



# APPREHENSION

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# Apprehension

Two novellas of erotic romance by

YVETTE HINES

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**Dedication:** To my husband who always respects my writing craft, even when I forced him to listen to hours of country music so that I could feel my characters. To the Zajdels for challenging me to write this story, it allowed my writing to grow in another direction. Cheers to the both of you.

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# **HEATED RESTRAINTS**

# Chapter One

Thor could hear the Carrie Underwood song blaring a quarter of a mile away. Even given the distance, the candy apple red shine of the car was vaguely identifiable as it barreled down the road's flat terrain leading to the main gate of Moody Air Force Base.

*Here comes trouble.* The words echoed through Thor's mind, only slightly comprehended above the car's radio.

When the red Corvette finally pulled up beside him, the chorus of *Before He Cheats* was playing. He watched the blonde driver as she conversed with the brunette beside her and flipped her dependent identification toward him.

Things like that always pissed him off. "Excuse me, ma'am. I need you—"

Thor cut his own words off. Blondie still wasn't giving him the benefit of eye contact.

On any other day, he would have repeated his order. But not today. Today was his last day of work and he classified that as 'taking no shit day'. Reaching across her body, he twisted the radio's dial quickly, feeling it snap into the off position. *Nice legs.* He noted the fact that the skirt of her sundress was riding high on her thighs, whether by the wind or her instigation, it was a sight worth appreciating.

He returned to his authoritative stance beside the car.

Finally, the blonde turned with her brow pinched and pierced him with an angry glare, barely visible through the tint of her glasses. "Hey, where in the hell do you get off—"

"Sorry, ma'am," he began "but it's base policy—"

"I can care less about base policy. But, a little courtesy would've been nice." The blonde woman pushed her sunshades on top of her head, allowing it to double as a headband holding her wind blown shoulder length hair away from her face.



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She had nice eyes. Hazel eyes. He hadn't expected that color. Blue maybe or even brown, but the striking gold-green color of her irises emphasized by her mascara thickened lashes gave him pause.

Reigning himself in, he brought his focus back to the subject at hand. "When you pulled up, I requested you lower your music, but I guess you couldn't hear me with the volume up so loud." He purposely gave her a cocky smile.

The brunette leaned toward the driver's side of the car with a snide smirk on her face. "Evidently, *Technical Sergeant* Zeller, you don't realize who you're talking to."

Taking his sights off the driver, he glanced at her passenger for a moment. "Doesn't matter, ma'am, the rules apply to anyone entering the base."

The brunette hooted with laughter. "Your little security force's handbook of rules doesn't apply to Major General Michael Wright's daughter."

"Stephanie, don't—" the blonde driver attempted to stop her friend.

Ignoring her, Stephanie, the brunette, went on, "I'm sure you know who *he* is." She beamed a superior smile at him. "He's here from the Pentagon to retire in his hometown. *Our* hometown. Claremont is a neighbor of Lowndes."

*Just great. I had to be the one to get the town princess.*

The driver jumped in again. "Steph, leave it alone. It's not worth it."

He was sure the General's daughter probably meant that he wasn't worth the time.

"Well, when you get there, tell him I said congrats," he commanded. Looking back at the driver, he placed an additional amount of authority in his voice. "Identification, please."

Opening her hand, the blonde presented him with her card.

Collecting it from her for review, his fingers brushed the soft, supple skin of her palm and heat raced up through his fingertips. Lifting the picture, he scanned the name on the card. Liza Wright. Purposely, he held it longer than was necessary before he passed it back to her awaiting hand.

"Enjoy the ceremony, ma'am," Thor told her.

Slipping the card into the inside handle grip of the driver's side door, she looked back at him. For a moment, her eyes traveled down the length of his body as if assessing his worth. When they returned back to his face, she flipped her glasses down and said, "I plan to. The party is at Claremont Wright Country Club if you care to stop by when you get off."

*Like hell I will.* It wasn't that she was not beautiful. She was damn hot. Every fiber in his being had reacted to the view of her golden thighs. And in any other situation he would have taken her up on the offer with big hopes for the end of the night. However, his every instinct told him she was trouble.

"No thank you, ma'am."

Shrugging off his reply, she floored the gas and peeled through the gate, turning her music back up.

As he watched her pull off, he was tempted to call it in, but disregarded it. Instead, he looked down at his watch and checked the time. He was relieved to note that in four hours and ten minutes he would be off duty and by tomorrow morning he would be out of the Air Force.

\* \* \* \*

Few parking spaces were available when Thor arrived at Sonny's. He'd learned quickly that food and business were how they did things in the south, in that order. A month after he left the military, he'd received a call from Robert Dennison, the Claremont police chief, asking him to meet him for the final interview to join the local force.

Thor was happy for the time off to relax but now he was becoming restless and antsy. It was time for him to get back in the cops and robbers game. Stepping out of his car, he paused. Leaving the barbeque establishment was the town princess he'd had the pleasure of meeting during his last day of duty. Just like four weeks ago, she wore a dress and sunshades, the only difference this time was instead of a mouthy brunette accompanying her, she held a large bag of takeout. He admitted to himself she was a knockout. A visual treat. Even with her regal attitude. It just made him want to tame her even more.

Leaning back against his car, he took a moment to observe the General's daughter. Watching the sway of her hips as she strolled with confidence to her convertible two rows over from

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his, a smile played on his lips. The miniscule amount of wind in the air wasn't an adequate amount to cool the rising summer heat from his skin, however, it was more than enough to flirt with the hem of her dress, allowing him a glimpse of her sexy tanned legs. As she padded across the ground in her sandals, he noted how nice her calves were. The kind of calves a man loved to cup in his hands or feel over his shoulders. He was slightly heartbroken when the parked cars in her row blocked his view of them.

She disappeared from his line of sight as she passed two vans parked next to her car. When she arrived at her car, she leaned over the driver's side door and situated her burden in the back seat. Just like sweet iced tea to a hot and thirsty man, the town princess satisfied him with a view of her sweet round ass. The thought of wanting to see her naked in the same position didn't shock him as much as it turned him on. Quick and fierce.

Attempting to clear his mind of images that wouldn't lead him to employment, but more than likely run out of town if anyone found out, he brushed his hand across the back of his neck and pushed away from his car. Chief Dennison was inside waiting on him and he needed to mind his own business concerns. The princess definitely wasn't his business, nor his concern. Matter of fact, Princess Wright would probably have been pissed if she'd known he'd been observing her royal hiney. Nevertheless, as he walked away, he couldn't stop himself from glancing back over his shoulder and watching her pull out of the parking lot. The wind now teased her hair and made his finger itch to do the same.

Running his hands through his hair, now grown out from the short standard military cut, he headed toward the front of the wooden restaurant, which resembled a big red barn, to meet the Claremont chief of police. Dust from the unpaved parking lot trailed in the wake of his footsteps as he moved to the entrance.

"Brad 'Thor' Zeller." A tall, thin black man in a suit with basketball palming hands grabbed his hand and patted Thor on the back. "I recognize you from your file photo."

Thor added his own strength to the handshake. "Then you better be Chief Dennison."

The black man smiled.

"The one and only." A greeter standing by the welcome podium chimed in with a wink.

"I hope you brought your appetite," Chief Dennison commented as he ended the handshake.

"I sure did." Thor rubbed his abdomen for effect. He'd heard from his friend Jack that this was one of the best barbeque restaurants in town.

"Great." Dennison headed toward the woman. "A booth, please, Rachel."

"You got it, shuga'bear." Grabbing two menus from beside her stand, Rachel, the greeter, sashayed into the dining area. "This way."

"During lunch we'll talk about the position I have open and you can tell me how you got your nickname. Or should I just believe I'm eating with a legend?"

It was Thor's turn to laugh. Business and food, the southern way.

\* \* \* \*

Liza was tired. She'd spent her Saturday at an all day study session in the library at Florida State. Her group's final research project was due and they had needed this last meeting to tie up loose ends before the semester ended. She would be starting her six weeks of internship, and then wait for fall graduation. Then she didn't know what she was going to do. She'd have her Master's in early childhood counseling, but she didn't know whether or not she wanted to stay in Claremont County or if it was time for her to pick up roots and leave. She'd been here all of her life. This had been where her father was raised, as well as Moody being his first assignment. He'd met and married her mom here. The military had relocated him to various places, but her mother was a homebody and refused to uproot her son and daughter every three years. Amazingly, her parents had made it through the long stretches of absence.

Dressed in a frayed, thigh length skirt and short-sleeved layered t-shirt, she cruised along the interstate. The cool early evening breeze blew through the window and cooled her heated flesh. Thick rolling gray clouds moved across the dark sky, making her aware that a spring storm was on its way. She loved storms. They were unpredictable.

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Sighing, Liza wished she could have said the same for her life. Claremont County was a beautiful place to raise a family, but she didn't know if it was the place for a twenty-seven-year-old single woman. She craved change like she craved sex. It had been years since she'd dated and almost as long since she'd slept with anyone.

In Claremont County, everyone knew everything about everybody so she'd spent the last two years concentrating on school to keep the gossip about her life at bay.

She loved being a part of the town, but for a while now she questioned herself. There was no doubt if she desired a counseling position anywhere in the town, she'd have one without even an interview. If a position wasn't open, one would be created for her. She was Liza Wright, grandchild of a founder. Could she make it somewhere else? Did she want to make it somewhere else? Was there anything in Claremont County for her? Those questions constantly plagued her.

Pulling off Interstate 75 onto Gridston, she gave a sigh of relief. The only thing she wanted to do was get home and put her feet up. The highway was deserted as she careened down the stretch of road.

"You've got to be kidding me," Liza groaned when minutes later she saw flashing lights in her rearview mirror. She steered her car to the shoulder and put the car in park. She didn't have any concerns about getting a speeding ticket, instead, she was more annoyed at being stopped. Whichever deputy was stopping her must not have recognized her car. They'd give her a friendly hello and a warning and send her own her way. All the neighborly conversation was just delaying the time until she was bumming mindlessly in front of a movie, until sleep claimed her. Tired, she wanted to get home soon.

She watched the car slide up behind hers, then she got out of her convertible. With the search light beaming in her eyes, it was hard to determine which deputy was walking toward her.

"Dale, is that you, or is it Martin?" Liza called out.

"Ma'am, do you know you're not supposed to get out of your car unless instructed to do so?"

The voice was gritty and male. As he spoke, there was a bite to each word as if he didn't tolerate noncompliance. He

commanded authority. Liza noticed the tingling along her arms as the hairs on both of them rose.

*Definitely not Dale or Martin.* Warm sensations raced along her skin where moments before the wind had cooled it. Chalking it up to the humidity of the night, she leaned against her car and waited. Finally, he stepped in front of her and blocked the bright light and she could see his face.

"You." She tilted her head and stared up toward his face, seeing the gate guard from the base in Valdosta, the main city of Lowndes County that bordered Claremont. "So, you're the new officer everyone has been talkin' about. Thor, isn't that what they call you?"

His intense blue eyes captured her. "Good evening, ma'am. Once again—"

This man's nickname had always intrigued her. Cutting him off, she asked, "Don't tell me. You're supposed to be able to clap and make it thunder or something, right?"

One of his eyebrows lifted. "Anything's possible. But, no matter. When people talk, the made up story is always better than the original one."

She chuckled as she tapped a finger against her lips. "Now, I recall Jack told me somethin' about you being deployed to Iraq twice. He said when you all were there no matter what situation you were in, you always managed to get out without a scratch. Jack seems to believe that you have some sort of shield around you. He said you wielded your gun to protect as if it was a gift from the gods." She stepped toward him and spoke in a sultry voice, "So, does lightening flash in the sky when you use your *mighty* hammer?"

Liza didn't miss the flare of his nostril as she stood close to him. She wondered if it was a response to her honeysuckle body spritz or if it was a sign of annoyance. The desire to push the envelope tickled the back of her neck.

"Ms. Wright, do you know you're not supposed to get out of your vehicle unless instructed to do so?" He repeated the question.

"Hmm." At least six feet tall, he towered over her five foot six inch height. Broad shoulders and narrow waist were enhanced by the cut of his uniform. She had to admit the man

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had a nice build. A part of her wished she could view him from the back and see if his ass was just as pleasant. Ignoring her own wondering thoughts, she leaned against her car. "I guess the base doesn't offer enough work for you. Now you're moonlighting with the sheriff's department."

"No." Amazingly, he arched his eyebrow higher.

She figured he was probably annoyed because she hadn't answered his question. Crossing her arms over her chest, she continued, "No. Ah, maybe you got kicked out of the military. Couldn't hack it. All those loud music violators making you mad?"

Tilting his head to the side, he eyed her from under the brim of his hat. "Are you trying to piss me off and get a ticket or are you always this insolent?"

*Insolent? The nerve of him.* Slapping her hands to her hips, she leaned toward him. "I like to call it my own sassy wit."

"Hm," he grunted.

The little nonverbal, guttural sound he made infuriated her. Balling her fists against her waist, she asked, "Don't you have bad guys to catch? I'm sure someone is robbing a bank somewhere." Liza didn't know why she felt the urge to antagonize him. Something about him caused an unnamed sensation to dance along her spine.

Watching the muscle jump along his jaw line, she enjoyed a small thrill in knowing that she could aggravate him.

He stared at her, unaffected by her comments, and calmly ordered, "License and registration, please."

*He's got to be made of stone.* Rolling her eyes, Liza turned toward her driver's side door, wrenched it open and bent inside to retrieve her information. While she was in the car, she became more irritated that she couldn't affect him. The fact that this was her town, where she'd lived all her life and Mr. Patrol Officer By the Books couldn't get past his own ego to give her a little courtesy for speeding, which she knew she'd been doing, angered her.

Sitting in her seat while rifling through her purse, an idea occurred to her. If she couldn't affect him with her sharp mind, then she'd get to him the old fashioned way. Backing out of the car, she handed him only her license.

Taking her identification, he eyed her. "Do you have a car registration?"

"I'm sorry. I've never been stopped in my own town before so I'm a little fuzzy about the protocol."

"Registration." He rested the palm of one hand against the butt of his gun, which she figured he used more as a place to rest his hand than a threat of force.

"Yes, sir." Turning with a flounce, Liza got back into her car. This time she balanced her body on the knee she placed in the center of the seat. Stretching long and arching her back, she reached over the center console to the glove compartment, where she rifled inside, pretending to search for her registration.

Liza was no fool. She knew that the position she assumed allowed Officer Zeller a clear view of the expansion of her thighs. She had been told many times that she had nice legs and for sheer spite, she was willing to use them against the emotional rock outside.

Turning her head, she glanced out of the back window, but was unable to see more than his waist and the top of his pants. Forgetting herself, she couldn't help but admire the cut of his clothing and how well his uniform slacks cupped his sex. *Impressive*. The thought danced in her mind before she had a chance to refocus herself. Heat filled her lower belly and she was shocked at how easily she had become aroused by a man she didn't even know, let alone like.

"Here it is." She announced as she backed out of the car. Giving him a triumphant smile, she slapped the paper into his open hand. "There."

For a brief moment, his wide hand closed around her smaller one, holding it. Feeling the slight grip, he held on.

Liza allowed her eyes to travel from their joined hands, moving her gaze past his hair-sprinkled forearm and shoulder, until she reached his face. Taking note of his chiseled jaw, firm lips and distinct nose, she continued up to meet his eyes. She was captured by the heat in his azure stare.

Sparks went off where their hands touched, causing her fingers to tingle.

"I'm completely within my right to give you a ticket. Speeding is illegal and dangerous," he told her.



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Snatching her hand from his, she tried to regain control of the situation and her emotions. "Well, if you fear for your life and the safety of the drivers of Claremont County..." She stepped toward him, tilting her head back so she could continue to maintain eye contact with him, "why don't you just arrest me, officer?"

Like lightening, Officer Zeller had her swung around and pinned against the side of her car. The heat of his body pressed along her back.

"You know, princess, I have no qualms about putting you in handcuffs." He spoke in low tones with his mouth flush to her ears.

Her lungs seized, stealing her breath and refusing to relinquish it. She became light-headed. She was assailed with the desire to arch her back and press her hips into him. It had been so long since any man had dared to impose his strength on her. His forcefulness turned her on. Desire ignited between her legs and caused her sex to swell. One of his hands gripped her hip while the other held her hands on the top of her car. The material of the ragtop under her palms and the vibration of the running car kindled sensations in her breast.

Being restrained by Zeller was giving her thoughts of what it would be like to be with him in a more intimate setting. Naked and vulnerable for him. At that moment, she wanted him.

Shocked at her thoughts and the wetness dampening her panties, she gave herself a mental shake. Using all of her willpower, she shifted to the present. Liza finally took a deep breath to fill her lungs with the cool night air, but instead she smelled him. He didn't wear cologne or a fancy aftershave; just the scent of clean male with his own natural musk. Her pussy throbbed and she squeezed her thighs together in an attempt to squelch it, unintentionally making it worse.

Zeller's hand traveled around her waist, adding pressure to her abdomen, pushing her back until his thick cock lightly brushed the crease of her ass. "Nothing to say, princess?"

The way he called her princess sounded like both an endearment and an insult. "I do believe this could be considered police brutality. I wonder how Sheriff Pyle would feel if I told

him about one of his deputies taking liberties with me on a routine traffic stop."

His chuckle rumbled against her back before she heard it. "This stopped being routine the moment you put those creamy thighs of yours in my line of sight. It's a good thing I work directly for Russell and I'm not a deputy."

*Damn.* She knew she wasn't being subtle, but she didn't expect that her actions would backfire on her in this way. "Arrest me, give me a damn ticket, or let me go, *Officer Zeller.*"

For a moment, he didn't move and Liza thought he was going to continue to hold her. But he stepped away, releasing her as quickly as he had grabbed her, saying, "I'm going to give you a warning this time, but you need to be careful on these roads at night."

Facing him, she leaned back against her car, staring at Thor. "Thanks for your concern, Officer Zeller. I'll take it under consideration." Pushing away from her vehicle, she turned to get in. She ran into Zeller's arm as it shot out in front of her, halting her movement.

"I mean it, princess. The RACE team has been cruising these roads because of the teens drag racing down here and causing accidents, some serious."

"Duly noted." She shoved his arm out of her way and got in her car.

"You may need these for the next time you're stopped."

He held her driver's license and registration out to her. Reaching out the window, Liza removed the items from his hand. "Thanks. By the way, my name is Liza. And I'm nobody's princess."

Not waiting for his compliance, Liza shifted her car into drive and pulled away.

Liza had always hated being called princess. It was an old wound for her. In Claremont County where her family owned so much, it had separated her from everyone else. She had always been treated with kid gloves. Until now.

## Chapter Two

Thor watched her drive off, as gravel from her spinning tires pelted the bottom of his pants and fat raindrops struck his shoulders and hat. She was a firecracker, that one. Claremont County's own Princess Liza Wright. In the two months since he'd permanently become a citizen of the county, he'd heard stories from his friends about her and her family. The county, a blink between Lowndes and Tallahassee, was almost nonexistent. It wasn't large, but her family owned a lot of it. Her great-grandfather was one of the founders.

Shaking his head, Thor chided himself on his actions. In the eight years he'd been a security force's officer, he'd never mishandled anyone. Whether a traffic violator or a suspect in a crime, he'd never overstepped his boundaries. But with the princess, it was an entirely different story. During their encounter he'd felt on edge, reckless, and untamed.

He couldn't deny that he was attracted to her. Shit, he thought she was sexy as hell. But, she wasn't the first good-looking girl he'd ever been around. He'd had plenty of women passing through town attempting to flirt with him to get out of a ticket. Most showed him a heavy helping of cleavage, while others went as far as pulling their skirts up to an obscene level. Still, he'd kept his cool in all of those situations.

But with Princess Liza, the more she gave him her brazen attitude the more he wanted to prove to her how bold he could be. When he'd restrained her against the car, he'd known instantly that it was a mistake. He should have never touched her. Feeling her body aligned with his had made him instantly hot and horny. His cock had gone on full alert and he'd wanted to flip up the back of her skirt and take her right there on the side of the road. Feel her wet heat squeezing him tight as he buried himself deep inside of her sweet pussy and drive them both to

paradise. Thoughts of showing her a better use for her saucy mouth had flooded his mind.

Sighing, he watched the shine of her taillights disappear as she turned around a bend. The only thing this night has confirmed to him was that he had to keep control of his emotions when he was around her. Now that they lived in the same town, he'd have to remain constantly on guard.

Turning back to his car, Thor adjusted the bulge protruding from the front of his uniform pants, making him uncomfortable as he walked back to his car.

What he'd told Liza had been the truth. These roads weren't safe after dark, especially for a woman alone. During the past month, he'd been assigned to the nine member Rural Area Criminal Enforcement Team, more commonly referred to as the RACE team. They'd arrested several drug traffickers who were attempting to move their wares from Florida to Atlanta, as well as a few young adults who used some of the rural roads for drag-racing. They were increasing the motor vehicle accidents.

The town princess had an annoying habit of getting under his collar, but the last thing he wanted was to see her harmed. Shaking his head to clear it, he got in his green and blue patrol car to call the station. He had a job to do out here and it wasn't the princess, no matter what his libido was telling him.

\* \* \* \*

Entering her bedroom, Liza set her book bag on the floor beside her desk. The only thing she wanted was a shower. She was tired and the verbal scrimmage with Officer Brad "Thor" Zeller had sapped her of any remaining energy.

Slipping off her shoes, she berated herself for allowing him to get under her skin. Since she'd been with him on the side of the road, her body had felt hot and feverish. She would have loved to blame her physical complaints on the rising temperature of the spring change to summer, but she knew that wasn't it. It was Thor. His tall sinewy frame was playing havoc on her senses. Pulling her shirt over her head and tossing it to the floor, Liza continued her progress toward the shower. Her skirt and panties were next. In one swift motion, they met the carpet floor like the rest of her apparel. Padding into the bathroom, her bra was the last thing to drop from her body. Brushing the shower

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curtain aside, she turned on the faucet. She tested the temperature before getting in.

Once under the comfortable stream, her skin rejoiced while the steady flow of water cascaded over her. Sighing, she ducked her head under in an attempt to rinse the day's worries of school and men from her mind. Feeling refreshed, she grabbed her puff and began to lather her body. Suds dripped from the twisted plastic and filled the air with the scent of peaches and melons. Scrubbing her body in a circular motion, Liza relaxed. Closing her eyes, she allowed her mind to wander.

*The steam filled the room, footsteps could be heard outside of the shower. Slow progressive beats brought him closer to her. Her breath quickened in anticipation for the moment he'd join her. Waiting for him to give her body what it wanted. She didn't have to wait long.*

*When she turned and looked over her shoulder, he was there, entering the shower. She looked into his cobalt eyes and was lost. Lost in the confidence that this man could bring her pleasures she'd never known. Allowing her gaze to travel, they roved past his firm lips and chiseled jaw until they reached his broad shoulders. Reaching out, she touched them and felt the heat of his skin. He was on fire just like her body. The desire to cool him, taste with slow licks, covering him from head to toe assailed her.*

*His gaze was intense. No words were needed. He closed the gap that remained between them. Pulled her into his arms. A frisson of heat raced down her spine, followed by the descent of his hands as they glided down her back until they reached her ass. Cupping her bare cheeks in his hands, he squeezed them.*

*His throbbing erection pressed into her abdomen, causing her pussy to throb with the desire to have him deep inside of her. She wanted him to lift her, impale her on his hard cock and fuck her until she came pulsing around him.*

*But he had other plans. With the same speed that had been performed at the side of the road, he turned her back around to face the wall. Placing her hands flat against the cold tile, his voice was husky in her ears, "Don't move."*

*She couldn't have moved if she'd wanted to. He kept a firm hold on her hips, restraining her. There was no fear of the*

*situation or of him. The position aroused her. But, those sensations were tame compared to the searing passion that assaulted her senses as he pushed her hair aside and began raining open-mouthed kisses along her shoulders and the sides of her neck. She began to shiver with pent-up desire. Release. More than her next breath, she needed it.*

*"Touch me," she begged. "Please..." She knew there was a whine to her voice but Liza didn't care. She needed him.*

*Sealing his lips to her ear, he asked, "Where? Where do you want me to touch you?"*

*Reaching back, she made an attempted to grab his hand and place it where she wanted it. But he evaded her.*

*Seizing her wrist again, he returned it to the wall.*

*"Stay," he growled.*

*Spreading her legs, Liza tilted her ass back, trying to communicate her need.*

*"Where?"*

*That one word and his tongue stroking the outside shell of her ear was enough to make her reel.*

*"My pussy. Now. Please," she demanded.*

*His low chuckle rumbled along her spine as strong hands circled her waist and slipped between her legs. His agile fingers parted her aching lips. She almost sighed with relief as he slid along her juices and made swirling motions around her clit.*

*The trembling began in her legs, making her aware that her orgasm was heartbeats away.*

*His other hand reached up and captured her breast, massaging and flicking her taut nipple. Liza began to pant as she realized his cock was sliding down the crease of her ass, joining his hand in playing with her heated sex.*

*Slippery, wet and aroused, Liza enjoyed everything he was doing to her, but she needed more. Rotating her hips along with his movements, she was prepared to help him get her off.*

*He had other plans for her. With one of his feet, he nudged one of hers until her stance had widened. Dropping his hand from her breast, he wrapped it around her waist to support her as his other hand joined hers against the wall. The tip of his cock rested at the opening of her sex, then without a moment of*

*further hesitation he thrust forward thick and hard, not stopping until he had seated himself deep inside of her heat.*

Liza screamed as her orgasm overwhelmed her. Shaking and pulsing she leaned against the wall of the shower panting. Her legs were weak and threatening to collapse as her sex throbbed and contracted in its final spasms of ecstasy around her own fingers. Eyes hazy with lust, she looked around her empty shower. Sadness invaded her heart as she realized it had been a dream, a fantasy of her own making. Thor had not been there pleasing her. Her imagination had played a wicked trick on her.

Righting herself, she rinsed the remaining soap from her body, then turned off the shower and got out. After drying herself briskly with a towel, she collected her clothes from the floor as she entered her bedroom. Depositing them in the dirty laundry basket, she pulled a t-shirt and panties from her dresser and put them on.

Climbing into bed, she told herself that she was not attracted to Officer Zeller, she had just been working herself too hard for school and that was all.

Her sex chose that moment to give her one final flutter of the previous climax, calling her a liar. Squeezing her eyes shut, she ignored her body's response and hoped for a dreamless sleep.

\* \* \* \*

"Hey, Jack. How's it going tonight?" Liza approached the bar and nodded at Stephanie Maxwell, who was waving her over to one of the back tables where she was surrounded by other bar customers, mostly males. Liza ran her fingers through her hair in exasperation. She'd just finished the mother of all tests for school and she didn't feel like fighting off drunken men. She only agreed to come tonight because Stephanie complained that she didn't get to see her often during the school year. Since tonight started her two-week vacation before the summer session, she felt bad not spending time with her best friend.

Jack moved down the bar until he stood in front her, drying a glass, then placed it on the shelf behind him. "Pretty busy for a Wednesday night." He turned back to her. "But I guess I can attribute it to the high school baseball team playing in the regional championship against Echols."

Leaning into the tall polished wood bar, Liza gave him a small smile. "Too bad we didn't win."

Shrugging, Jack said, "Guess we can't win 'em all. What can I get you?"

"Classes are over for now, so I'll take a Bacardi Lemon with 7UP...just for a little celebration."

Jack gave her a quick wink before moving around the back of the counter to mix her drink. Liza observed her old classmate. She'd known Jack since the third grade when his family had moved into town. They'd attended the first two years of college together, but he left school to join the military. He'd said he needed to do something different for a while that wasn't in Claremont. After four years in the military, he'd come back, opened up the Dirty Dozen bar and married Betty Dixon, his high school sweetheart.

"Here you go, little lady." Jack placed her clear beverage on a small round coaster, which boasted the name of his establishment.

She could see the words, 'Dirty Dozen', magnified at the bottom of the glass. Laughing at the nickname, little lady, her friend had given her in high school after she'd failed to have a growth spurt like the rest of her friends, finally capping out her height of five' six". Rising up on her tiptoes, she reached across the bar and ruffled Jack's short black hair. "Thanks, Jackie boy."

Reaching into her purse for money, she was stopped by Jack's voice.

"No need to pay. It's my gift to you, little lady. Congrats on another semester ended." Grinning at her, he continued, "But, don't get beside yourself. It's only the first one that's on the house."

"Jackie boy, you know I only ever drink one."

He nodded. "That's right, college girl, and you keep it that way."

Returning his earlier wink, she strutted away from the bar to join Stephanie, who looked as if any moment she'd come over to the bar and get her.

"Well, it's about time you got over here, Liza. I thought I was goin' to have to drag you away from the bar," Stephanie reprimanded from her perch on Wyatt McCall's lap. Wyatt was a



surgical assistant in Tallahassee and by the looks of it, Stephanie's new boy-toy.

Liza shook her head at her girlfriend's antics and wondered how long this relationship would last before Stephanie resumed her pursuit of her brother Robert. Her best friend had been after Robert since her brother had graduated college and went on to law school. But, Robert was doing an excellent job of playing hard to get. He hadn't seriously dated anyone since college, which was usually a topic of discussion at Sunday afternoon family dinners.

"I was just chatting with Jack for a moment." Liza glanced around the booth, trying to decide whether or not she wanted to squeeze in around all the men at the table. "Evenin' Dale, Wyatt, Harvey, Steve."

"You can sit right here, pretty Liza." Dale Moore gave a few pats high on his thigh, leaving no misunderstanding where he wanted her to sit.

Taking a sip of her drink, she placed it back on the table, then leaned in toward Dale and spoke to him in a breathy voice, loud enough for all the people around the table to hear. "Dale, as much as I would love the chance to *ride* the evenin' out on you generous lap... I can see you're still on duty and I'd hate to do anythin' to cause you to have a *hard* night at work."

"Well, shit, you done it now." Dale quickly squeezed his large body out of the booth and lumbered away to the bathroom, the cackling of the remaining five people chorusing behind him.

"Liza, you're going to give that old man a heart attack talkin' to him like that," Steve Ewing chided her, shaking his head as he slid across the cushioned seat from where Dale had him crunched in.

"Well, if he went home to Mindy like a good man should then he'd have nothin' to worry about," she answered.

"Give me somethin' to worry about. Come dance with me." Steve grabbed her hand and tugged her toward the dance floor.

Liza didn't complain because one of her favorite songs was beginning. As the opening guitar strings to *Here for the Party* by Gretchen Wilson started playing she was already swaying to the beat. She and Steve had dated during their junior year in high

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school, but had realized they made better friends. She knew she could be as wild as she wanted with Steve, he was safe.

Swinging and swaying to the country rock style of the female artist, Liza enjoyed herself. No school, no worries, and the arms of a good friend were just what she need.

## Chapter Three

That's exactly how Thor found Liza when he walked into the Dirty Dozen. For a moment, he was mesmerized by her fluid movements on the dance floor. With her arms above her head as her hips rocked to the music, her skirt rode low and her shirt rose high, allowing a glimpse of her midriff. Her face was filled with joy. There was a broad smile on her mouth as she dropped her arms and glided around her partner in circles. He knew the guy she was dancing with. His name was Steve and he was the manager at the Claremont Bank in town.

Thor had to admit that they made a nice-looking couple. The thought caused a stone to drop in his gut. Biting the inside of his lip to keep himself under control when Liza stepped into the arms of Steve and gyrated her body against the banker's tall frame.

Turning away from the couple, he headed toward his friend at the bar. "Hey, Jack, let me have a beer." He and Jack had been stationed together for four years and it was because of that friendship Thor had obtained his position on the RACE team. Jack's father was the sheriff in town. As a favor to his son, as well as honoring Thor's eight years as an Air Force security forces troop, Sheriff Pyle had given the job to him. The two tours Thor had served doing special investigation in Iraq had helped to seal the deal.

"Anything for an officer of the law." Reaching into one of the cabinets under the bar and popping the top off the dewy bottle of beer, Jack slid it along the polished wood to rest in front of Thor.

Thor caught the beer and quickly brought it to his mouth as the misty smoke crawled out of the top. The beer was ice-cold and did the trick in cooling his senses and setting him right in the

mind. He hadn't seen Liza in over a week, but she'd been in his thoughts since their roadside encounter.

Setting his beer back down on the bar, he glanced over his shoulder as the last bars of the song were playing and witnessed Liza giving Steve a kiss on the cheek before rejoining the group at one of the back booths.

"So, Thor, you starting to adjust to small town life?" Jack's voice pulled him away from Liza.

"Yeah, it's quiet for the most part and I like that." He took another sip of his beer.

Jack chuckled loudly. "Yeah, quiet. Excluding tonight."

"I noticed when I walked in there were a few more people than usual at this time of night."

"The baseball championship," he confirmed.

Thor nodded.

"How was work tonight?" Jack wiped down the counter.

"It was alright. I spent most of it following a tip on some drug runners we were expecting through here."

"Any luck?"

Thor shook his head. "Nope. Maybe they've found a new route."

"Wouldn't that be nice? Then we wouldn't have to worry so much about our teens in Claremont getting that junk."

Thor took his last swig. "Sad thing about it, if they don't get it from these guys, they get it from somewhere else." Thor pushed aside his empty bottle.

Jack moved with years of efficiency at tending bar and grabbed Thor's empty bottle and replaced it with a fresh one, cap removed.

"That's true." Jack changed the subject. "So are you missin' the military?"

Thor laughed. "Did you miss it when you hung your BDU's up for the last time?"

"Shit, no. And every day I'm here I miss it less and less."

"Exactly." Thor couldn't resist peering over at Liza and her friends at their booth. She now sat next to Steve in the booth and another chair had been brought over for Dale to rest his heavy frame in.

## APPREHENSION

The lazy arm Steve had slung over the back of the booth that Liza's head was leaning against slightly raised Thor's hackles. He hated feeling possessive of her. She wasn't his. Had never been his. Hell, he didn't even truly know the princess. Shaking his head, he shifted away from them.

Thinking about the events of the night, he watched as Jack saluted farewells to each customer as they began to trickle out the door. He admired his friend. Jack was happy. He had the job he wanted and the family he desired. Thor envied the peace his friend had found. Over the years of being in the military, he hadn't met or dated anyone whom he'd even considered for a moment marrying and raising a family.

His eyes drifted again to Claremont's princess. Shaking his head, he forced himself to turn away.

"Be right back, Thor, I need to get the stuff to restock the shelves for tomorrow." Jack tossed his towel over his shoulder and walked to the back of the bar.

"I think I can find something to occupy my time while you're gone." Thor tilted his beer up to his mouth.

"I'm sure you can." Jack yelled from the back.

At that moment, Thor heard a melodic laughter coming from behind him. Turning, he noticed Liza and some of her group had moved to one of three pool tables four yards away from him. Steve sat on a stool by the table. Liza was playing pool against Harvey Carter, one of the supervisors at the local peanut plant. Dale must have finally remembered he was on duty tonight and left. Out of the corner of his eye, Thor spotted Stephanie and Wyatt on the dance floor grinding and swaying to Melissa Etheridge's *My Lover*, and doing an excellent job of ignoring everyone else around them.

Thor could hear a few people around him murmuring how the couple needed to take their sex act from the bar floor to one of their apartments.

Disregarding the pair, Thor turned fully around in his seat and leaned his back against the bar as he drank his beer and watched Liza. She flirted with both men equally. Steve appeared to take it good naturedly, but Harvey's face was lit up as if he really hoped to spend the remainder of the evening in Liza's arms.

As he continued to observe them, he heard Jack bring in empty crates to begin removing the alcohol from the shelves preparing the bar for closing. Checking his watch, Thor noted the time. Fifteen minutes 'til one. Just as always. Jack was a family man, he never stayed open past one and he never opened on Sunday because it was family day for him.

Yeah, he envied him.

Exhaling slowly, he gulped down more beer as he stared at the pool players in front of him. Liza had just shot in the eight ball, leaving Harvey with four striped balls still on the green felt.

"Man, I told you not to play her. She's a shark," Steve snickered and hooted.

He could see the tension around the other man's mouth. Harvey was angry. By his look, Harvey didn't appreciate being bested by a woman. It possibly wouldn't have been so bad without Steve's additional comments.

Harvey whipped around toward Steve and spoke through gritted teeth. "Shut up, Steve. She's beat the shit out of you before."

Steve spoke through broken laughter. "Damn, right. That's why I don't play...Liza." He laughed harder. "And especially not for a year's supply of peanuts that you're going to have to pay for."

Before Harvey could respond, Wyatt and Stephanie came waltzing back over, holding hands. Wyatt questioned, "Who's paying in peanuts?"

"Harv—"

Steve's speech was broken off when Harvey jabbed the pool stick in his side.

Thor watched Liza stroll toward the man with the wounded ego. She turned her full charm on Harvey.

"Harvey, don't be mad. I'm sure I got the upper hand on you tonight only because it's late, you've been drinkin' and you're probably tired from a long day at the plant." If the hand Liza placed on Harvey's shoulder wasn't enough to assuage his pride then the syrupy sweet voice she used did the trick.

Giving Liza a broad smile, he nodded like a bobble head willing to agree to anything she said.

## APPREHENSION

"Yeah, it's probably best I head home and get some rest." Forcing a yawn, Harvey emphasized his point by rubbing his eyes as if he just now realized he was tired. "Do you want me to bring the peanuts by your house each week?" Harvey asked, hopeful as a puppy begging for a treat.

Stepping back, Liza gave him a smile. "Harvey, you're an honorable man. But I couldn't eat all those peanuts." Turning toward the pool table, she began to retrieve all of the balls from the slot below, deposit them on top and prepared them for racking.

Thor noticed he wasn't the only one admiring the view of Liza's sexy thighs revealed from underneath her skirt every time she leaned over the pool table. Both Harvey and Wyatt looked as if any moment their eyes would pop out of their heads.

Stephanie giving Wyatt's arm a smack was enough to get his attention.

Liza continued. "Harvey, you can just have them delivered here. That way everyone can enjoy them."

It was at that moment Harvey realized he'd been had.

"Come, Harvey, let me get you home. Remember how tired you are?" Steve stood up and stretched.

"I'm heading out, too, Liza." Snuggling against Wyatt's side, Stephanie continued. "Wyatt has agreed to give me a lift home."

*Yeah, he's going to give her a lift alright,* Thor thought.

"You're all leaving me?" Liza gave her friends a sexy pout.

The desire to kiss her and suck her full-bottomed lip into his mouth was driving him crazy. Lifting his beer, he took a deep swig, finishing it while attempting to cool his heated thoughts.

"Sorry, sweet cakes. But, I've got to get up early tomorrow for work," Steve apologized.

"And I really need to get to bed," Stephanie replied as she tugged Wyatt toward the door.

"You're the one who invited me here," Liza tossed the accusation to Stephanie.

Stopping in her tracks, Stephanie tilted her head to the side and gave Liza a pointed look. "I'm sure you *understand*, Liza."

"I do." Waving her friend away, she said, "Go. Get some *rest*."

Steve kissed Liza on the forehead. "I'll talk to you later in the week." He pushed Harvey toward the door.

"Alright," Liza mumbled, more to herself.

Thor spied Liza glancing at her watch, then she looked around the bar to see if there were any other people in it, possibly to persuade them into playing pool with her. Pivoting around, she spotted him and realized the same thing that he had, they were the only two left, with the exception of Jack, who was in the back with his cash drawer.

Neither one spoke. Thor's eyes dropped, attracted by the subtle tapping of her fingers along the pool stick. Nervousness or indecision? Thor pondered her small action.

He was enjoying the moment, observing her without the earlier crowd hovering around. His eyes lowered further and he took in her small feet, which were slipped inside a pair of decorative flip-flops. The view of the pale pink polish coating her naked toes and the plain gold band surrounding her second toe was downright erotic. Her sexy jewelry caused a feeling of intimacy in him. Dragging his gaze higher he took in the silky smooth expanse of her legs until his view ended at the hem of her light green skirt that reached mid-thigh. He'd never had an opinion of whether he liked his women in skirts or pants, but on Princess Liza, it was definitely skirts.

Scanning past her skirt and now covered midriff, Thor paused at her breasts, which were held captive by her form-fitting top. Full breasts, with erect nipples. Evidence of arousal or a biological response to the air conditioner?

"Are you finished?"

Her sultry voice forced his eyes to return to her face. Glad she'd grabbed his attention, because soon his cock would have shown her exactly what he was ready to finish.

"With what?" he responded.

Rolling her eyes, she said, "Ogling me."

Angling his head, he raised a single eyebrow in her direction. "I wasn't ogling. I was appreciating the view."

She made a sucking sound between her teeth and turned away from him. "Well, I hope you got your fill, Officer Zeller."

"Thor."

Glancing over her shoulder, she eyed him. "Excuse me."



## APPREHENSION

"My name is Thor or Brad."

She settled the pool stick in the case, which was attached to the wall. "Don't tell me, Officer Zeller, you don't take your duty to the county seriously?"

Still resting against the bar, Thor stretched his arms out along the top. "I take my job very seriously. But, when I'm off, I'm off."

"Gotcha," she said, walking over to one of the tables to retrieve her purse.

"I thought you weren't finished playing."

Stopping with her purse clutched under an arm, Liza stared at him. "Everyone's gone. All of my friends left. It's a little hard to play the game alone."

Piercing her with a direct look, Thor asked, "What's wrong, you afraid to play someone who could truly give you a little competition?"

"Who's that, Jack?"

Taking note of the light in her eyes, it was evident to Thor she was being playful.

Pulling out money from his jeans pocket, Thor laid it on the counter and rose from the stool. "If Jack can beat you then I know I'd spank that sexy ass of yours all over this bar."

Looking passed his shoulder, she said, "Jack, did you here that? He thinks he's better than you."

"I heard 'im," Jack responded, coming further into the bar from his office. "I'd prove him wrong if I wasn't headin' home."

"Any day, Jack," glancing in Jack's direction, Thor challenged good-naturedly. Looking back at Liza, he asked, "So, you game, princess?"

"Didn't you hear the man? He said he was going home. Which means we'll have to find out who's better another day. Oh, wel—"

"Don't let me stand in the way of a fair competition." Jack tossed Thor keys. "Lock up when you leave. I'll stop by your house and get the keys from you in the morning."

With sure hands, Thor caught them. "Will do."

"But—"

Both men ignored her protest.

"By the way, you can put that money back in your pocket." Pushing his backside against the door to press it open, Jack finished, "You know it's no good here."

"Don't worry, Jack, it's not for the owner. It's for the bartender." Thor beamed a smile at him.

Laughing and shaking his head, Jack left.

Thor followed him out and switched the bolt to the locked position. Sliding the keys into his back pocket, Thor asked, "So, what's it going to be, Princess Liza? Will Daddy let you stay out and play?"

Shooting daggers at him, she bit out, "Fine." Tossing her purse onto a table, she marched over to the pool sticks and grabbed the one she'd replaced moments before. "Only so I can whip that smug smile off your face, officer."

Thor's smile became broader as he crossed the room to get his on stick. "Rack 'em."

Stomping over to the other end of the table, she mumbled, "Well, I can tell I won't be playin' with a gentleman."

"That's for damn sure." Thor added chalk to the tip of his stick. He normally would have racked the balls, but he couldn't resist the temptation of watching the princess leaning forward on the table and her breast giving a nice little swing in accompaniment. "You can break."

"Thanks." She removed the triangle and pushed it in the slot on the side of the table. Grabbing her stick from where she propped it against the edge, she walked around the table planning her first move.

"So, what are we playing for?"

"My name." Finding the angle she desired, she leaned over the table and stretched one arm forward to balance the stick in the crease of her thumb and forefinger. "If I win...you stop calling me Princess Liza." Controlling the pool stick with her left hand, she rested the tip on her tented right hand and snapped it forward, hitting the tip against the top right of the cue ball.

The crack of balls knocking against each other was broken when two of them dunked into a corner pocket one after the other.

"I'll take solids." Liza announced.

Nodding, Thor acknowledged her request.

## APPREHENSION

"If you happen to beat me...which I warn you no one has done in a long time, what do you want?"

Staring across the length of the pool table at her, Thor waited until she made eye contact. He said, "I want the same thing as you. If I win..." he purposely lowered his voice a notch, "you say my name?"

He noticed the significant rise and fall of her chest.

"Fine. If you win. But that's a big 'if'."

Thor noticed her slight nervousness as her smile quivered slightly at the corners. He wondered what was behind it. Pushing the question away for the moment, he took a seat on the barstool Steve had vacated and waited for her to miss. Once she did, he would put his all into the game and make it a point to beat her.

## Chapter Four

"Well, I do believe it is time for you to pay the piper," Thor told Liza as he dropped his pool stick onto the table. Over an hour later, they finished their second game. Liza had lost the first with two balls remaining on the table and had demanded they play the best out of three. This time Thor had beat her with four of her balls left on the table. He had to admit she was an awesome player.

"What are you, some kind of shark?"

Thor laughed loudly. "That would only qualify if I hadn't told you from the beginning that I was good."

"Whatever," she said, still holding the pool stick in front of her with the wide end of the stick on the floor.

Approaching her, Thor admitted, "I'll give it to you. You're really good. Too bad all of your competition consists of men in a small county who would rather allow the town princess to win just because they have hopes of getting into her panties." Reaching out, he grabbed the pool stick in an attempt to return it to the wall.

"You don't know a damn thing, Officer Zeller." Liza yanked at the pool stick caught between their two bodies.

"I don't know anything?" A rough chuckle erupted from his lips. He caught how once again she'd purposely used his position instead of his first name. Thor leaned closer to her, his mouth almost touching hers. "I know one thing, princess. You prance around this county like you've got gold between your thighs." He stepped forward, pressing his body into hers.

"Maybe I do," she punctuated her words with a sassy tilt of her head.

Thor was hard as a hammer and he had no doubt the town princess noticed it pressing into her abdomen. "Then let's see."

He took a final step forward to bring Liza up against the edge of the pool table.

For a moment, he paused, watching her eyes to see if there was any sign she didn't want this. Want him.

"If you're man enough, Officer Zeller," she taunted.

That was all he needed. With a half growl and half sigh of relief he removed the pool stick from her slack fingers and tossed it onto the floor behind him. Thor bent at the knees, grabbed the back of Liza's thighs and hoisted her onto the pool table.

She gave a small scream of shock blended with a giggle when she noted her new position. She wasted no time in pulling his mouth to hers.

The kiss was rough and quick. Thor's tongue entered her mouth. She tasted like down home spices and country warmth. The kiss went on and their tongues battled as their hands had done with the pool stick. He pulled away, breaking the contact of their lips.

With labored breathing, their chests expanded and contracted rapidly as if they had been running for miles.

He gave her a cocky grin. "Now, let's see about that pot of gold." Thor dropped down between her legs. Pushing her skirt up to her waist, he viewed white cotton panties covering her sex.

Leaning forward, he could smell the heady scent of her pussy. She wanted this as much as he did. He hooked his thumbs under the edges and stroked her wet heat. He heard her breath catch. Then he tugged, making quick work of sliding her underwear down around her ankles. Liza removed her feet from the leg holes, totally disregarding them. Her panties dropped to the floor and he spread her thighs wide and gazed at the royal treasure illuminated by the lamp hanging over the pool table.

Glistening wet, she looked like a treat waiting for him to taste. That's exactly what he did. Dragging her hips to the edge of the table Thor began to lick and lave her cunt. His tongue slid along her spicy honey-coated slit until he reached her clit. Gently flicking the stiff nub, he enjoyed Liza lifting her hips toward his mouth. He sucked her swollen lips and she cried out. Slipping two of his fingers inside of her, her slick muscles squeezed as he pumped them into her. She began to moan and whimper as he

returned his attention to the kernel guiding her desire. As he circled it, she rotated her hips, matching his pattern. He watched her legs begin to shake, her thigh muscles quivering and jerking. Liza was close to climaxing, when he leaned away from her, pausing in order to intensify her orgasm. She buried her hands in his hair, pulling him back to her.

"Please."

Chuckling, he gave in to her request. He moved back toward her sweet pussy and orally gave her what she wanted. He laved, swirled, flicked and suckled her until she exploded into ecstasy's haven. Giving her one final lick, he rose.

He and Liza's hands battled once again, this time over the fastenings of his jeans. In seconds, his button and zipper were undone and his jeans were shoved below his hips.

Liza's hands reached out and grasped his aching cock. He had to clench his teeth to keep himself under control. The soft feel of her hands circling his engorged member pushed him quickly toward his end.

"Shit," he called out when her thumb brushed the sensitive tip. With shaky hands, he pulled a condom out of his back pocket. Using his teeth to tear it open, he removed it.

She took it from his hand and slid it properly down his engorged member, then stroked his covered length.

"As good as that feels there's only one place I want to be right now."

Smiling at him coyly, she asked, "Where is—"

His deep thrust silenced her and himself as well. She was so tight. Thor's spine tingled as if held inside of a warm fist. Closing his eyes, he took a few breaths to get himself under control. If he didn't watch himself, he would come before he'd given either of them the fullness of pleasure.

Feeling Liza arch her hips, pushing him in further, caused him to open his eyes. Looking at her lying back across the green felt expectantly heightened his arousal. Lowering his eyes, he stared for a moment at the place where their bodies were joined. Almost poetic.

Shaking himself for the sappy thought he began to slide in and out of her snug pussy, inch by inch. Hooking her legs over

his arms, he leaned over her, allowing himself total access to sink completely inside of her.

"Let me see those beautiful breasts, princess," he commanded.

Without question, Liza lifted her shirt and bra, availing herself to his gaze. Her breasts were perfect globes, enough to fill a man's hand and mouth. Admiring the rose-colored tips briefly before bowing his head and taking one of them between his lips, Thor suckled her.

For the second time that night, Liza buried her hands in his hair. Feeling her fingers gripping and massaging his scalp drove him wild. Releasing her breast, he captured her mouth in a feverish kiss and propelled his hips forward, driving into her.

\* \* \* \*

Thor was being rough, pounding into her repeatedly and Liza enjoyed every intense movement. Every man she'd ever been with treated her as if she were delicate and breakable, but not Thor. He was different in many ways from her previous boyfriends.

The thickness of his cock sliding in and out of her body was impressive. *Boy, did he know how to use it.* A while ago, she'd kicked off her sandals and now her heels were digging into his sides and her toes were curling.

Meeting him thrust for thrust, she wanted more of him. When he leaned, pushing her thighs wider as he pressed himself deeper, she swore the tip of his cock had touched her soul. Needing to touch him, she unbuttoned his shirt and glided her hands across his taut skin. The thought of having the time to savor every inch of Thor's firm body tapped at the edges of her mind.

Her fingers tingled as the second climax of the night slammed into her, pulling a scream and his name from her lips. Behind her closed lids, her eyes burned and tears threatened to spill from them.

Moments passed before she opened her eyes and looked at Thor. A sheen of sweat coated his chest and his head tossed back as he groaned out his release. Finally, his head fell forward, bowing low.

The room was quiet. No more music, no sounds of them having sex. Nothing.

Liza wanted to say something. Tell him she wasn't a whore. Explain that she'd never done anything like this before. Even possibly thank him for protecting both of them. But she didn't know where to start. She wondered what he'd say if she told him that he was beginning to work himself into her thoughts on a daily basis.

Before she could figure out what to say, Thor stepped away from her. His semi-erect cock slid from her, leaving a hollow feeling in its wake. Looking at her for a moment, he turned away and straightened his shirt and pants.

Jumping down from the table, Liza righted her own clothes and stepped her feet into her shoes. "Thor, this was not how I'd planned my evening—"

"Look, Princess Liza," he began, cutting off her words. "I know that letting a commoner between those sweet thighs of yours probably wasn't your *plan*."

Staring at his back, Liza was shocked by his words. She wanted to turn him around and tell him that wasn't what she was going to say.

His back still to her, he continued, "Why don't you just head home and wash up before my scent sets in."

She wanted to take one of the pool sticks and smack him in the head. However, if he could say something as thickheaded as that, she doubted it would even faze him. Instead, she reached out and grabbed his shoulder, forcing him to look at her. "You know, Thor, you're right, you are beneath me. But not because my dad is a general and not even because my family owns most of this town." Jabbing a finger into his chest for punctuation, she finished, "but because you're a fucking insensitive prick. And the day you moved into Claremont was the beginning of the worst days of my life."

Thor dropped his head, appearing ashamed, but Liza didn't buy it for one moment. Turning, she snatched her purse from the table and marched toward the door. When she reached it, she undid the lock, then faced Thor one last time. He'd raised his head, still standing where she'd left him, and watched her.



## APPREHENSION

The tears started burning in her eyes again. She knew that if she didn't leave soon they would spill over. This time not in soul-wrenching passion, but in pain. "You know what, *Thor*, while your face was buried between me *sweet thighs* you should have kissed my ass." With that said, she pushed the door open and exited the Dirty Dozen, not looking back as she got into her car and drove off spitting gravel.

\* \* \* \*

Thor felt like shit. He knew he'd hurt her. It had been his intention. Being inside of Liza had been an earth-shattering experience. If it had just been great sex, he wouldn't have thought anything about it outside of it being gratifying pleasure. But, it had been more than that and when he'd looked at her and seen the tears shimmering in her eyes under the lights, he knew she'd experienced something, too.

He had to get his head on straight. Brad Zeller was the last person she'd probably be looking for to have a serious relationship with. Women like Liza Wright married men with more than just a badge pinned to their chest.

Yeah, he'd done the right thing. Keeping the sex that happened between them in perspective was the best for both of them. It had been a long time for him. That was the only reason the world had seemed as if it had tilted when he entered her and the sole reason why his heart felt as if it beat in tune with the pulse leaping at the side of her neck.

*Then why did it feel as if a part of you walked out the door with her?*

"A long time." He repeated the words aloud hoping to silence his internal voice.

Tidying the area, Thor grabbed the foil wrappers from the floor and collected Liza's white cotton panties. Sliding them in his pocket, he grabbed the pool stick from where it had rolled under a table and placed it back in an empty clamp.

Glancing around the room, he verified that there was no further evidence of what had happened between them. Reassured, he turned toward the door, switched off the lights and left. Locking up the bar behind him, he got into his car and pulled away.

## Chapter Five

Two weeks later, Thor sped down Gridston Road. He was trailing a 2006 burgundy Monte Carlo. It was two o'clock in the morning and he'd gotten a tip from the Tallahassee police department that the vehicle had crossed the state line into Georgia. The Florida authorities suspected them of drug running. Fifteen minutes ago, he'd caught up with the car. He had waited until locating the perpetrators before he switched on his sirens, not wanting to alert them. Calling in to the station, he let them know he was on the suspect's tail. A quarter of a mile down Gridston Road he saw several lights and cars lining the side of the road.

"Damn, a drag race," Thor said, reasoning why all the cars were gathered together.

The Monte Carlo continued on, not slowing down. Spotting his patrol car and hearing the sirens, the teenagers scattered quickly into cars and peeled away. Thor was thankful that no accident had happened. Still in hot pursuit of the burgundy car, he witnessed it taking a bend in the road. Finally, leaving the teen crowd behind, Thor began to exhale a sigh of relief as his car rounded the curve and two other vehicles came careening toward him. Apparently, they had been swerving to miss the Monte Carlo.

Shifting into defensive driving mode, Thor attempted to veer around them, but since both drivers were moving at reckless speeds around the turn, it was impossible to anticipate their moves. Within seconds, he was hit by one car, then the other. His car was shoved in multiple directions and began to spin and flip. Everything went black.

\* \* \* \*

"Let's start over..." Liza's voice sang out along with Chris Daughtry as his song *It's Not Over* played on the radio. It was

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almost two-thirty in the morning and she was on her way home from Sacred Heart children's home. She'd pulled an evening shift with them. In her final semester of school, Liza was at the beginning phase of her internship. Even though her degree was in school guidance counseling, she'd asked her advising professor permission to do her internship at a children's home. She wanted the experience of working with children who were misfortunate. Do something different from working in the schoolhouse in Claremont County. Thankfully, her internship professor had thought it a good idea as well and had approved it.

Excitement cruised through her veins as she hit Gridston from I-75. She was almost home. When several cars zoomed passed her, she wondered what was going on. Seeing all of the small decorated cars, she assumed the teens in town were finishing a drag racing event. Glad that she missed it, she continued in the opposite direction. As she moved around a sharp curve, her heart dropped. A few yards in front of her was a patrol car, smashed into the hill on the side of the road.

Veering off to the side, she pulled up behind the car. Jumping out, she ran over to it. The car was upside down and smashed badly. She dropped to her knees as she approached the driver's side of the car. Dirt scattered as her knees made impact and oblivious to the pain, bent down to she peer into the window.

The officer was hanging upside down, suspended in place by his seatbelt. The beating of her heart sped up as she reached into the car and pulled the head back so she could see who it was. Dirt and blood were smeared all over his face, but she had no doubt of the identity of the unconscious officer. It was Thor.

"No..." Her voice was faint. Praying he was still alive, she slid her hand up until she could locate the pulse as the side of his neck. It was faint, but he was still alive. Relief flooded her body like summer rain. Scooting away from the car, she looked around to find someone to help. A few yards away from her, two tall gangly boys stood staring at the car in shock.

"Get help!" she screamed out to them. When they didn't move and still stood there in horror of the accident they most likely caused, Liza yelled, "Get help, dammit! Before he dies!"

Snapping out of their zombie mode, they scrambled back toward one of the two other cars on the other side of the road.

She didn't trust the two of them to be able to get someone out here before Thor got worse.

"Hold on, Thor," Liza told him as she got to her feet and returned to her car. She grabbed her purse and pulled the cell phone out, then tossed the bag back into the car, not caring where it ended up. Moving back to the patrol car where Thor's life was in danger, she called the 911 dispatch.

When Bonnie Tucker's familiar voice answered the line, Liza began speaking, not waiting for the operator to finish her speech.

"Bonnie, this is Liza Wright. Officer Zeller is hurt. His car is at the Gridston curve toward I-75. He's unconscious and bleeding."

"Got it. Everyone is out in pursuit of a suspect but I'll call them back and get help out there. The EMT's have already been dispatched and should arrive shortly. Does he have a pulse?"

"Yes. It's weak." The tightness in the back of her throat as she peered up at Thor still hanging there motionless was painful. "Tell them to hurry, Bonnie. Please." Liza didn't care if the other woman heard the begging tone in her voice, she only cared about Thor.

"I will. I promise."

"Thanks," Liza said before she disconnected her phone.

Lying down in the dirt, Liza grasped one of Thor's hands in hers. It was warm, swollen and slightly purplish from the blood pooling in it. She began to speak softly to him, consoling words about help being on its way and how he was going to be all right. She wasn't sure if he could hear her or not, she just needed to talk to him. It had been over two weeks since she'd last seen him in the bar and she'd purposely not gone into town in an attempt to avoid him. He had said a lot of hurtful words to her, but at that moment she would have given anything to hear his voice or see his piercing blue eyes.

\* \* \* \*

Throbbing pain drummed a beat through Thor's body. He laid on the bed motionless, afraid to move a single muscle in fear it would rebel and cause him to hurt even more. One of the last things he could recall was the horror in the teenage boy's eyes as his car spun out of control and headed for his police car. Finally,

the last view he saw as his vehicle began to flip and before everything went black was the taillights of the Monte Carlo as it sped away.

Hell, had those kids not been racing, he'd have caught up with the drug runners.

For a moment, he struggled to become conscious of his surroundings without opening his eyes. Even with the full body ache, he became aware that he was lying flat on something soft but firm. His ears noticed a steady beeping sound in tune with his own heartbeat. It didn't take a genius to realize he was hulled up in a hospital. One of his least favorite places to be trapped falling a close second to staring down the barrel of a gun in the hands of an enemy.

But, if he was in a hospital, the thing that didn't make sense was why he smelled a light sweet scent reminding him of honeysuckles instead of antiseptic.

Expecting to see a petite-sized blonde-haired person with hazel eyes, he was shocked to discover Jack. However, reality set in past all of the drugs they may have given him to minimize his pain. The princess had reason to be many places, but after how he'd treated her at the bar, this wasn't one of them. He'd be lucky if she threw a handful of dirt on his casket at his burial.

"Jack, you using your wife's body wash again? I can smell you all the way over here." He turned his head, eyeing his friend.

"Well, you should smell shit." Jack moved from his stance by the window and stood next to the bed. "Because I about crapped in my pants when I heard you were injured and in the hospital."

Thor chuckled and wished he hadn't. Grabbing his ribs, he groaned.

"Don't worry, they're not broken, just bruised," Jack confirmed.

Exhaling a breath as the pain subsided, Thor smiled as he said, "Well, I guess my shield is gone."

"Maybe." His friend pulled a chair closer to the bed and sat down. "All heroes take a tumble. Next thing you know they come out stronger than before. Soon as your leg heals, you'll be up and runnin' in no time."

"If you say so, Jack." Moving each leg slowly, Thor discovered quickly by the shot of pain his right leg was injured. He sucked in air between clenched teeth.

"I say so, Thor."

He eyed his friend. "Then say you can get me out of this sickbed."

"Don't doubt me, man." Jack shook his head. "I already asked. The doctor said as long as you woke up tonight and had no complications...you could be sprung in the morning."

Holding his hand out to Jack with a grimace of pain, Thor said, "That's why you were on the intelligence side of the team, you always know the right questions to ask."

Slapping Thor's awaiting hand, Jack gave him a large grin. "A cop never forgets his training."

"Never."

\* \* \* \*

"Hand me the suntan lotion, Steph." Liza situated herself on the terrycloth material covering the lounge on the side of the pool at the Claremont Wright Country Club.

Snapping the lotion shut after pouring a liberal amount into her hands, Stephanie gave it to Liza, then asked, "So, you goin' to tell me what's up with you and Mister Law and Order?" Stephanie eyed Liza with a questioning look.

Distracting herself with the lotion, Liza averted her gaze away from her friends. "What do you mean? There's nothing going on with the new cop and me, I barely know the guy."

"Ha! That's not what everyone in town is saying," Stephanie giggled and relaxed back in her chair.

Liza glanced around at the other pool attendees. She was glad it was still early and only a few people sprinkled the pool area and most of them were middle aged men more interested in their morning laps than conversation.

"Steph, you know you can't believe everything you hear in this town," she punctuated her words with a giggle. "Hell, they've been convinced that Robert is gay for years since he's in a successful law practice but no marriage."

Stephanie wiggled dramatically and shook her fake breast for effect. "Well, any man who turns Stephanie Maxwell down repeatedly has got to be batting for the other team. But I haven't

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given up on your brother yet. You and I are destined to truly be sisters." Stephanie winked.

"Well, that's good to know." Liza rolled her eyes and smiled at her friend. It would've never dawned on Stephanie that maybe she wasn't Robert's type. Maybe her brother was like her, nobody in Claremont County seemed to grab her attention and excite her like...

Quickly, Liza shook her head, attempting to clear her thoughts. She was not going to spend this day thinking about Thor. Not at all.

"Well, Liza, if nothing is going on between you and mister sexy cuff me and spank me, then why were you at the hospital all...night...long."

*Damn.* She'd forgotten how fast gossip spread in her town. "It wasn't all night. Besides, since I found him near death on the side of the road, I kinda felt responsible for him. Once I discovered he was okay, I left. Plain and simple." Too bad the same couldn't be said for the state of her legs. In the agitation brought about by her friend's prying question, Liza had applied an extremely liberal amount of suntan lotion to her them.

"Plain and simple my ass. If that's what you want me to believe then have no worries. Just like your legs don't look like grandma's southern fried chicken." Stephanie laughed and slipped her sunshades on and settled against her lounge.

Vaulting up from the seat, Liza said, "I'm going to the bathroom to wash some of this off. When I get back, try not to be close to the pool. I'd hate for you to fall into all that chlorine just hours before your hair-coloring appointment."

Liza headed toward the bungalow style bathrooms and smiled as she heard Stephanie call out.

"That's real low, Liza."

Yeah, her comment was low, but so was the fact Stephanie had brought emotions to the surface that she wasn't ready to face just yet. Shaking her head at her friend's outrage, Liza continued to the bathroom.

\* \* \* \*

Bored, Thor stared up at the ceiling. He hated being immobile for a week. At least next week he would be able to do light work around his house. After spending two days in the

hospital, plus several hours unconscious, he was very thankful to only have had a bad knee sprain and a minor concussion from the accident.

His gaze dropped to his right knee as it lie swollen and discolored, propped up on top of a mound of pillows. He had torn his medial collateral ligament. Sighing, he reached for his crossword puzzle to take his mind off the throbbing pain.

"Knock, knock," a female voice and a soft tap came from his front door.

Dropping the puzzle onto his chest as the front door was pushed open, Liza stepped inside. His heart leaped at seeing her and his groin tightened at her appearance in his home. She stood in the doorway, wearing a light purple-colored tank style dress, with slip-on sandals. Something he was noticing was her trademark foot apparel. The part of her outfit that was causing his libido the most problems was the lower half of the dress. It began an inch below the apex of her thighs and ended mid-thigh, the crochet pattern allowing him a healthy glimpse of her creamy thighs.

Swallowing his groan, he said, "So what brings you here?"

Liza licking her lips before she spoke wasn't doing anything to quell his rapidly approaching arousal.

"I heard you'd been released from the hospital and I figured you might be hungry for some real food." Stepping forward with a foil-wrapped plate in her hand, she continued, "Smith Northview Hospital isn't known for their cuisine. Although I'm sure it was worth the trip for you to return back to Valdosta."

Thor was shocked to see her at his house and even wearier of her bearing a plate, the last time he'd seen her, they hadn't parted on friendly terms. "Are you sure you're not trying to send me back to the hospital for the things I said to you?"

She dropped her eyes to the floor, then pasted a smile on her face and lifted her gaze to him again. "No fear, Thor, I like my enemies to be standing when I take them out."

Returning her smile, even though he was convinced that she was hurt by his words, he responded, "That's good to know."

Placing the plate on the table, she walked into the kitchen. Thor heard her opening and closing doors looking for utensils, he suspected.



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"The silverware is in the third drawer from the refrigerator," he called out as he grabbed one of the pillows from under his knee and placed it in his lap over his erection. The smell of her perfume had reached him and it was causing sexual mayhem in his body.

The slapping sound of her shoes against the tile floor allowed him to track her movements, until she came out of the kitchen with a fork and paper towels.

Setting them down next to his food, Liza looked at him and said, "Can I get you something to drink or anything before I go?"

He shook his head. "No, thanks. Jack set me up a cooler with some drinks in it. So, I'm good."

Rubbing her hands together, she gave him another smile. "Well, I guess I'll be going then." Starting to turn toward the door, she paused. "You know, Thor, I am really glad you're okay."

Staring at her for a moment, Thor had the urge to pull her into his arms and hold her. She was right. He'd been a jackass the other night and he could kick himself twice for putting the nervous look in her eyes. "Thanks. And for the record, I'm sorry for what I said to you at the bar."

When she grinned at him, the light that filled her eyes let him know the smile was genuine this time. "Maybe tomorrow I could bring you another plate. If this one doesn't kill you." She winked at him and headed toward his door.

Thor's laugh followed her out.

Yeah, Princess Liza was sassy, but she had spunk and that made her even sexier to him.

\* \* \* \*

The following two weeks fell into a routine of Liza coming over, cooking for him and spending a few hours playing a couple games of *Sorry*. He found out it was her favorite board game, as well as other things about her. She spent most of her day with him, but at night, she drove to Tallahassee to the Sacred Heart children's home to work with them while she completed her internship for her master's degree. That shocked him. He'd believed that all these nights she had been driving back and forth from Florida to party like other people. His guilt ate him up for thinking that she just a shallow rich girl.

Thor stood in the shower and rinsed the suds from his hair. It had been too long since he'd washed his hair. Most of the days he hobbled to the sink and washed up, but he couldn't take the stench coming from his head any longer. Positive that Liza could smell it, he figured she was too polite to say anything. His balance wasn't the best and it proved faulty when he tilted his head back and shifted his position, causing pain to shoot through his knee and up his thigh.

"Aww—" he hollered as his feet slipped in the bubbles at the bottom of the tub and he went careening to the porcelain flooring. His butt smacked and stung as it came in contact with the hard surface. Thor began to curse a blue streak until he saw Liza running into the bathroom. He could see her distorted silhouette through the designer Plexiglas door.

"Thor, are you okay?" her words were anxious.

Guilty, he struggled to get up. "You're early." He turned the shower off.

"And you're not supposed be taking a shower yet."

He saw her arms pull in close to her body as she crossed them over her chest. It was the posture she'd taken with him many times during his convalesces when she'd caught him doing something the doctor had forbidden.

"I hate to admit it, but I might need a hand getting up." Thor had made a few attempts to push himself upright, but couldn't find enough footing with only one foot.

Approaching the door, Liza slid it open. "I have a mind to leave your hard headed ass right there, Thor."

"But you have too big of a heart to leave a man down." Thor gave her a lopsided smile.

"You should be glad. So, how do you want to do this?"

"Put your arms under my arms. I'm going to do most of the pushing, but I need someone to keep me stable."

Following his directions, Liza moved in close to him.

Oh, hell, he thought as he smelled her intoxicating scent. Chiding himself for not remembering how she affected him, he steeled himself against her smell. Pushing up too fast to avoid a soon-to-be embarrassing situation, Thor almost knocked them both into the shower. But, luckily, Liza was stronger than her tiny frame suggested.

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Standing up, he quickly grabbed the towel from the bar and held it in front of him until she stepped back. Wrapping it around his waist, he looked up and his eyes made contact with Liza's and he couldn't help but notice that her hazel eyes had darkened to green. He didn't know if it was because of him or a reflection of the emerald green v-neck top she wore with her white knee-length skirt.

"Thanks." He cleared his throat. "I might've pruned sitting there at the bottom of the shower without you."

She rubbed the back of her neck. "No problem. I'm here to help. If I assist you to your room, you think you can manage from there?" Liza licked her lips.

It was a signal Thor was becoming familiar with when she was nervous.

"Yeah."

Aligning herself to his side, Liza wrapped her arms around his waist.

"You're going to get your clothes all wet." Thor couldn't stop the thought that raced into his mind. He wondered if she was wet in other places. That caused him to drop his eyes to her skirt. Returning them back to her face, he took a deep breath, which he shouldn't have done because he could smell the soft scent of her hair. *Get yourself together, man.*

"Are you ready?" she asked.

"Yup." The single word came out gruff.

Together they managed to lift him out of the bathtub and into his room. Just as they reached his bed, Thor attempted to step away from her prematurely and the sudden lack of support caused him to fall. Since Liza had yet to let him go completely, she was caught up in his tumble toward the bed.

Thor landed on his back with Liza sprawled on top of him. Neither of them moved. Feeling the supple imprint of her body on top of his, Thor was helpless to stop the full awakening of his cock as it made its presence known between their pelvises. Identifying the texture of her skirt, he was alerted to the fact that his towel had been lost in the fall.

"Liza," was the only thing he got out before he pulled her lips down to his.

He kissed her like a starving man. Nipping at her bottom lip, then drawing it into his mouth. Deepening the kiss, he slid his tongue along hers.

Liza began to moan and grind her hips into his hard length. He gripped her hips and pressed against her.

Breaking away, he panted, "Tell me if you don't want this. Stop me now, Liza. Otherwise I'm going to be buried too deep for either of us to speak."

Her giggle fluttered in her stomach and patted against his abs before it left her lips.

"I want you, Thor." Standing up, Liza removed her clothes. The urgency in her gesture let him know she hadn't lied, her desire was as elevated as his.

Scooting back until his head rested against the pillow so he could watch her undress, Thor appreciated every inch of her body that was revealed to him. When she stood naked before him, he said, "Come here, princess."

Climbing onto the bed, she kneeled beside him. Gripping her at the waist, Thor hoisted her tiny frame up until her thighs straddled his face. Blowing slow breaths against the golden triangle cut hair covering her cunt, he teased her. When he heard a small moan come from her mouth, he commanded her, "Hold on."

When she reached out and grabbed the headboard, he began. Parting the lips of her sex, he witnessed the level of her arousal in the wet shine of her pussy lips. Thor glided his tongue from the rosy hole of her ass to the tight opening, up her slit until he reached her clitoris. She began to buck against his mouth, showing him her enjoyment. Holding a tight reign on her hips, he guided her movement until she began to cry out. With one hand, he held her in place as he flicked his tongue across her distended clit and slipped three of his fingers inside of her, pumping along with her gyrating hips.

\* \* \* \*

Liza's sex was stretched as Thor's fingers entered her. All she wanted to do was come and come hard. Seizing the top of the headboard in her grasp, she bore down against his talented tongue and his hand. Instinctively, Thor began to stroke the spot inside of her pussy that made lights flash behind her eyes as she

exploded uncontrollably. Quaking and moaning, she lost track of how many orgasms he gave her. Every time she thought she was coming back down, he would start up again.

When he finally removed his hand and ceased his actions, Liza took several breaths to steady herself. She could smell the scent of her own juices permeating the air around them.

"You're not the only one with oral skills, Thor." Sliding back down his body, she didn't stop until his hard cock was before her face. Using a single finger, she softly circled his tip, swirling his pre-come around the head, watching it leap and flex in response. He was impressive in length and size. The last time they were together, she didn't get a chance to truly admire all that he had to offer. It had been a rushed moment, no time for discovery.

Continuing on, Liza dragged her finger away from the tip of his shaft and down the large vein. She reached his sack and cupped the heaviness. Leaning down, she took them into her mouth and suckled them gently. When Thor spread his legs slightly, allowing her more room; she stroked the sensitive skin located at the bottom of his balls.

Thor groaned.

Shifting, Liza trailed her tongue back up the main vein. When she reached the crown once again, she gripped his length with her hand, and took him into her mouth. Bowing her head, she deep throated him.

He growled.

Liza continued. Her head bobbed up and down as she stroked his thick cock in her mouth with her tongue. Squeezing and pumping she massaged his hard shaft. She could taste the salty bit of his pre-come and he caused her arousal to rise again.

The slight trembling in his thighs was her signal that he was progressing close to his climax. Giving him one final suckle, she rose and crawled up his body.

"I want you inside of me, Thor. Do you have any objections?" She placed small kisses on his abdomen and then his chest. Hovering above him, she flicked one of his nipples.

Giving a quick intake of breath, Thor grabbed her shoulders. Pulling her toward him, he kissed her. Reaching

beside the bed, he retrieved a condom from his nightstand and handed it to her. "None. Unless you make me wait any longer."

After she placed the thin sheath over him, she smiled. Gripping his stiff cock, she guided him to her heated center. Pressing down, she spread her thighs wide and took him inside. Her breath caught as his thickness slipped along her walls. *Full and complete*. The words echoed in her mind. Gazing at Thor, she watched his face take on both an expression of rapture and peace as they paused for a moment.

Liza clenched her sex around his cock, causing him to open his eyes and look at her. Winking, he took hold of her waist and arched his hips up, burying himself to the hilt. Her eyes closed and her head tilted back at the deep impact. A sigh of exhilaration came out as she began to ride him.

Thor met each drop of her hips with an upward thrust. In and out, they moved as one, fulfilling each other's desire. Calling out words of adoration and encouragement, they took one another into ecstasy. The pressure of her budding orgasm made her body tense and the nerves connected to her skin come alive. Every brush of Thor's hands along her skin made her moan in pleasure. She knew it wouldn't be long until she was taken over. Up and down, she rotated and arched her hips, making sure that Thor finished with her.

"Touch yourself." Thor cupped both of her breasts, squeezing and pinching her nipples.

She had no issue with satisfying herself, but she'd never done it in front of anyone else. However, Thor challenged her. He made her want to step out of her normal mode and discover who she could be. Taking a chance, she lowered her hand down his abdomen until she reached her pussy. Her wetness surrounded them. She was amazed to feel how it coated them both and allowed their smooth glide. Touching her clit, she shuddered in response. It was sensitive and swollen, in need.

"Look at me," he commanded.

Opening her eyes, Liza stared into his heated blue pools. As she stroked the stiff bud, circling and flicking it, she noticed Thor was taking as much pleasure in her act from watching her. Her sex began to pulse and twitch against her hand and his cock as she raced toward a climax.

Her hips became more insistent, rocking and swaying, pumping and squeezing until finally she came. And came hard and wild, calling his name.

The only thing she was aware of outside her own rapture was Thor climaxing along with her. His heated essence filled her as his hands clutched her hips, holding her in place.

Collapsing onto his chest, Liza lay there listening to his rapid heartbeat until it calmed.

"I do so love to hear you call my name."

His voice rumbled in her ear.

She leaned up over him. "That's because you're a sexy *arrogant* man."

Kissing her on the tip of her nose, he said, "Don't forget cocky."

His semi-erect cock flexed inside of her, punctuating his words.

"Yeah, you've definitely got more than your fair share of that." She returned her head to his chest and heard his laughter rumble in her ear.

They lay in silence, until finally she sighed. It was time for her to go. She looked at him again. "Well, I have to leave."

"So soon?" Thor ran his fingers through her hair, pushing it away from her face.

"Yeah. That's why I was here early to tell you I couldn't stay long. We have our monthly internship meeting tonight so I need to go by campus before the children's home."

There was something reflected in the depth of his eyes, but Liza was afraid to hope for more with him. She still had a couple of hours before she had to be at the school, but it was time for her to go. Thor was an addiction. She needed to give herself some time away from him. Doubtful that she meant more to him than a good time, however, she had no regrets.

Getting up, she said, "Let's end this right this time." Sitting beside Thor, she bent forward and kissed him, putting all of her unspoken feelings and emotions into it.

As they parted, she rose. She quickly got dressed without looking at him. Finally, she slipped on her sandals and turned toward him. Eyeing his well-sculpted naked form in repose,

there was no longer any swelling around his knee. He would be back to work in a couple of days.

He pushed himself up to a sitting position against the headboard. "You take care of yourself, princess."

"You do the same, Thor." Smiling, she turned and left his house. Nothing else needed to be said.



## Chapter Six

"So, how's the MCL doing today?" Jack asked the next day when he stopped by Thor's house to drop off a dessert plate from his wife Betty. Taking the chair across from the couch, Jack sat down.

"Good. By tomorrow I should be about ninety percent." Thor rubbed a hand across the side of his knee. Most of the soreness had gone and he walked with only a slight limp. "Hopefully, I'll only have to ride the desk for a few days, then I can get back out to the field."

"Yeah? I'm surprised you lasted this long being a couch potato." Jack reached into the cooler beside the table, tossed Thor a beer and retrieved one for himself.

"So, am I," Thor chuckled and popped the top off his bottle.

"I guess it helped having company sitting with you while you recuperated." Jack opened his drink and guzzled some.

Thor was in the process of lifting his beer to his mouth when the understanding of Jack's words hit him. "Company...hmmm. Who told you?"

"Small town chatter." Jack confirmed and took another drink, eyeing Thor over the brown bottle's length.

Looking at Jack intently, Thor decided not to waste time beating around the bush. He and Jack had always been straight with each other. No need to change that now. "Yeah, Liza came by a few times."

Jack raised his eyebrow. "A few times? More like three to four hours a day," his friend corrected.

"Damn. That's not chatter, that's fuckin' special investigations."

Barking with laughter, Jack almost choked on a mouthful of beer. Wiping his lips and chin with the back of his hand, Jack

said, "Pretty much." He cleared his throat. "So, what's going on with you and Liza?"

"Nothing." He paused and stared down at his label. "I thought maybe something... but," he stopped again, sighed and took a sip of his beer, "I'm not what she wants."

"Are you sure?"

"Yup. She likes charity cases. Helping the helpless." He patted his knee in what he hoped was a nonchalant manner. "I was. Now, I'm not."

"What happened? Did that accident knock all the sense out of your damn thick skull?"

Thor was shocked by the forceful tone of his friend. He and Jack went way back and this was the first time he'd ever seen him this upset. "What's wrong with you? Liza and I are both adults. I didn't take advantage of your town princess if that's what's going around."

"No one's sayin' that." Jack barked. "This town cares too much for Liza to say anything that hurtful."

"Well, good." Now he was angry. Thor's beer made a loud *thunk* as he set it down on the table. "Because I care about her too, but she's the one who walked away and hasn't called or come by in two days."

"Have you called her?"

Jack's calm question knocked the wind out of his sails. "What?"

"Have you called her?" he asked again.

"No."

"I thought you said you two were adults."

"I am a fuckin' adult."

Standing, Jack grabbed both their beer bottles. "No time like the present to act like one."

"What makes you think that she wants more from me than a good time?" Thor asked.

"Women who want a good time don't lay on the side of the road in the dirt holding on to an unconscious man's hand. Nor do they spend all night in a hospital waiting for a guy to wake up if all they're looking for is a little fun." Jack turned and headed toward the kitchen.

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Jack's words hit him deep in the gut. *Liza had been there at the accident and with him at the hospital?* Thor watched his friend walk into the kitchen. He knew Jack was right. For the last two days, he'd been sulking around the house waiting for her to come by so he could talk to her. Tell her how he felt and that he cared for her. More than he ever wanted to.

Liza had waltzed her little sassy ass right into his heart. And damn it, he'd fallen for her hard. It was time for him to make the next move.

\* \* \* \*

"So, guys, this is our game plan."

Thor watched Glen Russell, the captain of the RACE team, walk over to the white board in the conference room they'd all been in for the past hour discussing the drug traffickers.

Popping the cap off a marker, Captain Russell began to make drawings that resembled a football diagram. "I spoke with Chief Dennison and Sheriff Pyle. We've all decided that our best plan of attack against these guys is a good solid roadblock." He turned back toward his men, waving the marker as he spoke. "There may only be one main interstate that runs through Claremont from Florida, but there are several ways to branch off it and travel around." Facing the board again, he made a few more X's and O's. "Now, these are the areas we will cover. As you can see we're goin' need all of the law enforcement workin' together at the same time to make this happen."

"Any questions?" Snapping the cap on the marker, he waited.

"Does this mean we all will be on duty every night until they come through here again?" Thor asked, leaning back in his chair in the first row and trying to ignore the pain in his ass from sitting in the hard plastic seat for so long. Add it to the nagging feeling in his knee, which only acted up when he sat still; he was more than ready for the session to end.

"Nope. The schedule will remain just as it is. The only difference is everyone will be on call. As soon as these guys are spotted, you need to get to your position point in record time." Captain Russell picked up a small stack of papers and passed them out to his team.

Thor glanced down at his copy of the town and city limits map. He sighed with relief when he located his name with a few more officers from the other two law enforcement departments. Since he was on desk duty this week, he'd been afraid they may have considered leaving him out of the detail.

"We're going to catch these guys and sooner or later they'll all learn to stay out of our county. If there's nothin' else, you all can go."

The room was silent. When all the men were dismissed, Thor stood to exit the room. It was his day off and he had his own plan of action to execute tonight.

"Officer Zeller," the Captain called out to him, halting Thor at the door.

Stepping to the side, Thor allowed his other teammates to pass. "Yeah, Captain?"

"I just wanted to check on how you were doin'?"

"I feel great. My leg gets a little stiff now and then, but I'm fine. I wouldn't jeopardize the team just to be part of the show."

Captain Russell eyed him for a moment. "Glad to here it." Extending his arm, he patted Thor on the shoulder. "You're still on desk for a while. But, whenever all this goes down, you're in."

"Thanks, Captain."

Thor waited until his boss left the room, then popped his cell phone out of his pocket and punched in a number.

\* \* \* \*

Liza heard Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 begin to play as she hustled across the campus of Florida State to her advisor's office. Pulling her cell phone out of its side pouch on her purse, she eyed the caller I.D. screen. Finally locating it, she smiled when she saw it was Thor. She'd given him her number one day while he was healing at home just in case he needed something. He'd never used it.

"Hello, Thor."

"Hi, princess. I want to see you tonight."

Damn, his deep voice sounded good. She'd missed him over the week. Purposely, she'd kept her distance from him since he'd gotten better, needing him to show her that this *relationship* of sorts wasn't one-sided. She was old-fashioned in a sense and desired him to make the next move. "I'm at school now, but I

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should be done in an hour or so. Then I just have a quick stop by the children's home and tell the kids goodbye. What time?"

"Can you come here when you finish?"

"Yes."

"I'll see you then."

They ended the call and she continued her brisk strut across campus with a little pep in her step. After she turned in her thesis to her professor, school would be complete.

\* \* \* \*

Two hours later, Liza walked out of the Sacred Hearts children's home. It amazed her how dark it was outside. She'd only been inside forty minutes and the moonless sky gave the area an eerie feel. For a moment, she considered returning inside and asking someone to walk her to the car, but knowing the counselors inside were already beyond the ratio of children to staff, she changed her mind and continued. Rounding the corner of the building, she headed in the direction of her car. When she parked earlier, there had only been a few spaces available in the back row; now an extended-cab truck was blocking the view of her convertible.

Anxious, she accelerated her pace, finally arriving at the pickup. She began to sigh with relief. Stepping around the flatbed, she froze. A few feet in front of her, a tall white man was sliding some type of car jacking tool along her window. Not waiting to be discovered, she pivoted on her rubber-soled flats and prepared to run back to the building for help.

"Well, what do we have here?" A short stocky dark-skinned black man called out as his hand gripped her forearm only two strides into her escape plan. In his other hand, he held a dark colored gym bag.

She'd missed the lookout guy because he'd blended into the night.

"I take it this must be your car, little lady," the tool man said from behind her.

Liza turned her gaze away from the short mountain, looked back at the tall tawny-haired man, and took note of the scar along his jaw. *Identification features*. "You can have the car. Please just let me go."

"I don't think so." The white man leaned his arm on the top of her now open driver's side door. Evidently, he was savvy enough to disarm her alarm system.

The blood in her arm began to throb around the place where the black man's hand held her like a manacle.

The dark mountain began to shove her toward the open door as he said, "You and Georgia plates are going to get us through the little speck on the map called Claremont."

*Claremont County.* Liza dug her heels into the ground and tried to pull her arm free. She didn't have to be a genius to realize who these guys were. What she didn't want was them to figure out who she was. That the very same town they wanted to drive through without trouble was her town. "Please, let me go. My family will miss me if I don't show up home soon."

Dropping the bag, the black man grabbed her other arm and pulled her closer to him. "Listen, lady, at this moment I don't give a fuck about your family. I've got an appointment on the other side of that shit kick'n town and I don't plan to miss it."

The other man stepped closer to them. "If you play nice then we'll let you go and you can drive to wherever home is, unharmed. If not...", the white man gave her a sadistic smile, then lowered his voice to barely a whisper. "Now, get your pretty little ass in the car before I start thinking of other ways to get you to cooperate."

The black man's barking laughter grated along her nerves as he released his hold and gave her a push toward the car. Silently, she crawled into the back seat and prayed she'd get out of this alive. Both men got into the front and closed their doors, sealing her fate.

\* \* \* \*

Thor leaned against the banister on his porch, watching the car lights pull into his driveway. Well over an hour ago, she'd called him and said she was getting ready to leave the children's home. He'd gone out and picked up food so they could have a quiet dinner and talk about their relationship or lack there of.

The ready smile on his face slowly disappeared when he realized it wasn't her, but one of his RACE team members.

"Thor!" Chris Payton called out as he launched himself out of his haphazardly parked car and raced toward him.

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Chuckling, he asked, "Is my house on fire, Chris?"

"It's the drug runners."

Instantly, the muscles in Thor's shoulders tensed, as he turned toward his front door. "I'm on my way, let me grab my gun and leave a note for—"

"They've got Liza."

His knees went weak and almost buckled. The only thing that saved him from hitting the ground was his grip on his front door. Thor looked over his shoulder at his teammate. "How in the hell did that happen? What happened to the fuckin' roadblock plan?" He rushed into his house for his gun.

Following him, Chris answered each question Thor volleyed at him. "They were drivin' her car. So, the block was never activated."

"How'd they get her car?" Thor slammed a full clip into his gun, then placed it into the holster on his thigh.

"We don't know." Chris trailed Thor out the door. "We would've missed them completely, but Dale got curious when he tried to flag her down for a greeting and she didn't stop. Then when he threw on his lights as a joke to get her to stop, her car sped up. That's when he got concerned and started following her. He called it in when he noticed she was looking out the back window."

Thor opened his new patrol car door. The whole team had started driving home every night awaiting the drug runners' return. None of them expected them to return like this. "Where are they now?"

"Claremont Wright Country Club in one of the Northern resort condos."

Thor didn't wait to hear anything else. He pulled across his front yard, drove over the sidewalk, and then pressed his pedal to full speed once he hit the street.

\* \* \* \*

"I want my daughter out of there now!" A man, who could only be recognized as the general by his mannerisms and dictatorial orders, stared down over half of the Claremont County law enforcement agency as Thor approached.

"How many people are in there with her?" Thor interjected to Chief Dennison and Captain Russell.

"Two." Captain Russell spoke first. "Dale saw them drag her out of the car and luckily the guest who stayed here checked out this mornin'."

"You're Thor." Squinting, the general assessed him as if trying to gauge his worth through his eyes. "Liza got help for you when you were injured some weeks back."

"Yes, sir," Thor answered automatically, even though it had not been posed as a question. He was no longer shocked about the small town communication system. "I'm going to get Liza out of there."

"I'm going to hold you to your word." With a quiet authority, the general walked through the crowd of cops who were parting before him.

Thor looked back at the two men in charge. "Do we have a diagram or sketch of this place?"

"Here you go, Thor." Danielle Smith, a petite black woman on the police force, passed him some papers.

"Thanks." He began scanning the diagram and looking for the best way to enter the house. The hairs on the back of his neck began to lift and his heart thumped forcefully in his chest as he slid back into the military training he'd received. This town wasn't prepared for a situation like this.

"Whatcha got, Thor?" Chief Dennison stepped closer to him.

Glancing up, Thor said, "I need two good officers to help me assess the house."

"They told us to stay away or they'd hurt her," Deputy Martin recited, his voice holding a slight tremor.

Thor didn't think for a moment that Deputy Martin wasn't scared, he knew the whole town was nervous about anything happening to Liza; one of their own. Their town's princess. He felt the same way, but he didn't have time to let his emotions set in, he needed to get Liza out of there. "You all have done a fine job of that. Now we need to get in there before those two men start to make rash, stupid mistakes and realize they are not getting out of Claremont. They think they're calling the shots and we're going to let them."

"Take Chris from RACE and—"

"I'll go."



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All eyes focused on Smith in surprise.

"Before you say no, Chief, remember, I'm fast and small. I can get into a lot of places all you big burly men can't."

Sighing, Chief began, "Now, Officer Smith, I know you—"

"I'll take her," Thor said. Within moments, he and the other two officers moved away from the group as Thor articulated his plan. "There are two men. They can't cover the whole house. I want to go around back and get a look into every crack and crevice. First person to find an opening or where everyone is in the house let me know."

When he received a nod from both Chris and Danielle, Thor led them out.

After twenty minutes of low crawling and sliding through the dirt to peep in the windows, Thor was the one to find Liza. She was sitting on the floor with her arms tied around the base of the toilet and a bandana across her mouth. The bathroom door was closed.

He reminded himself to stay focused. Even though he knew the armed runners were in the living room, arguing and talking with someone on a cell phone, he didn't want to alert Liza just yet. Instead, he moved to the front of the house and let Chris know what he'd discovered and to keep watch of the criminals. Signaling Danielle on the other side of the house to follow him, he waited until they were below the bathroom window to whisper to her what was going on.

Glancing up at the small window, Danielle smiled. He knew what she was thinking "There was no way in hell any of the men would have been able to squeeze through the window and cut Liza loose. But she could.

Thor finally got Liza's attention as he used a knife from the Leatherman on his belt and began working quickly against the window's lock. When Liza's gaze met his, he silently tried to communicate to her that everything would be okay.

When the pane slid quietly across the track, he placed his finger over his lips to tell Liza not to make a sound. Stooping down, he laced his fingers together to give Danielle the boost she needed. Like butter, Danielle slipped through the narrow window with ease. Thor held the petite officer's feet as she placed her

hands on the floor, then tucked her head and rolled as he released her.

Danielle stood up, grabbed the knife he handed her, then squatted, making quick work of what he soon discovered was duct tape binding Liza's arms. Pulling the bandana from her mouth, Liza wasted no time in stepping into Danielle's braced hands and crawling out of the window into Thor's awaiting arms.

He seized her tightly to his frame for a moment and felt the trembling in her body. Placing a kiss on her forehead, he moved her to the side as he assisted Danielle out. Gazing into Liza's beautiful hazel eyes, he wanted to hold her again, but he knew now was not the time. Grabbing Liza's hand, he placed it into the female officer's, then directed them into the wooded area behind the house and before signaling the other law enforcement personnel to come in.

It was clean up time.

\* \* \* \*

"Daddy!" Liza ran into her father's arms and finally allowed the tears to flow that she'd been holding back since the moment the drug men had shoved her into the back seat of her own car. Once the first tear slid out of her eyes, it was like Niagara Falls.

"Liza, baby, I thought I'd go mad waiting for them to get you out of there." He squeezed her tight and rubbed her back.

"Hey, squirt, I thought you'd grown out of finding trouble."

Stepping out of her father's embrace, she turned and looked at her brother Robert. "I've more than learned my lesson now." She gave him a watery smile and allowed him to pull her into a hug.

She didn't know how long she stood in the huddle with her father and brother, not wanting to pay attention to action going on at the club condo.

"How can I ever thank you?"

Her father's question and the tingling sensation running down her spine alerted her to who approached them. Turning, she watched Thor move toward them; his gaze swiped her from head to toe, assessing, before glancing at her father.

"Sir, there's no thanks needed," Thor confirmed and shook the hand her father extended to him. "There wasn't any other option for me except getting Liza out of there."

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Her heart accelerated as she listened to his words. She wondered if he saved her because it was his duty or because of his heart.

Thor turned to her again. "Ms. Wright, the drug runners have been taken into custody. We know you're tired, but Chief Dennison would really like you to come in tonight and give your statement while everything is fresh."

"Don't you think tomorrow would be—" her father began.

Laying a hand on her father's arm, she gave him a reassuring smile. "Dad, I'm alright. I'll go tonight, if Officer Zeller doesn't mind taking me in with him." She cut her eyes to Thor.

"How'll you get home? The police will need your car for evidence," Robert her law conscious brother chimed in.

"I'll make sure she gets there," Thor announced, looking at the men in her family.

Her father's heavy sigh let her know that he wasn't in agreement, but he nodded. She kissed him on the cheek and hugged her brother one more time before walking away with Thor.

## Chapter Seven

"Are you sure this is where you want to be, Liza?" Thor asked when they walked into his house after leaving the police station.

Strolling into the center of the room, Liza allowed her hand to brush along the furniture in his house. She needed to touch things and feel alive.

Turning, she stared at Thor, who hadn't moved from his place by the closed door. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed, strong and handsome Thor. For hours she had wondered if she'd ever hear his voice again, feel the restrained strength as she glided her hands along his skin. *Thor*. "Yes."

She began to undo the buttons of her blouse. "May I use your shower?"

He intense gaze watched her hands as they worked the fastenings of her shirt, then her slacks.

His eyes lifted and met hers. "Yes. I'll get you a towel." Leaving his position, he crossed the carpeted floor and pulled her into his arms.

Sliding her hands up his broad back, she enjoyed the sense of safety that only Thor made her feel.

Rising on her toes, she kissed his chin, then stepped away and moved to the bathroom. She removed her clothes, got into the shower, and thoroughly bathed herself. Liza made sure to clean away every place the two men had touched her. She was thankful that she hadn't been raped, but she still felt filthy.

When she exited the bathroom, Thor entered it saying, "I'll be out in a minute. I think I have half of Claremont County's soil on my clothes. I put some sweats and a t-shirt on the bed so you could have something to wear home."

"Thanks." She padded her towel-clad body down the hall to his room.

## APPREHENSION

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"What are you doing, Liza?" Thor didn't even attempt to keep the shock out of his voice when he walked into his room, saw Liza standing next to his bed, handcuffed to the post, and bare as the day she was born.

Her hazel eyes were dark with anxiety as they stared at him. "Thor, I need you."

"Okay, princess, that's all you had to say and I wouldn't have taken you home. You didn't have to bind yourself to my bed." He crossed the room with only the towel around his waist.

"Yes, I did. For three hours of my life I was held prisoner and tied to a toilet not knowing what those two assholes would do to me."

The sadness in her eyes pulled at him.

"Why the cuffs, baby?" Reaching toward her, he caressed her shoulder.

"The shower cleaned the outside but now my soul needs to be renewed and reminded that I'm safe. Free, even with these." She shook the little chain between her wrists. "I want you to make love to me, Thor."

He didn't try to understand her, he just responded to the desperation he heard in her voice and the need in her eyes. Stepping up behind her, Thor stroked her shoulders, kneading the tight muscles.

The tension receded from her body and Liza's head bowed forward, allowing him to place kisses along her neck. Soft pecks and light licks, he coaxed her to relax even more. Where they touched, he wasn't sure which one of them was trembling more. Liza wasn't the only one who needed cleansing. He'd been afraid tonight, something he'd never experience in his military career, but it took everything in him not to freeze under the paralyzing feeling. Everything that could've gone wrong in trying to get her out of that condo had haunted him every minute.

Yeah, this was for them both.

Lowering his hands down her sides, he was amazed and thankful for her small frame. Resting his hand on her waist, barely larger than the span of his hand, he held her and breathed in her scent. Freshly scrubbed, there was no scent of peaches, melons or honeysuckle. This time it was Liza's natural scent. She

smelled like home. A place he wanted her to be for the rest of his life, but this was not the time for the conversation, it was time for healing her.

Circling her waist, he guided his fingers through the hair covering her sex and slipped between her legs. Without direction, she widened her stance and he became aware of her level of arousal.

Wet and stiff. The swollen lips of her pussy were open, revealing her distended clit. Grasping her hip with his other hand, he pulled her back against his hard length and let her know she wasn't the only one affected. No, his blood pumped forcefully into his dick.

Her wet heat covered his hand as he stroked her cunt. Pulling against the cuffs, she arched her back to him and ground her sexy ass into his stiff shaft.

"Thor, please don't make me wait. Not tonight."

"Never, baby." Snatching the towel from around his waist, he didn't care where it landed. Pressing a hand in the center of her back, he directed her into a low position.

Bowing his head, he did what she'd requested of him before and kissed both of her ass cheeks. He heard her passionate giggle at the attention he gave to her bottom as he made patterns along her skin. Moving lower, he licked her. Sliding his tongue through the honey spiced juices of her pussy, relishing her taste.

She opened wider.

Circling and flicking her clit, he heard her moan as her hips began to make erratic movements. Drawing the kernel into his mouth, he alternated between suckling and licking until she climaxed.

Dragging his tongue through her sweet cream, he rose and took hold of his cock. Angling himself against her heat, he slid inside of her tight sheath. She cried out as he entered her and the spasms of her orgasm pulled him in deeper. Tilting his head back, he closed his eyes and enjoyed the erotic peace that came over him every time he joined with her.

"More, Thor." She pressed back, seating him in the depths of her delicious sex. "Don't stop."

Gripping her hips, he extended his stance and began to thrust. She met him each time as she pressed her ass into his

hips. Grinding his teeth, he rode her hard, making a concerted effort to remove the night's event from both of their minds. It was just him and her, nothing else mattered.

The pressure in his balls as they tightened let him know his climax was imminent. But, he didn't want them to end this way. He needed to look into her eyes, the hazel pools that had captivated him the first time he saw them.

Pulling out, he took note of his glistening red angry dick making small jerks of disapproval after leaving her snug heat.

Shifting positions, he sat on the edge of the bed, moved inside the circle of her arms, and lifted her body until she straddled his lap.

Her beautiful eyes assessed him.

Smiling, he brushed her hair over her shoulders. "Now, we're ready to finish this."

Spreading her thighs, she availed herself to him as he entered her. Together gazing at each other, they journeyed into an orgasm that left them both speechless and shaken.

\* \* \* \*

"Well, Zeller, I was wondering when you'd show up."

Thor stared at Liza's father across the threshold of their family house. Wondered how long it would take the Major General to kick him off his property. When he'd met him last night, there was no mistake that Liza was daddy's little girl. Thor was sure her father knew what time he'd brought Liza home as well.

Observing the older man who still stood ramrod straight with his hair cut to military standards, Thor said, "Hello, General Wright."

"Thanks again for going in there and getting my daughter. No kind of planning can beat military training. I spoke with Dennison and Russell last night about you instructing Claremont County's law enforcement agencies."

Thor sized up the other man. Did he really want to be standing in a classroom instead of out in the field? He wasn't sure, but one thing he knew was having General Wright in his corner in this town would go a long way. Not to mention the future he hoped to have with Liza. "Thanks, sir."

"None needed. Come in." The older man stepped back allowing Thor to enter. "I'm sure you haven't come out here to discuss your career with me."

Respecting General Wright enough to give him direct eye contact, he said, "No, sir. I was hoping to speak with Liza." All that talking he'd done with Jack about being an adult. Now, he felt like a teenager standing before this man.

"I'll get her. You're welcome to wait in the library." He gestured to his left as he headed up the stairs leading to the second level.

Thor turned toward the library. Entering it, he walked around the spacious room, picking up a few books and thumbing through them just to give himself something to do besides tap his fingers.

"Thor?"

The breathy sound of Liza's voice calling his name drew his attention. It had only been a few hours, but it felt longer. She stood in the doorway looking as beautiful as the last time he'd seen her. However, this was the first time he'd seen her in pants. She was casually dressed in tan khakis and a button-down blue shirt. As always, another designer pair of sandals graced her feet.

Replacing the book on the shelf, he stepped over to her. "Sorry to just drop by, but I needed to talk to you."

"About what?" She pushed her hair back behind her ear.

*Is she nervous as I am?*

Looking at the open door, he asked, "Can we talk in private?"

Catching his hint, she shut the door.

As soon as she had the door closed, he stepped to her, pulled her into his arms and kissed her. When her lips opened under his, he slipped his tongue into her mouth, sliding it across hers. Joining in, her tongue circled his. Her lips sealed around it and she began to suckle him as she'd done his cock before.

His penis leaped in remembrance. Thor pulled back, his breath labored. "Why didn't you tell me you were with me after the accident?"

"Because, Thor, if I told you that, then I'd have to tell you I'd fallen in love with you at that moment, when I thought you weren't going to make it."



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Thor's heart swelled. He'd never met anyone like her before. "I've judged you so wrong. Then last night, I almost lost you."

"I know." Her words were softly spoken, but clear.

A dry chuckle came out. "Liza, I didn't come to this town looking for love." He planted a kiss on the center of her forehead. "I just wanted peace from all the things I'd seen and experienced while I was in the military."

She wrapped her arms around his waist. "So, have you found what you were looking for?"

"No." He began moving backwards until he reached the couch, sitting down he pulled her onto his lap. "Instead, I found a little hellion who invaded my every thought, whether I was awake or asleep. Then ultimately took over my heart."

She batted her eyes at him playfully. "I haven't the foggiest idea who you're talkin' about."

Swatting her on the ass, he said, "You. I'm talking about you, Princess Liza."

Liza wiggled, until she settled more comfortably in his lap. "You know, I think I'm getting used to that name."

"Hmm." His hand traveled underneath her shirt and rested on the bare skin of her midriff. "Do you think you could get used to living with me?"

Her eyes became large as she stared at him. "I believe I could."

"How about Liza Zeller?"

Realizing what he was asking her, she began raining kisses over his face.

"Is that a yes?"

Pulling back she asked, "Are you sure you want to be stuck with such a *hellion*?"

"Without a doubt. Besides, it's my job to apprehend all reckless drivers on the road." He pressed his rising cock against her ass.

"Wise guy." She swatted his shoulder. "But, I do like the way you think, Officer Zeller." She ground her hips against him.

"I'd show you exactly what I was thinking if you hadn't picked today to wear pants and your father wasn't on the other side of that door."

She laughed, "You know doors can be locked and pants can be taken off."

Thor groaned. "I know, but I need to be able to make you scream my name and I'd hate for the general to come in here with guns blazin'."

"So, what do you suggest?" Her voice became low and throaty.

"How about tomorrow I come by and speak with your father?"

"That's a great idea. I guess I can wait until then." She gave an exaggerated sigh. "You can have Sunday dinner with my family." She started to rise. "I'll start packing today."

Tugging her back down, Thor asked, "You wouldn't be a little anxious, would you?"

Unfastening her pants, she grabbed his hand and slid it down the front. "What do you think?" Liza asked as he reached inside of her underwear.

Her hot wet pussy saturated his fingers. "Let's ask the general if he has any empty boxes for you to pack. Now."

Moaning she pressed herself against his hand. "I thought you'd see things my way."

"And you're about to see stars, Princess," Thor told her as he pushed his hand down further. When he slipped two of his fingers into her damp sex, he pressed his lips to hers, trying to quiet her cries of ecstasy.

APPREHENSION

# ARRESTED HEART

## Chapter One

"Ohhh," Danielle sighed.

She would not have been shocked if her pussy caught fire at that moment. Every ounce of blood in her legs had pooled between her thighs and pulsed in her clit as her loving admirer worshiped her with his mouth. He'd wasted no time in pushing her feet toward the roof of her squad car and spreading her legs. She was his delectable feast and he was thoroughly enjoying the main course with the avid attention of his mouth.

His tongue teased her as it slid along her slit. She would never cease to be impressed by the strength and agility of it. Palming the back of his head, she pushed him closer to the place yearning for him. His mouth drew on the lips of her sex, then circled around her clit and sucked it, making her toes curl.

Biting down on her bottom lip, she attempted to stifle her moans. Soon, recalling that there was no one else around on the south end of the Claremont Wright Country Club golf course at three in the morning, she let her sounds of ecstasy free. Coaxing and praising his oral talent.

"Oh, baby that feels so good," she cried as he swept his tongue from her ass to the throbbing nub.

His open-mouth kiss of her whole pussy made her grip a fistful of his hair and yell, "Don't stop!"

She could tell his arousal level had increased along with hers by the intense heat of his tongue. When they'd begun, his tongue had been warm, a small contrast to the night air, but now it was as if she were being licked by a flame and she loved every minute of it.

Strong fingers stroked her juicy center, then one pressed against the puckered skin of her ass letting her know what was to come. Excited, she pushed against it, encouraging him to proceed. When it entered, her clit felt as if it had swollen ten

times its size, almost painful. Her thighs began to shake. Her orgasm was imminent.

Torn between wanting to come and wanting the sensations to last forever, she was losing her mind. Giving in to the pleasure, she let herself go, fucking both his mouth and finger. He was the only one who could do this to her, the only one who had ever done this to her; willingly she fell into an erotic insanity.

Coming hard, she screamed and heard a bird respond somewhere in the distance. As orgasmic spasms still shuddered through her body, her lover moved up her torso.

Feeling drugged, she stared into his hazel eyes. Her gaze traveled the distinct angles of his face, his summer tan barely visible in the low glow of the interior car light.

He brushed the back of his hand along her cheek. "You are beautiful and delicious," he said, her scent a pungent sweet spice mingling with his breath.

Leaning up, she kissed him, sliding her tongue into his mouth, tasting *them* and loving the mixture. She broke away. "Said the spider to the fly," she answered, smiling.

Chuckling, he slipped his thick cock inside of her, making her breath catch. His size may have been impressive, but his use of it always left her begging for more. Stretched and full, she squeezed his ass and urged him on. Being intimate with him consumed her. She felt at peace. Whole.

Rotating his hips, he stroked the sensitive spot inside of her, along her upper wall. Arching her back and undulating her hips against him, she matched his movements. The air caressed her breast as he pushed the sides of her uniform shirt aside and her bra up. He continued to thrust, as he brought his head down and gave each breast his attention. The sucking and caressing of each nipple caused tingling sensations to race along her skin and her clit began to ache.

His thrusts became more insistent as he buried his face in the curve of her neck. Wrapping her arms around his broad shoulder, she enjoyed his weight on her body and felt his trembling echo her own as they both progressed rapidly toward completion.

Muscles bunching and tensing under her hands, he climaxed. His release sparked her own, and she saw stars for the second time that night. "Robert!" she shouted in ecstasy.

"Danielle...you turn me inside...out," he panted.

Giggling, she danced her fingernails along his bare back. She didn't know at what point he'd lost his t-shirt before joining her in the car, nor did she care.

After a quick kiss, he pulled away and dragged his body back out of the open door. "So tell, sweetheart." He adjusted his clothes. "Do all cops get aroused during rescue missions and apprehending bad guys? Or just you?" Reaching up he pulled his shirt from the roof of the car and put it on, giving her a wicked smile that made his eyes dance in the moonlight.

Sitting up, her face became hot. Not because of embarrassment, but because she remembered just how aroused she'd been. Standing, she ran her hands down the buttons of his now fastened shirt. "I don't know. Neither do I care as long as I'm the only cop you're satisfying."

"Only you." He laughed. "When would I have time for anyone else? You're insatiable."

"I like to keep it that way." Yanking her sports bra back down over her breasts, she began looking around for her panties. She'd hate to lose them on the perfectly manicured golfing green and have them turned in to the authorities and her cream get analyzed for DNA identification. In Claremont County, people weren't expected to have scandalous sex in public. It was in the unwritten rulebook. It was bad enough her squad car would already leave tire tracks.

"In a few hours this course is going to be crawling with men." Robert tucked his shirt into his slacks.

"Yeah, old retired men and social climbers." Spotting her underwear on the other side of the back seat, she turned and bent forward to reach for them. "So, what are your plans for the remainder—"

If the loud smack of hand on flesh wasn't enough to grab her attention, the stinging warmth radiating from her right ass cheek did. Her spine tightened instantly, and heat danced down from her bottom straight to her pussy and ignited in her clit. She

dipped her back lower and offered her plump dark ass to the moon and Robert. "*Please*," she panted.

Obliging her, his hand made contact again, this time on the other cheek.

"*Morre*," she planted her feet in a firmer stance and leaned back expectantly. Regardless of the two orgasms he'd just given her, her sex began to pulse again and become drenched with moist excitement. Until this moment, she hadn't missed their usual play before intercourse. Now she almost regretted her pleas for him to take her when he'd shown up at the twentieth hole.

Dragging her out of the car, he pushed her against the door, her hanging pants cushioning her back.

"You want more?" His body was flushed to hers and his glorious hands stroke her stinging bottom.

As if she were an alley cat in heat, she rubbed her body over his and her sensitive nipples beaded in response. "Robert, you know I do." He couldn't miss the trembling of her body, she wanted the erotic play that only Robert could give her.

"Then come home with me," he demanded.

She buried her face on his chest and mumbled, "You know I can't."

"Yes. If you really wanted to, you could."

The sadness in his voice was almost her undoing, but she knew she had to stand firm. "Like you said, Robert, it will be morning soon. If your neighbor's see—"

Stepping back, he lifted her chin, raising her gaze to his as his thumb stroked her bottom lip.

She was lost in his hazel eyes.

"I don't care about what my neighbors or Claremont County sees—"

Moving away, she kept her back to him as she put her panties on. "I know you don't, but I do." Facing him, she snatched her pants off the door. "I'd like to keep my job." Pulling on her forest green pants, she attacked the button of her tan shirt next as she slid her feet in her shoes.

"Danielle—" Moving toward her, he still towered over her.

She was five seven in her thick soled patent leather shoes, but she would never measure up to his six foot frame.

"No, Robert, we're not going to debate this. As you said, in a couple hours this place is going to be packed. It's Saturday morning and you should be out here with them. You're trying to make partner at the law firm—"

He grabbed her hand, bringing it to his mouth. "Being in a relationship with you isn't going to jeopardize my chances at the firm."

Smiling at the brush of his lips on skin, she pleaded, "Can we talk about this some other time? I need to get some rest. I have to be back to work in a few hours."

His sigh was audible. "Fine." He wrapped his arms around her, and bowing his head, he kissed her.

His tongue mastered her mouth, sliding deep, consuming her. When he pulled away, she was breathless.

"This conversation is suspended, but it's not over." His hazel eyes were intense as they stared into hers.

She nodded, too relieved to let the subject of them be put on hold.

Taking her hand again, he led her around to the driver's side. "Now, it's time for you to go before the retirees show. My dad included."

That was all she needed to hear. The last person she wanted to find her and Robert together was Major General Wright, the man whose family had been one of the original founders of the town. She opened the door and slid behind the wheel. "I'll talk to you later."

"Maybe we can do dinner."

Starting the car, she rolled the window down and shut the door. "We'll see. I don't know how the night is going to pan out, especially after last night's events with the drug runners."

"Call me when you get off."

"Promise." She pulled away, noting the change of color taking place on the horizon. Morning would be here soon. Driving toward the authorized vehicle exit at the end of the course, she glanced in her rearview mirror and saw Robert's silhouette become more obscure. There was no mistaking it, Robert knew she was making excuses. However, she would keep making them until he realized their relationship had to remain just how it had been for the last eight months. A secret.



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\* \* \* \*

Robert watched Danielle's car lights fade as she left the golf course. Running his hands over his head, he exhaled the pent-up air in his lungs. Turning around, he started on his one-mile hike toward the main building of the golf course, where he'd parked his car.

He didn't know what he was going to do about his relationship with Danielle. A year ago, he'd moved back to his hometown after finally finishing law school at William and Mary and passing the bar. It had been seven years since he'd lived in Claremont County. He'd only come home for holidays and didn't stay long then. Now, he was back for good. This town was his roots, where he and his sister Liza had been raised. His great-grandparents had helped the other four founders build this town. They bought a little bit of property at a time until Claremont was its present size. Which wasn't saying much with its two thousand four-hundred and three citizens.

Taking care of the legal issues in Claremont was easy, but handling Danielle was another issue.

He remember the moment he'd seen her again after eight years, when he'd stopped into Juice Sips, the only smoothie bar and Internet café in town. He'd just finished his lunchtime workout at the gym and was headed back to work after picking up a protein shake. The sexiest pair of brown legs were swinging underneath a corner table. When he'd followed the cinnamon length to a narrow waist, full breast and a face from his past, he'd almost dropped his drink.

Danielle Smith had sat there engrossed in a book as she sipped her drink. He didn't know if she felt his gaze or heard him whisper her name, but when she looked up it was as if time had stood still. They were back at her school's Memorial Day dance during his senior year. He and a few of his friends had traveled up for the festivities and stopped into the dance, cruising for girls. Meeting the Nubian beauty had sparked a romance. They met and every other weekend after that the two of them snuck away to be with each other. Driving her little beater, she'd meet him at a hotel on the outskirts of Lowndes County. She never let him pick her up. When the summer ended, he'd left for college.

They'd called it a summer fling, but by Christmas he'd known it was more. His feelings were deep, but when he got home his freshmen year and made inquiries about a Danielle Smith among his friends in Valdosta, no one knew her. He arrived at his car. Disregarding the first employees of the Claremont Wright Country Club who were starting to ready the green and prepare breakfast, he pondered his current relationship with Danielle.

A month after he'd met her in the smoothie café, they'd begun sleeping together again. Or having incredible sex was more like it. They'd always experimented as teenagers with their sexuality, but their bumbling ignorance didn't compare to what they did now. Sex with Danielle always made him feel like an ocean wave had knocked him flat. He loved to dominate in the bedroom and Danielle was his perfect equal, she loved to be dominated. He only wished that outside of lovemaking he could command her as easily. She called the shots.

Once again, they were hiding, but this time he refused to lose her or what they had.

Backing out of the parking lot, he headed home to shower and get some rest.

\* \* \* \*

"Hey, Smith, are you doing the 5K run in two weeks to help raise money for the police department's booth at the Fourth of July festival?" Mark Brantley, a tall mountain of a man with freckles and red hair that didn't match his physique, asked when she walked into their small station.

Danielle hung up her hat, then dropped her purse in her desk drawer and faced Brantley. "Of course, Brantley, anything for a good cause and I'm there."

Brantley jotted her name down on the paper. "You know, Chief Dennison was also looking for someone to sell raffle tickets at the town center by the clothing stores." The sarcastic smile gave away his intent. "I told him you could do it easily while you were out shopping."

The male officers and the other female officers joined in on the laughter. Danielle was used to being harassed because she wore a little makeup and kept her nails manicured, but short. There were three female officers on the police force and one in

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the sheriffs department and all the others were rougher in both appearance and mannerism. Her fellow cops always questioned her decision to be on the force. Sometimes she wasn't sure. She'd always wanted to make a difference, but being an officer wouldn't have been it.

Allowing her co-workers their moment of joviality, her mind drifted to her life eight years ago. By the end of her senior year in high school, she felt like a bird without a nest. Needing to get away from home and take care of herself, she grabbed the first opportunity that came her way. The Atlanta police department had collaborated with a community college to provide an associate's degree in criminal justice as long as the eligible candidates agreed to attend the academy and promise two years to any of the high crime rate departments. After three years working the inner city of Atlanta, she found out Claremont County had an opening and put in for a transfer.

She'd been content in this town for a year, until Robert returned.

Focusing once again on Brantley, she stepped toward his desk. "Ha! Your humor makes me laugh to the point I could vomit." She rubbed her stomach. "Is that your lunch box there?" Leaning towards it she pretended to get sick.

Snatching his Spiderman container away from her reach, he growled, "Stop playing around people's food, Danielle."

Shimmying her shoulders, she said, "Oh, it's Danielle now. Watch it, Mark. I might think you're sweet on me."

Danielle and the rest of the day team laughed as Mark's face started to match his hair color.

"Don't give her a hard time, Brantley," the chief barked, his words rough and gravelly from years of smoking. "She might keep herself model pretty, but she'll be the one to squeeze into a bathroom window to save your big ass. If someone ever found a way to hold you hostage." Chief Dennison walked up, causing the room to fall silent and the onlookers to begin fumbling around their desk to look busy.

Brantley grumbled, but kept his mouth shut.

Danielle hid her smile behind her hand.

"Glad to see you're well rested, Smith." Chief Dennison moved in front of her, his massive shoulder, almost as wide as Brantley's, blocked her view of everyone else behind him.

"Thanks, Chief, for allowing me to come in a few hours late. It was just what I needed." She was glad he didn't know she'd spent her free hours having sex on the course instead of in her bed. For a moment, she wondered if he would've been pissed about how she used her time, but pushed it aside. Even if she had been caught, feeling Robert inside of her was always worth it.

"Is the moon still orbitin' earth?"

"What?" Danielle cleared her throat. "Sir? I'm sorry I didn't hear you."

"That was evident." His eyes squinted as he viewed her. "I said, the two men are bein' transported to Tallahassee tonight. I want you, Brantley and Willis to take 'em down. You up to it?"

She was supposed to meet with Robert tonight, but for the first time Chief Dennison seemed to be recognizing her existence. Since the day she showed up for work, she'd known the department hadn't been expecting her. Danni Smith, as she'd been called at her last unit, a decorated officer in Atlanta must not have appeared to be a black woman on paper. "Yes, sir."

"Good. I'll let you all know what time. I'm waitin' on word from the other end." Turning, he started to head back to his office, then stopped. "By the way, Smith, you stepped up last night into a situation that could have turned deadly." He eyed her petite frame as if assessing her worth as a cop with new eyes. "Good work."

"Thanks, sir." She watched him walk away. Sitting down in her rolling chair, she didn't attempt to hide the bold smile on her face. Someone whistle softly, and turning her head, Danielle glanced at Mandy Franklin, the other female cop.

Mandy licked her finger and made a mark in the air.

Nodding, Danielle let the other woman know she understood. By her heroic actions last night, she had not only brought recognition to herself but the other female officers on the force. The women were finally on the scoreboard. In a small town like Claremont, opportunities didn't come around often.

With hummingbirds of excitement buzzing in her stomach, Danielle pulled out her caseload and started working.

## Chapter Two

Robert shuffled the documents on his desk. Tomorrow he needed to stop by the courthouse to drop off some papers. As a family and property lawyer in Claremont County, he didn't get many grand cases, but they were usually time-consuming. Getting married was easy. However, once people added in money and children, things got complicated fast.

"Alright, Wright, I'm outta here." Lincoln Knowles, one of two senior partners, called from the door, chuckling at the humorous play on his name. "Margaret's made my favorite dinner and I don't like cold steak."

He glanced at the older man, one of his dad's best friends, and took note of his immaculate state of dress. It was late, but Lincoln's jacket was still on, his tie was straight and in place, not to mention the few strands of hair gracing the top of the man's head hadn't moved since nine o'clock that morning. Knowles appearance was a complete reversal of his own.

"I don't think there's a red-blooded male who does." Robert's own stomach growled.

Knowles laughter rumbled in the room. "I guess you bes' be gettin' out soon, too. Otherwise, your stomach's goin' to start eatin' you from the inside out."

"I can't let that happen." Robert rubbed his vociferous belly. "I'll call an order into Smokie or Jack Rabbit Pizza before I head home."

Scratching the stubble on his jaw, Knowles sighed. "See, that's what's wrong with you single guys, too much bad eatin'."

"Long hours at work, then longer hours over a hot stove, not for me." Robert settled back in his chair.

"That's because you need to get you a wife."

Robert groaned.

Knowles continued. "On Saturday, the general and I were talking about that on the green."

*I bet you all were.*

"You know, Stephanie Maxwell has blossomed out to be quiet a lady."

"Has she. I can't say that I've noticed," he lied. Stephanie had made sure he noticed every aspect of her surgically perfected body, at every turn. "She's been my sister's best friend since childhood. Snaggletooth Stephie is all I see when I look at her."

"Well, that's a shame." Knowles shook his head. "Take a better look the next time you're around her."

"I'll try to remember," Robert replied, not committing to anything, especially when it came to Stephanie.

"A man starting out in his career needs to have roots, family." Not waiting for a response, Knowles turned and left.

Leaning forward, Robert ran a hand around the back of his neck and squeezed. Knowles didn't say anything to him that he hadn't said to himself over the last few months. He was ready for a wife, more than ready, but he doubted if the woman he wanted to marry would want him. He probably should set his sights on Stephanie. She'd at least be an easy catch. However, he didn't desire Stephanie. Not because of the reason he'd given Knowles, but with Stephanie what you saw was exactly what you got. There was no depth to her.

Danielle. She had depth and layers that he'd yet to peel back. Just thinking her name stirred places deep inside of him that not only made his cock come to attention, but squeezed his heart. Sitting back in his chair, he dragged a hand through his hair. She was supposed to call him Saturday but hadn't. Sunday nights he always spent with his family, but when he got home, he'd been greeted by the delicious sound of her voice on his answering machine wishing him a good night.

Refocusing on the affidavits in front of him, he attempted to keep himself from clock watching.

When Kenny Roger's *The Gambler* began to play, Robert reached over and grabbed his cell phone as it blinked and bounced around on the side of his desk.

Reading the name in the screen, he answered. "Hi, beautiful."

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"Hi yourself."

Danielle's soft husky whisper caused his blood flow to head directly south. "Are you still at work?"

"No, I'm in the parking lot of Duncan and Knowles."

Springing from his seat, he crossed the carpet to the window and pushed the blinds back to see Danielle sitting in her burgundy Altima. His office window faced the back of the building. The parking lot was his only view. It was empty except for Danielle's car next to his midnight blue F-150.

She waved and he smiled.

"Do you want me to come out?" He stared at her across the twenty-five foot gap.

Shaking her head, she opened her car door. "No, I want to come inside and play." Standing beside her car, she waited. "May I?"

The erotic indications in her voice and the view of her standing in a light orange summer dress with her hair still pinned back in her normal work style made heat race down his spine. It let him know she'd rushed to change, he hoped in anticipation to see him.

"Undress."

"Out here?" she asked, a slight hesitation apparent in her words. Her head turned slightly to the left looking at the parking lot's single entryway, then returned toward him.

"Yes. Complete nudity is your access pass. Will you pay it?" He knew this request was bold, but they had done things that made this simple request minimal in nature. All of the other times had been in the privacy of one of the hotels in a neighboring county, except the night she'd asked him to have sex with her on the golf course. That had added another arena to their playing field.

Danielle didn't respond, instead she closed her cell phone.

He watched her as she turned back toward her car. At first, he thought she'd decided to go home, but he noticed she pulled a small rolling case from her backseat. Then moved to the front of her car, she paused and glanced around again.

Her slight nervousness heightened his level of arousal.

Looking directly at him, she slipped the tiny straps of her dress off her shoulders. His dick twitched to life. Pushing and

wiggling, the garment moved down the length of her small luscious frame. The sight of her bare breast bouncing with the movement of her body thickened his shaft to an almost unbearable degree. Soon he would need to undo his slacks.

Stepping out of the dress, she placed it in a simple fold on top of the bag. Clad only in panties and white sandals, she settled into her roll of seductress. Smiling, she turned, giving him her profile as she hooked her thumbs in the side of her pearl white underwear. The pale color next to her cinnamon skin made his mouth water to taste the hidden treasure behind the lacy material.

Bending forward, she pulled her feet out of the leg holes and gave him a delicious view of her round plump ass. One he'd enjoyed being inside many times. Lowering his hand, he stroked his hard length behind the stretched fabric of his pants.

Dialing her number, he called her as she deposited her underwear on her dress.

"Leave the heels," he instructed when she answered. "Come to me."

"I'm close to that already." Her giggle was breathy, letting him know she was just as aroused.

"Can't wait to see." He snapped his phone shut, then walked to the back door of the firm.

Strutting to the door with confidence, Danielle walked as if she were an executive strolling through the airport to catch a flight. She paused before him. "Do I meet the pay requirement?"

Lowering his eyes to her erect chocolate nipples, he said, "And then some." Winking, he asked, "What's with the bag?"

Moving through the open door so he could close it, Danielle pressed her body against his. "I thought you might want something to eat."

"You were right. But, at this moment what's between your legs seems more appealing than whatever you have in that bag."

Laughing, her hands slid up the front of his shirt, squeezing the muscles of his chest as she passed. When her hand wrapped around the back of his neck, she pulled him down to her.

Placing her lips on his, she kissed him deeply and passionately. She nipped at his bottom lip until he opened for her and permitted her tongue entrance. Dueling with her, his tongue conquered and entered her mouth. He took command of the kiss



and her body. Pulling her closer, his hands circled her small waist, loving the supple warmth of her skin.

Venturing lower, he cupped her firm ass, holding her in place along his hard length. His hand moved down between her thighs and stroked her pussy, discovering her words had been true, she was soaking wet. The exhibition had turned her on as much as it did him.

Her moan vibrated into his mouth as the kiss continued. The sweet recess of her mouth tempted him just as much as her moist sex. Danielle's legs parted wider, allowing him more access to her slick womanhood. Pushing two fingers into her tight cunt, he used his other hand to smack one enticing globe.

She gasped into his mouth at the impact of his hand. He continued to kiss and fondle her, not allowing her a reprieve.

His thumb lay along the crease of her ass as he pumped his fingers in and out of her pliant sex. The second slap came with more force. She squeezed the column of his neck with one hand and his shoulder with the other, but didn't cease in returning his kiss this time. Arching her hips out, she availed herself to his discipline.

Leaning back onto the wall behind him, he found his rhythm between spanking, feasting on her mouth and stroking her sex. The sound of each strike echoed in the hallway. By the fifth slap to her ass, she started trembling. Before he arrived at the eleventh whack, her flesh was hot to his touch and her kisses inconsistent. She was close to coming.

"Stay with me, beautiful." He refused to allow her a reprieve, knowing the longer she held off, the greater the orgasm would be. The words were for himself as well, he was so hard it was painful not to release.

The fifteenth time his hand met the heated skin was Danielle's undoing. She climaxed screaming into his mouth as her thigh trapped his other hand in a vice-like grip. Pulling back, he placed a kiss on her cheek as he petted her tender behind. Resting her head on his shoulder, her chest rose and fell as she filled her lungs while her body calmed.

Once the trembling quieted to an occasional tremor, he set her away from him.

"Follow me." He led her past the other offices until they arrived at his own. Closing the door behind, he stopped in front of his desk. "Would you like to show me what's in the bag, now?"

She shook her head. "No. I'd prefer to bring your arousal to a tolerable level as you did for me."

"What do you suggest?" If she asked him to get inside of her, they would never eat. He would be making love to her for hours. After they ate, he wanted to take her to his house and stay between her thighs until the sun came up.

Rolling her bag beside his desk, she approached him with bright eyes glowing from her recent climax and seduction. "However you want it."

"On your knees."

"You must have read my mind." Smiling, she lowered herself and sank down to the carpet.

Chuckling, he told her, "Then show me what you've been thinking about."

"My pleasure." Reaching out, she made quick work of his belt and fastenings, then pushed his slacks to his thighs.

A rush of air entered his mouth when her hands pulled his hard length out of his underwear. Her touch was gentle but firm. The same confidence she'd shown in her walk, she exhibited in her stroke. Since the summer after his graduation when he'd shown her how he liked to be touched, she'd never forgotten.

Pulling the pins from her hair, he dropped them to the floor, not caring how they scattered. In a few hours, the cleaning crew would come in and find them. He and Danielle would be nestled in his bed by then. Fingering the hair around her shoulder, he watched her pump and squeeze him from base to tip.

When the clear bead of moisture seeped out, she leaned forward and captured it on her tongue. For a moment, he shut his eyes, feeling the smooth glide of her tongue as it licked the slit, then circled his engorged head. Her mouth closed over him and slid down his length.

Opening his eyes only enough to observe her, his spine tightened as a significant amount of his cock disappeared between her full lips. Drawing on his stiff rod, her head bobbed

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back and forth and her fingers continued to contract, pulling him at the base.

If her mouth wasn't providing torture enough, her other hand caressed his thighs and balls, clutching and rolling them. Humming, she let him know how much she enjoyed pleasuring him.

Her fervent attention was his undoing. Gripping her hair, he held her in place as he fucked her delicious mouth. Pumping and rotating her hands in time with his thrusts, she brought him to his breaking point.

His growl was almost animalistic as he came.

\* \* \* \*

Pure delight swirled in the pit of Danielle's stomach as Robert's cum coated the back of her throat thick and warm. Swallowing, she continued to suckle him, loving the jerks his body made in response.

"Enough," he barked, his voice rough with exertion. Robert pulled away from her.

Giving the glistening semi-erect length one final squeeze, she released him. Rising, she brushed her thumb below her bottom lip and removed the small droplet of Robert's fluid that had escaped.

After straightening his clothes, he pulled her into a hug. She settled herself against his chest. She loved his height and strength. His embrace always made her feel protected and supported. Those emotions had always been missing from her life. Until Robert.

"How was work?"

Glancing up at him, she said, "Good. Yours?"

Kissing the tip of her nose, then her lips, he gazed into her eyes. "Even better now."

"So, are you ready for some food?"

She laughed as his stomach answered for him. Walking over to her bag, she moved her clothes to his chair, opting to stay nude, then opened the case. Removing a blanket, she placed it on the floor. Curling up on the side, she began to unload the contents.

"Oh, baby, what did you do clean out Southern Pride Restaurant?" Robert sat beside her on the blanket, idly rubbing her legs. "Millie probably had to close down for the night."

"Sorry to disappoint you darlin', but I cooked all of this." Smiling at his shocked expression, she popped the lids off the array of food, showing him the fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, green beans and rolls.

Dancing his fingers up her thighs, he asked, "When did you have time to do all this?"

Not fussing with plates, she held out a fork. "Yesterday. Except the chicken. I made it before I came."

He shook his head. "I didn't know you could cook."

"You still don't." Diving a fork into the macaroni, she placed it before his mouth.

Eyes never wavering, Robert allowed her to slide the fork in his mouth. "Hmm, absolutely amazing." His eyes closed as he chewed.

"I'm glad you like it." She beamed a smile at him when he looked at her.

"What I like is you." Holding her shoulder, he pulled her toward him.

Danielle's body started to sing once again as he kissed her. When he entered her mouth, she could taste the warm flavors of the cheese and buttery pasta on his tongue.

Even after they parted, a low hum still vibrated between her legs and she felt the wetness seep onto her thighs; she wanted him again.

She was thankful when he picked up his fork and began eating. Joining him, she began to tell him about her trip to Florida to transport the two criminals. How she could feel things changing for her since she aided in the rescue of his sister.

"Every time I think about that night, I want to tell you how grateful I am for your courage." Reaching out, he stroked the side of her cheek with his knuckles.

Her cheeks heated at his words. "You're welcome, again."

Robert laid down his third drumstick bone and wiped his mouth, then polished off the green beans.

Full, she eyed the empty containers and was amazed at Robert's robust appetite. They hadn't spent much time out of the

hotel over the past few months, except a delivery food bite here and there. She'd decided it was time she did what Robert asked and moved their relationship to the next level. So she would be cooking for him when they were together, filling his belly in addition to warming his bed.

Retrieving the food, she began putting everything away. When the area was clear, she moved across the blanket to Robert.

Noticing her amorous attention, he cupped her breast and circled her taunt nipple with his thumb.

"This weekend, Mr. Duncan is having an anniversary party at the country club." He pinched her nipple, giving it a slight tug.

Only half listening to Robert's words, her eyes slipped closed, loving his strong hands on her body.

"I want you to go with me," he said.

Stilling his hand on her breast, she gazed at him. "What?"

His hands moved underneath her own, squeezed her. Normally a move that would've made her squirm in excitement, but her mind was too focused on what he would say.

"Be my date this Friday."

It was exactly what she'd thought he said. "I don't think that's a good idea." She stood.

He rose with her. "Why not?" His brows furrowed.

"Look, Robert, I don't think we're ready to be the out and about couple." Avoiding his eye contact, she picked up the blanket when he got up.

"We're not or you're not?" He leaned back against his desk.

Watching him from the corner of her eye, she shoved their makeshift table into her case and secured it. "What's wrong with how we are now?" Walking toward him with slow grace, she attempted to steer him away from the conversation. She cared for Robert deeply, but this discussion could only lead to trouble.

Grabbing her hips when she was within arm distance, he stopped her progression, reading her actions easily. "Nothing is wrong with us. That's why I want you to come with me."

Stepping away from him, she grabbed her clothes and put her panties on. "No, Robert, this is just not—"

"Not what...how you feel about me?" he questioned, crossing his arms over his muscular chest. "Maybe I've been

wrong and you just want to keep this a booty call. Is that it?" Moving away from the desk, he stepped to her, holding her shoulders firmly.

Danielle had no other choice but to gaze into his eyes. She could see his confusion. She was afraid if she tried to make him understand, the knowledge might push him away and she didn't want to lose him. "I care about you. A lot, but I just don't want to share this. Us."

"Beautiful, you act like something will change because we walk down the street holding hands." A harsh laugh came out. "Claremont may be small, but it's not Mayberry. Couples even kiss in public here."

Annoyed at his ignorance of the town and their relationship, she stepped away from him and pulled her dress over her head. "White couples and an occasional black couple kiss. But not this." She waved a finger between them.

Holding his hands out to his side, he said, "No one's going to care, sweetheart, that we're together."

Shaking her head, she glanced at him as if she were waiting for another eye to come out of his forehead. "You must live under a rock, Robert." Snatching up the handle of her rolling bag, she headed toward the door. She originally hoped to finish the rest of the night in one of their beds, but not anymore. "The next time you're at one of your country club affairs why don't you look around and see how many faces like mine you see."

"Danielle, you're being ridiculous. You act as if you're the only black person in town. Your Chief is even black." He rubbed his hand through his hair in frustration. "The percentage of minorit—"

Her own fingers tingled with the desire to feel the silky thick strands, but she pushed the thought away and refocused. "Besides me, there're fourteen others. If I can count them, then what little percentage we hold doesn't matter."

Her agitation began to rise. She took a deep breath to keep herself calm. At the same time, she heard Robert exhale and laugh, all on the same breath.

"What do you want me to do, baby? I can't add more people to the town."

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The corners of her cheeks barely lifted as she gave him a weak smile. "Nothing. I just want to enjoy being with you without other people imposing their views."

Hazel eyes met hers. "Fine, beautiful, but I can't live in secret forever."

Noncommittally, she crossed the carpet and kissed him. She understood his viewpoint, but she also knew that if they came out, then so would the truth. She would lose Robert regardless.

Embracing her, he inquired, "Are you coming to my house?"

"Not tonight, I'm tired and need to get up early in the morning." It was a small lie, but it was best for her to be alone tonight. If she lay in his arms, he would convince her to risk their relationship with his enticing kisses and seductive touches.

Doubt was evident in his gaze, but he nodded. "Okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow." Pulling her to him, his kiss overpowered her, filling her body with heat and muddling her senses.

The kiss ended.

"Tomorrow." Backing away from him, she exited the office. They were safe for now. But for how long would she be able to hide her secrets from him? This was more than about race. So much more.

## Chapter Three

"Congratulations, squirt." Robert spotted his sister from the corner of his eye as she walked out onto the porch.

"Thanks, brother dear." Liza flopped down beside him on the swing, setting it in motion. "So, do you like Brad?"

"Yeah. But, I'm not the one marrying him." He chuckled. Glancing down, he noticed how his sister's toes barely grazed the floor. Liza was small, just like Danielle. If they weren't so petite, Claremont County still would have been standing outside of the condo trying to figure out how to rescue his sister.

The thought of Danielle made his spine tingle. "Where's your intended?"

"He had to work late tonight, but he'll be here before dinner."

Looking at Liza with her wide hopeful gaze and ready smile, joy radiated in his sister's features. "I'm glad you're happy, squirt."

Envious, he turned away. Gazing off into the distance over the treetops, he and Liza silently watched the late June sun begin to set, turning the horizon to a magnificent golden with blushing shades of orange.

"I can see it's only going to be a matter of time. Stephanie's going to be heartbroken."

Catching only a few words his sister was saying, he asked halfheartedly, "Why? She already run through all the men in town?"

*Oof.* He hadn't prepared himself for Liza's elbow to his ribs.

Raising her back off the swing, she put her hands on her hips. She would give the same bossy pose to him when they were little if she thought all the lights weren't on in his mental house. "No, big brother. It's because of you," she charged.



## APPREHENSION

Scrunching his brows, he eyed his sister. "Me? I've never given her any reason to think I was interested in her."

"Exactly. Now she's going to be hurt when she finds out you're in love with someone else."

That got his attention. *Fuck, someone must have seen Danielle at his office.* They hadn't been careful when she left, after the disagreement about her going with him to Mr. Duncan's party, she had exited the building alone. He just prayed no one spotted her in her initial state of undress when she walked into the building. His hand clenched with the thought of some other man seeing her nude sexy body. "Who told you?"

"Aha! I knew it," she declared and slapped her jean-covered thigh.

The feeling of being duped made his shoulders tense. "Knew what?"

"You're definitely in love and don't try to deny it." Turning her pint-size frame sideways on the swing, she gave him a smile, showing all her teeth. "Who is she?"

He glanced over his shoulder, peered through the living room window and assured himself that their parents were not within earshot. Seeing no one, he glanced out over the yard again. "I don't want to talk about it."

"Why not?" Leaning toward him, she whispered. "Is it a man?"

"Fuck no." He barked a laugh. "Not that I have issues with those who are...it's just not me."

"Then tell me about her," she whined. "Pleeease..."

"Fine, squirt." He ran his hand over his hair. "Damn, I forgot how nosey you are."

"Thank you." She beamed. "Now talk."

"I'm not telling who she is." From the corner of his eye he noticed his sister's mouth gaped open and started to appeal, he shook his head. "She doesn't want me to. And I'm trying hard to respect her wishes of privacy."

"Does she know how you feel?"

"I've told her I care about her and want to move our relationship to another level."

"And?"

Gazing down at his hands, remembering the feel of Danielle's toned supple skin the last time they were together, he sighed. "Nothing. She won't budge."

The sound of scrunching gravel alerted them to someone's arrival. Both of them turned to the right and spotted Brad rounding the corner of the house, still in uniform with a blue small duffle bag on his shoulder.

"I saw your mom out front bringing in flowers from her garden. She said you all were back here." Brad walked up the back steps. "Hi, princess."

Robert watched his sister scramble from her seat, move into Brad's arms, and kiss her fiancé loudly on the lips.

"If Mom had flowers, then dinner's about ready." Robert said.

"Well, I'm going to change beforehand so I can enjoy my food." Stepping away from Liza, Brad reached for the backdoor.

"I'll be right in to help."

Brad winked at her and stepped into the house.

Crossing the porch to where he still sat, his sister leaned down and pecked him lightly on the cheek. "Tell her you love her. It just might change things."

"Maybe." Rising, Robert followed his sister into the house. He headed toward the kitchen while Liza moved toward one of the first floor guest bedrooms to find Brad. Silently, he hoped his sister and Brad didn't get too involved in there, because if they were late for dinner, their mother would have no problem going in after them.

\* \* \* \*

"Hi, beautiful."

Danielle found herself in Robert's arms seconds after he opened his front door and shut it behind her.

"Hi, yourself, handsome." Wrapping her arms around his waist, she stroked the muscular plains of his back.

Robert's head bent toward her and their lips brushed against each other. His tongue slipped across her bottom lip and made her mouth tingle with anticipation. Capturing his tongue, she suckled it. His groan vibrated into her mouth and made her body come alive.

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They parted breathless and horny. Her sex had begun to throb as she'd prepared herself to come over to his house, now her panties were saturated.

"So, do you want to eat first or play?" Robert escorted her deeper into his living room.

Her first time in his house, she took notes of her surroundings, noticing Robert kept his decorations basic and simple with only the necessities. There was a couch and loveseat, no lamps or potted plants like her apartment, just a long panoramic picture of some sort of lagoon or inlet surrounded by thick green foliage and a small waterfall. The photo went well with his forest green and tan colored pattern of the furniture.

She was tempted to ask him to bend her over the back of his couch and ease the ache between her thighs. But the wait always made her orgasms so much sweeter. "I'd like to eat first while it's hot."

"Great. Let me show you the kitchen." He took her hand and led the way, introducing the areas of the house they passed. "After we eat, I'll give you a full tour. Outside of the living room, kitchen, dinning room, and office, the only other room with furniture is the master bedroom."

Danielle considered how different their homes were. Her apartment had fewer rooms than he'd just listed. She had a one-bedroom apartment with a kitchenette and a great room. "How many bedrooms do you have?"

Arriving in the kitchen, he took the handle of her rolling food case from her and collapsed the extended grip to place it on the counter. "Five and a bounce room." He smiled, wiggling his eyebrows.

Biting the side of her lip, she turned away. The heat in his gaze was making it hard for her to focus. "This is a lot of space for one person." She unpacked the container of roast beef, mashed potatoes, sweet snap peas and cherry cobbler.

"For now, but I don't have plans to be here alone for long." Stepping up behind her, he slipped his arms around her waist and began to kiss the curve of her neck. He rubbed his hard length against her backside as he continued to nibble along her skin.

That was one of her sensitive spots. Closing her eyes, she relaxed against him, willing herself to push aside his words. She

didn't believe they were anywhere near the forever after point and she didn't want to think about anyone else making a home with him here.

Turning her head, she kissed him on the chin. "Set the table and I'll try to figure out your cabinet order."

Swatting her on the butt, he said, "You got it." Opening a cabinet to the right, he removed plates and left the kitchen.

Her butt tingled under the material of her leggings from the smack. Leaning against the counter, Danielle took a deep breath. *I shouldn't have come here.* Being in Robert's house with him and soon making love under his roof was giving her a yearning to make their relationship permanent. The thought of filling some of the rooms with their babies made her eyes burn. Her insides were trembling with need and nerves. *Get yourself together, Danielle. Keep it simple. You and Robert have pleasurable fun, nothing more. It can't be more.*

Opening and closing doors and drawers to distract herself, she finally discovered everything she required. Keeping her hands busy while Robert came back and forth to place the platters of food on the table, she regained her composure.

"Did you pick up the wine?" she asked, holding two wine glasses in her hands and heading to the dining room.

"I sure did." He opened the refrigerator and followed her out with bottle in hand.

Opening the wine, he filled their glasses, and then set it inside a soapstone chiller in the center of the table. Moving around the side, Robert assisted her in her chair, then claimed the seat at the head of the table beside her.

Looking around, he said, "Everything smells delicious, Danielle. You've surely entered my heart with your cooking."

*His heart.* Her hands began to tremble. Did she want Robert to give her his heart? He'd claimed hers years ago.

"What should we toast to?" He lifted his wide bottom glass and smiled.

The same sexy boyish grin he'd shown her at the high school dance the spring they'd met made her pulse accelerate. Rubbing her thighs under the table, she forced herself to relax. Reaching out, she picked up her own red wine and was glad for her cop training that kept her hands steady.

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Leaning forward, she purposely spoke in a breathy voice, "How about to wonderful wine, good food and great sex without boundaries?" She was taking the advice of her inner voice. Sex was hot, but simple.

His eyes traveled the lines and angles of her face before he spoke. Returning his hazel gaze to her brown one, he said, "I can drink to that. Of course my list would have been in the reverse order."

They were back on track. She sighed, clinked her glass against his, then sipped her drink. Its dry but rich flavor smoothed its way down her throat. Relaxing, she enjoyed her meal and company.

\* \* \* \*

Glancing around the spacious bathroom, Danielle took note of the 'his and hers' pedestal sinks with matching cabinets. One held all of Robert's male toiletries while the other was bare with the exception of an Ivory soap bar and a toothbrush, still in the wrapper. As she undressed, thoughts and images of her and Robert making love under the large stone-tiled waterfall shower made her breasts become heavy and her nipples tighten.

Grabbing an item from her purse, she opened the door. She stepped into the master bedroom and was enveloped by warmth from the blazing gas fireplace in the wall across from his navy blue and white covered bed. The air conditioner and heat warred against each other in the largest room in the house.

"I'm in here, sweetheart!" Robert called from the bonus room that sat on the other side of an archway.

Moving past the bed, she wondered if a time would ever come when she'd be able to sleep all night in the bed with him. Her feet sank deep into the plush carpet as she added more swing to her hips, accentuating the part of her anatomy that Robert adored the most and crossed the threshold.

"The sight of you never stops taking my breath away," Robert spoke in low tones, his eyes caressing her nude length. "You're beautiful."

Heat progressed up her neck and into her face. "Robert," was all she could say. The man had a way of making her speechless. Only dressed in dark gray boxer briefs, he made her mouth water. She may run to keep herself lean, but Robert spent

time in the gym honing his body. He wasn't overly muscular like a bodybuilder, just chiseled deliciously.

"Did you bring them?" He beckoned her to him, where he stood beside some sort of chaise lounge with handles on both sides of the foot and head. Next to it was a small half-moon shaped wooden console table. The only thing on the table was a square frosted glass candle with its soft light flickering, complimenting the low burn of the ceiling lights.

Moving to the center of the room to him, she noticed the air in the room was cooler than in the master suite, making her nipples bead further. Opening her hands, she presented him with her handcuffs.

"Perfect." He claimed them and the key out of her hand.

This was not the first time they used her handcuffs to play. Two months ago, she had offered to buy him a set, but he told her it turned him on to use her official restraints on her. It heightened her own desire as well.

"Where do you want me?" She stepped toward him and wrapped her arms around his waist.

He squeezed her against his chest, then instructed her to kneel in the center of a towel facing the high end of the long chair. "Rest your arms on the top. That way your sweet ass is high in the air."

The wide cushion gave her elbows a comfortable spot to rest on. Seeing another handle across the back, she took hold of it. "Like this?" She wiggled her hips.

"Good girl." Robert trailed his fingers from her butt to her shoulders as he rounded the lounge. Facing her, he snapped one of the silver bracelets onto her wrist. Bringing the small link chain under the wooden bar, he then seized her other wrist. "Comfy?"

"Completely."

Robert kissed her. Holding the back of her head, he took possession of her mouth. Slanting his lips, he sent his tongue into her waiting mouth. They sparred and she allowed him the lead, it was what they both wanted, him to consume and dominate her. Her excitement rose even higher. The lips of her sex throbbed with desire, making her thighs slick with her own cream.

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Breathing heavily, he stepped away from her. "Are you ready, Danielle?" Dropping the key on the table, he picked up the candle.

Curiosity drew her eye the glowing glass. "Always," she said without apprehension.

Rewarding her with a kiss on the curve of her shoulder, he lifted the glass and blew out the flame. Smoke curled in the air, making a sweet earthy scent of oak and peaches permeate the air. It reminded her of Georgia, home and Robert.

Still with candle in hand, he approached her round bottom.

With a moment of caution, as she realized what he planned to do, she asked, "That's not some grocery store candle is it?"

Intense and dark, his hazel eyes met hers. "Horny and freaky, yes, crazy, I'm not." He chuckled. "It's a specially made massage oil candle." As he alleviated her fears, he tilted the candle over her back.

The first drip made her gasp as it pooled in the center of her back. The hot sensation on her spine made her toes curl.

"Nice?" he asked.

"Mmm," she responded.

More of the molten liquid met her flesh as Robert dribbled it down toward her backside. Without prompting, she arched her rear and spread her thighs, a silent plea for him to continue.

Robert used the melted wax to tease her, pouring it over one brown globe, then the other. She whimpered, biting her lip to keep from yelling at him. She knew it would only delay the pleasure she wanted. Her clit, swollen with need, throbbed for attention, whether by hand, mouth or oil.

"Such a delectable and lovely ass."

Finally, heat slithered between her butt cheeks coating the puckered sensitive skin on its way to her sex. Bowing her head, she relaxed and relished the sensation as the rapid droplets traveled along her slit, coated her lips and tickled the kernel of her desire.

A frisson curled in her belly and radiated between her legs. "That feels *sooo* good."

Her eyes were now closed, but she detected the sound of the glass being placed on the table, then Robert's magnificent hands touched her.

Sliding through the wax on her back, he smeared it down on her shoulders and around her waist. His slippery hands palmed her breast, pinching and plucking her erect nipples like a musician's instrument.

She pressed herself into his hands.

Continuing on, he massaged her ass and used that oil to paint her thighs. Moving up between them, he reached her pussy and mixed her cream with the liquid. His strong fingers played between the folds and circled her clit. She trembled as he repeatedly fondled her slick bare flesh. Slipping along her slit, he dipped inside of her core with one finger, then two, then down the susceptible folds and around her peak once more until she could no longer hold back her orgasm.

Her climax continued for long minutes as Robert's mouth captured her clit with his lips and drew it into his mouth. When his tongue followed the same path as his hand, adding rapid taps on her sensitive tip, she came once again. The scent in the room changed, as the oily aroma mingled with the spicy blend of her sexual juice.

"Robert, I need you." She cried. Having multiple orgasms was great, but they were nothing without him joining her.

His underwear landed on the floor, moments before he spread his legs over the sides of the lounge and rose above her. The thick length of his cock brushed between her cheeks, covering them both in the lover's massage oil. "You have me," he said in a husky voice, as the broad head of his shaft kissed her furrowed hole, then burrowed inside of her tight flesh. Pulling back, and pushing forward again, he coaxed her muscles to allow his entry, the slick oil aiding his penetration, turning it into an intense glide.

Digging her knees into the fabric, she pressed her hips back taking him deeper. The wicked position was a favorite treat for both of them. Her hands gripped the bar as fireflies glowed erratically behind her lids from the fierce pleasure.

\* \* \* \*

Robert felt like his balls were going to burst. Flames licked at his spine with the need to come. Being inside Danielle's plump luscious tight ass was only second to her enchanting pussy. Her taste was still on his tongue and her smell infused into his senses.



She continually rocked her hips back and forth, taking his full length inside of her. His Danielle was a giver in so many ways when it came to her body. Whatever he proposed, she was eager to try. But, her heart was another matter.

Gripping her hips, he met each of her undulations until her bucking became wild. His thrusts became more forceful, causing a slapping sound to echo in the room as their thighs made contact. Reading the urgent message of her body, he reached around and stroked her engorged clit. The little kernel was easily accessible, protruding from her swollen lips.

"Yes!" She tossed her head back. "More, Robert," she begged.

Answering her request, Robert pumped and fondled her until she tensed. Her body shook with her release as her creamy pleasure ran down his fingers.

The contracting of her ass muscles took him over the edge. His orgasm was a painful euphoria as he came with a hard force, erupting inside of her, barely aware of Danielle's body going limp against his arm around her waist.

Pulling out from her, he chuckled as her body collapsed to the chair. He understood how she felt, thoroughly pleased. Leaning over her, he placed his hands on the high back of the chaise and took cleansing breaths until the world righted itself.

With only a slight tremble left in his legs, he moved to the table and picked up the keys, unlocking the cuffs. "Put these up before you forget them and have to explain to your office where you left them."

Rolling over on her back, she said, "Even better, I'll just tell them what I was doing with them. I'm sure they'd get a kick out of that."

"Maybe. I know I did." He winked. "Come on, join me in the shower."

Springing from the couch, she raced past him. "I thought you'd never ask."

Laughing, he chased her into the bathroom. By the time he caught up with his sexy little runner, the waterfall in the shower was flowing.

They played around in the water, splashing and cleaning each other until they were both panting with desire once again.

"I've had ideas about this shower." Standing behind him, she stroked his hard cock as water cascaded down his chest.

"Hopefully, they were the same ideas I've been having," the words came out hoarse. Her talented hands were turning him inside out.

"That depends on what you were thinking."

One of her hands cupped his sacks. "This."

Unable to take any more torture, he pivoted them around until her back was against the stone covered wall.

Her eyes were bright with excitement as she squealed in delight.

Sipping water from her breast until she was squirming in his arms, he dropped to his knees before her. Pressing her thighs wide he eyed the streams of water creating a pattern around her swollen clit. Feeling aroused and thirsty, he leaned in to drink from her nectar. Each droplet was a delicious blend of water and Danielle's honey. Dipping his tongue between her folds, he tasted more as he slid against her slick cream. Pushing inside her tight pussy with his tongue, he tickled her walls and felt her squirm against his mouth. Her thighs began to quiver in his hands as he played her like a well-tuned instrument.

Raising his head, he began flicking her protruding nub. Burying her hands in his hair, her fingers massaged his scalp as she pressed him closer to her sweet cunt. With her back arching off the shower wall, she climaxed, causing her hips to buck toward his face. Catching the refreshing piquant liquid in his mouth, he greedily consumed the flow of her orgasm.

Standing, he gazed into her warm brown eyes, which were glowing with ecstasy.

"You're mine," he told her, needing to place his claim on her the only way she allowed.

"Always."

The single word of confirmation made him feel feral and dominant. Lifting her against the wet stone, he positioned himself between her legs.

Robert loved how Danielle was never tentative about kissing him after he tasted her delectable sex. Leaning in, she kissed him deeply as they worked together in unison. She wrapped her legs around his waist and he buried his dick inside

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her in one sure thrust. His ears rang with their moans of passion and the sound mingled with the splashing water and reverberated around the room. Grinding into her, he gave her pleasure. She undulated against him, returning the favor.

Entwined in each other's arms, he and Danielle climaxed. He couldn't say whose orgasm sparked the other's, neither did he care as long as they were together.

## Chapter Four

"Sweetheart, I don't want this to end." Robert leaned over Danielle in his bed, tracing the cocoa colored tip of her nipple. "I want more."

"Well, if I want to walk tomorrow, we're going to have to stop eventually," she giggled, misunderstanding his words.

Stilling his hand, he looked into her milk chocolate brown eyes. "Not sex tonight. I mean us."

Her hand sifting through the hair on his chest stopped. The eyes that had been clear moments ago shaded as if blinds had been drawn over her soul.

"As in?"

She tensed under his hand, a deer prepared for flight.

Placing a hand on her waist, to keep her from going before he said what was in his heart, he began, "Danielle, I want to be able to tell everyone I'm with you. See you in the morning when I wake up if I want to. Sit across from you in a restaurant."

"Robert, we've been down this road before—"

"Let me finish, sweetheart." He moved his hand to her lip. "I'm not asking because I want you as some trophy on my arm. But, I want you to understand how much I care about you. I want you as a permanent fixture in my life."

"This will never work." She shook her head and sat up.

"It will if we want it to." He gazed up at her.

"This county is not ready for us to be the first interracial couple."

Sitting up, he grabbed her hands. "I don't care about this town's opinion. You're what matters and how much I lo—"

"Don't say it." Launching herself off the bed, Danielle held her hands up as if warding him and his words off.

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He was beginning to get upset. The tension in his jaw was causing his teeth to clench. Not following her, he crossed his arms over his chest. "Why the hell not?"

"Because we'll both be hurt. This is a fantasy, Robert, and soon we *are* going to have to wake up."

"Bullshit!" he exploded and got off the bed then. "If this is all some damn dream we've been living then why did you move to Claremont?"

She retreated to the bathroom. "Let's not do this, Robert. Please." She called from the other room.

"Not this time, Danielle, we're going to put everything on the table and deal with it. Then we can move forward. Together."

Stomping out of the room dressed in her leggings and sports bra, she said, "Deal with it?" A harsh dry chuckle came from her lips. "No."

Seizing her arm, he said, "Why would you rather run away instead of face our problems head on?"

"You know me, Robert, running is what I do." Pulling out of his grasp, she snatched her shirt over her head. One arm, then the other came out of the side. "You're the prince of Claremont County, Robert, with a big bad general of a father ruling this town. They don't want this." Her finger waved between the two of them. "I don't know why you try to ignore that fact." She jammed her feet in her sneakers.

"You want facts. How about I thought you were the most beautiful girl I've ever seen when I met you? Fact. I've never stopped thinking about you since I went away to college. Fact. I couldn't even study for the bar exam without hearing your laugh or seeing your smile. Final fact. My father may be a general, but he taught me not to stop fighting for what I want. I want you. Us." Now he was even more pissed and shocked when he heard himself yelling. Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he stepped to her and prepared to pull her in his arms.

She moved out of reach. "How can you want and care about someone you don't really know?" Her voice was low, almost making it difficult to hear.

Robert tried to read her features, but they remained neutral, not giving anything away. "I know you, sweetheart. Inside and out." He gave her a wicked smile.

Not returning his smile, she asked in a hollow voice.  
"What's my name?"

*What game is she playing now?* "Seriously, honey?"

"What's my name?" she repeated the question.

"Fine." He threw his hands up. "Danielle Smith."

"Wrong." Exiting his bedroom, she walked up the hall.

His long strides allowed him to reach her, steps away from the living room. "Hold up a second. You can't make a statement like that then leave. How can I be wrong? You've had the same name since I met you eight years ago."

"Not legally at that time."

Crossing his arms over his chest, he stood formidable as a wall, refusing to allow her to pass. "If Danielle isn't your real name, why lie? I didn't know you."

"I lied because I liked you. From across the room, you astounded me. It took everything inside of me to approach you. All the way over to you, I thought about introducing myself, then I considered the shock on your face when I told you my name."

"I wouldn't have cared, Danielle. I desired you. Every randy hormone was shouting inside my body when you walked up to me. I was sitting outside because none of those other girls even grabbed my attention. Black or white. I was getting ready to find my friends and tell them let's go."

Squeezing past him, she entered the living room. "I should have let it end eight years ago." Stopping at the door, she turned. "But I couldn't stay away no matter how much I tried."

"So, who are you?" he asked, standing behind his couch.

"LaQuesha Taleshia Danola Smith." Shrugging her shoulder, she said, "My mom couldn't make up her mind, so she gave me all of her inventions. My friends always called me Danni. So, I applied to college in Atlanta and put Danielle Smith on the application. A year later I got it legally changed. I've never looked back."

"That explains a lot." Running his hands over his head, he sighed.

"Like what? That I'm a girl from the wrong side of the city?" she guffawed.

"No. Why I couldn't find you."

Shock registered on her face.

## APPREHENSION

He was glad he was finally in the other seat. It was time for him to knock her off balance. "Christmas of my sophomore year, I came home. I drove to Valdosta and made some inquiries about Danielle Smith. No one had ever heard of her." He crossed the carpet toward her. "I had a Rip Van Winkle moment. I thought that maybe I slept that summer and dreamed you."

Her eyes became glassy as they filled with water. "It wasn't a dream. But, this is still not going to work."

Reaching out, he held her face between his hands. "It has to, because just like when I'm inside of you and you need me to move harder and faster for you to come, I need you in my life so I can breathe."

Stretching up on her toes, she kissed him. "I have to go." She turned away.

As he watched her, she grabbed the rolling case she'd placed by the door after they straightened up after dinner, then pulled the door open and left.

He allowed her to leave this time, knowing they both needed time to absorb the information. But, his heart was light. A plan was formulating in his mind to prove to her his feelings were real.

\* \* \* \*

Danielle walked to her car, eyes bleary from unshed tears. Squeezing them together and blinking, she cleared them. She knew if she gave in to tears now that she would be in hysterics. The thought of losing Robert hurt her to her soul. But, it was probably inevitable.

It was almost midnight and most of the neighbors on Robert's street were sleeping or in for the night. She had parked a block away, not wanting anyone to see her car in his driveway for extended hours. Increasing her pace, she arrived at her vehicle and deposited the food bag inside. Still feeling emotionally charged from the conversation with Robert, she decided to go for a run. This set of houses was almost a perfect mile around the block. She needed to expend some of the energy or she would never get to sleep.

Starting out in a light jog, her strides lengthened to a quicker pace as she settled into the rhythm and her thoughts began to race in her head. She questioned whether she was

making the right decision. If possible, she was allowing fear to hold her back from the man she loved. She loved Robert. There was no doubt in her mind. He'd asked her why she had come to Claremont and it was because of him. Not to have a relationship with him because she thought he would've been married to some country club girl, but mainly just to be around him. She knew it was pathetic. However, the years without him had been grueling.

Many things had happened to her since they parted that summer, but she had to question whether or not she was allowing her past pain to hurt her future with Robert. Maybe she was being a bit ridiculous. This was a new year, new era. The browning of America was happening all over the country, maybe now was the time for it to occur in Claremont.

The weight on her shoulders began to lighten, but her steps faltered slightly when she considered the reaction of Robert's family. She'd had a run-in with the general before and he was one person who probably would not be smiling to see her arm linked with his son's.

Taking a deep breath as she rounded the corner that would take her past Robert's house for the third time, she decided it was time for her to meet him halfway in the relationship.

Seeing the police and a cluster of Robert's neighbors standing outside, Danielle slowed down to a light jog, progressing toward the crowd.

A small gray-haired white woman in a long robe with a floor-length housedress peeping out of the bottom, was speaking loudly while her arms waved around in the air toward the officer.

Danielle wondered what had happened in the twenty minutes she'd been running. Steps away she heard the woman say, "Something has to be done. I don't even feel safe anymore in my own neighborhood."

"Let's try and be calm about this, Ms. Hanscom." Brantley's bulky frame stood out among the others. He'd pulled a double shift because one of the other officers had gotten sick.

Danielle smiled to herself as he attempted to push his verbal authority over the little woman.

"Don't tell me to calm down! My house was vandalized twice with eggs and toilet paper and one of my trashcans were stolen on trash day and I know—"



## APPREHENSION

"Ms. Hanscom!" Brantley barked, his frustration evident. "We already have your report down at the station about the defacement, but why did you call tonight?"

Danielle wanted to laugh. The station knew Ms. Hanscom as the town busybody who refused to consider that her house could get TP'd during the high school home games like anyone else. But the old lady chose to believe that someone was out to get her personally. Spotting Robert out of the corner of her eye as he approached, he raised an eyebrow at her. She knew he probably wondered what she was still doing here, but she refused to look at him or give him an excuse. Tomorrow she would call him with her decision. Let him stew and worry tonight. Biting her lip, Danielle hid her smile.

Ms. Hanscom stared at Officer Brantley and the other onlookers. "I've been watching every night to see if those vandals would come back. Jessica Fletcher always said that criminals come back to the scene of a crime. She was right...because I saw them scoping out our houses tonight."

Moving closer to the pack, Danielle frowned. Great. Just what the department needed tonight, an old woman doped up on reruns of *Murder She Wrote* and thinking she's a detective.

Pulling his small issued notepad out of his pocket, probably to humor the hysterical old woman, Brantley asked, "What did you see?"

"That woman." Hanscom's accusing finger aimed directly at Danielle.

Danielle was speechless as she looked down the accusing finger of Ms. Hanscom, seeing the old woman's suspicious eyes. Glancing around her, Danielle noticed the questioning shocked looks of the other neighbors mingling around. "Me?"

"Her?" Brantley and Robert called out simultaneously.

"Yes, her," Ms. Hanscom declared. "What is she doing here? She doesn't belong in this neighborhood, it's a private residence."

Heat and anger traveled along the blood moving through Danielle's veins. She was pissed.

Brantley's laugh broke the tension. "You're mistaken."

Finally dropping her pointed finger, Ms. Hanscom folded her arms under the small sagging breasts the sizes of prunes. "How do you know? There aren't any blacks that live here."

"Because..." Robert began.

Danielle looked at him and gave a slight shake of her head. If he was thinking about confessing their relationship, now was not the time. This moment made it clear to her that maybe she'd been correct in her argument with Robert. The Ms. Hanscoms of Claremont were not ready for them.

Clearing his throat, Robert continued. "She's a Claremont County police officer and she saved my sister's life." His eyes were full of apology and his gaze never left Danielle's face.

"Yeah, Ms. Hanscom, Officer Smith was with me the first night we came out here to investigate your house being TP'd during this year's high school homecoming game."

Ms. Hanscom blushed slightly as the onlookers began to murmur about how often Danielle had assisted them when they had problems.

Still refusing to walk away with egg on her face, Ms. Hanscom mumbled, "Well, by her dress, she's not on duty tonight and I saw her running past the house twice."

All eyes focused on Danielle, awaiting her reply.

Looking at Robert, then toward Brantley, Danielle used the only excuse these people would be comfortable hearing. "I'm training for the Claremont County Police 'fun run' to raise money for the July fourth fair. I clocked the distance one night while we were out here."

"That's right." Brantley echoed in confirmation.

The crowd's face held small relieved smiles of approval. The fair and football were a big deal in Claremont.

"See, Ms. Hanscom, nothing is going on for you to worry about. The cops have this under control," Brantley tried to reassure.

"Well, maybe you all should patrol here more than once a night." Ms. Hanscom gave her parting shot, refusing to be outdone, then turned and stalked back to her house.

Sighing, Brantley shook his head. "Some people are just too set in their ways to see any differently."

## APPREHENSION

"A lot of people in this town are," Danielle told her co-worker as she watched the rest of the crowd disperse and move back to their homes. Everyone except Robert.

Moving to his patrol car, Brantley warned, "Hey don't judge all of us by Ms. Hanscom. She's in a narrow-minded class with very few others."

Danielle shrugged, feeling Robert's presence behind her. He probably was hoping that she stayed, but all of her worry and doubts were back in full force and the last thing she wanted to do was talk about them or what happened. "Well, I gotta go."

"You need a ride?" Brantley asked.

"Nope, my car is just a few houses up. I'm good." Turning without looking at Robert again, she ran with all her might toward her car, feeling his heated gaze on her back the entire way.

Breathing hard, she stopped beside her driver's side door. Across her hood she could see him still standing beneath the streetlights. He was talking to Brantley but looking down the sidewalk at her. Her heart was breaking at the knowledge that she and Robert were ending. She would have to let him go so he could find the perfect wife to compliment his life in Claremont, and not be a distraction as she would. Getting in her car, she grabbed the key from under her mat and pulled off as the tears filled her eyes.

## Chapter Five

"Yea, can I help you?" The medium height older black woman in a worn Denny's uniform stared at him through the screen door on the south end of Patterson Street. There were no lights or open windows behind her and the darkness of the house obscured her features, but even that didn't reduce the resemblance this woman had to Danielle.

"Hi, ma'am. My name's Robert and I spoke to you on the phone."

Brown eyes that would have been mirror images of Danielle, if not for the world battered haze distorting them, scanned him from head to toe. Returning her gaze to his face, she said, "You the one dat called about LaQuesha."

He nodded, even though she was making a statement. "You're her mother?"

"Who else would I be...the maid?" she snorted a laugh. "I told you on the phone dat I hadn't seen Quesha in years."

This woman had been difficult to talk to on the phone, but it was nothing compared to in person. Now standing with her arms folded over her large bosom, she didn't look as if she was going to give him any more information than before. "I understand, ma'am. I'm not looking for her. Just trying to get to know her better."

She tilted her head and pursed her lips. "Why? What in the hell Quesha gone done now? Got into some trouble?" Checking out his Dockers and button down shirt, she asked. "You her lawyer or somethin'?"

Robert smiled, hoping to put her at ease. By the lift of the woman's eyebrow, he could tell it wasn't working. "No, Ms. Smith, your daughter is not in any trouble." Taking a deep breath, he looked the woman in the eye. Whatever Danielle's

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problem with her mother was, he owed this woman his respect and honesty. "I love your daughter."

Ms. Smith didn't move for a full minute, just unwaveringly stared at him. He would have hated to have her on the witness stand. With her poker face, she would be a hard witness to break.

Without warning, the screen swung open. Robert had to step to the side to avoid being hit by it.

Flicking an interior light switch, she commanded, "Come in." Ms. Smith moved aside so he could enter. "I have a few minutes to spare 'fore I have to be to work."

Stepping inside, Robert took note of the worn furniture, dark worn curtains and nineteen-inch television. "Thank you, Ms. Smith."

"Harvey." Leaving the door open, she crossed the room and claimed a grey tweed recliner. "LaQuesha's last name is Smith from her daddy. But, I ain't never married his foolish ass. But a baby s'posed to have they daddy's name so all four of my kids is Smith."

"Ms. Harvey then." He sat on the couch across from her.

"What you want to know 'bout LaQuesha?" She leaned back, getting comfortable in her chair.

"Whatever you want to tell me." Robert didn't even know why he'd driven to Lowndes County. He just felt as if most of Danielle's issues and problems started here and when he discovered on the phone that she hadn't seen her mother in years, he knew he had to come.

"Hmph." She shook her head. "Quesha was a difficult child from conception. I knew when I was pregnant with her she was goin' be my last."

"Did you have complications?"

"No. Her ass just couldn't keep still. I don't think I slept for months while I was pregnant wit' her." She placed a fist on a plump hip. "I thought she was goin' to be a fat baby or a soccer team was goin' come out. But, shock me twice if she didn't come out a month early at barely four and half pounds, kickin' and screamin'."

Robert smiled. Danielle was still on the move to this day. Not only did she run frequently to stay in shape, but she was

running emotionally from him. The latter was enough to wipe the smile from his mouth. "How was she as a little girl?"

Ms. Harvey's shoulders raised and dropped. "Nothing much to say. She went to school and acted like every other child. But, she was always sittin' on the porch just starin' down the road at nothin'." Ms. Harvey glanced off for a moment, then looked back at him. "Maybe even then she was plannin' to leave. She never could just be satisfied with life as it is."

"In what way?" Robert asked.

"Every way. If I said go left, she wanted to see what was right. All my other children always did what I expected them to do. Grew up like good kids, got jobs in the city and knew where they came from and where they belonged. But, not LaQuesha. No, she thought she was better than where she came from. Where her family is from. Like her shit don't stink like the rest of ours."

It wasn't hard for him to pick up on the hurt and anger in Danielle's mother voice. "It must have been hard to let her go when she left for the academy."

"Let her. I didn't let her do nothin'." Leaning over her knee she said, "LaQuesha ran off because she found out one year that she can spread her thighs like the rest of us and found herself caught in a situation. She wasn't the same after that. Depressed and cryin' all the time."

Taken aback, Robert stared at Danielle's mother. Was she telling him that LaQuesha got pregnant? Maybe that was why she'd told him from the beginning, after they'd renewed their previous relationship, that she was on the Pill faithfully and he didn't have to worry about her trapping him with a baby. Swallowing down the lump in his throat, Robert asked the question he didn't want to hear the answer to, because selfishly he'd never dreamed that Danielle had been intimate with any man but him. "Where's the baby?" Glancing around the house, he saw a small toy car sitting on the floor by the TV. "Are you raising it?"

"Hello, no! I got seven grankids and I told all my children from the start that if they had babies they could break 'dey own back rasin' em. I aint doin' it."

## APPREHENSION

"I've been with your daughter for a year, I know she doesn't have a child."

Throwing her hands up, Ms. Harvey said, "I didn't say she had the baby." She gave a dry chuckle. "She was even too good for that I guess."

"What happened?" he inquired. Knowing that Danielle had been pregnant by another man didn't change how he felt about her, but maybe he could discover why she protected her heart from him so fiercely.

"I guess sometime during the summer before her senior year of high school. I don't know. She was never home and then the school year started and she was always depressed it seems. Mopin' around the house. Then one day during the fall she left outta here in that ragged car her daddy gave her."

"Where'd she go?"

"Hell, if I know. Some chop shop I guess, because I got a call from the hospital. When I got there, she was cryin', all balled up in the hospital bed and dat baby was gone." Ms. Harvey glanced down at her watch and stood. "I ain't ask no questions, cause if she want'd me ta know, she'd said somethin'. She stayed close to home over the next few months, then before her graduation cap landed on the ground she had hightailed it outta here."

Getting the message, Robert stood as well. "Thanks for your time."

Walking with him to the door, Danielle's mom grabbed her purse and keys off the hook by the door and escorted him out.

"I'd say it was my pleasure but I'd be lyin'." Lumbering down the steps, she moved to her late model green Stratus. Stopping, she turned toward him. "How is LaQuesha?"

He wondered if Danielle's mother knew she changed her name. Smiling, he looked at the life-weary woman. "Good. She's doing very well."

She nodded. "When you get back to Claremont you take good care of her."

"I will." Frowning, he asked. "I never said where I lived."

"I said I hadn't seen her. But, I get a card and money from her every holiday and my birthday. All the things over the last

year have been comin' from Claremont. I guess Atlanta got to be too much for a small town girl."

"I guess so." Robert got into his truck and pulled away with his heart heavy. He couldn't recall the last time he'd cried, but his eyes were stinging as he drove out of Lowndes County.

\* \* \* \*

Getting out of the shower, Danielle had just finished putting lotion on her body when a loud knock sounded at her door. Pulling a gown over her head, she crossed her carpeted floor to peer out of the peephole. Seeing Robert's face staring back at her, she placed her forehead against the door and took a few calming breaths. They had not spoken in two days. She didn't know if she wanted to begin the dreaded conversation of why they couldn't be together at ten o'clock at night.

"Danielle, I know you're standing by the door, I saw your shadow in the peephole."

*Damn.* She should've looked out her window to the parking lot for cars that didn't belong to the residence. *Too late now.* Unlatching the door, she opened it. "Robert, now is—"

He stormed past her into the apartment.

Looking at him, she shut the door. Her neighbors had probably already heard his banging. They didn't need to be a witness to the rest of their conversation. "Why are you here, Robert?"

He stood in the middle of her living room rubbing his forehead, clothes disheveled.

"How could you do it?" He pierced her with his red-rimmed gaze.

"Do what? Not talk to you? I needed time." She said, staring at him closely.

"I'm not talking about calling me!" he yelled.

Robert never yelled. "Keep your voice down," she spoke through gritted teeth. Her cop instinct kicked in and things became clear. "Are you drunk?"

He stepped toward her, where she still stood by the door. "Have I been drinking? Yes. I'm not drunk. I wish I was, then maybe I wouldn't have to think about it."

Placing a hand on his arm, she tried to reassure him. "Look, Robert, this is hard for both of us. But we have to admit we knew



it was coming." As she spoke, Robert closed the gap between them. Danielle moved backwards and came up against the door. Around him, she always found herself in a constant state of arousal. If he touched her, they would end up having sex and that would just muddle everything all over again.

"Danielle." He said her name as if he were unsure of who she was.

The soft, hollow sound of his voice made her nervous. It wasn't sexual in nature, but different. "Ro-bert?"

His hands massaged her shoulders, then moved down to her breast and squeezed.

She trembled at the warmth of his strong touch through her silk gown. "Robert, what are you doing?"

"Why'd you do it?" His hands continued on past her stomach and stopped at her lower abdomen. With circular motions, his thumbs caressed her there, not moving any further.

"Do what?" She gazed at his face, dark with emotion. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I know you had to be scared and confused, sweetheart."

Setting her hands over his, she stilled his touch. "Scared. Confused. I'm I supposed to know what this conversation is about?" The feeling of foreboding crept into her heart.

"I went to see your mother today."

Her lungs contracted, making it hard for her to breath. "What?" she whispered. "Why in the hell would you do that?" She knew it was a mistake to tell him her real name. Needing some space, she pushed away from him and the door.

"I wanted to prove to you I didn't care where you came from or what your name was. I care about you regardless."

She bet her mother had given him an earful. Marlana Harvey and she had never gotten along. They were too different just like her parents. Her father loved her mother, but her mother would never marry him because he wanted to leave Valdosta and her mother was afraid she'd have to follow her husband wherever he wanted to take her. Shortly after she was born, her father left and only came to visit her and her siblings for birthdays.

Keeping her back to him, she stood in the center of her small apartment. "What did she tell you?" Her voice was low, not really wanting him to hear the question.

"That you were pregnant during your senior year."

*No such luck.* Closing her eyes, she bowed her head and wrapped her arms around her stomach feeling sick. "What else?" She had to ask even though she knew what would come next.

"You aborted your baby. Our baby."

Danielle whipped around, facing him, not expecting those words. "What?"

Approaching her, he said, "I don't fault you for it, sweetheart. I know you were young. We were young. I just wish you would've told me."

Recognizing the hurt she saw in Robert's face mirrored the pain in her heart she was experiencing. She shook her head, not believing what was happening. "Robert, I wanted to tell you."

He moved closer, but didn't touch her. "Why didn't you? You at least knew my name. But to abort our ba—" he voice broke.

Tears welled up in her eyes. "Those long hours in the hospital waiting for my mother and feeling as if I'd lost everything that mattered to me in the world..." First one tear spilled over, then another. "I would have *never*..." her voice faded away as the tears came rushing out, "even when I was offered the money to do it."

Face scrunched, Robert asked, "By who? Your mother? I've seen her house and she can't even afford new furniture."

With bleary vision, she made her way to the door. "You're right, Robert, my mother is poor. But, she would've accepted my child no matter how or with whom I conceived it. Blood is more precious than money."

Steps away, Robert gazed at her, still looking perplexed. "Who then?"

Pulling the door open, letting him know it was time to leave, she brushed a tear away with the back of her hand and snorted. "The next time you're at your family home for Sunday dinner talk to your father. See how happy he would've been to have you bring home a poor black girl and a baby."

"My father? What does he have to do with this?"

"Either you leave or I will." Danielle looked past his shoulder, staring at the wall.

## APPREHENSION

Touching her hand on the door, he said, "This isn't over, Danielle."

Seeing the beautiful contrast of their skin colors, she swallowed down the thump in her throat. Staring into his hazel eyes for what possibly could be the last time, she said, "It is now."

Moving her hand from under his, she watched him shake his head as he left her apartment.

Closing the door behind him, she pressed her back against it, slid to the floor and cried. Feeling the pain of the loss of their baby from years ago was bad, but the overwhelming ache of losing Robert for good devastated her. Curling into a fetal position on the floor, she rocked her body against the cold tile in front of her door. She didn't attempt to console herself or convince herself that she was going to be all right. Instead, she laid there and waited for the numb feeling to set in so she could pick herself up off the floor and go to bed, praying for morning to come so she could drown herself in work. Something that didn't ask anything of her. Something that left her soul untouched. Something that wasn't connected to Robert.

\* \* \* \*

*Fuck, I messed up.* Robert could hear the murmuring of Danielle's sobs through the door. He'd handled this situation all wrong with her. When he drove from her mother's house and stopped at the country club, waiting for her to get off work, he had a drink. He'd wanted to use vodka to drench the hurt of finding out he was almost a father, then discover the opportunity had been taken away from him, but he was too miserable to even get drunk. He'd never thought about having kids anytime soon, but the image of Danielle swollen with his child caused his heart to leap and beat hard against his chest.

Now he wanted to bang his head against the wall for jumping to conclusions as her mother had done. He had become someone else who didn't believe in Danielle and thought her guilty of aborting their baby.

Sitting on the other side of her door, he didn't think about how ridiculous he might look resting there, he just waited. Listened and waited. He didn't fool himself into believing that if he knocked she would open the door and allow him to hold her.

Almost an hour passed before he realized there was a quiet stillness on the other side. It was time for him to leave. Tomorrow he was going to close the gaps of all the missing information, but he needed to get himself together before he approached his father. Otherwise, he was liable to say things he would regret.

## Chapter Six

Robert stood at his father's office door and watched retired Major General Wright as he spoke on the phone. Glancing up, his father smiled and waved him inside. Entering, Robert closed the door behind him, then crossed the room and took the single chair opposite his dad.

"All right, Mayor Benson, I'll see what I can throw together." His father made a few more agreements, then hung up the phone. "That Benson boy, he's always coming up with ideas."

"Is he?" Robert leaned back in his chair and observed his father, the man who'd taught him never to give up without a fight. The same man he called when he felt overwhelmed in law school. His dad always told him he believed in him. His father unwaveringly said he could do it. Robert highly respected the man across the desk, but he couldn't deny the anger simmering in his veins. General Wright had secrets. Secrets that involved him, his son.

"Ole' Greg has decided that with my retirement and all earlier this summer I ought to give the Fourth of July speech."

His dad laughed, but Robert could see the pride in his face. "Nothing to it, Dad, someone in our family has always given the speech before. You'll be fine."

Tilting his head, his father eyed him for a moment. Then the astute man across the desk from him lowered his eyes and focused on Robert's hand.

Robert looked at his own hand, noticing his thumb was rubbing hard against the arm of the chair as if trying to remove the polish. Ceasing his agitated movement, Robert took note of the burning on the pad of his thumb.

"So, you want to tell me what's bugging you?" His father's chair squeaked.

"Yeah, I do, but I'm not sure where or how to start." Folding his hands in his lap, Robert raised his gaze to meet his father's.

"You know I don't like people to pussy cat around a conversation, so just say it. We'll handle whatever it is from there." His father's mouth angled up in a half smile. "Like always."

*Like always, hell.* "Dad, you always taught Liza and me to live up to our achievements and mistakes."

Taking a deep breath, he face looked at him with compassion filling his blue eyes. "Have you got yourself in a situation?"

"Not now." Forcing out a breath, he pushed his words out. "But, eight years ago I did."

The general's eyebrows pinched together in the center of his forehead. "While you were in college? What could've happened back then that could cause you to be this stressed?"

"Why didn't you tell me about the baby, Dad?" Robert blurted out.

His father's head bounced up and down in understanding. "Now I see. She told you I offered her money for an abortion."

For the first time in his life, Robert saw red clouds obstructing his vision of his father. "Why in the hell—" Raking his hands through his hair, Robert stood. Moving to the back of the chair, he leaned over it, gripping the headrest. "Dad, I loved her."

Still calm, his father folded his hands on the desktop. "Robert, I would never belittle your feelings."

"Then why do it, Dad? The baby would've been your grandchild. You would've willingly killed your grandson or granddaughter and not even told me." Robert's words came out pressured. The tightness in his throat from the night before returned full force.

His father's features distorted. Robert couldn't tell if it was from pain or embarrassment.

"You were only a child yourself. Both of you were. I wasn't telling her to have an abortion, I was giving her options. I saw the old used car she came pulling up in the driveway in." His father threw his hands up, settling deeper in his chair. "That girl didn't have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of. The

last thing you all needed was for you to come charging down here from college and continue in the house game you shouldn't have even started. No money and no jobs." Pausing, his father sighed. Locking gazes with him, his father said, "But, so you know this. I would've made sure you knew, came home and had a job. I didn't raise you and your sister to hide from your problems and I'll be *damned* if it would've started then."

The truth of his father's words popped the steam out of his balloon of indignation. "What happened, Dad? Do you know how she ended up in the hospital?"

"I took her."

"What?" Robert folded his arms across his chest.

A smile stretched across his father's face, almost prideful. "That girl has spunk. She's a fighter. She sat in that chair." His father pointed at the chair Robert now stood behind, and said, "When I offered her money for an abortion, she called me a cold rich white man who was afraid to blemish the family snow with a chocolate drop. I've had airmen who would never have had the balls to raise their voice at me. But that girl didn't care one whit about my two stars." A dry chuckle came from his mouth. "Then before I could say anything she ran out the house. I went chasing after her, but by the time I got to the front door she was laying awkward at the bottom of the porch steps clutching her stomach and crying." Sadness glazed his father's eyes. "There wasn't anything else for me to do but scoop her up and get her to Smith Northview Hospital in Valdosta. The bleeding started on the way."

Robert returned to the chair Danielle had fled so many years ago. "Her mother believes she had an abortion."

The general folded his hands in his lap. "I'm sure she does. The hospital told me they'd contacted her mother, so I waited outside the room to make sure she was going to be okay. Her mother didn't even blink in my direction when she stormed into the room in front of me. The door hadn't even shut before she said, 'well you done fixed yo' problem now. It's time to go. I need to get back to work to pay for this new bill you done made'. In a flash, she had her daughter dressed and out of the hospital, never asking what happened or how the girl was doing."

Robert shook his head. Danielle's mother wondered why her daughter left and only sends cards and money. When Danielle had needed Ms. Harvey emotionally, her mother hadn't been there for her. Now he could understand why Danielle put up so many walls and refused to address their feelings for each other.

"So, what's your plan for you and this girl?"

Staring at his father, he corrected him, "Danielle. Her name is Danielle."

"No, her name is LaQuesha. But, it was legally changed in Atlanta to Danielle."

Robert frowned. "She told you her real name."

"Hell, no," he barked with laughter. "When she came to the house, she introduced herself as Danielle. I did some checking around and found out about her."

"I tried to do the same thing and got nowhere."

His father grinned. "Son, I was a general in the United States Air Force. There's not much I can't discover."

Nodding, Robert agreed with his father. "I'm sure. So, you figured out I'm dating her."

"That didn't take much discovering. When she moved to town, I knew once you finished law school and came home it was a matter of time."

"Then why do you and all your buddies keep trying to set me up with all of the available girls in town?" He could start his own phone book with the numbers he'd been given.

"Options, son. Life is filled with options," his father threw his hands out to the side.

"I love her, Dad," he confirmed.

"I figured as much." Leaning his elbows on the desk, his father eyed him across the polished wood surface. "Do me a favor. Make an honest woman out of her *before* you all start on my grandbabies this time."

Lifting and dropping his hands with a loud slap on his thighs, Robert said, "I'd love to, Dad. But, Danielle won't even answer my phone calls."

"Well, we know she'll be at the Claremont County Independence Day fair."

For the first time that day, Robert smiled. "Thanks, Dad."

\* \* \* \*



## APPREHENSION

"Okay, Smith, you're off candy apple patrol. Step back and let a professional handle this," said Mandy Franklin, the other day shift female cop.

Laughing, Danielle allowed the tall, lanky ebony-haired woman to hip bump her away from the bubbling caramel pot. "So, you're trying to tell me you can do a better job than me?"

Mandy looked over at the gooey blob-covered apples on the wax paper. "Uh, I think a two-year-old could have managed to make it still look like apples."

Biting on the side of her lip and wrinkling her nose, Danielle said, "I think you're right, Franklin. I can cook, but I'm terrible with carnival candy."

"You got that right. So, stay away from the cotton candy bin as well, Smith. I still haven't gotten all the sugar out of my hair," Brantley warned.

Danielle stuck her tongue out at the big burly redhead. "Whatever. I'll just help Thompson with chocolate dipped bananas—"

"No!" Fred Thompson, the buzz cut blond of the force, threw his hands up to ward her off the simmering double boiler. The white gauze on his forearm a stark reminder of the last time she'd been there.

Poking her lip out to hide her grin, she asked, "So, you don't want my help?"

Pulling a perfect brown covered apple out of the pot and placing it on the wax sheet, Franklin said, "Smith, you ran your ass off yesterday and raised a lot of money. You made it possible for us to provide so many free treats for the town folks. You did your part."

"Ran like something was chasing you," Thompson chirped in.

"Now get your tiny ass out of the booth." Franklin ordered.

"Fine." Danielle waved at her friends, taking the hint that her service was no longer needed, and left the candy stand. She was finally feeling a part of the town and the force. Strolling through the fairgrounds, she loved how twice a year this place came together raising money and contributing things so that this event was free for everyone.

Pausing by the Ferris wheel, Danielle spotted the only dark corner of her own personal cloud nine. Robert. He was standing in the conductor's box at the carousel waiting for more kids to load up on the metal horses. His sister Liza and Officer Zeller were assisting smaller kids on the ride, while inside with him was Stephanie Maxwell, pressed close beside him. The woman's fake boobs practically stroked Robert's arm. Danielle could see Stephanie's sharp nipples signaling attention from this far away. Shifting her gaze back to Robert and seeing his brown hair, strong jaw line and sexy mouth, Danielle's body tensed in remembrance. His hands shifted the controls, starting the ride for the children, and heat rolled in her stomach and lowered between her legs, awakening her sex. She recalled every touch and caress of his hands on her body and his spicy male scent.

She shook her head to clear it. The last thing she needed was to torture herself any more than she already was. Pulling her gaze away from him, Danielle turned and went to the picnic area. She would need to find a spot before it got too crowded. The fireworks would be starting soon.

Plopping down on the grass, Danielle stared off in the distance. Thompson had been correct when he said she ran as if something was chasing her. Yesterday, she had tried to outrun all of the loneliness that was going to be her companion for many years to come.

She and Robert were over. He hadn't called her since Wednesday. Maybe he'd finally gotten tired of her not answering or returning his calls. After her run yesterday, she had been shocked to see him standing at the finish line. He and his father were there conversing with the two senior partners at the law firm and Chief Dennison. Robert clapped as she came across the line, third but the first woman. Winded, she gazed at him, while someone handed her a bottle of water. Pacing, she had tried to fill her lungs with much needed air and noticed his nod of congratulations.

Unable to deny the warm feelings surrounding her heart at his support, she almost smiled until General Wright turned and followed Robert's gaze to her. Quickly, giving both men her back, she walked away to the cheering group of cops.

"So, what's eating you?"

Danielle lifted her head and saw Mandy, the second female runner, standing beside her. "Hey girl, what happened to your dipping fun?"

"See when you're a caramel apple-ologist. You don't need lots of time." Mandy sat beside her.

"Apple-ologist? Is that even a word?"

"It is now." The dark haired woman gave a husky laugh, almost masculine in nature. "Actually, the line started to thin. Everyone wants to hear the speech and see the fireworks."

Danielle looked over the sea of families sitting around on blankets, eating, laughing and mingling with friends.

"You never answered my question. What's eating you, Smith?"

Glancing to the side, she stared at the other woman who had become a friend to her in the last few weeks. They'd even had lunch together a few times. "Why do you think something's bothering me?"

Bending her legs, Mandy propped her elbows on her knees. "It's not because you haven't been Miss Ray of Sunshine. The guys probably can't tell any difference, but woman to woman, I've witnessed more than just one time where you were lost in your own thoughts and pain shadowed your eyes."

*Damn, who would've ever thought tough Mandy had female intuition.* Folding her legs in a crisscross fashion, Danielle decided to open up. She needed to talk to someone. "Mandy—"

"Mandy? Not Franklin? Whoa, this must be serious." The other woman dramatically placed her hand over her heart.

"Do you want to hear this or not?"

Mandy pretended to zip her lip.

Giggling for a moment, Danielle took a deep breath, then began, "I'm not going to go into great detail now, because if I do..." she swallowed, trying to loosen the thick feeling in her throat, "I'll start crying. Have you ever been in love with someone you knew couldn't be yours? Shouldn't be yours?"

"No."

Snapping her head to the side, Danielle looked at Mandy. "You've never been in love?"

"That's not what you asked. I've been in love lots. Never deeply in love, though. But, I can't think of a time that it was to anyone I shouldn't have. Unless the person you love is married."

"No, he's not married." She glanced past Mandy in the direction of the carousel, but no longer saw Robert. She wondered if he was off with Stephanie. "It just won't work. There's too much between us."

"Never." Mandy nudged her shoulder. "If two people are in love and want it to work. Nothing can stop it."

Refocusing on Mandy, Danielle asked, "What about past hurts? Other people's views? Family disapproval? Those things can tear people apart."

"Only if the two want it to happen." With eyes full of a wisdom that Danielle had never recognized before, Mandy continued, "Do you love him, Danni?"

Danielle smiled at hearing her old nickname. "Yeah, I love him." She blinked away the tears threatening to fall. "But, what if it's too late?"

"Happy Independence Day, Claremont County!" Mayor Benson bellowed into the microphone from the wooden platform, erected for the fair, making the screech blare in everyone's ears.

Putting their conversation on hold, she and Mandy looked over to the small stage.

"This year, I decided to do something different." The fairground conversation came to a halt as everyone listened to the Mayor. "Instead of me kicking off the fireworks, I'm going to allow our county's highest ranking decorated hero and a descendent of one of our founders, and finally a county resident since his retirement, to speak."

Everyone, knowing who the Mayor was talking about before he said it, began to clap for General Wright.

Robert's father patted Mayor Benson on the back as he took the microphone. "Thanks, everyone. I must say that in all of my years traveling and living all over the world, there is no place like Claremont County."

People called out their agreement to his words.

"Nowhere else I've been comes together and supports each other like Claremont County."

Whistles pierced the night air.

"It's because of that love and encouragement we show each other in this town that my son has decided this would be the best place to make an announcement."

Danielle's gaze located Robert walking up onto the five-foot high platform. His father gave him a wink, then passed the microphone to him. She wondered what Robert had to say that was so important he would do it in such a fashion. *Maybe he made partner.*

"My father and quite a few other people in this town have not pulled any punches in telling me that I need to be thinking about getting married."

That wasn't what she was expecting. Scanning the groups standing by the stage, she looked for Stephanie; the person she considered was the town's pick for Robert. She hadn't missed the gossip about how much Stephanie talked about wanting Robert.

"Before I go any further. I have a problem." He lifted his hand to his forehead and looked around the gathering. "Can you all help me find Officer Danielle Smith?"

Her lids stretched wide as all the town seemed to be staring at her with question in their eyes.

"Here she is!" Mandy bellowed out.

Looking at her friend, she whispered, "Thanks, Benedict Arnold."

"No time like the present for you to discover I'm a romantic at heart."

Danielle found herself shoved to her feet by her friend.

"Great," she mumbled. Unable to escape, Danielle found herself moving on wooden legs toward the stage.

"Hi, beautiful." Robert spoke into the mic.

Heat spread over her face. She was afraid to look anywhere else but at Robert. She didn't want to see the judgmental eyes of the onlookers. Giving a slight shake to her head, she attempted to plead with Robert not to do this. *Don't embarrass me, please.*

But he disregarded her appeal and continued, "Officer Smith, you arrested my heart years ago the first time I saw you."

Nerves got the best of her, causing her legs to quiver in her jeans. *Oh, God, this man has lost his mind.*

"I'm crazy in love and I'm hoping that you won't say no in front of all of these people. Will you marry me?"

She was speechless, overwhelmed and nervous. A part of her wanted to turn and hightail it out of there. Accustomed to running, her defense mechanism told her to do it again. Not give a damn what Robert wanted, leave and find a new town.

Robert must have sensed the warring emotions inside of her because he handed the microphone to his father and jumped off the stage.

As his long muscular legs ate up the distance between them, Danielle's feet were rooted to the spot. She couldn't will herself to move, let alone run. But for once in her life she didn't want to.

Close enough to touch, Robert stood before her. "Robert, I—" her voice broke.

"Love me?" he questioned, sounding slightly unsure. "Sweetheart, we both lost something precious once. But I refuse to lose you."

Through watery eyes, she looked into his hazel ones. "I don't want to lose you. But, do you really want to marry me knowing that your father doesn't approve of us?" Danielle's body felt prickly with all the attention focused on them.

Closing the gap, he held her face in his hands. "I don't care if this whole town, my father or Ms. Hanscom doesn't like it. I'd marry you in the town square today. I said I love you and I meant it."

What girl could argue with that? "I love you, Robert." Her heart pounded with excitement in her chest. "Ask me again," her voice wavered as the tears she'd been holding back began to fall.

Lowering his body to the ground, Robert took hold of her hand as he balanced himself on one knee. "Danielle Smith, will you marry me?"

"Yees!" she answered, squealing with delight as Robert lifted her into his arms and began kissing her.

"Let the fireworks begin!" General Wright called out as the people cheered and explosions of lights lit the sky.

Placing her feet back on the ground, she found herself tugged behind Robert through the throng of citizens, congratulating them, and passed a teary-eyed Officer Franklin.

Robert didn't stop until he had her inside the hall of mirrors trailer. "Now, I can show you how happy you've made me." Pulling her to him, his hands snaked up the back of her shirt and caressed her skin.

The tingle she was feeling earlier was nothing in comparison to how her body was singing now. "Babe, we are not going to make love in this trailer with all of Claremont County outside the door." She moaned at the hot open mouth kiss he was placing on the side of her neck.

"Fine." His hands moved down to her butt and gripped it, pressing her to his distinct erection. "Party pooper, but I need to touch you."

Wrapping her arms around his wide shoulders, she said, "What kind of woman would I be if I denied my fiancée?"

"A very naughty woman." Unzipping her pants, he slipped one hand inside and underneath the elastic of her panties. "And a deliciously wet one." Palming her bare sex, he brushed her clit, nestled between her slick folds.

Spreading her legs, Danielle gyrated her hips and pressed her aching center against his hand.

"Liza and Brad are getting married at the end of the summer. How do you feel about a Christmas wedding?"

Her eyes slid shut. "As long as you don't...stop...I'll agree to...anything."

"Hmm, good." His talented finger made circles at the apex of her thighs. "Dad wants the wedding at the house."

Danielle's eyes sprang open. "Are you sure he was talking about our wedding?"

With one arm curved around her waist, his hand between her legs became more insistent. "Positive, now you need to come, sweetheart, before the fireworks stop and the whole town hears you screaming."

She didn't care as her orgasm overtook her and she cried out, feeling the joy of knowing she was beginning a new life with Robert.

## About the Author

Yvette Hines loves romance and writing it is one of her greatest pleasures in life outside of her husband and two children. Her belief in happily ever after began when she was sixteen and started reading romance books. Now as an erotic romance author, she tries to show that every woman no matter color, age, shape or size deserves a high level of passion in her life. Residing in Virginia with her family, she is an avid member of Chesapeake Romance Writers. She loves to hear from her readers: [sasseyyvettehines@yahoo.com](mailto:sasseyyvettehines@yahoo.com) or visit her at <http://SASSE-Yvette-Hines.blogspot.com>.