



# Passion Victoria Beth's Savors

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## **Prologue**

Lisa McDonald was consumed with fear; she had been on the run for several years. Her goal was to try to stay one step ahead of the horrifying threat that haunted her. She had arrived in the town of Passion, Victoria, Australia and put down roots for the first time since her life had changed irrevocably for the worse.

She hid her fear from her new friends until her best friend Tasha Cameron arrived on her doorstep after a misunderstanding with the two men pursuing her. Once she had calmed Tash down, her friend had begun to question her; for she had picked up on the fact Lisa was hiding something.

Lisa had broken down for the first time in a long while and the whole horrifying story had tumbled from her lips as she finally unburdened some of her worries.

Before Tash knew of Lisa's past, she had introduced Lisa to the two new police sergeants, Noah D'Angelo and Zachary Beech and to her horror they had begun pursuing her. She was terrified of the law; and she had been very rude to the two men whenever they were near her. Every time the two tall, masculine built sexy cops looked at her, she could see the heat in their eyes. Lisa has managed keep

them at arms-length until somehow her life was once more in jeopardy.

Lisa knew it was time to pack up and move again, but the two cops changed everything before she even had the chance.

## Chapter One

Lisa heard a car pull into her driveway just after she had arrived home from working at the local library. She had put the kettle on as she passed through the kitchen on her way to her bedroom to change out of her work clothes. She had just pulled on her three quarter denim jeans and her blue midriff top and was pouring water into her coffee mug when she heard tires crunching over the gravel in her drive.

She tried to see the car from her kitchen window but it had already passed by so she missed seeing who was visiting. She gave a sigh as she headed to the front door as her visitor knocked. Lisa was half expecting Tash to be standing on the other side of her front door, so she didn't take the time to look through the peep hole to check first.

She opened the door and looked into the vivid intense eyes of Sergeant Noah D'Angelo as he leaned nonchalantly against her door jamb.

“What do you want?” Lisa asked as she scowled up at Noah.

“Don't you look through your peep hole before you answer your door Beth? That's not a very smart thing to do,” Noah shoved his foot in the door.

Beth gave a shriek of fright as Noah called her by her real name and tried to slam the door in his face. He'd already placed his foot in between the door and door jamb; he used his impressive muscular arm and shoved it open, walked into her house and slammed the door behind him.

Lisa took off running down the hall, towards her the only other door in her house to have a lock on it, her bedroom. She didn't make it five steps before Noah had a large arm wrapped around her waist as he hauled her up against his large muscular body.

"Take it easy Beth I'm not going to hurt you, I want to help you," Noah soothed as he tried to contain the hysterical woman in his arms.

"I want you to explain to me why you've been hiding from me and Zach, as well as this whole damn town; under the false name of Lisa McDonald? I know your name is Elizabeth Smart. Why couldn't you have come to either me or Zach for help?" Noah asked with frustration.

Beth was too scared to hear anything Noah said. Her heartbeat was pounding in her ears as she scratched and kicked trying to get away from the big man holding her.

Noah moved his arms placing them around both of hers pinning them to her sides. He hauled her over to the sofa in her living room, sat down with her on his lap and clamped her legs between his large muscular thigh.

"I'm not going to hurt you Lisa. Calm down babe,

I'm trying to help you," Noah said in a calm soothing voice. He cursed succinctly when she kept fighting and didn't look like she was about to stop. Noah moved one of his arms across her chest clamping her arms to her sides once more. He used his thumb and index finger to tilt her head up to his and smothered her mouth with his own.

The sweet taste of her exploded on his tongue as he thrust it into her mouth, tangling her tongue with his. He tasted her entire sweet cavern by running his tongue over her teeth, along her cheeks and then to the roof of her mouth. He felt her body soften into his as he kissed her passionately and felt elation course through his big body when she moaned out loud. He slowly weaned his lips from hers knowing if he didn't stop now he would end up pushing her too far and scaring her.

"Lisa I am not going to hurt you or let anyone else get near enough to hurt you. Zach and I want to protect you babe, but you are going to have to trust us. Do you want me to call you Lisa or Beth?"

"How the hell did you find out who I was? Did Tash tell you? You may as well call me Beth" she said with a sigh as she began to calm.

"No Beth. You should know better than that, Tash would never rat on you," Noah stated in a firm voice.

"Then how do you know who I am?" Beth glared at Noah as she waited for him to answer.

"I'm not really at liberty to give you that



information Beth, but I need you to pack a bag and come with me to the station. There is a strange man in town asking for you by your real name honey. That means that someone in this town has let the cat out of the bag or you've slipped up somehow; and used something under your real name that led this guy here."

"You can't protect me Noah. You will end up being crucified by fellow officers if you do. For not protecting a colleague," Beth tried to move off of Noah's lap.

Noah held her firmly against him, as he tilted her head once more so he could look into her frightened eyes.

"I don't care if the police commissioner himself is involved in this cover up babe. Zach and I are not going to let anyone near you to hurt you. If that means we have to keep you locked up in a cell then so be it. Go and pack a bag Beth, you either come with me willingly or I will pick you up and haul you out of here over my shoulder kicking and screaming. The choice is yours," Noah stated in a hard voice as he glared her into supplication.

Beth took a deep breath, letting it out slowly before she had the courage to answer Noah.

"Let me go and pack a bag. I'll be ready in a few minutes," Beth said over her shoulder and pushed to her feet once more. She was surprised when Noah released her.

"I'll help you babe. The sooner you're under our protection the better," Noah nearly laughed as she stomped to her room ahead of him.

He wasn't that gullible. Noah knew if he had left her to pack on her own she would have been out her window and on the run again in minutes.

Life was about to become a lot more interesting.

## **Chapter Two**

Beth stomped around her room, slamming closet doors and drawers as she grabbed clothing without being aware what she took from her cupboards. She threw them haphazardly into two suitcases and felt her skin prickle with awareness as Noah leaned against the wall nonchalantly as he watched her. She was in so much trouble.

Noah D'Angelo and Zachery Beech were two of the most sexy men she had ever seen. She could feel arousal dampening her panties whenever they were near her. God she had to get a hold of herself. There was no way she was going to start a relationship with either one of the men. They were cops for god sakes, she was running from the law and didn't trust any law enforcement officer. She just hoped what he said was true, that they were trying to help her and not setting her up to hand her over to the law. For some reason she actually trusted Noah when he said he and his partner wanted to help her. She just hoped her instincts were right for a change.

Beth slammed the suitcases closed then went to her bathroom to retrieve her personal items; and put them in her beauty case. Once she had everything she needed she grabbed the case, entered the bedroom once more and saw

Noah push himself up straight.

He was so sexy, with his black hair and piercing blue eyes. Beth felt he could see into the depths of her soul, as he looked at her. He towered over her five foot five frame by at least a foot and when he was standing near her she felt so small and feminine. He had very broad muscular shoulders which tapered down to a narrow waist and long muscular legs. He had once told her his age was around thirty about seven years her senior, but at the moment she felt as if she was one hundred.

She was so tired of looking over her shoulder and being on the run, having to pack and move without a moments notice. Maybe it was time she took a stand and fought to get her life back.

“Are you done babe?” Noah asked as he moved towards her.

Beth retreated, her eyes wide with apprehension as he stalked towards her.

“My name is Elizabeth not babe,” she stated with haughty disdain and lifted her small pointed chin in the air.

“Whatever you say; babe,” Noah drawled out and gave her a wink as he picked her suitcases up from the bed.

He noticed she relaxed once more when he didn't get too close to her. He grabbed her cases and led the way out of her house. Noah opened the back door of his police cruiser and stashed her cases as she closed and locked her

front door.

He surreptitiously watched Beth from the corner of his eye as he drove through the quiet streets of Passion. When he pulled into the driveway of the police station and the house he shared with his partner Zach, he made sure to drive around to the back, away from prying eyes.

Noah grabbed her bags from the car and led the way to the open back door of their private living quarters and gave Zach a grin as he passed by.

“Hi hon how are you doing?” Zach asked as he looked down into the pixie face of the woman making her way closer to him.

Beth stopped mid stride as she looked up into the brown eyes of Zachery Beech, she felt pinned to the spot as he gave her the once over. His eyes traveled from the top of her head right down to the tip of her toes, then back again until his eyes were once more locked to hers.

Beth took a deep fortifying breath as she gazed at the muscular Adonis leaning against the door jamb. He was just slightly taller Noah with a more muscular physique. He had eyes you could drown in as they always reminded her of a sad puppy, but his smile was so wicked she creamed her panties as she looked at him. It looked as if he had no intention of moving, to let her pass him so she cut him down with her tongue.

“My name is Elizabeth or Beth, not babe or hon. Fucking use it,” she snarled as she pushed her way passed

the arrogant man, making sure she 'accidentally' hit him with her beauty case.

Zach's laughter followed her as he threw back his head and let out a guffaw.

“I just love a feisty woman,” he stated as he followed, his eyes attached to her ass.

Noah entered a large bedroom off a hallway and placed her cases upon the king size bed and watched her face as she took in the sparseness of the room. Other than an adjoining bathroom, a large closet and a bedside table, the room was bare. The bed was made up and the cover was a rich navy blue.

“I'll leave you to unpack, dinner should be ready around six, just follow your nose and you'll find the kitchen,” Noah replied just before he turned and left the room.

Beth didn't want to unpack anything, there was no way she was going to live with two cops for long. She knew if she didn't unpack, the two men would realize she had no intention of staying. She had hardly anything in her beauty case beside personal items, brush, toothpaste and tooth brush, she had folded a backpack up tightly and shoved it in the small case. At least when she did escape she would be able to take a couple of changes of clothes with her. She had saved whatever spare cash she could every week once she paid all the bills and stashed it in a secret pocket within her backpack. She had enough money

to tide her over and her passport handy in case she decided to leave the country; or she could head to a different state where she could start all over again.

Beth walked over to the window and looked out over the small back yard, she noticed the window had a lock on it and there was no key in the keyhole. She tried to open the window to see if it was locked and gave a sigh as it didn't budge.

She started unpacking, hoping she had at least some clothes to match, when she had thrown them into the cases without looking. She was just about done when a deep male voice spoke from behind her, making her jump with fright.

“Dinner's ready honey. Why don't you leave the rest of that until later?” Zach suggested from the doorway.

“I'm not very hungry,” Beth replied as she lowered her eyes to the floor.

She caught movement from beneath her lashes and opened her eyes wide as Zach moved towards her. She backed up a step for every step he took towards her, until her back was plastered to the window.

“You need to keep your strength up Beth, I don't want you getting sick. Now I am not going taking no for an answer. So I suggest you move your pretty little ass to the kitchen or I will throw you over my shoulder, haul you in there and force feed you.”

Beth stood staring at him wide eyed until he

stopped a few feet in front of her. She gave a sigh of relief and the tension began to leave her body as he stood watching her. She gave a nod of her head, then moved around him cautiously and made her way to the kitchen, where Noah was placing three plates full of food onto the small timber table. She stood hesitantly in the doorway not sure of where she was to sit.

Zach walked up behind her careful to make noise so her wouldn't scare her out of her wits and placed his hands on her shoulders to guide her to a seat at the table. He felt her sigh of relief when he let her sit on the end so she wouldn't feel trapped and sat down to her right. Noah pulled out his seat and sat to her left.

"I hope you like meat and vegetables, I don't know how to cook anything fancy," he said with a grin when she looked at him as he spoke.

"This is fine, thank you."

The two men chatted amicably between themselves as Beth picked at her food. She was so nervous she barely tasted anything that passed her lips and gave a sigh of relief when the two men leaned back in their chairs as they finished their meal. They both looked at her plate of barely touched food with a scowl, being careful she didn't see their frowns when she raised her eyes to theirs once more.

"You didn't eat enough to keep a bird alive babe, if you don't start eating more you'll never grow up to be big and strong," Noah teased her with a grin.



“I'm sorry. Thank you for my dinner but I'm just not very hungry,” Beth said quietly.

“Why don't you go and have a shower and relax honey, you look beat,” Zach suggested.

“I'll do the dishes first. It's the least I can do, after you two went to all the trouble of cooking.”

“No you won't hon, it's my turn to do the dishes and you look dead on your feet. There will be plenty of other opportunities for you to cook or clean up later, but for tonight you get to relax,” Zach said.

“Thank you, I think I will,” Beth stated then rose from her seat and left the room.

“If she was any more scared of us she'd probably lock herself into that bedroom and never come out,” Noah sighed in frustration.

“Yeah I know. Every time I move towards her she backs away. Do you think it's because we're cops and the situation she's in or because she's scared of her attraction to us?” Zach asked speculatively.

“I'd have to say both Zach. How the hell are we going to get her to stay here and trust us? She has every right to be terrified of the law after what she's been through. I just know she's gonna try and run the first chance she gets. How are we going to stop her? We can't be with her twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.”

“I've been thinking about that. How about I give my

twin brother, Tomas a call and ask him to come and stay for a while? He's finally out of the Air Force and hasn't decided what he wants to do yet. It won't take him long to pack a bag, jump on his bike and get here within a few hours," Zach suggested.

"Do it. See if he can get here by tomorrow, until then we'll just have to keep her locked in the cell because my gut is telling me she going to make a run for it; and very soon," Noah folded his muscular arms across his broad chest.

Noah listened as Zach called his brother from his mobile phone. He filled Tomas in on the situation Beth found herself in and gave Noah a thumbs up when he asked if Tomas would come and stay to be Beth's body guard until the situation was cleared up. When Zach got off the phone to Tom he filled Noah in on the details.

Beth took a long hot shower and got into one of her large sleeping shirts, crawled into bed and lay staring at the ceiling. She was so tired and knew if she didn't get a good nights sleep soon she was going to collapse with exhaustion. Her busy mind wouldn't allow for her to drift to sleep as she planned what she was going to do and she knew once she eventually slept the nightmares would come to disturb her rest. She gave a sigh and rolled over onto her side, she would get what little sleep she could and then she planned to leave. She had her backpack already packed and hidden away underneath the sink in the bathroom cupboard. All she needed to do was dress and leave. That was her last

thought as her mind finally let her drift into an uneasy sleep.

## **Chapter Three**

Tom had made good time as he traveled from Melbourne to Passion in the late evening and early morning hours as he rode his bike. There was hardly any traffic on the roads besides the B double trucks making their way to their destinations with their cargo. It was an amazing sight to see a truck hauling two or more long trailers behind the large cabs.

Tom hit the outskirts of Passion just after two in the morning and as he pulled onto the side of the road in front of the Police station he turned his bike engine off and coasted up the drive so he wouldn't wake anyone sleeping in the house.

He got off and pushed his bike the rest of the way around the drive until it was hidden in the back yard behind the house. Locking his bike and grabbing his bag, he was just in time to see the back door open slowly. He moved into the shadows and watched to see who was skulking around the house.

A small petite figure wearing dark clothes crept out of the house closing the door cautiously, then quietly crept along the driveway and around to the front of the house. Tom quietly placed his bag on the ground and followed without making a sound.

Beth followed the drive around to the front of the house aware of every sound her sneakers made on the gravel. She was so scared she would be found before she made her way back home to her car and her ears were attuned to every little noise. She even felt her ears prick up on her head when she heard a dog barked in the distance. She made it to the pavement without a hitch and gave a sigh of relief as she began her walk home.

She made it about five steps on the concrete pavement before a large hand was placed over her mouth and a muscular arm snaked around her waist. She gave a muffled scream as she was hauled back against a very large hard body and lifted from her feet. She raised her arms and tried to claw her way free from the person holding her in a tight grip and used her feet to kick any place she could reach. She heard a few grunts of pain as the heels of her feet connected with shins and gave a squeak of alarm as the arm around her waist tightened its hold trying to squeeze the breath from her lungs. Beth was so scared she couldn't see past the hand on her mouth as she kicked, clawed and fought as if her life depended on it. Her foot connected with something solid and made a loud thumping sound which seemed to echo loudly. All of a sudden bright light blinded her as a light was switched on.

Two very large, very pissed off men stood in the hallway clad only in a pair of jeans with their chests bare as they scowled at her, and whoever held her kept her within their grasp. She pleaded with her eyes for them to help her

as tears began to leak out from them.

“You can let her go now, I don't think she'll try to escape again tonight. Looks like you arrived just in time Tom,” Zach stated as he smiled at the person behind Beth.

“Sure does,” Tom replied with a grin, then cautiously took his hand and arm around from the petite feminine bundle he held firmly against him. “She's quite the little fighter, I'm gonna have a few bruises and scratches for a few days.”

Beth slowly moved away from the man holding her; and slowly turned to face her captor, she gave a gasp as she looked into the hard brown eyes of another Zach. She backed away from him, until she bumped into another hard warm male chest. She gave another shriek of fright, as her heart pumped erratically until she could hardly breath and felt herself slowly falling into unconsciousness. Noah caught her before she hit the floor.

“Well, I can't say I've ever had that effect on a female before,” Tom said with a smile as he moved to greet his brother.

Tom and Zach gave each other a quick hug and a slap on the back then headed to the kitchen while Noah put Beth on the bed, stripped her clothes from her body leaving her in her bra and panties, pulled the covers up over her and made his way to the kitchen. He picked up Beth's backpack from the hallway floor and wandered into the kitchen. His two best friends were sitting at the kitchen table enjoying a

cup of coffee as he sauntered in and sat in the chair with another mug of coffee waiting on the table for him.

“How is she?” Zach asked.

“Out cold. You scared the shit out of her Tom. Couldn't you have restrained her another way?”

“I did what I had to without the whole neighborhood waking to an hysterical woman's screams. What did you want me to do? Knock her out?”

“Sorry Tom, I know you did the right thing. It's just..., shit,' Noah swiped the palm of his hand over his face.

“She's got your balls so twisted you don't know what to do huh? I can see why, she's gorgeous. I have never seen eyes that shade of blue before; and her long blonde hair is enough to tie a guys guts into knots. I'll bet she's one fine piece of ass,” Tom stated with a grin.

“Oh no, not you too,” Zach groaned.

“Would I be stepping on someone's toes?” Tom asked as he looked from Noah to Zach. “Oh shit, you both want her too. Well as far as I'm concerned first in best dressed.”

“Haven't you ever heard of sharing little brother?” Zach asked in a firm voice.

“Well since we used to share all the time, I guess you know I have. Do you think she'd go for sharing between the three of us?” Tom asked dubiously.

“I don't know. All I do know right now is she is scared out of her ever loving mind, especially of cops. We'll just have to take things nice and slow,” Noah explained.

“Well now, it seems I have an added advantage over you two. I'm not a cop, yet!” Tom said. “Maybe I can work on her for all of us and get her to relax a little.”

“Might work, but you'll still have to take things slow and easy. Are you thinking about joining the police force Tom?” Zach asked his brother.

“Yep but I might just wait a bit,” Tom replied with a grin.

“Well I'm headed back to bed to get another couple of hours of sleep before my shift starts,” Noah stated and then left the room.

“Where the hell am I gonna sleep now you have no spare beds?” Tom asked.

“Well you could bunk down on the floor in Beth's room, so you can keep an eye on her,” Zach suggested.

“Fuck that bro. If I am going to sleep it's going to be curled up in bed with that sweet little package,” Tom said with a grin.

“Let's just hope she doesn't cut your balls off when she wakes up.”

“I love a feisty woman,” Tom grabbed his crotch indecently. “I left my bag out back, I'll just go get it and I'll



lock up when I come back in. It's good to see you again bro, it's been way too damn long.”

“Yeah it has, but now you've done your time in the air force we can spend more time with each other. I going to bed, night.” Zach stated as he slapped his brother on the back again and left.

Tom crept into the bedroom and watched the rise and fall of the little woman's chest as she breathed deeply. She didn't wake up as he stripped off and climbed into the other side of the bed. Tom was a light sleeper. After years of being in the Air Force, you became acquainted to sleeping literally with one eye open. He knew there was no way Beth would even be able to get out this bed without him waking up. He lay down on his side facing Beth, relaxed his muscles slowed his breathing and drifted to sleep.

Beth struggled to get free. She was being held down by the cop she had just witnessed him murder another human being; and now he was going to kill her. She was sobbing in terror, tears streaming down her face as she pleaded for her life. All she could see were his evil amber eyes and the dark hole down the barrel of a gun. She didn't want to die, she was too young and had way too many things she wanted to do. She let out a piercing scream as she watched the finger on the trigger slowly squeeze.

“Beth wake up. Come on baby, wake up, you're safe now,” Tom spoke firmly as he held the hysterical sobbing

woman in his arms.

Beth slowly became aware of her surroundings as the horror of the familiar nightmare began to recede. God why did she have to have the same dream every night, she sobbed to herself. She became aware of large male arms holding her against a large muscular naked frame. She gasped and tried to push her way out of the arms holding her and opened her eyes to look at the man speaking to her.

“It's alright baby, no one can hurt you here. Take nice deep breaths, you're safe Beth,” Tom soothed.

“Zach? No you're not Zach. What the hell are you doing in my bed Tom? Are you naked? Get out,” Beth cried out, as she pushed against the warm hard chest her face was practically pinned to.

“Calm down Beth. There was no where else for me to sleep other than the floor and I've had enough of sleeping on the hard ground to last me a lifetime. I'm not totally naked, I still have on my underwear. Do you want to talk about the nightmare you just had?” Tom asked in a deep sleep gravely voice, as he held her to his big body.

“No,” Beth took a deep breath.

Tom's scent surrounded her, he smelled so good. She could still smell the faint scent of aftershave or deodorant he used, but his natural clean warm male scent was stronger, tantalizing her to breath in as much of him as she could. She felt him move one of his arms, then he began to stroke the bare skin of her naked back.

“Oh my god I'm naked,” she whispered in a quiet horrified voice. “Who took my clothes off? Did you?”

“No, Noah removed your clothes when you fainted in the hallway, after he put you to bed and you're not naked. You still have on your panties and bra,” Tom's voice rumbled against her ear.

“I did not faint. I've never fainted in my life,” Beth said indignantly.

“You did a very good impression of someone fainting baby,” Tom teased with a smile. “I'm sorry I scared you sweetheart. It wasn't my intention, I only wanted to make sure you were kept safe, and I didn't want the whole damn neighborhood aware of a woman staying at the police station. Go back to sleep Beth, there isn't much left of the night and by the looks of you, you could do with all the sleep you can get.”

“Thank you so much,” Beth said facetiously and tried to relax in the embrace of the big man. as she knew already trying to struggle away from him was totally useless.

## Chapter Four

Beth was dreaming and the dream was so pleasurable, so erotic, she didn't want to wake up. Warm large hands were running up and down her body, coaxing her thighs apart as they slid the silken length on her inner thighs. She moaned and arched her lower body then moaned again, as more hands joined in the fray. The hands seemed to be everywhere, on her thighs, her hips, stomach and breasts. She moaned again as hands massaged the small firm globes of her breasts, then gave a gasp of pleasure as they plucked and pulled at her sensitive nipples through the silk of her lacy bra.

The cups of her bra were pulled down and her nipples were enclosed in warm wet mouths and she pushed her chest up for better contact. She felt her panties being pulled down her legs and off over her feet. Another pair of hands spread her legs wide, then large gentle fingers ran the length of her inner folds gathering the cream weeping from her body then moving to her clit where it circled the turgid bundle of nerves gently. Around and around with ever decreasing circles until she was writhing with the exquisite pleasure.

A large finger pushed it's way inside her warm wet sheath and she nearly screamed when the finger on her clit moved to be replaced by a warm wet tongue. Her mouth

encountered warm soft masculine lips and she opened with a sigh then groaned as a tongue thrust in to tangle with hers. She was on sensation overload, hands and mouths caressed her whole body and she lay shaking with her desire.

“She's a virgin,” she heard a deep voice state somewhere in the back of her mind.

“Oh yeah, she's ours. No one else is going to ever see this delectable little body,” said another male voice.

“Keep her overwhelmed I'm going to break through as she orgasms.”

Beth sobbed in the back of her throat; not sure if she was dreaming anymore but uncertain if she was awake. The finger slid in and out of her bald pussy rubbed over a very sensitive spot and shot pleasure through her stomach and legs. She was on fire, nearly bursting into flames. She couldn't take much more without exploding. Her hips were rocking in rhythm with the movement of the large finger and she sobbed as she felt her internal muscles gather for the release of the storm. She cried out incoherently when the tip of a wet finger massaged against the puckered entrance to her anus and then the tip was inside her body.

She screamed as she felt her muscles clamp down hard on the fingers inside her body, then screamed again, as she convulsed with the pleasure pain as the finger in her pussy surged into her wet depths. She was gasping in great gulps of air and she slowly opened her eyes to see three

pairs of male eyes smiling down at her.

“What the fuck? Oh my god. What did you do to me?” Beth asked as red tinged her cheeks with humiliation and embarrassment. She held up her hand when she saw Noah sitting between her legs and opened his mouth to speak. Thanking her stars they were all dressed except Tom who was sitting to her left in a pair of underpants. She had to forcibly drag her eyes away from the huge shape of his erect cock so she could speak once more.

“Get out of my room right now. Don't speak to me and do not pass go. Get the fuck out,” Beth screamed at them, then buried her head in her hands.

The three men looked at each other then back down at Beth. They couldn't figure out what the problem was. They had given her pleasure and she was hiding from them for no reason. Zach noticed tears leaking from between her fingers and decided to demand an explanation. He picked her up and held her in his lap and was totally unprepared for her attack. She slapped at him with her palms as she cried. She was nearly hysterical as she tried to slap his hands away from her. He gathered her into his arms and pinned hers against the side of her body, then threw a large leg over hers to hold her securely.

“What the hell is wrong with you? Cut it out Beth. I want an explanation and if you don't start talking I'll put you over my knee and tan your ass until you do.”

“You fucking morons, you just don't get it do you? I

thought I was dreaming. You've taken away my chance to choose who to give my virginity to. You seduced me into compliance and there was no way I would have given the gift of my body to you three arrogant assholes. Now get out and leave me the hell alone.”

“You can deny it all you want Beth, but we know you desire us. We can see it in your eyes,” Zach said arrogantly.

“Physical attraction means nothing in the whole schematics of a relationship and if you don't know that; then you three need to stop thinking with your dicks and start using your brains. I was saving myself for someone who loved me and whom I loved in return. Do you really think I want a relationship when I have a cop chasing me and wanting to kill me? Two of you are fucking cops and I don't trust any one of the three of you. I hardly know you or Zach, and your stupid macho brother over there I met for the first time last night for god sakes. I've had enough of this, let me go Zach or I'll bring you to your knees.”

“I'd like to see you try babe,” Zach goaded.

Beth twisted in his lap and without using her arms kneed him in the groin. Not enough to disable him but just enough so he let her go with a small gasp of pain; and she bolted from his lap, flew into the bathroom and locked the door behind her.

“Way to go Zach,” Noah and Tom said in unison.

“Hey don't blame me, you two were in on it too. So

what the hell do we do now?" Zach asked quietly, as they heard the shower start in the adjoining bathroom.

"Keep her safe and let her make the next move," Tom suggested.

"You're shitting me right? There is no way Beth is going to make a move on one or all of us," Zach said as he glared at his brother.

"Don't you two start a domestic, the last thing Beth needs is us fighting over her. Our first and only priority is to keep her safe; and see if we can find this bastard before he finds her," Noah stated diffusing the escalating situation.

"Yeah, but how do we draw him out without putting her in danger?" Zach asked with a frown.

"I hear there has been a male in town asking about her. Do you have a description or any thing else to go on yet?" Tom asked.

"No. Apparently her friend Tash Cameron was in the bank when she heard the man beside her asking about Beth. Of course no one around here knows her by that name, so for now we presume he has no idea if she is in town or not; but something or someone must have tipped him off to be here asking," Noah pondered out loud.

"I have a few buddies from the force who have just finished their time as well and as yet have not decided what they're going to do. If you want, I can give them a call and see if they're willing to come out here, to help out



protecting our girl,” Tom stated.

“I’ll let you know Tom. I’m going to call on Tash this morning to see if she can remember anything about this guy and do a little asking around town. I want you to stay with Beth twenty four seven until otherwise notified Tom. Zach I want you to do a check up on our girl. See what’s been put out on the law enforcement data base. It may give us some clues to what this guy is up to. I’ll let you know if I find out anything and I want you guys to keep me informed of any information you find as well. See you later,” Noah rose from the bed and left the room with Zach following close on his heels.

Tom relaxed back on the bed, waiting for the bathroom to be free so he could clean up. He heard the shower shut off and grinned as he envisioned one naked wet pissed off female. She was so feisty, it was going to be fun taming their little woman. Getting her to admit she was in lust with the three men trying to keep her alive was just what he needed. Until he was actually signed up with the police force he needed something to occupy his time and Beth was just that something he was looking for.

Beth walked back into the bedroom with a towel wrapped around her body and froze when she saw Tom reclining on the bed.

“What are you still doing in here? I thought I told you all to get out?”

“You can demand and yell all you want babe, but

from now on I am your body guard. That means where ever you go, I go,” Tom said with a grin.

“Well you can just bloody well get out of here so I can dress. I don't need an audience,” Beth growled at him, shooting daggers with her eyes.

“You haven't got anything I haven't already seen Beth. In fact if I remember right, I've also had a taste, mm mm.”

“Get. Out. Right. Now,” Beth hissed through clenched teeth, her hands curling into fists by her sides.

“Now don't go getting your panties in a twist babe, you might do yourself an injury,” Tom goaded as he rose from the bed.

He stalked towards her, planted a peck on her cheek and with a chuckle left the room.

Beth moved to the door and slammed it closed after Tom. She rummaged through her clothes and got dressed.

Tom sauntered into the kitchen just as Noah and Zach were preparing to leave.

“What's so funny?” Zach asked his brother.

“Beth is such a feisty little thing. It's going to be fun trying to keep her in line.”

“Yeah well just keep her safe,” Noah ordered.

“You know I will,” Tom stated with a gleam of determination in his eyes.

## Chapter Five

Tom and Beth went shopping for groceries and much to Beth's surprise he made her wear a disguise. He had found a cap in his brothers room and made her tuck her hair up beneath it as well as making her wear one of his large T-shirts, big baggy track pants and the ugliest sun glasses she had ever seen. Beth had taken a glance at herself in a mirror before she left and gave an internal cringe. She barely recognized herself. Luckily she had a belt that kept the bloody pants around her hips; and she had also rolled the legs up underneath so she could wear them without tripping.

Tom helped her shop and she was horrified with the amount of junk he was placing into the shopping kart. She had tried to surreptitiously place the items back on the shelf but he had caught her in the act. He had wrapped an arm around her waist, the entire length of her body pressed to his as he reached over her to retrieve the item again, placed a kiss on her lips and dumped it back in the kart. Beth didn't bother trying to curb him again afraid she would give away the arousal she felt for him every time he was close to her.

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He stood at the end of the aisle watching the bitch from his peripheral vision as he pretended to look over grocery items. He knew it was her, no one could ever mistake her small features and slight body, even though she and the bruiser with her had tried. He cautiously followed as they shopped, totally oblivious to his presence. He was going to follow them and find out where she was hiding; and once he did he was going to plan so he could get to her and silence her for all time.

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Beth and Tom unloaded Zach's private pick up truck and put the groceries away. Then they planned out the evening meal once she was rid of her hideous disguise and comfortable again. She meandered back into the kitchen to see Tom making coffee and she sat down at the small table for a moment. Tom placed a mug of coffee in front of her and sat beside her. He studied her over the rim of his mug as he sipped his coffee.

"I had a call from Noah and Zach when you were changing. Tash gave Noah a description of the man who was asking about you at the bank. I don't want you leaving this house anymore, not even to go shopping, it's too bloody dangerous. Apparently you are listed on the police data base as a person of interest in the murder of a man in Sydney and they have an all points bulletin out to bring you in for questioning. You are not to go anywhere and if I find

you trying to escape in any way, I will get a set of handcuffs and attach you to my side. Do you understand Beth?" Tom asked.

"Look Tom, I know I am in trouble. I understand that. God I have spent the last three years of my life running and there is no way I am going to put myself in danger but you don't know for sure the person asking about me is the cop looking for me. You can't expect me to stay locked up in this house permanently for however long it takes to get this bastard. I will go stark raving mad. Just take me back to my place, I'll back a bag and leave. That way you, Zach and Noah will be left out of this mess and I can keep moving without having to lock myself into hiding. I can take care of myself, I've proven that already. I wouldn't be here otherwise," Beth stated.

"No fucking way," Tom slammed his fist down on the table making Beth jump. "You are not going anywhere baby; and if I have to tie you to the bed, I will. You can't spend the rest of your life on the run Beth. What sort of life is that? You would be looking over your shoulder all the time. You would never be able to settle down, get married or have kids. Is that what you want? Is that the sort of life you want to live for the rest of your life?"

Beth drew her eyes away from his as she felt tears tingle at the back of her eyeballs.

"No," she whispered, "I just don't want to be the reason for any of you to be hurt in the process. I couldn't

live with myself if an innocent person got hurt because of me,”

The tears could be held back no longer, they began to leak from the corners of her eyes. The harder she tried to stem the flow, the faster they fell, until she could hold the storm back no more.

Tom pulled her from her chair and brought her over until she was sitting on his lap. He held her while the storm of emotion raged within. He could feel the fear and hopelessness as she sobbed against his broad muscular chest. She had had to be so strong for way too long and now she had people trying to help her she fell apart. He knew it was cathartic for her to release all the tension and fear she felt; but could not help rage inside against the bastard causing all her pain.

He held her until finally the storm began to calm and gave a sigh of relief as she slumped against him with exhaustion. Tom didn't move he just held her securely, comfortingly until she was ready to do so herself. He had no idea how long he sat there holding her, it must have been quiet a while because he could hear Zach and Noah coming in through the station as they finished their shift.

Zach and Noah walked into the kitchen. Because they had learned to move quietly, Beth didn't hear them or stir on Tom's lap. When they saw her on Tom's lap Noah moved around so he could see her face and had to swallow a vicious oath as he saw her tear streaked face and swollen

eyelids. She was fast asleep tucked up against Tom's big body and he felt his cock jump to attention at the sight of Tom's large body practically surrounding her petite frame.

“How long as she been like that?” Zach asked quietly as he moved next to Noah and studied Beth's tear ravaged face.

“A while, I didn't want to move and disturb her sleep. I think this is the first time she has slept so soundly. She exhausted herself with a crying jag and as much as it pained me to witness her pain, I think it's what she needed,” Tom whispered.

The two men standing in front of her crouched down on their haunches as Beth stirred in Tom's arms. She slowly blinked and then gave a squeak as she saw the two faces looming in front of her.

“Shit you scared me,” Beth squealed as she looked from Noah to Zach and back again.

“Are you all right babe?” Zach asked as he frowned at her.

“Yeah I'm fine. Sorry Tom I didn't mean to cry all over you then fall asleep. Why didn't you wake me up?” Beth asked, as she sat up straight on his lap.

“Because you needed to sleep Beth. I know you haven't slept properly baby and I wanted you to rest as much as possible. Catch up a little so you wouldn't be so tired.”

“Uh okay thanks. If you let me up I'll get dinner started,” Beth squirmed trying to move from Tom's lap.

“I don't think so sweetheart, Zach and I will cook tonight. You just sit back and relax for a while,” Noah ordered, as he and Zach once more gained their feet and moved back from her.

“That's not fair. You and Zach have been working all day, you shouldn't have to cook as well,” Beth protested with a frown.

“You are not cooking Beth, you're still tired baby. I'll cook tonight, you just sit there and watch. Would you like a glass of wine?” Tom asked as he hugged her to him with his large muscular arms.

“Mm that would be nice,” Beth murmured as she slumped back against Tom.

Tom rose to his long legs, taking Beth with him and passed her over to Noah. He placed a kiss on her temple and turned to the kitchen. He opened a bottle of wine and poured her a glass, taking it back to her placing it in front of her where she was now sitting on Noah's lap. He also handed a beer to Noah and Zach then went and got one for himself and set about cooking dinner.

Beth had never felt so small, safe and protected than when she was with the three big men. She was very afraid she would get used to being looked after; but even more afraid she was falling in love with them.



While Tom cooked, Zach had left the room to change out of his uniform and when he came back Noah handed her over to Zach and she was now sitting on his lap. Noah walked back into the kitchen dining room after he had changed and took a seat next to her and Zach.

“I spoke to Tash today honey. We now have a good description of the cop after you. Do you know his name at all Beth?” Noah asked after he described the man.

“No, I didn't hear what either of the men were saying to each other. The blood was pounding in my ears so loudly it drowned out any other sound besides the gun shot,” Beth stated with a frown, as she tried to envisage the scene once more.

“Do you remember anything at all babe? Did he have any tattoos? Was he bald? What the color of his hair was?” Zach prompted.

Beth breathed in deeply and closed her eyes as she concentrated on her memories. She was once more looking at the scene, reliving it as if it was happening now. She watched the cop raise his arm and then she heard the loud gun report and echo through the cold night air. As he raised his arm she saw a dark mark on his wrist and concentrated harder, trying to make it out. Then it was staring her in the face and she raised his eyes from his victim and turned towards her.

“H-he has a tattoo on his left wrist of a snake and he's left handed. His hair is a dark color, I think black or

maybe dark brown but you have to remember it was night time; and even though there were lights, the illumination could make the color of his hair seem different,” Beth breathed deeply, trying to stop the racing of her heart and her panting breath as she let the memories drift away once more.

“Shh it's okay babe, breath deeply, count to three slowly as you breath in and out. Good girl,” Zach ran a soothing arm up and down her arm.

“You don't have to worry anymore Beth, we won't let anything happen to you, I promise,” Noah vowed.

“As much as I know you mean that Noah, you can't make that kind of promise. I appreciate what you're all trying to do for me, but please don't make any promises,” she stated with tears in her eyes, then looked away hurriedly. “I really think you guys should just take me home so I can get my car and leave. I don't want any of you getting hurt.”

“No fucking way,” the three men shouted together.

“That's the second time today you've said that baby and the answer is still the same. No. You are staying with us Beth, there is no way in hell we are letting you out of here by yourself,” Tom said harshly through clenched teeth.

They ate dinner companionably and once they were finished Beth offered to clean up. They wouldn't let her.

“Beth why don't you go have a shower? Maybe the hot water will help you feel more relaxed,” Zach suggested

as he turned her head to his with a finger beneath her chin and placed a light kiss on the lips.

“Okay,” Beth sighed tiredly.

The men waited until they were sure she was out of hearing range, then began to talk quietly amongst themselves.

“You know she is going to try and run again don't you?” Zach asked.

“Yeah,” Noah and Tom answered.

“What the hell are we going to do? How are we going to keep her here where she is safe?” Zach asked.

“Do you really need me to answer that Zach? There is only one way I want to keep her safe and occupied; and we'll all benefit from it,” Tom smirked.

“We are going to have work in shifts through the day so none of us have any reason to be jealous of the other. And night time we all work together,” Noah opined.

“Hell yeah,” Zach stated with a grin, “I knew there was a reason I liked you two.”

“I'll be back in a sec,” Noah rose to his feet.

“Where are you going?” Zach asked.

“To catch Beth and stop her from climbing out the bathroom window,” Noah said over his shoulder with a smirk.

## Chapter Six

“Put me down you fucking cave man,” Beth screamed as she was hung upside down over Noah's big shoulder.

Noah gave a chuckle and slapped her ass.

“Ouch that hurt. What did you do that for?”

“Watch that mouth of yours Beth. Every time you swear you are going to be punished,” Noah explained.

“Who died and made you king?”

Noah entered the back door and headed towards the kitchen, he stood in the doorway with a furious struggling bundle over his shoulder.

“Look who I found climbing out the bathroom window,” Noah announced as he once more slapped Beth's ass.

“Put me down you fucking asshole,” Beth yelled as she slapped at Noah's back.

“Are we going to let her get away with such a trashy mouth boys?” Noah asked.

“Hell no,” Tom turned from drying the dishes and moved towards Noah. Noah backed up into the hall, careful he didn't hurt Beth against any of the door jambs or walls.

He turned around and headed for her bedroom knowing that Tom and Zach followed behind

Noah placed Beth on the bed and followed her down, using his body weight to pin her to the mattress. He took her mouth with a carnality that made her blood boil. He thrust his tongue into her mouth over and over again until she was whimpering in the back of her throat. Noah moved off her body as he slid his hands up along hers, pinning them to the bed beside her head without taking his mouth from hers, giving Zach and Tom access to her body.

Tom and Zach moved down to the end of the bed and took a shoe each to pull them from her feet. Tom crawled up on the bed beside Beth and popped the button on her jeans and pulled the zipper down. Zach crawled up onto the end of the bed and tugged her jeans over her hips, making sure to take her panties with them. He crawled up between her legs spreading them with hands as he moved until he was laying down with his face above her mound.

He swooped down and licked her warm, wet folds, holding her labia apart with his thumbs. He licked and nibbled his way from her clit back down to her vagina where he circled his tongue around the rim of her hole. He thrust his tongue into her pussy as far as it would go and wiggled it about, groaning at her delectable taste and the feeling of her pussy walls clamping and releasing on his tongue.

Noah moved away from her mouth so he and Tom

could pull the clothes from her upper body while Zach kept her enthralled with arousal. She gave them no resistance and in fact put her arms up to unlatch the front hook of her bra.

Tom moved in and began kissing her, his taste was so different to Noah's and Zach's yet just as intoxicating. Beth tangled her tongue with his as he thrust it into her mouth to taste her sweet flavor.

Beth moaned as she consumed her with pleasure, Noah was sucking and plucking at her nipples while Tom took her mouth. She gave a small scream as Zach brought his fingers into play on her pussy, sliding them in and out of her body while he licked and sucked her clit. She pulled her mouth from Tom's so she could gulp in a lungful of air.

“Stop it's too much,” she cried out.

“No baby, we could never give you too much pleasure. Don't fight it Beth let us make you feel good,” Tom soothed as he leaned back down and took her other breast with his mouth.

He sucked her puckered nipple into his mouth, crushing it to the top of his palette with his tongue. Then let it out of his mouth with a pop and nibbled his way up to her neck to the sensitive spot beneath her ear. He nibbled, licked and gently bit his way up until he reached her ear. He felt her shudder in reaction as he breathed hot moist air into her ear canal and thrust his tongue in. The feel of her shoulders tensing with pleasure and sound she made was

music to his ears; but he wanted so much more.

Zach sheathed his cock with latex and began to push into her tight, wet pussy. He held her hips steady with his large hands as he forged into her body with gentle thrusts. Once he was in all the way to his balls, he held still giving Beth time to adjust to his size. He indicated to Tom to help her up and pulled her onto his lap, with her knees on either side of her hips. He clamped his arms around her waist and held her still as he bent down to ravage her mouth.

Noah moved up behind her and placed a cold wet finger against the pucker of her anus, massaging the lubricant into her skin and then her tight hole as he pushed the tip of his finger firmly into her ass. When the muscles of her body relaxed slightly, he took advantage and pushed his finger into the hilt, wiggling it around gently to spread the lube.

Noah pulled his finger out, gathered some more lube and then pushed two fingers in until they were through the tight muscles of her sphincter. He let her get used to the feel of the penetration then thrust his fingers in and out until they were buried in her body. He spread his fingers apart in a scissoring motion, stretching her tight muscles until they stopped clamping down.

He pulled his fingers out of her ass, sheathed himself in a condom, lubed his covered dick and then pushed the tip against her tight opening. He gave a moan as

the pleasure of her tight gripping anus clamped around the crown of his cock as he popped through. He held still, giving her time to adjust to his penetration, allowing her muscles to relax around the intrusion. As her muscles released he began to push in with slow increments until finally, with sweat dripping from his brow he was fully in.

Beth felt so full of cock. It was a pleasure mixed with a burning pain as she felt like she was being stretched to the brink of her bodies capacity. She moaned from the depths of her chest, a guttural sound which turned her lovers on so much they couldn't hold still anymore.

Noah pulled out until just the tip of his cock was resting in Beth's ass, as he pushed back in Tom pulled his hips back slowly until his crown was resting in her pussy. They set up a slow easy rhythm being careful not to push too hard or fast so they wouldn't hurt their woman, as they thrust in and out of her body alternately. Making sure she was filled by at least one of them all the time.

Zach moved on the bed until he was level with Beth's head. He gently grasped her chin with his hand, turning her to face him as he knelt next to her, her head and mouth level with his crotch.

“Suck me babe, please. I want to feel that sweet mouth wrapped around my cock,” Zach stated as he slid the tip of his cock along the seam of her lips.

Beth opened her mouth on a gasp and moan, she licked the tip of Zach's cock. swirling her tongue around



the crown, being sure to slide it along the underneath of his cock, enhancing his pleasure by licking his corona.

She sucked him in pulling her cheeks taught to enhance the feeling for him as he slid into the depths of her mouth. She began bobbing her head up and down matching the rhythm of Tom and Noah's thrusting into her own body. She was burning up with pleasure, a light sheen of sweat coating her body as the three men overwhelmed her in sensations.

Zach began thrusting his hips in tune to the bobbing of Beth's head as she pleasured his engorged shaft with her warm wet mouth. He reached down with a hand plucking and twisting at the nipple within his reach. Moaning with pleasure in unison with Beth as she began to suck harder and faster. He reached the back of her throat and had to grip his own balls to prevent himself from shooting off too soon. He wanted to feel of her sweet mouth wrapped around him for as long as possible, not yet ready to let his release with culmination, to give up the exquisite sensations.

"I can't hold out much longer, she's gripping my cock so tightly it's almost painful," Noah gasped out as he pushed back into her body. "Make her cum Tom."

Tom reached a hand down between his and Beth's body, he gathered some of her pussy juice and slid his finger back up and began to massage her clit with the pad of his finger. He and Noah moaned with pleasure as her

internal muscles gripped them like a fist and then released once more.

“Oh my, stop. It's too much, it feels too good,” Beth panted as she felt her muscles begin to coil.

“No it's not Beth. We can never give you too much pleasure,” Zach pinched her nipple.

Beth felt her internal muscles gather tighter and tighter until she thought she would rip apart, and then she flew. She saw stars as orgasm burst through her entire body. Her toes curled and tingled, then the sensations traveled up her legs as she burst with a loud scream. Her whole body convulsed as pleasure she never dreamed possible consumed her, she was vaguely aware of her lovers reaching their own peaks as they roared out their pleasure; and swallowed Zach's cum, then she knew no more as she blacked out with a sigh, slumping down onto Tom.

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He stood outside in the backyard of the police station and listened as the little slut screamed out her pleasure. He couldn't wait to get a hold of her. He decided he was going to have a little fun with her before he killed her. He slipped along the in the shadows, being careful not to make a sound as he made his way back to his hidden car. Oh yes, it would be a pleasurable interlude, he thought to himself as he rubbed his hands together. He couldn't wait

for the fun to begin.

## Chapter Seven

Beth woke to sun streaming through her bedroom window and gave a grimace when the muscles in her body protested as she stretched. She could feel muscles aching she never knew even existed. She flung the covers aside, got out of bed and headed to the bathroom. After a long hot shower which helped to ease her aching muscles, she dried herself off, dressed and headed for the kitchen.

“Hi baby; how are you feeling?” Tom asked as he walked over to Beth, took her into his arms and kissed her on the lips.

“Fine,” Beth answered breathlessly. She couldn't believe how just a small pack from one of her lovers could make her so aroused so quickly.

“Are Zach and Noah in the station?”

“Yeah they've been working for a couple of hours now. I take it you slept well sweetheart?” Tom asked with a grin.

“Yes, better than I have in ages,” Beth said as she hid her red face against Tom's shirt covered chest, inhaling his clean masculine scent.

“You have nothing to be embarrassed about baby,” Tom lifted her gaze to his by placing a finger beneath her

chin. He placed a light kiss to her small nose, gave her a squeeze and released her. "What would you like for breakfast Beth?"

"Just some toast and coffee. You know I'm quite capable of getting my own breakfast. You don't need to wait on me," Beth moved into the kitchen and grabbed a mug from the cupboard and poured coffee into it from the coffee machine.

"Yeah we know that baby, but we like taking care of you. Why don't you sit down and drink your coffee, I'll bring your toast over when it's done."

"Thanks Tom."

"What would you like to do today Beth? Do you need anything from the shops?" Tom asked.

"Um yeah, I do. Can I go with you? I'll wear that ridiculous disguise again," Beth stated.

"I don't see why not. You finish up here, I'll go and let Noah and Zach know where we're going," Tom replied over his shoulder as he walked towards the station part of the house.

"Noah, I'm going to the shops with our friend. Can you give a portable radio to take with me?" Tom asked quietly as Zach was talking to someone at the counter.

"Here you go," Noah handed over a spare police radio. "Where are you taking her?"

"Beth needs a few items from the store and if all

goes well, I thought we might drop into the adult store too,” Tom wiggled his eyebrows lasciviously.

Noah gave a grin and slapped Tom on the back, “Keep your eyes open and give me a call if you need to.”

“I will,” Tom replied.

Beth and Tom walked around the supermarket, he made sure to keep Beth securely at his side, holding her hand as they walked up and down the aisles. Once they finished, Tom took her to the coffee shop where they enjoyed a delicious latte and chatted quietly. Beth didn't know the new owner's of Tash's store and felt a pang of sadness as she realized she hadn't seen anything of her friend for a couple of weeks. Even though she wanted to visit Tash she was reluctant to do so as she hadn't been with her two finances for very long and she didn't want to interrupt the honey moon stage of their relationship.

They finished their coffee and headed to the car park at the back of the shops.

Tom felt a tingle at the back of his neck warning him of danger, he half turned as he tried to shove Beth behind him, he was a fraction of a second too late. Pain exploded along the side of his head, he slumped to the ground as blackness drew him down within it's dark pit.

Beth gave a cry of surprise as Tom shoved her to his side as he slumped to the ground, she felt a large hand grip her arm so tightly she was afraid her bones would break. She turned her body to face her attacker froze with

fear as she faced her worse nightmare. It was him. The cop she had seen murder an innocent man in cold blood. Her heart leaped in her chest as adrenaline pumped blood at a furious rate throughout her body.

She heard roaring in her ears as she confronted her enemy. Fear turned to rage and she struck out with her foot aiming for his groin; but he moved too fast and blocked her kick with his thigh. She saw stars as he backhanded her with his free hand and felt her knees buckle. She tried to hold onto consciousness, knowing if she gave in her life would be forfeit. She breathed deeply trying to regain her control as she knelt on the hard bitumen as he began dragging her to his car.

Her arm felt as if it was being pulled out of its socket. She had to try and keep calm and remain conscious, it was her only hope of escape. She raised her free arm and clawed at the hand holding her arm so cruelly. She gave a cry of pain as he pulled the hat from her head tossing it to the ground and grabbed a handful of her hair pulling her head back to an unnatural angle.

“Shut up you little slut. I want you to get up and walk with me to my car as if you want to be with me; otherwise I will kill your lover right here, right now,” he threatened as he pulled a gun from the small of his back and aimed it at Tom.

“No. Don't shoot him, please. I'll come with you quietly,” Beth sobbed out. She held her breath waiting for

the sound and anguish she knew she would feel if he pulled the trigger and killed Tom. She wouldn't want to live if he killed Tom, Noah or Zach. Oh god, she loved them. All three of them and she hadn't even had the chance to tell them. She would rather he killed her than harm the men she loved more than her own life. She rose to her feet, swaying slightly as dizziness consumed her; and gave a sigh of relief as he pulled her towards a dark sedan. He got into the drivers side of the car pulling her in after him until he was on the passenger side of the vehicle. He handed the keys to Beth and pointed the gun towards her side.

“Drive and don't do anything funny because I won't hesitate to shoot you,” he said.

“Please let me go. I don't even know your name I can't tell anyone who you are,” Beth sobbed out as tears coursed down her cheeks.

“I'm not fucking stupid you little slut. Those cops you're banging have already searched the law data base and know who I am. You've already told them what's going on. Just shut the fuck up and drive, before I decide to pull onto the side of the road and shoot you right now.

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Tom groaned as pain throbbed through his head. He tried to remember what he was supposed to be doing as he pushed himself slowly into a sitting position. Oh fuck, Beth. Where was Beth? He grabbed the police radio and called Noah.



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Beth's cheek was throbbing from where he had hit her and she had a headache pounding through her skull. She was at the end of her tether and didn't think she could drive much further. It felt as if she had been driving for hours, when in reality it was only about one hour. She had seen the signs indicating they were close to Bendigo and tried to formulate a plan to escape. Not matter the scenario that popped into her head she knew she was in trouble. She was going to have to bide her time and hope an opportunity presented itself and take the chance when she had it.

The man beside her indicated she was turn off on the dirt road ahead, so she slowed the car down and turned. They traveled down the dirt road for about five miles until they came to a smaller dirt track. She followed the track and felt fear slam into her again when she noticed the small cabin in amongst the eucalyptus trees. She pulled the car to a stop and put it into park with the engine still running, hoping he would get out the passenger side so she could make a run for it.

“Turn the ignition off and give me the keys.”

Beth did as he told and handed the keys over, knowing her chance of escape was futile for the moment. He pocketed the keys and pushed her out the front driver's side door following her with his hand wrapped around her arm in a tight grip. He pulled her to the cabin behind him and pushed her into the sparsely furnished room in front of

him, slamming the door closed behind him.

“Get into the kitchen and make some food bitch, and don't try anything because I will shoot you,” he warned, as he pushed her into the kitchen and sat down on a chair, at the small scarred timber table. He placed the gun on the table and watched as she moved about the kitchen.

Beth was trembling with fear, she was so scared she could barely move, but she set about rummaging in the pantry and small stocked fridge. She made him some soup from a can and some sandwiches as placed them in front of him. She turned back to the small kitchen to make some coffee.

She sat down with her mug of coffee, her hands wrapped around it trying to relieve some of the chill in her fingers as she kept her gaze on the table.

“You've ruined everything. If it wasn't for you I'd be sitting pretty right now on a tropical island somewhere. Now I'm gonna have to kill you as well as your lovers. I don't like my plans to be fucked up, especially by some stupid slut,” he stated and grabbed her by the hair dragging her into the bedroom off the main room of the cabin.

## Chapter Eight

Noah and Zach sped into the parking lot with a screech of tires. Zach was out of the car and at his brother's side before Noah had even pulled the car to a stop.

“What the fuck happened? Are you alright Tom?” Zach asked.

“Yeah I'm fine just a fucking headache. The bastard blindsided me, he's got Beth. We have to find her Zach. God this is all my fault. I should never have let her come to the shops with me.”

“Hey it's not your fault Tom. It could have happened to anyone of us. It's that mother fucker's fault. Let's get you back to the station and get a doc to come check you over. I want you to call your buddies from the force to come and help us find Beth. Do you know anyone who can fly them in by chopper?” Noah asked as he helped Zach get Tom to his feet and into the police car.

“Yeah let me make a couple of calls,” Tom replied.

Noah called the doc from the patrol car on the way back to the station while Tom had contacted his friends. They would be here within the hour and the doc was waiting on the front steps of the station waiting to check Tom over.

Noah made coffee while the Doctor examined Tom and Zach set about preparing their gear and weapons. The doctor pronounced Tom fit and well besides a slight concussion which he advised rest to be the cure. Tom gave a snort as he knew there was no way he would be resting until Beth was back with them.

Tom's friends arrived within the hour, Noah would have been apprehensive himself at seeing the giant warrior men if he didn't know they were on their side.

“Noah, Zach this is Tony, Colt and Bear. Tony, Colt, Bear, this is my brother Zach and his partner Noah.”

Once the greetings were out of the way, the five men sat down fueling themselves with coffee and sandwiches as they mapped out their plan of attack. Bear was one of the best trackers in the country, hence the nickname. All the men were well over six and half feet, built like brick shit houses with features of Greek Gods. They three men were brothers with special abilities no one else knew about but them. They were about to shock their comrades at arms.

“Do you have anything of Beth's I can have?” Bear asked with a deep bass voice.

“Yeah let me get you something of hers,” Zach stated as he left the room.

“Why do you need something of Beth's?” Noah asked curiously.

“Watch and learn,” Colt answered for his brother.

“I got her robe since it hasn't been washed since she's worn it,” Zach walked back into the kitchen with it. He handed it over to Bear and watched curiously as Bear inhaled the scent of their woman and closed his eyes.

Bear felt the connection begin to weave through the air and project out into the sky. He followed the essence of her scent and took the path she had taken that morning with Tom. He saw them in the supermarket and then the coffee shop as they drank coffee. He felt and saw the fear through her eyes as she watched Tom slump to the ground. He felt her pain as she was slapped across the face, her arm wrenched; and her head was pulled back by her hair.

He felt her fear as she drove with a gun held at her side but also took note of the signs on the road indicating the direction she had driven. He felt her being dragged into a room in a cabin where she was punched in the stomach as she fought her captor as she nearly passed out again. The bastard holding her stripped her clothes from body and tide her naked to the posts of the bed. He pulled her head back until it felt as if her neck was about to snap, another slap on the face and then he felt no more.

“Your woman is alive for the moment, I know where she is but her has her tied to a bed. She's a fighter and she won't give up,” Bear said in his deep voice.

“How the fuck do you know that?” Tom asked.

“I'm a empathic psychic, which means I have just

traveled the path your female traveled from the time you took her to the supermarket, coffee shop and then watched as you slumped to the ground after you were hit on the head. He has her in a cabin off a dirt road about ten minutes from Bendigo. He has her tied up to a bed and is leaving her alone for the moment,” Bear stated as he looked from Tom, Zach and Noah.

Bear and his brother's had been different all their lives and was used to people being cynical, wary and frightened of the unique abilities. He expected to see the same emotions in the eyes of the men in front of him; but was quite surprised when he only saw relief.

“Let's get moving then,” Tom said as he stood. “We have to get to her before he kills her.”

“Did you see anyone else with him Bear?” Noah asked.

“No, but that doesn't mean there isn't. I could only see through her eyes for a while and then the bastard knocked her out.”

Tom's roar of pain and frustration surprised the men in the kitchen with him. He was one of the most controlled people they knew. He usually handled situations with a coldness that scared the shit out of his comrades. To see him loose control was something none of them had ever seen before.

“That fucker is mine.”

“Tom get a hold of yourself. You can't go in there planning to kill him unless it's in self defense. You are going to be no good to your woman if you end up in jail,” Colt grabbed Tom's arm.

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Beth came awake with a groan. Her body was aching all over. Her face felt as if it was swollen beyond recognition and her feet and hands were numb from lack of blood flow. Light was receding from the sky as the sun began to sink in the west. She was so scared and alone. Tom, Noah and Zach would never be able to find her and she knew it was just a matter of time before her life would cease to exist.

She heard a noise beyond the bedroom door and closed her eyes, praying the bastard wouldn't realize she was awake. Hoping to stretch out the hours left for her to live. She heard the door open as he stood in the doorway and then gave a sigh of relief as it closed once more.

She heard another voice on the other side of the door and realized he was no longer alone. Oh god there were two of them. How was she going to escape? Her arms were drawn tightly above her head, secured to the metal frame of the headboard. She couldn't even reach the ropes with her teeth, because if she tried she would be hurting her ankles. But she had to try anyway, it didn't matter if she pulled her foot off by stretching out, she was going to die anyway if she didn't do something.

She pulled and stretched until she felt the ropes around her ankles and legs rub her skin raw. She could feel blood trickling down over her skin as she strained the muscles in her arms, pulling herself up so she could reach the ropes with her teeth. She was so tired, her head was throbbing so badly she felt nauseous and the muscles in her arms were burning with pain. She gave a sob as she collapsed back and relaxed onto the bed. She just wasn't strong enough, she couldn't pull herself up so she could reach the knots on the rope with her teeth.

No damn it. She was not giving up. She would let herself rest up a bit and then she would try again and again until she could move no more.

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The six men jumped into the helicopter and held on as Tony lifted it off the ground. He spoke into the headset attached.

"I'm going to stealth mode, I don't want any of you speaking just in case he has a scanner on him. Switching over now," Tony said.

That was the last word any of them spoke for the next fifteen minutes. Tony put the chopper down about a mile away from the cabin, Bear had pointed out on a map before they left. He shut down the engine and the six men took their headsets from their heads.



“Tom, Zach, Noah, I want you guys to follow us in. We're going in first because you three are too emotionally attached. We don't know this woman and we won't hesitate to do anything you may in case you put Beth in jeopardy.” Colt stated with a voice of steel.

Zach, Tom and Noah looked at each other then back at Colt giving a nod of affirmation. They moved out, weapons at the ready as they moved silently towards the area the cabin was in.

Colt signaled a halt with a hand as they came to the edge of the trees. He ordered his brothers to move around the cabin using the trees as cover. When they were in position they let Colt know and he ordered Zach and Noah to cover him as he crept up towards the front of the building. Colt and Bear crept up from the back and one side as Tom crept up on the other side of the cabin.

Colt reached the steps of the cabin and kicked the door in just in time to see one of the men disappear through a door to the left of the room. He took down the first guy with a punch since he was unarmed and came to a halt at the door of the bedroom taking in the scene at a glance.

The man held a naked female in front of him, using her as a shield as he held a gun to her head.

“Drop the gun, or she dies now,” he screamed out. Pushing the gun harder against the woman's temple.

“You're surrounded, there is no way you're getting out of here alive. Why not let her go?” Colt asked in a calm

voice.

“I'm not that stupid you dumb ass. There is no way I'm going to end up in prison. You know what would happen to a cop in jail. I'm using her to get out of here so I suggest you lay your weapons down and let me leave with her otherwise I may as well pull the trigger right now,” he screamed, spittle flying from his mouth with his fury.

Beth looked into the cold green eyes of the stranger standing at the bedroom door. She had no idea who he was but she knew there was no way he was letting the asshole holding her to go free. Her whole body was trembling with fear, shock and she was so cold, but the adrenaline coursing through her helped to keep her wits in check. She looked into those green eyes, dropped her blue eyes to the floor and back up again.

If she hadn't been watching him so carefully she would have missed the twitch of his eyelid as he indicated he understood what she was going to do. Beth let her body go lax and felt the grip the asshole had on her falter. She heard the sharp echo of the gunshot through the room and an ice cold sensation on the top of her arm, then searing pain as she fell to the floor. Another gunshot followed the first and a heavy male body fell on top of her.

“You're okay now darlin'. He can't hurt you anymore,” Colt whispered to Beth as he dragged the dead policeman off of her. He grabbed the blanket from the bed and wrapped it around her body and lifted her into his arms.

He made soothing noises as he stood and walked out of the room to meet her lovers. She was trembling and sobbing incoherently as he passed her over to Tom.

“Ah honey, I'm so sorry. It's all my fault you were hurt. He can't hurt you anymore sweetheart. God I'm so glad you're safe,” Tom soothed as he hugged her to him.

Noah and Zach walked up and cuddled her as well. She was surrounded by warmth and love as she cried and trembled.

“Babe we need to get you to a hospital,” Noah stated as he took in her bruised swollen face and eyes.

“Are you hurt anywhere else sweetheart?” Zach asked.

Beth nodded, as she sniffled and panted, trying to get her emotions under control.

“The bastard shot me,” she cried again.

“Where did he shoot you Beth? God if he wasn't dead I'd kill him all over again,” Tom spoke furiously.

“No not that bastard. That one,” Beth used her good arm to point to Colt.

Tom quickly handed Beth over to Zach as he turned to face Colt.

“You did what?” Tom roared as he dove for Colt.

Colt side stepped Tom and gave him a shove so he ended up stumbling out the front door, down the wooden

steps until he landed on his knees in the dirt.

“You would have done the same thing I did Tom, if you had been in the same situation. It's only a flesh wound. He had a gun against her head. He was gonna kill her man,” Colt held his hands up in front of him in a placating gesture as Tom gained his feet.

“I'm gonna kill you for hurting my woman,” Tom roared.

“Tom, stop it for god sakes,” Beth stated as she walked down the front steps of the cabin, blanket trailing behind her as she maneuvered between the two men. “It was the only thing he could do Tom. That other asshole was using me as a shield with a gun to my head. What did you want him to do? Put his gun down and hand me over to the bastard?”

“No baby. I just didn't want you to be hurt anymore than you already were,” Tom said softly as he held her close to him.

Bear walked up to the couple embracing; and quickly wrapped a bandage around the top of Beth's grazed bleeding arm then tied it securely.

“Thank you,” Beth said as she looked at the giant with a smile, and promptly passed out.

Beth woke to the sound of a hospital and opened her eyes scanning the room. Tom was sitting in a chair beside her bed with his head against the bed sound asleep. Zach

was on the other side of the room standing at the window looking out.

“Hi,” she said quietly so she wouldn't wake Tom.

Zach turned at the sound of her voice and rushed over to her. He bent down gave her a hug and kissed her lips.

“Hi baby, how are you feeling? We've been so worried about you. You've been asleep for two days straight,” Zach said in a husky voice.

I'm okay. My head's feeling a bit fuzzy and arm is sore but I'm alive. God I love you so much Zach. I never thought I'd get to tell you just how much you mean to me,” Beth said with a wobbly smile and moisture in her eyes.

Zach got up on the bed beside her and carefully took her into his arms as he lay beside her.

“I love you too babe. We all do, we were so scared when Tom told us that bastard got a hold of you.”

“I was too Zach, but he can't hurt me anymore. Who was he?”

Zach gave a bark of laughter as he looked down at her. “Do you mean to tell me after all you've been through, on the run for three years, as well as being abducted by him, you don't know who he was?”

“No, I have no idea.”

“Oh babe you are one of a kind,” Zach kissed her temple being careful not to touch her bruises. “He was the son of a prominent member of parliament. He was in deep with a drug cartel and you saw him murder one of his suppliers. He owed him money and didn't have it to be able to pay; so he killed him instead. He can't hurt you anymore babe.”

“Beth sweetheart. How are you feeling?” Tom rasped out with a sleep roughened voice as he lifted his head.

“I'm fine Tom,” Beth stated as she looked deeply into his eyes. She raised her hand and caressed his cheek, feeling two days growth of stubble tickle her palm. “I love you Tom.”

“Ah baby I love you too,” Tom stated as he rose to his feet, kissed her lips and gave her a hug.

“Glad to see you awake babe,” said a familiar voice.

“Noah,” Beth breathed a sigh of contentment as her third lover walked through the door.

“How do you feel honey?” Noah asked as he walked towards her with a gleam in his eye.

“Never better. Now that I have all three of the men I love in the room together with me,” Beth stated with a smile so brilliant with happiness; and full of love it had her men gasping for breath.

## Chapter Nine

Noah, Zach and Tom took Beth back to the residence at the back of the police station, early that afternoon, settled her into the living room on the large modular sofa in front of the wide-screen TV with a rug over her lap. Zach and Tom sat beside her and snuggled up next to her as they watched a movie. Noah spent the rest of his shift out in the front room of the station, counting the hours until he could be with his woman and hold her once more.

Bear, Tony and Colt Spencer had headed to the new club which had opened only the day before. It was a place for the men of Passion to go for a good workout using the elite gym equipment as well as having a bar, where the men could go to talk and relax.

“How do you feel sweetheart?” Tom asked Beth as she covered her a yawn with her hand over her mouth.

“I'm fine Tom. Stop worrying,” Beth looked at the frown on his face.

“Of course I'm worrying about you Beth. I love you and you've just been through hell.”

“I'm fine now,” Beth gently stroked his cheek and snuggled into his side.

“Yeah I know sweetheart, but I was so scared when I woke up and found you gone. I never want to let you out of my sight again.”

“It's alright Tom. He's never going to bother me again, thanks to you three and your three friends,” Beth stated around another yawn.

“Put your head down on my lap baby. Have a nap while I hold you safe in my arms,” Tom said as he pulled her down to his lap.

Zach picked Beth's feet up and placed them in his lap and the two big men watched as the love of their lives drifted off to sleep.

Beth woke with a start a loud cry escaping her through her lips, her body was covered with sweat and she was shaking uncontrollably. She felt arms gather her close as the bedside lamp in her room was turned on.

“It's alright sweetheart. Your safe now,” Tom crooned as he cradled her in his lap.

Beth was too overcome with emotion to speak. Her hands curled into Tom's chest hair, clutching him close to her as she tried to crawl inside him as she sobbed against his chest.

She felt two more pairs of hands stroking her back, arms and head until she calmed and her tears dried up. She lifted her head to see three pairs of eyes frowning down and over at her with concern.



“Sorry,” she apologized in a tear roughened voice, “I didn't mean to wake you all.”

“Beth don't ever say you are sorry to us babe. We love you and want to take care of you. If you're hurting, we hurt right along with you,” Noah said with a frown. “Do you want to talk about your nightmare babe?”

“No, it's over now. I just want to try and forget it and get on with my life.”

“What do you want to do now your free baby?” Zach asked from behind her.

“Well I love working at the library. I didn't think I would, but I want to stay there. I love to see the concentration on kids faces as they read a story or are read to. I used to be an accountant working for a large firm. Just another number in a large company, where no one cared about you except for the profits rolling in. I get so much joy out of enriching a child's life with books. I want to stay at the library. I'm hungry,” Beth gave a laugh as her stomach growled loudly in protest.

“No wonder. You slept right through dinner baby,” Zach stood and pulled on a pair of pants. He held out a hand towards Beth, “How about a midnight snack?”

“Oh yeah. Have we got any chocolate fudge ice cream?”

“Yeah I think we do,” Tom stated as he stood with Beth in his arms. He slid her down the length of his naked

body and watched in fascination as her cheeks turned a pretty shade of pink.

“Just let me put my robe on,” Beth walked to the hook on the back of the door where her robe was hanging.

“Oh, you're such a spoilsport babe,” Noah stated as he wiggled his eyebrows lasciviously.

Beth gave a laugh as she tied the belt of her robe and followed Zach out to the kitchen with Noah and Tom following after they pulled on a pair of jeans. She sat at the kitchen table as her men got her a sugar packed midnight snack, watching as their muscles rippled under their skin as they moved. She was so lucky to have found love with not one but three hot sexy cops. Who would have thought that after being so frightened of anyone in law enforcement she would now be living with them? She had never even contemplated having a relationship with one man, let alone three gorgeous sexy policemen.

“Thanks,” Beth said with a grin as Noah placed a bowl of her favorite ice cream in front of her. She dipped her spoon into the bowl as she watched her men walk to the table and sit with their own bowl of dessert. She knew they loved watching her eat ice cream and decided to play them for all she was worth. She licked the spoon clean and had her men squirming in their seats as they watched her erotic play.

She took another mouthful and placed it in her mouth, savoring the flavor and letting it slide down her

throat. Her three men never took their eyes from her or her mouth as she teased and tantalized until she the spoon was once more licked clean. She was certain they could see the gleam in her eyes and smiled saucily as Tom groaned and shifted in his seat once more. Taking another bite she frowned as she felt something hard in her mouth, she sucked until most of the ice cream had been swallowed, placed two fingers into her mouth and looked down at her hand.

She stared for a moment in-comprehensively and then she felt tears gather at the back of her eyes until they began to leak out down her cheeks. She raised her head and looked at her three men.

Noah, Zach and Tom rose from their chairs, turned hers until they were standing in front of her and knelt down at her feet. Tom reached out and took the object from her fingers as Zach and Noah each took one of her hands.

“We love you so much Beth. You have given us hope, joy, laughter and love. You are our heart and souls and we can't live without you. Will you marry us Beth?” Tom asked as he handed the sapphire and diamond ring in a setting of white gold over to Noah.

Beth was so happy she had a huge lump constricting her chest and had to gulp air a few times before she could speak.

“I love you all so much, but how can I marry all three of you? It's just not possible. It isn't legal,” Beth said

in concern. There was no way she could choose between the three of them. She loved them all equally and didn't want to hurt anyone of them by marrying one of the others.

“We've already talked about this sweetheart. You will marry me on paper as I am the oldest by a few minutes and Noah is going to change his name to Beech so we all have the same name. In our hearts you will be married to all three of us Beth. So what do you say?” Tom asked again.

“You three are so special. You are my hearts and souls as well as my saviors. Yes I'll marry you all,” Beth stated with a wobbly smile as tears streamed down her face with joy.

“Ah babe, thank you. You won't regret it, we are going to make sure you are happy, safe and loved,” Noah stated as he slid the exquisite ring on her finger.

It was a perfect fit. Beth slid down to the floor and hugged her three men to her. If it hadn't been for them and their persistence she would probably be dead. She couldn't wait to marry her three saviors and begin the rest of her life loving her men.

“Take me to bed and love me,” Beth ordered in a husky voice.

“We do baby, for the rest of our lives,” Zach scooped their woman into his arms and headed to the bedroom. His brother and friend close at his heels.

## Epilogue

Nikki Sprite the owner of Passion Art Gallery was just exiting the coffee shop as three of the biggest men she had ever seen walked toward the open door. She stared up at them from her five foot three frame gaping at the large handsome men. They were all at least six foot five with dark brown hair and varying shades of eye color, from an amber to hazel. She stood gaping at them as she held the door open with her free hand, her cup of take away coffee in the other. They eyed her up and down intently, their gazes wandering from the top of her red hair down to her petite size four shoes.

The first two sauntered passed her with a smile and nod of their heads in appreciation for her holding the door open for them. The third huge male stopped and stood looking down at her from his great height as he eyed her up and down. She watched as his harsh features are transformed as the beginnings of a grin tilted up the corners of her mouth.

“Thanks little darlin', but it should be one of us holding the door open for you,” Bear stated in a deep gravelly voice. He slowly moved his arm up to the door handle and felt a jolt of fire race up his arm as one of his fingers come in contact with one of hers.

He stood frozen looking down at her with glazed over eyes as he saw flashes of the little woman's life explode through his mind at a rapid pace. He felt his brothers turn to stare at him and the fragile female standing at the door as he went into a trance. He breathed her exquisite scent and filled his lungs and nose with her essence. She was in trouble and she was theirs. He shook his head as he looked at the woman frowning up at him.

“What's your name little one?” Bear asked in a gentle voice.

“Nikki, Nikki Sprite,” Nikki replied automatically as she stared at the huge man.

“Well Nikki you've just met your match,” Bear promised as he looked from her then to his brothers with a huge grin.

His brothers Colt and Tony felt what Bear felt as he touched Nikki's hand and they all knew without a doubt they had just met the one woman meant for the three of them. Now all they have to do was convince Nikki she wants them in return.