah, finally, he'd flustered the unflappable Pac. "Because what?"

"Because I fucking said so. How would you like it if I ran around naked?"

Dragging her up close to him, he whispered his response directly in her ear. "I'd advise you only run

around naked when you're ready to have ten inches of hard cock in you."

Watching her tremble at his words, he couldn't help the arrogant smile that lit his visage.

"Do you want me to help you with your hair or not?" she snapped.

Before she could push him and inadvertently break something else on him, he sat back and enjoyed her ministrations. It took everything he had not to purr...but that wasn't enough because five minutes into it, he was outright moaning in pleasure. He'd never let a woman touch his hair—period. Feeling Pac's hands in his hair, he knew he'd been right to deny her. There was no way he could've sat still and allowed her to have her way with his hair without having his way with her. The only reason he was able to hold off now was because he had plans.

He didn't realize he'd fallen asleep until she gently nudged him awake and pushed him in the direction of the bedroom.

"Come on, Salacious. You need to rest."

"Don't want to," he mumbled.

"Don't care. You're going to," she said as she pulled back the covers and pushed him into bed.

Gently manacled her wrist, he pulled her down beside him. If he was going to rest, then so was she. They'd both had busy mornings, and besides, she was

going to need her rest in order to handle everything he was going to give her. Settling her next to him, he pulled her in his arms before reaching down to strip her shorts off.

“Salacious,” she moaned.

“Pacifica,” he responded as he made quick work of her shirt before pulling the sheet around them both.

“Salacious, unless you want to wake up pregnant, then we probably shouldn’t be this close together.”

*Ah, but he wanted to be close to her.* “I’m all man and thus potent enough to impregnate you with a hall and two rooms between us.”

“Is there a reason I need to be naked?”

“Besides me wanting you naked? No,” he said as he kissed her.

“You are so damn arrogant.” She sighed.

“And with you in my bed, I have every right to be,” he said.

“Salacious, I—” she began.

“Belong to me,” he finished.

“I don’t remember you asking me,” she threw back.

“Must’ve not been paying attention,” he said as he gently cupped her breasts.

Her gasp and sigh of pleasure almost unmanned him. The sound traveled down his spine and settled

right in his groin. He enjoyed the sounds of her pleasure. He enjoyed the feel of her even more. He enjoyed her presence in his life most of all. Taking his time, he leisurely kissed her before pulling back.

“Is there a reason you stopped?” she asked.

He made sure not to smile at her annoyance. “Yes.”

“And the reason is?”

Even though she was lying in his bed, he knew she was metaphorically tapping her foot. “I want to give you time to get accustomed to being in my bed. I want to give you time to get accustomed to having me in your space.”

Huffing, she asked, “Who said I’m going to give you a second chance?”

“This says it,” he said as he stroked her mound outside of her shorts. “This says it,” he reiterated as he caressed her soft breasts. “This says it,” he whispered as he drank from her lips. Smiling, he set the alarm and settled in for a nap.

An hour and a half later, he was awake and just as he’d expected, Pac was deep in the throes of REM sleep. Taking care of his needs, he called a limo and returned to rouse Pac.

Pac was enjoying an erotic dream involving her, Salacious and peach ice cream when she felt herself being gently shaken awake. Pushing her hair out of her face, she looked up into Salacious' blue-green eyes. "Are you hurting?"

"Yes, but I don't think anyone's ever perished from blue balls," he said.

*Did that motherfucker just say what she thought he said?* She was about to ask when he dropped another verbal bombshell.

"I need you to pack."

"What?!" she asked, confused as ever.

"I need you to pack," he repeated.

It was then she noticed he was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

"Salacious, if you were tired of my company, all you had to do was say so," she said as she scrambled out of his bed.

Well, she attempted to scramble out of his bed. She didn't even get to the edge before she found herself pressed to the bed by two hundred plus pounds of Brazilian hotness.

"You misunderstand me. I don't want *you* to leave; I want *us* to leave. Now hurry and pack."

Always in the mood for a road trip, she asked, "Where are we going?"

"Home," he said simply.

“Home Atlanta, home Colorado Springs, or home Pernanbuco?” she asked.

“Home Pernanbuco,” he said.

“Is everything alright?” she asked, since they’d just recently returned from Brazil.

“Yes, now come. Our ride is already here.”

“Why didn’t you wake me earlier?” she asked.

“I did, but you’re still in bed.”

“Sometimes you are such a man, Salacious.”

“I’m *always* a man.”

“Yeah, yeah. How long are we staying?” she asked.

“For as long as we want.”

“And what if I decided I never wanted to leave?”

“That’d be fine with me.”

“You say that now. You need me to pack for you?”

“Already packed.”

She was packed in five minutes flat, dressed in three, and at the door a minute after that.

“If I didn’t know better, I might think you liked my beach more than you liked me.”

“Well, you do know better, so hush,” she said.

“Don’t you even want to know why we’re going to Brazil?”

“Long as nothing’s wrong, I really don’t care why we’re going to Brazil. I love your beach.”

“But what if I wanted to go to the rainforest?”

“Well, you go ahead, but drop me off at the beach first.”

“It’s a good thing I don’t have a fragile ego,” he said.

“Sure is.”

Expecting a taxi to fetch them, she was surprised to walk out and spy a limousine.

Turning to Salacious, she asked, “Isn’t this a little bit of overkill?”

“Not this time,” he said as he took her hand.

Already surprised at the limousine, she was floored by the private jet. Normally, they purchased tickets in coach if the plane wasn’t crowded or business class if it was. She’d been on a private jet before, but this was different. She wasn’t on some random corporate jet; she was on Salacious’ family jet being called ‘Senhora’ left, right and center as she was offered fine dining, fine wine (which she declined), and fine chocolates (which she devoured).

Finally, after being wine and dined and not sixty-nined, she asked the question that begged, pleaded, and demanded to be asked.

“Why are we flying on your family’s personal jet?”

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Although he’d distracted Pac with good food, Salomão knew three things. One, she’d turn her nose up at most of the food. Two, she’d damn near tackle the steward to the floor for the chocolate. Three, when she was no longer distracted by the chocolate, she’d ask the all-important question. Hearing it, he couldn’t help but smile. Any other woman wouldn’t care why she was on his family’s personal jet; she’d want to know why they hadn’t been taking it all along. Not his Pac, though.

Setting his napkin aside, he moved closer to her. She raised a single eyebrow at him but held her ground. *Ah, silly woman, thinking he wasn’t a threat to her virtue.* He’d always allowed her to think he was mild-mannered, and he was...except when it came to her. When it came to her, he was all hot-blooded, Latin male. Reaching out to her, he pulled her into his lap, and when she gasped out her surprise, he caught the sound in his mouth and pillaged her. She tasted like chocolate and strawberries and every single one of his fantasies.

“Salacious,” she moaned out.



He didn't respond, he simply continued his sensual onslaught. He kissed her until the need for air took precedence over his sexual desire. Breaking apart, he smiled at the picture she made. Pacifica Hampton looked thoroughly ravished. And she was going to stay that way for the rest of their lives.

"We are taking my family's jet because I can't be bothered waiting for the next flight to Brazil, not when I want so badly, need so badly, and desire so badly to be home."

"But you said nothing was wrong!"

"Nothing is wrong. Everything is as it should be. I just *need* to be home."

"Okay, I understand that."

And he knew that she did. Fourteen hours later, they were landing in Recife. Twenty minutes later, they had arrived at his family's estate. Though she hadn't delved deeper, Pac had wrapped herself around him and given him her trust. He almost felt bad for making her worry, but he'd needed to be on Brazilian soil before he unleashed the words in his soul.

The closer they got to the main house, the more fidgety Pac became. He knew she was worried about what his family would think of this new development in their relationship, but she need not have been concerned. She was his choice, and that was simply all there was to it. His *abuela* had known the moment

she'd met Pac that she was his. So had his *mamá*, which was why they'd forbidden him to bring home any female who wasn't her. The fact he hadn't fought the decree should've alerted him to what was up, but he'd been so busy trying to impress Pac, he hadn't even balked at the demand.

"Want to skip going to the main house in favor of one of the bungalows?"

Her brilliant smile was all the answer he needed. Taking her hand, he led the way to the private beach. Unlocking the biggest of the bungalows, he led her inside. As always, it was pristine, but having called ahead, it was also stocked with everything lovers would need. Sunrise was still about two hours away, so they stripped down. Though he admired her scandalous red bra and panty set, he wanted her stripped down to nothing.

"Take it all off, Pac," he entreated.

Adventuress that she was, she didn't hesitate.

"You're not afraid?" he asked.

"Never when I'm with you," she admitted.

Her admission caused his cock to harden even more than it already was. She trusted him...and she had every reason to. A selfish bastard, he'd never allow another male to look upon his woman and live.

Grabbing a blanket and two pillows, he tucked them under one arm and took her hand before walking

out to the shore. Arranging the blanket and pillows, he lay down and pulled her down beside him. At first neither said anything, but soon Pac spoke.

“Do you feel better?”

“Yes,” he admitted.

“Are you going to tell me what’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong,” he began.

“Salacious, don’t lie to me. You’ve been tense the last few hours. Don’t get me wrong, I love my beach, but as beautiful as it is, I can’t enjoy it without you. Now tell me what’s wrong so I know whose ass needs to be whipped.”

He already loved her, but her words kicked his emotions into the stratosphere. Rolling her under him, he feathered kisses alongside her jaw and finally on her lips. “How did it become your beach?” he asked.

“I decided, but that’s not the point. Tell me what’s wrong,” she demanded.

“Nothing’s wrong, Pacifica. Finally, everything’s right.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m sure,” he said.

“What’s finally so right?” she asked.

“Us,” he said as he slid his hands over her sex and stroked her intimately.

“Salacious,” she moaned.

“Pacifica,” he groaned her name in response when he felt her grip his manhood. They spent a few minutes stroking, caressing, and kissing.

“I’ve wanted you from the moment you started that riot on Emory’s campus. I wanted you more that evening in your fancy little restaurant. But I’ve never wanted you more than I did in the hospital,” she admitted.

“Of course you’d want me when I was a mess. My hair was tangled, my shirt was covered with blood—” he started.

“You were okay though. And even hurt, you defended me, Salacious. You’d just gotten fifteen stitches, and yet your first concern when you came down that hall was for me. I kept telling myself you’d do that for anybody, but then you kissed me. Until then, I never believed you’d ever really look at me like *that*.”

“I’ve never *not* looked at you like *that* in the past five years, Pacifica.”

“Make love to me, Salacious,” she requested.

“If I make love to you, Pacifica, there’s no going back.”

“When *I* make love to *you*, you won’t want to go anywhere but forward,” she countered.

“Do you know why I needed to come home?”

“No,” she admitted.

“Because ever since I glimpsed the love you hold for my homeland, I’ve been filled with this longing to make love to you on my beach. I want my homeland to witness the consummation of our love. I want to add the sounds of our mutual orgasms to the melody of the rainforest.”

“Salacious,” she cried. “Oh, Salacious.”

“I will live in your America, but I want to conceive all of our babies on the sands of this beach, on the forest floor of my grandmother’s rainforest, on the top of Monte Roraima, and under the waterfalls of Primavera.”

“Babies?” she asked. Her face was a composition in shock and pleasure.

“Yes, babies,” he confirmed. “Will you do me the honor of marrying me?” he asked as he slid the diamond onto her finger.

“I’m sorry, I think I misunderstood you. Could you repeat your question?” she said.

Smiling, he simply lifted her finger and kissed it before repeating his question. “Will you do me the honor of marrying me?”

“Yes, Salacious! Yes!”

Pac was sure she'd misunderstood Salacious. She had to be hearing things, because she was sure she'd just imagined him asking her to marry him. And then he asked her again, and the only possible answer spilled from her lips. While her lips offered up yeses, her body was ready to back those yeses up. Wrapping her thighs around his waist, she arched into his hardness, reveling in the contrast of his hard angles and planes and her soft dips and valleys. Reaching up, she tunneled her hands in his thick locks and stopped.

"May I?" she asked, remembering that Salacious was particular about people touching his hair.

"You never need to ask," he rasped.

"But you—" she began.

"Will only allow the woman I marry to touch me thusly."

"You've never allowed other women to—" she began.

"No, you are the first."

"And the only, being you asked me to marry you," she tossed in.

"Jealous?" he asked.

"Why should I be jealous over stuff that's undisputedly mine?" she sassed as she yanked him closer.

Gently pulling his full bottom lip between her teeth, she sucked on it momentarily before moving on

to explore the rest of his mouth. Salacious tasted like chocolate and mint and hot, Latin male. Just like when she used to lick cake batter off of the beaters, she took her time tasting him, not wanting to miss a single bit of sweetness.

She could lose herself in this man...and yet never be lost. Salacious was her beacon. A good man, he was just the right mix of strength and tenderness, arrogance and humility, and intelligence and playfulness all wrapped up in a beautiful caramel wrapping. She trusted this man, not because he was wealthy but because he'd never given her any reason not to. She believed in this man, not because of his eloquence or beautiful accent but because she'd witnessed him sweating to achieve his goals. He fell back on his own merit instead of his family name and money. She admired this man because he was so honest in his arrogance, so open with his words, so giving with his heart. She wanted this man, had always wanted this man, would never stop wanting this man because he honored her, cherished her, and loved her so unselfishly, so completely, and so audaciously.

How could she not want to give herself to this man? How could ever consider saying anything but 'yes' to being his woman? How had she made it so long without dibsing him? She didn't know, but now

that he'd requested her presence in his life, she'd spend every moment reminding this fine motherfucker that he belonged to her.

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Though Pacifica didn't utter a word, Salomão didn't need her to. He'd had six years of her words, and while he valued them, the only words he wanted in this moment were the ones that were felt rather than said. And *Graças a Deus*, he felt the answers he craved in her caresses; he witnessed them in the sparkles in her eyes; he heard them in the cadences of her moans.

Saying he loved this woman was an understatement. He *lived* this woman and thus wanted everything with this woman—her love, her passion, her friendship...her infectious laughter, her WTFs, her '*you got one more time*' responses.

So many women lived to please him, yet Pacifica lived to please her Creator, to honor her family, and to please herself. Strong in her convictions, she would not be moved simply because it was convenient. Daring, she ran full speed towards any adventure. Passionate, she wasn't ashamed to cry, afraid to say 'no,' too prideful to admit that she didn't understand, too stubborn to say 'I'm sorry'...and mean it.



He liked that about her—the fact that she meant all she said, including her apologies, her praises, and her fuck yous. That was why he didn't have to second-guess her acceptance, her touches, or her moans. Pac wasn't the type of woman to say 'yes' to gain access to wealth or fake an orgasm to spare his feelings. She said 'yes' because she wanted to; she moaned because he was making her feel good.

He'd had women before, but he'd cheated himself, because not only were none of them Pacifica Hampton, none of them came close to being half of what Pac was. Looking back, he realized he'd also cheated them, because he'd never given anything close to all of himself. Yet, he'd given Pac everything...and he hadn't regretted it. He only wished he had more to give.

He knew she'd been shocked to learn he hadn't had a woman in five years. Truth is, he'd had a woman all along—her. He simply hadn't consummated their relationship.

As if she'd read his thoughts, she asked. "Five years, Salacious."

"Foreplay, Pacifica. Extended foreplay."

Smiling, she said, "That's a long, long time for such a virile man."

Her tone wasn't accusatory or doubtful; it was perplexed.

“You were worth every day I waited, Pac.”

“I would’ve given myself to you long before,” she admitted.

“I wouldn’t have been strong enough to refuse such a wonderful gift. But I’m glad we waited, because it gave me time to become the man worthy of you.”

“Salacious, you honor me,” she whispered into his mouth.

“I can treat you no other way,” he responded as he linked their fingers. “I can treat you no other way,” he repeated. “The mother of my children, the other half of my soul, the most beautiful woman I know, the most adventurous woman I know, the most righteous woman I know deserves the best I have to give.”

She didn’t respond with words; she responded with her tears. And they broke him. Catching the tears in his hand, he made the sign of the cross over his heart. Catching the rest, he made the sign of the cross over hers. “I love you, Pacifica Hampton. I love you.”

“I love you, Salomão Roraima,” she said with naked honesty.

“I didn’t know how much until this year. Every day without you was agony.”

“And for me it was a hundred-fold. I hated you being so far away from me, around males who didn’t know or care that I was in love with you. I’ll never let

you go, Pacifica. If never was actually a point in time, I still wouldn't let you go then."

"I wouldn't let you let me go, Salacious."

Leaning down, he caught a breast in his mouth. Pleasuring her nipples with his tongue, he kneaded her firm breasts, marveling at their weight and texture. Using her moans as a guide, he sucked, laved, and caressed her to the edge of orgasm. Backing off, he brought her back to the edge again. Caught up in her beautiful response, he pulled back so he could see her pleasure on her face, needing to witness how good he made her feel.

But before he finished looking his fill, he found himself flat on his back and Pacifica straddling him. Sensitizing his flesh with her soft curves, she rubbed against him. From the passion filling her eyes, he knew his body gave her pleasure, and like the arrogant male he was, he took great satisfaction in it. When she slid down further and wrapped her hand around his cock, he came off of the bed.

"Pacifica," he moaned. "Pacifica," he repeated his entreaty.

"Mine, Salacious. Mine," she said as she continued to stroke him.

Her hands like magic, the scent of her arousal filling his nostrils, her passion overflowing from her, he couldn't have dreamed up a more erotic picture.

But he'd had six years worth of dreams. Flipping her over and retaking the dominant position, he slid two fingers into her sheath and had to ball up his other hand into a tight fist to stop himself from spilling on the spot.

Clamping down on his fingers, she threw back her head and screamed out his name. The sound of his name on her lips went straight to his heart.

"Revel in how good I make you feel," he demanded.

"I've done that for the past six years," she admitted. "Every night I fell asleep imagining you in me."

Her admission kicked his need up another level. Spreading her legs with his thigh, he settled between them. Though his body raged at him to take her, he savored the moment. Teasing her with brushes of his cock, he used his hands, tongue, and lips to pleasure her. Hearing her heart thunder beneath her breast, witnessing her thrashing her head from side to side, feeling her hips grind into him in an effort to join them, only then was he satisfied that she was as frantic for him as he was for her. Only then did he join them. Pulling back, he slammed his entire length into her...and almost passed out from the pleasure.

She was so fucking tight, so fucking wet, so fucking perfect. Though he wanted to shut his eyes, he

didn't. He wanted to see her passion, needed to see it. He wanted that moment inscribed in his psyche so he could describe it to her in such vivid detail, she could put it to canvas.

"Salacious," she choked out. "Salacious, please, please."

Hearing her pleas turned him on. Hearing them in his native tongue did him in. He wondered if she realized that she'd switched from English to Portuguese or that she was using his back as a scratching post. Proud to wear her marks, he gave her what she asked for. He gave her harder, longer, more.

He reveled in her tightness as he slid back in. He reveled in how tightly she held him to her as he withdrew. He reveled in the scent of their lovemaking. He reveled in the sounds of their pleasure mingling with the sounds of the crashing surf. He reveled in them. And when she clamped down on him so hard all he could do was surrender to his pleasure, he reveled in spilling inside of his destiny and in the possibility that they'd created life.

## **Epilogue: If You Can't Make Him See the Light, Make Him Feel the Heat**

There was nothing like being loved down from head to toe all weekend long to make a woman feel like a woman—especially when your man took you to the most beautiful place on earth to make love to you the first time. Yep, there was nothing. Or maybe there was, but not if that woman had Salacious Roraima as a lover—not that they would, because Salacious now bore her marks all over that hot-ass body. And just to back up her claim, she'd pulled a Dréa move and busted out the permanent marker and scribbled “Property of Pacifica” across the mountain chain that was his abs. Salacious was all hers, which meant half of his portion of the beach his parents called home was all hers too. Yay her! Go Pac! Go Pac! Go Pac!

As usual, chanting her name caused her to ‘feel it.’ Just as little old black ladies sitting up front in church weren't content to keep their “Amens” to themselves, she shouted out her narcissistic cheer. And of course she had to shake her booty with it. Being that she had such an awesome booty (Salacious said so, so there), it was quite a show.

“If you can shake your tempting ass like that, then I definitely need to take you back to my bed and

love you some more,” Salacious growled in his native Portuguese even as he caged her in with his chiseled body.

Any answer she might've given was swallowed up by his mouth. Salacious had lovely full lips, and he was putting them to good use. Pausing in her actions, she turned in his arms and threw herself into their kiss. Raking her nails over his scalp, she reveled in the purring sounds her actions elicited just as she reveled in the decadent feel of rubbing her sensitized body against his. Finding the tuck in his towel, she quickly yanked it from his body. Already having memorized his body's topography, she didn't need to pause to admire all six feet five inches of mountain before her; she simply paused because she wanted to. It was hard to get tired of looking at such hotness. And it was all hers. Again, yay her!

“You're chanting your own name again,” he said against her lips. “And you're still shaking that ass, which has too many clothes on it.”

“I chant my name because I have good reason to—you being that reason. I shake my ass like this to entice you,” she sassed.

“Everything about you entices me,” he growled as he slid his hand down her panties right before ripping them from her body.

“Hey, I liked those panties. They cupped my ass so good,” she complained even as she leaned back to give him better access to her goodies.

“That may be, but they’ll never cup your ass as good as my hands cup it,” he said as he squeezed it.

She had to admit her Salacious had a damn fine point. In fact, she doubted her own skin cupped her ass as well as he did. For a moment she lost herself in the pleasure. Salacious was a fucking maestro with his hands...and tongue...and his lovely, lovely cock.

“Salacious,” she moaned.

“Don’t mind me,” he whispered as he trailed kisses down her neck and decorated her shoulder blades with his tongue.

“Oh, but I want to,” she confessed. “But first we have to do this one little thing.”

“If I wasn’t so hard for you right now, I’d be scared of that tone.”

“But you are hard for me, so you’re not scared,” she said.

“This is true,” he replied. “Tell me what it is.”

“Payback,” she said as she picked up the phone and called Jonica, who was only all too happy to help.



Having listened to the phone call, Salomão couldn't help but be grateful he'd never done anything to land on Pac's "PAB (Payback's A Bitch) list." Though she specialized in gaming design, he'd never met anyone who could out-art Pac. There was nothing Pac couldn't duplicate right down to the most miniscule detail. Duplicating famous artworks wasn't much of a challenge for her—and neither was the scratchy handwriting of a certain doctor who had just worked her last good nerve. He hoped both doctors had healthy senses of humor, because if they didn't...he guessed he and Pac would be playing mixed-doubles smack down against Drs. Donnchadh and Deror.

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It'd been one hell of a weekend. First, there'd been the menace named Pacifica. Second, because of said menace, he'd had to go get his ribs x-rayed. Not only did he have one broken rib, he had two, along with a nasty bruise going down the right side of his body. Third, Sohvi wasn't there for him to ogle.

Sitting back in the swim spa, he enjoyed every one of those massaging jets. Taking a sip of ice-cold sweet tea, he exhaled—finally. Ah, blessed peace, he thought. Then two seconds later his phone rang.

Without even bothering to look at who it was, he mumbled a greeting.

“Lo.”

“You didn’t run off to Vegas and get married within the last two days, did you?” Pacifica Hampton asked.

“No, but I don’t want to marry you,” he said.

There. He’d said it. He’d gotten it firmly off of his chest. He felt no guilt. He felt no remorse. He felt nothing but relief. But of course since Pacifica Hampton was involved, that relief was short-lived.

“Good, because I told Dr. Deror that you like her. And don’t bother denying it, because I saw how y’all both ate each other up with your eyes. I sent her a bouquet signed by one Dr. Forbes Donnchadh. Think on how you’re going to explain your way out of that one, with your little comments all under your breath like I can’t hear you. And by the way, you lose, dude. Rounds one through eleven go to me. Your only chance at a victory is to win by knockout or concession, and a) for all of the asshole you are, I’m sure you don’t hit women, and b) I’m not conceding shit to you.”

Forbes knew he was experiencing shock—had to be. There was just no other way to explain his symptoms. Though he didn’t have the benefit of a medical kit or mirror, he was pretty damn sure he had,

at the minimum, fourteen of the nineteen symptoms of shock. He couldn't talk around the lump in his throat, and his clammy hands made it difficult for him to hold the phone. After sitting in stunned silence, he finally regained his voice and some of his sanity.

"Why?"

"Because you're an asshole, and the next time I bring Salacious to you, you're not going to be taking your sweet time about treating him."

"There were other doctors there—" he began.

"And I give a shit why? I didn't select them to fix him; I selected *you*. Now if I were you, I'd hustle my ass into the shower so I could smell a little bit less like asshole."

"What?!" he asked, having no idea what the hell was going on in this conversation.

"I want an apology from you for not seeing to your man right away," she said. "And before you get all arrogant and say 'no,' you might want to reconsider pissing off the woman who loves Salacious."

"Ah, so you're finally admitting that you love him?"

"Yes, now let's get back to my weekly special where I find some idiot and tell him why he isn't shit."

"Okay, I apologize, but are you going to apologize for breaking two of my ribs?"

“No, because then I’d be liable for whatever injury you incurred doing who knows what. At the rate you piss people off, all of Texas and half of Oklahoma could be responsible for your injury. And you shouldn’t be so soft.”

Wow. He was so damn glad Pacifica wasn’t in the helping professions, because she had one helluva bedside manner.

“Glad I wasn’t holding my breath for that apology,” he said.

“Still waiting for a decent apology,” she said.

Knowing he couldn’t possibly win this argument, he girded up his loins. Yes, dammit, he was going to apologize even though he’d done nothing wrong. As Mr. Roraima had said, sometimes you simply took the lesser of two evils. Exhaling, he put every bit of sincerity he could up in his voice.

“Pacifica Hampton, I apologize for not seeing to your man straight away.”

“See, that wasn’t so hard. Was it?”

“Actually, it was,” he admitted.

“Only because you’ve not stumbled across more women who put you in your place, but luckily, there is that feisty Dr. Deror. I like her.”

Something about her tone made everything within him go on full alert.

“What else did you do?” he asked calmly, even though he felt anything but.

“That’s for me to know and you to find out. Have a good week, Doctor, and remember. I might not have an M.D., and I might’ve been born at night, but it wasn’t last night.”

## **Intro: Forbes & Sohvi**

Sohvi had just stepped from the shower when she heard the sound of her doorbell ringing.

“Who is it?” she asked through the intercom.

“I’m T’zara Martin with Sweet Seduction Desserts and Floral,” a sultry voice answered.

“Okay, give me one moment,” she said as she shrugged into a short robe and made her way to the front door.

Opening the door, she came face-to-face with the biggest bouquet of roses she’d ever seen. There had to be three dozen. Reds, pinks, yellows—it was simply beautiful. It wasn’t her birthday. She had no man, so she was sure she wasn’t the woman this impressive bouquet was meant for.

“Are you sure you have the right address?” she asked.

“Are you Dr. Sohvi Deror?”

“Yes.”

“Then we have the right address,” Mrs. Martin said.

“But it’s not my birthday or anything,” she said.

“Well, someone certainly likes you.”

Finally, her good sense returned. “Oh come on in, please, and let me find a place to put these and get you a tip.”

“Tip’s already been taken care of,” Mrs. Martin said around a smile, “but you are going to need to get this in the fridge.”

“There’s more?” she asked.

“Yep. Like I said, someone certainly likes you,” Mrs. Martin said as she stepped aside.

It was then that she noticed the young woman with her and the box she had in her arms.

“What is *that*?” Sohvi asked.

“Only the best dessert in existence,” Mrs. Martin said as she followed her to the kitchen.

Forgetting her manners, she opened the box and gasped at the creation inside. “Oh my goodness!” she said, spying the heart-shaped cake.

She didn’t know what kind of cake it was, but it certainly looked delicious, and it looked like someone took a lot of time with the decorations.

“Yes, it took a long time, but your reaction was worth every hour spent on it. By the way, it’s a raspberry cheesecake, and those are sugared rose petals decorating it,” Mrs. Martin supplied.

“But—” Sohvi said, at a loss for words.

“Here’s the card that goes with it. Enjoy,” she said as she left her standing in her kitchen in shock.





*you...slowly...with my teeth. Give me a call—if you're not scared. Forbes.*

Oh. My. Damn. Oh. My. Damn. Despite just having jumped from a leisurely shower, Sohvi needed another, as she could feel her cream running down her thighs. If the man could do this with just a note, what could he actually do with his hands?

**\*\*J and J\*\***



## About the Authors

Besides being intelligent divas who pen kickass prose, Jeanie Johnson (the shagalicious wordslinger) and her momma Jayha Leigh (the ninja master of prose) are dessert-eating, take-no-shit, tell-it-like-they-feel-instead-of-tell-it-like-people-want-to-hear-it women. They have brains and aren't afraid to use them; feelings and aren't afraid to express them; and, middle fingers they'll happily use to salute out-of-line peeps. Independently, both are forces of nature that leave you begging for mercy or for more.

A kickass, tag-team duo bound together by the pen, they plan on conquering the world side by side. Jeanie will be wearing her favorite hoodie and her Chuck Taylors; Jayha will be wearing her Crocs, her blue T-shirt, and her halo. Of course, all domination will be done swiftly as Jeanie is always getting into sh\*t while Jayha is busy indulging in her torrid affair with ESPN.

Praises, compliments, adulation, and the like for Jeanie and Jayha can be sent to:

[jeanieandjayha@gmail.com](mailto:jeanieandjayha@gmail.com)