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SUBMISSION

Beautiful Liars 1

Ashley Brooke

Beautiful Liars 1

Submission

Carrington's strength and dominion bring Alicia to her knees in submission every time he brands her body with his own. His passion for her is like fire on gasoline, and the fire he possesses cannot be quenched. The thing is Alicia can get him killed in the game.

Dirty secrets and scandalous lies are told repeatedly in the name of winning the one prize that started it all. Alicia and Carrington fight to keep their secret affair alive, stealing kisses and brief hugs as a close friend plays the devil and angel in the midst of it all.

Many nights of passionate sex bring Alicia to the one path she thought she'd never cross, making it that much harder for her to choose. Alicia and Carrington adore one another and will do anything to stay together. The only problem is, Alicia isn't a player, she is the game.

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EROTIC ROMANCE



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SUBMISSION

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DEDICATION

First, I would like to thank God for a life of abundance, many blessings, and for the ability to write. I also want to thank Peter Jordan (my high school drama instructor), Brianna Arie Smith (my best friend), Asia Thompson (my sister), and Talera Thompson (my mother) for all of their encouragement and support. The love and advice I've received has given me great comfort throughout this entire process. I also want to thank Lonnie Thompson (my dad) for purchasing the computer on which my stories have been written. I am truly blessed to have such wonderful people in my life, words cannot even begin to express.

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ASHLEY BROOKE

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Chapter 1

Maybe it was his eyes or the stern expression he wore on his handsome face. Whatever it was, the mystery of the enticing man lingered in her mind and never failed to arouse her in such a powerful way. The pleasure she felt from simply being near him was heaven, and the agony of lust she endured was no further from hell than she was from earth.

The subconscious flaring of Alicia's nostrils and the continuous whimpers escaping her throat came in tiny spurts as she played the devil and angel in her violent fight against failure. The pounding of her footsteps came like thunder as she sprinted through the trail hidden deep within the woods. She crushed the colorful leaves with every step she took, as they lay dying beside the dozing trees. With every effort she made to cross the unseen finish line awaiting her, she struggled to capture every faint breath that never seemed to be enough for her air-thirsty lungs. The blanket of wind surrounding the caramel beauty mirrored the dryness of her throat as it basked in its growing strength and worked against her, blowing back the tiny sandy curls on her head.

Images of the tall mysterious stranger she'd encountered times before were like tattoos on her mind, and the moments she spent

standing before him were like high doses of ecstasy pushing her heart rate to the limit.

Alicia sighed with relief. The burning sensation caused by the blazing fire dancing in the pit of her belly was immediately washed away by a heavenly feeling of satisfaction and victory. She'd reached the end of the trail.

Head bowed with her hands on her knees, Alicia willed her breath to return to her like a lonely child missing his mother. When she finally did stand, she was stunned to find that familiar dark-haired stranger watching her with that same intensified gaze. He sat hunched over on a weathered green bench with his hands hovering over his knees. His entire demeanor said that he was daring enough to fix his ultraviolet-eyes on Alicia's beautiful brown ones.

Feeling a tad sheepish, Alicia tore away her gaze and with great effort focused on a fountain resting only but a few feet away from the attractive male. The two said nothing to one another, but somewhere along the line, Alicia found the courage to flash him a genuine smile as she approached the rusted spring. Receiving nothing but the same fierce expression he'd offered moments before, Alicia narrowed her head and sipped the purifying water. She'd seen this man several times before, and even though they'd stood within three feet of one another on many of those occasions, neither of them dared to say a word to one another.

Feeling replenished, but still much too tired to start another run, Alicia chose to walk in quick, long strides until she reached the opening of the trail she'd conquered just a few minutes ago.

* * * *

When Alicia returned to her apartment, she tossed her keys and cell phone onto her bed before stripping herself of everything but serenity, and then climbed into the shower. As the steamy water massaged the saltiness of her flesh, she combed through her short bob

of hair, using only her slender fingers to pluck away the undesirables nesting in her forming curls.

Alicia tilted her head back and allowed the droplets to dance upon the soft features of her pretty face. She shifted into several different positions for a number of minutes until every curve of her figure was massaged by her faucet's steaming tears. It wasn't long before she proceeded in uniting her body with the maroon wash cloth that hung lifelessly on her glass shower door. The feeling of gentle soap on flesh was like paradise and the fragrance released was like an unearthly pleasure. Alicia closed her eyes and found her happy place. Being there was the closest to heaven she'd ever been, for heart ache was nonexistent and love was God.

When she opened her eyes, she was disappointed with what lay in front of her, behind her, and all around her. Time. She'd been through hell for most of her years and things were only going to get worse, but none of the things she was about to see and do compared to the loss of born identity.

About fifteen minutes had elapsed, and she needed to be sitting down in the classroom within the next thirty minutes. Fortunately, for her, she wasn't the high-maintenance type. As Alicia climbed out of the shower, the condensation created by the steaming water filled the heated bathroom.

It took her no time to slip on her pink jump suit and pull her damp hair back into a bun of stubborn curls.

Before Alicia knew it, she was entering her class before call time.

No one except for the handsome young man she'd laid eyes on earlier after her jog had shown up yet. His presence was inevitable though. He was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. Though he did not intend on practicing law immediately after graduation, he valued the knowledge he'd gained and hoped to one day succeed in winning justice for those deserving. The bronze mystique treated his major as though it was his wife and he a devoted husband. He was

truly engrossed and savored every moment of his time gaining the knowledge needed to become a dominating lawyer.

Carrington Marino had broad rounded shoulders serving as the perfect complements for his muscle-bound back and abs of steel. He had well-defined arms and rock-solid calves. He was two hundred twenty pounds and stood at a sexy six foot four. His body was praised by many women, including Alicia.

Alicia and Carrington were complete opposites. Alicia was very petite and had curvy hips. Her five feet was no match for his large stature, nor could she outwit the wise man, for he held more knowledge of manipulation over her head and was the inventor of many love games. If he noticed her admiration for him, he never made it known. Between them both, Alicia was outspoken while he kept to himself. She could be read like a book, while the mystery of Carrington's heart could only be read by the one who birthed him, and that went far beyond the beauty of his betraying eyes.

Carrington's eyes changed with emotion. When he was happy or sexually aroused they were ultraviolet. The more aroused he was, the deeper the violet became. When he was frustrated or annoyed, they were gray. It wasn't until he reached his breaking point that his eyes were completely black. And when his feelings were in between, they were either gray-violet or violet-gray, depending on which half of the emotion he was feeling was more dominant.

After the first hour of class passed away, Professor Crane advised the class to collaborate with a neighbor and engage in a group discussion concerning the reading assignment he'd assigned the class before.

There was a sudden feeling of fluttering butterflies awakening in the pit of Alicia's belly and that familiar heart-stopping sensation between her small breasts. There was a parade going on inside of her. Fearing that for whatever reason she may come across as being a young schoolgirl with a major crush, instead of the strong, intelligent

twenty-two year old that she was, Alicia hesitated before turning to face the intimidating man.

“Would you like to—” The look he was giving her made her flush and feel silly for even approaching him. “Work. Together?” Her voice was a mere whisper.

“No.” His reply was as wry as his facial expression and his body language just as tainted. He clearly wanted nothing to do with the lovely Ms. Alicia Stewart.

The rest of class was a drag. Alicia was humiliated. The very first word Carrington had ever said to her made her feel as small as the sparkling pearl linked to her necklace, and even now that seemed larger than she.

He was just so arrogant, wry, and standoffish. He was much too serious and never smiled. She couldn’t possibly have an affinity for someone like that. He definitely wasn’t her type, and she was sure she wasn’t his. Besides, she knew nothing about him, except that his name was Carrington. She didn’t even know his last name.

Which is why she couldn’t understand the frequent jolts he’d caused her heart to suffer or why trying to make them stop was like telling the sun to stop burning.

The ringing of the bell was like music to Alicia’s ears. She tucked the strings of loose curls behind her ears as she stacked her spiral notebook on top of her heavy textbook with her free hand. She didn’t look up, but she saw Carrington brush past her as though she wasn’t even there. For whatever reason, it felt like a healing wound being reopened. She grabbed her large beige bag and cradled her books in the opposite arm. She was all set to go and motioned for the door when a firm hand grasped her shoulder.

“Ms. Stewart, how are you?” Crane greeted her with that same affectionate hug and smile others might have assumed to be intimate.

“Mr. Crane.” Alicia swallowed as she came into contact with the tall, fair-skinned man with silky brown hair. He had the most daunting icy blue eyes she’d ever seen.

“This is for you.” He handed her a large orange envelope.

“What is this?” She asked in a mere whisper.

“The papers,” he whispered, looking around for anyone who might overhear.

“Oh.” She quickly tucked the orange envelope into her bag.

“When you get home, read through them thoroughly, and be sure to sign every line, *especially* the one on the last page. Bring them back to me as soon as possible. My cousin will be thrilled to know you’ve gone through with the plan. I’ll be expecting them...*and* you.” He walked away, trying to appear as casual as possible.

“As you wish,” Alicia uttered begrudgingly, making her way to the door.

* * * *

The next couple of days were just okay. The wind was still just as brisk, the leaves just as colorful, and Alicia was just as eager to run. She hadn’t seen Carrington in days, and for whatever reason, it was more of a pain than the cramps in her side. She came around the corner panting heavily after slowing down from her rigorous run on the dark, forbidden trail. When she laid eyes on the man sitting on the weathered green bench, her heart froze, and all of a sudden, she couldn’t move. The sight of him made her blush, and the thought of being near him set her heart aflame.

Carrington was sitting in the same position he had been the day he was daring enough to warm her body with his eyes’ caress. She watched him closely for a moment before tearing away her gaze, and then turned to face the woods captivating the trail she’d relentlessly abused with the pounding of her feet. Wishing to be drunk with cocksureness and high on tranquility, she reluctantly parted from Carrington, carrying a heavy load of disappointment and a breaking heart instead.

Alicia ran until the power of denial surpassed the strident cries of her breaking heart. She wasn't intimidated by him, nor did he make her grow weak in the knees. She could live without him. He could disappear for all she cared. She didn't need him. She didn't want him.

Chapter 2

Later that Thursday night, the Cross Country runners met up at the trail. They all stood in two single-file lines while they prepared for what was going to be the most intensified aerobic training yet. Carrington stood at the very front of the line and was the one to set the pace in which they were to run for the night. His mind was everywhere but where he was physically that night. He wanted to part from the group and run alone, but he knew, as well as everyone else, how unacceptable that would be.

* * * *

The color of the sky—in contrast to the thin pink clouds streaming across its base—was a deep ocean blue. It hovered like an oversized blanket above Alicia's head as she stood outside in the middle of the parking lot. Nothing but the uniformed sound of heavy footsteps filled her ears as she stood in the middle of the parking lot, fiddling with the keys to her car. She'd know that sound anywhere. She looked over her shoulder and saw the large group of cross country runners nearing. Her heart fluttered when she laid eyes on the strong man leading the runners to their next destination.

For weeks, she'd been trying to analyze every little detail about Carrington. His demeanor demanded that she keep her distance, but his eyes told of another story. They caressed her at every given moment and revealed nothing more than his attentiveness. Even then as the runners made their way through the parking lot, Carrington

fixed his eyes on her and didn't break his trance until the distance hid her from him.

* * * *

When they reached the end of their run, Carrington dismissed the runners and stood beside the metal bench on the football field. He could see Alicia's small frame from where he was standing. He scowled as he watched her draw near from the distance. She was walking along the pavement leading to the large stadium.

* * * *

Alicia noticed Carrington lingering behind and felt tempted to do the same but was hesitant, lest he become aware of her incentive and brush her off again. She drew in a deep breath and walked a little faster. She had to try again. She made headway for Carrington. The closer she came to him, the louder her heart thudded.

Carrington must have sensed her presence, because he peered over his shoulder and sent her a look that made her heart jolt.

That look, oh *that* look left Alicia breathless, and his eyes...

They were *so* beautiful, gray with a touch of violet.

Something about his demeanor turned her on in such a way that could not be described.

Alicia had come so close to relief before his facial expression hardened and brought her back to the reality of her pain and to her reason for fear, fear of rejection. Carrington was frowning down upon her as if to ask why she was there. He had the appearance of a dangerous man on the verge of slicing away all collateral. He held her gaze a little longer before tearing his eyes away. He said nothing, showed no sign of even wanting her there and simply continued to look straight ahead from then on.

“H-hey.” Alicia’s voice was soft and meek. She was feeling just as embarrassed as she had been in class that day, wondering what in the hell she was thinking while initiating their second awkward encounter. She bowed her head and lowered her gaze to the smooth pavement beneath her feet. For the first time in her life, she sympathized for the concrete. *What must it be like being walked on every day?*

After what seemed like an eternity of damnation, Carrington opened his mouth to speak.

“Hey,” he said after a sigh, but his back remained to her.

“You like to come out here a lot?”

“No, I just make myself miserable by sitting out here every day,” he replied with patent sarcasm.

“You don’t have to be so rude you know,” she said softly.

“Why the hell are you speaking to me? Last time I checked, I didn’t give you permission to do so.”

Alicia jerked her head back. She was startled by his remark. There was a pregnant silence between them for a short moment. “You’re an ass,” she finally said.

Hurt yet again by his raw attitude, Alicia gave up and stalked off toward the large parking lot. She made a beeline for her black convertible. *I’m done. He can eat dirt, ’cause he sure as hell isn’t good enough to kiss my ass.*

* * * *

Carrington did turn then, but he didn’t speak, only watched. He watched as Alicia broadened the distance between them with her long, quick strides. Even with a tantrum, she appeared just as pretty and poised. She smelled of Jasmine and had the look of a goddess, glowing brighter than any candle in the dark. He’d never get over the way her hips swayed when she walked. She was *so* pretty and clearly vulnerable. She held a spark he found sexy and alluring. He’d

offended her for the second time, and he knew it. Surely, she'd want nothing to do with him now, and it was better that way.

* * * *

The following Tuesday, Alicia sat in her usual seat, next to Carrington. She didn't acknowledge him though. She didn't even look his way, and when Crane permitted the class to collaborate, she chose to work with a sweet redhead she'd made friends with at the start of the semester. Carrington worked independently for a while before joining a group of beefy guys in the far corner.

Alicia chose to ignore him, but her heart still yearned for his attention. Her rebellious eyes kissed his gray-violet ones several times during the hour, and every time it was like lightning bolts shocking her engorged heart.

* * * *

Carrington knew the innocence of Alicia's actions, and he resented her for them. He was well aware of the fierce lion living within her and wished it dead. He was fond of her beauty and wished with all of his heart that wasn't so. But as time progressed, he found that it was the little sweet nothings about Alicia that became harder to ignore.

The sex appeal of the shapely young woman persisted on playing mind games with him, and the effect she had on him physically became harder to ignore. Many nights Carrington found himself fighting a pain he felt in the juncture of his thighs and often waking up in the middle of darkness panting heavily while lying in damp sheets. Perhaps his daily fantasies of being with the sexy temptress had much to do with *something* he swore was *nothing*. But he wasn't alone. Alicia was pleasant on the eyes of many men, and her endearing aura drew them in.

* * * *

Jordan made his way around the classroom and helped students who were in need. Then he casually made his way over to Alicia, who seemed a little distracted from her work.

“Is everything okay, Ms. Stewart?”

Startled, Alicia turned to face the person who spoke softly in her ear. “I’m fine, thanks,” she said in a mere whisper. “I’m just waiting for my partner to come back. She excused herself for a moment. She’ll be back soon.”

Professor Crane squatted beside her and discreetly placed a gentle hand on the upper part of her thigh. “When will I get to be your partner again?” he whispered.

Alicia frowned and for a moment remained silent.

Enjoying the fact that he’d stomped her with such a question, he smiled and rubbed her thigh. His teeth were perfect, straight, and white. She could smell the mint on his breath and the cologne on his flesh. He was much too close for comfort.

Alicia struggled for words and to hold her composure. Jordan Crane made chills run down her spine and her insides turn. He was a very handsome man but extremely controlling and nearly ten years her senior.

Jordan kept his voice at a whisper and she noticed him redirect his attention, focusing on whatever it was that may have been behind her.

“Just let me know if you need help with”—he returned her gaze and glanced down at her hips, then back up at her eyes—“anything.”

* * * *

Jordan stood to his feet and he peered over his shoulder. He took a glimpse at the rest of the class. All were working diligently and appeared to be self-indulged. He turned his eye to Carrington who’d

been sitting in the back corner watching the entire time. The young man said nothing, but the piercing of his fuming gray eyes confirmed that he had seen everything. His glare was as unrelenting as was Jordan's, and in an instant, one man was silently challenging the other.

Chapter 3

Carrington allowed the steaming water to dance upon the surface of his firm skin. He'd just come in from his own personal jog along the wicked trail and was in desperate need of a shower. Though he had a place of his own, he decided to use the shower in the locker room this time. Appreciating his time alone, he reminded himself that it was his mission to avenge his father who'd been killed in a war that wasn't his to fight. He'd just entered the world of adolescence and needed his father more than anything at that time. But like a thief in the night, Ben Foxworth stole his father's final breath without a feeling of remorse or compassion. Carrington swore from then on he'd finish what his father started and avenge him in the process. Antonio Marino would have wanted it. Protecting your own and showing no weakness was spoken of many times in the Marino home—especially by Antonio—and it was sure to never be forgotten.

For months, Carrington witnessed the anguish and tears of his beloved mother as she waited frantically for the return of his father, and he vowed to never put that look on another woman's face. Forced to grow up and care for the youngest and most fragile of his siblings, he willed himself to think, act, and operate like the honorable man his father was, so that his little brother could, too, become a man of principle. If he could have been half the man Antonio Marino was, that alone would have been an honor to him.

Twenty-six and only a year from graduating first in his class, Carrington remained adamant about refraining from serious relationships—if any at all. For nine years, he anticipated this day, and now, only a light year and a month away, it stood staring him in

the eye, with death standing not far behind in the distance, taunting him as it once did his father years ago.

As God as my witness, I will do whatever it takes to avenge my father and protect my family, even if I die trying.

Carrington turned off the water and covered his hips with a white towel. He replayed the memory of the day he and his family learned that Antonio Marino was never coming back. He relived the grief and distress that overwhelmed him in the moment of watching his mother kneel and scream while holding the telephone to her ear.

Fourteen years had gone by since then and the wounds were still deep...

“Carrington!”

The unexpected call of his name brought him back from the past. Carrington turned his attention to the platinum-blond-haired, six-foot-three male. “Hey, Jake. What’s goin on, man?” Carrington pulled his gray sweatshirt over his head, and his damp hair remained plastered to his forehead.

Jake met Carrington his freshman year of college. Carrington was just beginning law school, and Jake was fresh out of high school. He barely had any friends at Harvard because he was from out of state and all of his loved ones were in California. He needed someone to show him around and make him feel more at home. Carrington gave him the time of day, and he’d clung to him like glue ever since.

“A lot.” Jake snickered. “How’s your mom by the way?” he asked.

“She’s fine. Last time I talked to her, she said things were civil back at home.”

“That’s good to hear.” Jake was pulling off his drenched gray shirt. It was the same as Carrington’s. It’d started raining outside, and Jake was unfortunate enough to have gotten caught in the mess in the middle of his jog. “So, you datin’ yet?”

“Nope.” Carrington pulled up his pants.

“Why?”

“I don’t want to.”

“Come on man, nothing has to be serious. Just have fun. Snag some babes for the night. It’s not like you have to marry one. One night Carrington, that’s all. I’m going to Paradise Haven tonight with some of the guys. You should come. Live a little.” Jake clapped a hand on Carrington’s strong, rounded shoulder and gave it a tight squeeze. “What do you say?” When Carrington didn’t answer, he persisted, “You’ll be sorry you missed it.”

Carrington inhaled deeply, and then exhaled heavily. “What time do you want to meet?”

* * * *

Alicia stood in front of her bedroom mirror as she combed through the damp tangle of curls on her head. She continued to replay the nightmare of the reception she’d experienced with Carrington earlier.

She’d been jogging along the trail when she thought she heard someone behind her. She peered over her shoulder for a second and that was all it took before she collided with Carrington, who’d been cutting through from the left—another path that connected with the trail.

“Jesus, why don’t you watch where you’re going?” He barked, not seeming to care that she’d fallen flat on her bottom.

Alicia was panting for air when she realized what had happened. Struggling to stand to her feet she hissed, “Dude, I didn’t see you coming. And apparently you didn’t see me, otherwise we wouldn’t have collided. So take your own damned advice and do the same.”

“How the hell was I supposed to see you? You barely reach my chest for God’s sake!”

“Oh, get over it, you big whimp! I’m the one who took the beating. I actually fell on the ground while you stood there without a scratch!”

Carrington's nostrils began to flair and his face flushed red. He took two steps forward and towered over her. She appeared even smaller when he did that.

Alicia was a tough cookie. She didn't cower, even though it was evident whose strength was superior. Instead, she tipped her chin up a little more, hoping to appear a little more defiant than she felt. She stared him dead in the eye, almost daring him to make a move.

Carrington's glare pierced through the holes of her soul, and his breathing became more rampant. "I have a hell of a lot more scratches and scars than you will ever be able to imagine," he murmured through gritted teeth.

Alicia did back up then, but her face never softened. "Go to hell," was all she managed in a low voice that every bit expressed her disdain for Carrington at the moment.

"You go first," he retorted, and then carried on with his run, leaving her to stand there with those awful words hovering over her head.

Alicia jumped at the ring of her cordless phone. "Hello?" She asked with caution.

"Hey, Alicia, it's Rachel."

Rachel Bennett was Alicia's friend of seven years. She was a pretty, young, sophisticated woman. She was two or three years older than Alicia. Her long wavy black hair was her sexiest feature, and she had the prettiest of blue eyes.

"Oh. Hey, Rachel. How's it goin'?"

"I'm a little swamped. Things are a little hectic around here."

"Mmm. How's the teaching coming along?"

"That's the hectic part. I've got several papers to grade, final and grades are due next week. But I mean, I can't complain, it's better than what I was doing before I got my degree. There was a time when I was willing to do just about anything for some extra cash."

"That's good to hear." Alicia winced as she tried to drag her comb through a knotted piece of hair.

“Mm...” There was a brief silence before Rachel carried on. “Hey, are you doing anything tonight?”

“Ugh!” Alicia whispered and dropped the phone. She quickly bent over to pick it up with her comb still stuck in her hair. “Besides studying and doing homework, nothing. Why?”

“I was wondering if you wanted to have a girls’ night out with some of the girls and me.”

“Where to?” Alicia removed the phone from her ear and switched to speaker.

“Oh, I don’t know. I was thinking about going to Paradise Haven.”

Alicia stood silent for a moment before answering. She’d finally untangled her hair and was now brushing through her smooth waves. “I don’t know, Rachel. I just took a shower, and I really need to start studying.”

“Oh, come on! You’re such a homebody. Come out. Have fun. You don’t get out enough, and you’re still single—gee, I wonder why.” There was a ring of sarcasm in Rachel’s raspy voice.

There was a brief silence on the other end. “What time do you need me to be ready?” Alicia finally asked.

“Seven thirty.”

* * * *

Rachel arrived at Alicia’s place at exactly seven thirty. It wasn’t long before they arrived and walked through the glass doors of Paradise Haven.

Chapter 4

Carrington sipped his Shirley Temple as his friends danced and flirted mercilessly. He turned his head and took notice to a slender figure leaning against the counter where he was seated.

“Hey, sexy, what’s your name?” the tall, blonde-haired woman asked, marveling at him. He was sporting a black fitted V-neck sweater and denim jeans. He held the look of a God. No woman in her right mind could fathom nor resist the hypnotic sparkle in those dashing gray eyes.

Carrington flashed her half of a smile. She was a tad tipsy but kind of cute. He told her his name before asking for hers, not that he would remember. She told him hers, and before he knew it, she was grinding on him on the dance floor. Carrington was actually enjoying himself for once and for a moment was able to forget about the constant reminders of not having his father. And Alicia.

The tipsy young beauty moved her slender hips one way and he followed, then she moved them the other way and he found that rhythm too. She dipped and came back up. Then moved her hips at a pace so rapid, it was obvious she was no virgin. That was the end for Carrington. Feeling like he’d had enough, he lightly tapped her on the shoulder and then excused himself. When he returned to his seat, he was stunned to find Alicia sitting on the stool next to his. She looked dashing in her mini cocktail dress embroidered with pink and yellow patterns with hints of hunter green. She wore her hair wavy and pinned up, with wisps of stubborn curls brushing ever-so-lightly against her neck. Her makeup was light and she smelled of fresh flowers. It was enough to make him melt.

Alicia was too busy laughing and joking around with Rachel to notice Carrington standing next to her. He took the next seat over. Alicia must have sensed his presence because she immediately looked his way when he sat down.

Carrington remained silent as she fixed her eyes on his, wondering how she was going to react.

The astonished look that seemed to be paralyzed on her face said it all.

The memory of their last encounter flooded both of their minds, but it was Carrington who felt compelled to apologize. He was a little hesitant at first because he feared the gesture would probably widen the crack of a door already standing ajar, but still, the need was great. He leaned in, never taking his eyes off her, and then tilted his head so that he could speak directly in her ear.

“Hey, uh, sorry about earlier. I shouldn’t have snapped at you that way.” He could barely hear himself above the music.

Alicia turned and leaned in even closer. “It’s all right,” she nearly yelled in his ear. “I should’ve been paying more attention anyway.”

“Would you like to dance?” Carrington regurgitated the words before he actually thought about them, but one dance wouldn’t hurt, right? After all, it wasn’t against the rules.

“Sure,” was Alicia’s response.

Carrington pretended not to notice as she turned to her friend and quickly flashed her a smile while he led her to the floor.

He spun her in a full circle before coming behind her and placing one arm around her waist. Alicia was wearing heels, and the extra inches did do her justice. Carrington slightly bent his knees and parted his legs so that Alicia would fit snugly between his strong thighs. When she began to rotate her hips to the beat of the music, Carrington found her rhythm and followed without any trouble.

For once, Alicia was controlling *him*, and she liked that idea. She rotated her hips in full complete circles, being sure to brush her perky bottom against Carrington’s hardening cock. Every time she moved

her hips backward, he moved his forward. The movement was fluid and natural between them both.

Carrington slid his big strong hands down Alicia's middle and then separated them so that he could grab hold to her hips. He tugged the sides of her dress upward, slid his hands inward, and then settled them on her inner thighs, nudging her closer to him.

Alicia could feel Carrington becoming more aroused every time her ass brushed up against his penis. She continued to move in a controlled motion, enjoying the feel of his hands pressing firmly against her groin. She covered those strong hands with her delicate ones and held them firm.

Carrington was rock-hard now. He allowed Alicia to grind against him one final time before willing her to stand still as he pressed his hardened dick against her soft, juicy ass.

Sensing his desire, Alicia pressed her back into his chest and simultaneously pushed her backside out more to increase the pressure and the pleasure on his dick. It satisfied him. He lowered his head to her ear, and then inhaled her sweet scent. They stood in that position for a few more seconds before Carrington exhaled a forceful grunt and pulled her into him more.

Alicia enjoyed the feel of Carrington's cock pressing against her, and the thought of him being turned on by her excited her even more. She intertwined her fingers with his and moved his right hand onto her pussy, the place she needed him most. She felt him clutch and hold on tight, forcing her legs to part a little more. He began to knead her through her silky dress with his middle finger. Alicia gasped and basked in the indescribable pleasure, tilting her head back so that her face was in the crook of his neck. Blinded by passion, she closed her eyes and completely forgot about the oblivious dancers on the floor who served as the perfect bodyguards from their observant friends—all but two anyway. The force of his finger intensified and a light moan escaped Alicia's throat. Clitoral stimulation felt incredible.

Alicia tightened her grip on his hand, silently begging for more. She flexed her pussy muscles, and just before she climaxed, Carrington stopped moving his finger. His grip began to ease. He stood straighter, and then removed his hand.

Alicia turned to face him. The two said nothing to one another. Carrington swallowed, ran his fingers through his perspired hair, and then stalked off before Alicia could say anything at all.

* * * *

Later that night, Alicia lay helplessly confused beneath the warmth of her satin sheets. She blushed with embarrassment as she curled into a tight ball and hugged her pillow tight, wishing it was Carrington resting soundly in her arms instead. Though well aware of the differences lying between them, the young beauty found it merely impossible to forget about him. Disdain just wasn't enough to quench the blazing fire burning within.

Feeling overwhelmed by the night's end, Alicia buried herself deep beneath the warmth of the white silky sheets. How could she have been so foolish? Yes, Carrington was desirable, and of course, he turned her on. But to be so careless? God what had she done? Her mother would have been mortified to find her conducting herself in such unladylike behavior. Yet, even still, regardless of her morals, Alicia was a woman with needs and far more than just a schoolgirl crush.

The sound of Alicia's cell phone ringing annoyed her more than the alarm clock her mother bought her after her high school graduation. Still groggy from a bad night's sleep, she rolled over on her side and reached for the phone. "Hello?"

"Did I wake you?"

"Rachel?" Alicia squinted and looked at her digital alarm clock. It was twelve noon.

"Yeah."

Alicia sat up on her bed and ran her fingers through her bundle of curls. “What’s going on?”

“You tell me,” Rachel scoffed.

“Excuse me?”

“Girl, what was going on with you and that cute guy last night?”

Alicia closed her eyes and held the phone close to her ear. She’d hoped no one had seen her that night. She hesitated for a moment before playing dumb. “Cute guy?”

“Yeah, the one you were dancing with. He was all over you. Touching you, blowing in your ear—”

“All right, I get it.” Alicia rubbed her forehead the way she always did when she was trying to wriggle her way out of a sticky situation. “Look, it was nothing, okay? Can we just drop the issue and forget about last night?”

Alicia was annoyed. She hadn’t intended on dancing, and she definitely didn’t anticipate seeing Carrington there of all places. He just didn’t seem like one to party, and he sure as hell didn’t strike her as the dancing type, but he had moves and was *very* good with his hands.

Still trying to make sense of it all, Alicia sat on her unmade bed and stared at the fitted dress lying on her carpeted floor. It was the perfect reminder of the night she surrendered to temptation and her lustful desires.

“Licia, I know you. You don’t do things like that, not in public anyway and certainly not with just any old guy.” There was a pause. Rachel inhaled and exhaled. “Do you know him?”

Alicia sighed, feeling both trapped and helpless. “I don’t know what came over me last night, Rachel.” She wished she could blame it on alcohol, but Rachel knew she didn’t drink.

“You didn’t answer my question. Is there something going on between the two of you?”

Alicia rolled her eyes and collapsed on her sheets, still holding the phone close to her ear. “We’ve had a few encounters, but he’s no friend of mine, and I’m definitely not one of his.”

“Define *encounters*.” Rachel’s voice was lower with suspicion.

“We have the same class together, and I see him whenever I go for my morning jogs, but that’s it. In all honesty, we really don’t care for each other. We bump heads a lot.”

“You two seemed fine last night. Maybe there’s some sexual tension—”

“Not a chance in hell. Look, can we just not talk about him anymore? I’d rather not spend my afternoon reminiscing on last night’s fiasco.”

Rachel obviously hadn’t seen him stalk off after their intimate gathering. Still bitter, Alicia was reluctant about carrying on.

There was a sigh on the other end of the phone. “Alicia, I just don’t get it. You say you hate this guy, but then you’re allowing him to put his hands on you and—”

“Rachel, I swear to—”

“I’m just saying. It sounds like there’s something there—”

“Rachel!” Alicia rolled to her side and placed the phone on her thigh. The muffled sounds coming from the phone told her that Rachel was still talking, but she didn’t want to hear it, so she held the phone there a moment longer. When the sounds subsided, she brought the receiver to her ear again.

“Rachel, I don’t know. It just happened.”

“Alicia, things like that don’t just happen. Not unless you want them to.” Rachel waited for Alicia to argue. When she didn’t, she carried on. “Look, whether you admit to it or not, I know you have an affinity for this guy. I mean, you just don’t act like that with guys you don’t give a damn about. You’re a good girl. Hell, you make me look like a Jezebel, and I’m nowhere near kinky. I may flirt, but that’s as far as it goes. Anyway”—she sighed—“I saw the way you let him

hold you and the way you fell into his arms. I'm not saying anything has to be serious, but if you want to go for him—"

"I don't. Look, Rachel, I appreciate your doing this and all, but I'll be fine, really. Carrington and I would never work, and that's just the way it is." Alicia said her good-byes and carried on with the rest of her day, constantly replaying the words her friend said to her.

Look, whether you admit to it or not, I know you have an affinity for this guy.

* * * *

"What are you talking about, Jake? We were just dancing, that's all!" Carrington protested, simultaneously throwing his friend the football.

"You were doing more than that." Jake snorted, catching the ball.

Carrington rolled his eyes and sighed. "Look, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, cut the bullshit act, Carrington. Just admit it, you like her." Jake threw the ball back.

Carrington caught it but held it this time. "No, I don't. We were just *dancing*, that's all. I danced with other women that night, too."

"Not like that you didn't. Dude, I *saw* you. You were all over Alicia. You barely even touched the other girls."

"Why do you care so much? I mean, what's it to you?" Carrington chided.

"I was just asking, man. Chill."

Alicia was so different and full of surprises. She was a dancer, and heaven knew she was a temptress. Lord, what he'd give to feel her perfectly rounded ass brushing up against him again. She was the only human being—other than his younger brother—who'd actually managed to get under his skin, and even though she often made his blood boil for this reason or that, she never failed at making his blood

rush to a place other than the head on his shoulders. And that's what he loved about her, her ability to arouse him where others had failed.

Chapter 5

Alicia looked sweet and innocent in her gray hoodie and pink athletic shorts. She stood not too far from the Cross Country runners who were doing individual stretches and preparing for the three-and-a-half-mile run. It was a chilly morning, and the sight of the moon took her breath away. Carrington continuously stole glimpses of the pretty, young woman, one glance lasting a little longer than the one before. If she noticed, she gave him no hint of it, but when she finally did look up, she met his gaze and held it boldly. Carrington was the first to look away. He checked to see if every runner was in line before returning to the front line.

They jogged along the merciless trail, cut through the parking lot, and sprinted towards the field. Every runner was breathless, bending over and gasping for air.

* * * *

Alicia cursed herself for being dumb enough to ask the Cross Country coach, Tomas Robinson, to allow her to workout with the runners. *I need a challenge, and I'm bored with my old routine.* Who was she kidding? Those guys were like machines. All she needed was a boost, not a near death experience. Perhaps a warning would have been nice, but it was much too late to quit now. Carrington had already seen her. All the times she caught him watching her, she was now wondering if it was because he thought she'd lost her mind. She knew she'd proved him right.

Carrington said nothing to the women, but gave Alicia a look that could have been interpreted as sexist. As he glared at her, she stood more defiant, giving him the harshest look he'd received from her yet. He dismissed the others and then made his way over to her. Feeling agitated and emotionally wrecked, she made no attempt to smart mouth him. She was in no mood for his rude remarks. After the runners were sure to have gone and it was just the two of them, Carrington spoke.

"You're a real piece of work, you know that?"

"Me? You tell me you're sorry, ask me to dance, then just leave me on the dance floor, and you're telling me *I'm* a piece of work!" She pointed to her chest. "You've got a lot of nerve." She clenched her jaw.

Carrington tilted his head back and rolled his eyes. When he looked back down at Alicia, she noticed that his eyes were gray-violet. His eyes changed colors. He *was* beautiful.

"Don't tell me you're seriously going to hold a night on a dance floor—and in a club at that—over my head."

"I'm not holding anything against you, though you did a pretty damned good job of holding *me* against you that night."

"And you obviously liked it because you let me. You could have pushed me off."

"And listen to you bitch because I shot your fucking ego down?"

Carrington chuckled. "Do you actually expect me to believe you're some kind of saint after what you did that night? Please, Alicia, your actions were no different from the other whores I fucked with that night. And anyway, I don't need you to boost my ego. You're not on my level." He watched as Alicia's face fell.

"You bastard," she said in a broken whisper. Her vision was beginning to blur and she could feel those stubborn tears springing on.

* * * *

“Yup.” He continued to look down at Alicia. Knowing that he broke her heart completely tore him apart. He hated hurting her, but he needed to keep her away. If he allowed himself to get involved with her, they would both be hurt in the end.

* * * *

Alicia watched him closely. His eyes were nearly black. “That was an awful thing to say,” she said softly. “That was an awful thing to say,” she said softly.

“But it’s the truth.”

“What the hell did I do? *You* asked *me* to dance with *you*!”

“We did more than just dance, Alicia—”

Alicia threw up a hand to silence him. She didn’t want to hear any more. Her heart couldn’t have been any more shattered than broken glass. Her tears sprang forth with a vengeance, falling like heavy rain that had been stuck in thick flocks of clouds far too long.

* * * *

Carrington thought he just might lose it. Seeing Alicia cry was like fire on his flesh. The smoke from the flames choked him inside, and the heat made him melt like ice. That was the very reason why he couldn’t allow himself to fall for her any more than he already had.

“You’re pathetic. I hope you rot in hell.”

Alicia’s words affected him more than she even knew. When she stormed off, he wanted to go after her, to tell her that he was sorry, and that he really didn’t mean what he’d said, that he truly adored her. But she was gone. She was only a few feet away, and yet still, she was so far out of reach. No one but God could restore the damage he’d done.

* * * *

Days bled into weeks, and Carrington missed Alicia even more. He thought it'd be easier getting over her as time elapsed, especially knowing that she could never not hate him now, but each day seemed more dreadful than the last. He'd seen her on several occasions, in class, passing in the hall, eating out with a friend at dinner. Because she continued to work out with the Cross Country team, he'd see her at the workout sessions, and he purposely began to make them longer for the runners so that he could be around her a little more, even though there'd be zero interaction between them. The only contact made was with their eyes, but even then, that didn't last long. Alicia loathed him, he was certain of it, but it didn't matter because even after everything he'd done, he was still that much more in love with her.

* * * *

Alicia noticed Carrington watching her on the days they had class together and when she ran into him on various occasions. Damn him for the way he treated her. How could he? How *dare* he? She tried desperately to ignore his endless gazing, but failed miserably. His beauty tempted her eyes like warm air feeding fire, and the love she felt for him surpassed the hatred she possessed. It was as unyielding as the grave. Carrington made her love him more every day, and she cursed him for it.

The runners were on their hands and knees doing leg lifts on the newly waxed gym floor in the athletic building. Alicia's butt burned like fire and the sweat trickled down her body. She wanted to scream, but the feeling of discomfort was nothing compared to that of her pride. She bit her bottom lip to keep from crying out. She knew Carrington was watching her and didn't want to give him the satisfaction of seeing her suffer. Damn. What the hell was she thinking asking Robinson to allow her to work out with the runners?

Sure, she wanted a greater challenge, but she could have easily gone to the gym for that.

Alicia fought to suppress a moan and yelp of pain. She was barely successful.

“And release,” was Carrington’s order.

Alicia fought for every breath that came her way. She wanted to kill Carrington. Damn him for making them work so hard. Damn him for breaking her heart, for hurting her both physically and mentally. She just knew he was intensifying the level of the workout to spite her. That was just like him.

With Carrington’s order, the runners, Alicia included, began to do their cool down work out and then their regular static stretching.

* * * *

Carrington lay restless in his bed later that night staring at the ceiling. He could neither sleep, eat, nor drink anything that day. He couldn’t erase the memory of Alicia crying because of the harsh words he’d thrown at her. She tried to appear defiant and strong, but her vulnerability bled through anyway. She was like an open book lying before him with big bold letters.

God, what had he done? She didn’t deserve that. He really was an ass. Feeling the need for fresh air, he crawled out of bed and threw on his gray hoodie and navy jogging pants. The October air was harsh and unrelenting at that hour, and the night sky had little mercy on the eyes that would be guiding his every move. Even the stars were stingy with their light that night.

The harsh whisper of the wind blew against Carrington’s face as he trotted along in the darkness. He kneaded the tight knot in his nape before placing his hands in his pockets. Seconds later, the incredible urge to run swept over him. He surrendered to the need and pushed against the powerful force of the wind, just as he’d done to his feelings for Alicia for the longest of time.

Carrington quickened his pace and was soon accelerating. The feeling of solemnity was soon replaced with that of exasperation and heat. Despite the pain that overwhelmed him from his strenuous run, Carrington pushed forth. He'd do anything to keep her off his mind.

He remembered the way his mother looked the moment she learned that his father was pronounced dead. That was the same look he'd put on Alicia's face when he insulted her that day, and it killed him because as a lad he swore he'd never put that look on a woman's face.

Eight minutes later, he'd covered a mile and a half. Breathing heavily, he slumped and headed over to the old, weathered green bench that waited for him daily. It was a quarter 'til three in the morning, and Carrington was suddenly weary but had no desire to sleep. His senses became alert when he heard quick footsteps coming from the direction in which he'd just run.

When the body came around the corner, now slumped over and panting heavily for air, his heart swelled. Light was limited, but he'd know the sound of those desperate gasps anywhere. What was she doing out so late? Carrington rose from his seat and motioned toward Alicia. When she noticed him, she gasped.

"It's okay." His voice was very calm and soothing.

"Carrington?" she half-whispered, squinting in the dark.

He hesitated before answering. "Yes, it's me."

"Get away from me." Alicia tried to move around him, but he blocked her. "Move!" she cried and tried to move again.

Carrington shimmied over and blocked her yet a third time. When she motioned to push him back, he caught both of her arms and held her tight. The look he gave her sent shudders down her spine, and for the first time, she wondered if she should truly be afraid of him.

As if on cue, the sky roared with thunder, and the dark clouds began to cry hysterically. They were instantly drenched and beginning to feel the chill of the wind. Silently but attentively, one took in the features of the other.

* * * *

Alicia looked stunning, yet vulnerable and innocent, standing before him all soaking wet. Her hair clung to her strong cheekbones and framed her neck. She was truly a natural beauty.

“What do you want from me?” She hissed, snatching her arms back.

* * * *

Even the shadows cast by the full moon couldn't hide the sex appeal and charisma Carrington had. He was the only man Alicia had ever known who could pull off a saggy hoodie and soaked jogging pants and still tempt any woman beyond measure. She wasn't sure what to think of his unrelenting gaze, but she'd rather his eyes rest on her than on any other woman. Though she hated him with all of her being, the revulsion was no match for the passion that burned within, and she cursed herself for possessing such a weakness.

A frown formed at Carrington's brow as he swallowed. “I can't do this anymore,” he whispered, taking another step closer.

“Do what?”

Carrington held a pained expression on his face but didn't say anything more. The time spent between the two saying nothing with their mouths, yet everything with their eyes, was everlasting, but it didn't compare to the agony they felt wanting to be touched by one another.

* * * *

Hesitantly at first, and then more relaxed the second attempt, Carrington lifted a hand and gently stroked Alicia's jaw line with his thumb. His striking violet-gray eyes caressed her full lips while his

mind filled with images and wonderings of what it might feel like kissing her. The world seemed to stop spinning and the cold chill he'd endured just moments before was nothing more than a memory as he cupped her face with both his hands and gazed deeply into her eyes.

God I want you so badly, Alicia. Words cannot express.

Carrington lowered his head and nuzzled his nose against Alicia's. She stood on her tiptoes to add to their closeness. Unable to help himself, Carrington smiled with great adoration while continuing to hold her still.

* * * *

Alicia kept her eyes glued on the man of her dreams and tried to blink away the water that collected on her naturally curled lashes. For the first time since she last allowed emotional desire to get involved with her and Carrington, she found great serenity, and it felt like heaven. Maybe she wouldn't regret this night.

Carrington brushed his thumbs over her cheeks, tempting her even more. His touch was like fire and spread through her like blazing flames on gasoline.

"I don't hate you," he whispered above her lips.

His breath was warm against her skin and made her yearn for his kiss even more.

"You could have fooled me."

Carrington took in a breath. "That's what I'm supposed to do."

"Why?"

Carrington watched her for another moment. "Reasons you'll never be able to understand," he admitted and then brought his lips to hers.

What started off as something gentle grew with great intensity as the seconds passed away. Carrington released Alicia's lips for a quick breath but stayed close to her face. His breathing grew ragged with need.

Alicia marveled at the brightness of his violet eyes. They glistened like shooting stars in outer space and were as bright as the sun.

“Try me,” she said. “I might surprise you.”

“I hate surprises.” He kissed her again.

“But maybe I can help you—”

* * * *

Carrington kissed her again, and again, loving the feel of her tender lips. They were lost in ecstasy, tasting one another for the very first time.

When the eruption of thunder soared through their ears and the flicker of lightning flashed before their eyes, Carrington grabbed Alicia’s arm and ran towards the men’s locker room without warning. She struggled to keep his pace, but never protested.

When they reached the forsaken dark room of tile and older lockers, Carrington allowed her to enter first. He closed the door behind them and did a quick look over to ensure they were alone. When he was reassured, his worries were quickly forgotten. Alicia was shivering nearly as much as he was. Carrington pulled her into him and held her close.

“I’m so c-cold.” Alicia was shivering.

“I know, babe, I know.” Carrington soothed.

After releasing her, he pulled off his hoodie, revealing a drenched, now transparent white tee, and tossed it on the bench by his side. His baby hairs plastered to his forehead and his chest peeped through the V of his T-shirt. He shook loose the wet hair clinging to his brow and then met Alicia’s gaze, smiling sheepishly.

“You’re really pretty,” he said.

Alicia blushed but said nothing. She was still taken aback by his sudden change in manner. First, he hated her, now he *liked* her? Or had he always liked her? She wanted to be with him more than

anything, and if she was dreaming, then God forbid she ever wake up again. A moment later, she spoke.

“You know”—she grinned—“I-if I didn’t know any better, I’d swear this was a s-set up.” When Carrington gave her a perplexed look, she went on. “You say all k-kind of horrible things to me, and then you k-kiss me”—she took a breath—“...*in the rain*. And then bring me b-back here. *With you*. I just d-don’t get it.” She was hugging herself, trying to fight off a chill.

Carrington rubbed the hair above his nape. He inhaled and then exhaled a shaky breath. *I do it because I’m lovesick, and you make it harder for me to stay away from you*. “I don’t know w-why I do the things I do to you, Alicia.” He drew in a shaky breath. “I don’t mean to h-hurt you. I just—”

Alicia took a few steps closer to him. He held her gaze and tilted his head downward as she came closer. She placed her hands on his cold, damp chest, never tearing her eyes away. She slid her trembling hands down to his firm sides. She took in a shaky breath and took another step closer, bringing her heat-deprived body against his. She stood on her tiptoes, wrapped her arms around his neck, and then tugged him lower, burying her face in his neck.

Carrington closed his eyes and surrendered to her embrace. He wrapped his strong arms around her back and held her tight. “Ally, I can’t give you what you want. We can’t be together, baby. I’m only going to hurt you,” he admitted sadly.

Alicia ignored him and captured his bottom lip, sucking on it gently.

This melted Carrington’s insides. Everything about her was gentle. He sucked on her upper lip just as gently and tightened his grip around her. When Alicia quivered from a chill, he released her.

“Let’s get you out of these,” he said, tugging on the sodden hoodie that was weighing her down.

Alicia raised her arms and allowed Carrington to pull off the cold material. What remained on her was a white, translucent, thin wife-

beater that revealed the rose-colored lacey bra she wore and her dark athletic shorts. Carrington worshipped her with eager eyes. She had small breasts, a narrow waist, and flaring hips. She was well-proportioned. He locked eyes with her and found that she was blushing, another gesture that made his heart swell.

“What are you waiting for, tough guy? Undress me,” she said sheepishly.

With steady and willing hands, Carrington peeled off Alicia’s tank. She was beginning to look paler in her face, a sign of how cold she truly was. All that was left was her bra and bottoms.

“I’ll help you, too.” She grinned bashfully through a shaky whisper and tugged at his T-shirt.

Carrington helped Alicia remove the piece of cloth, and when that was off, she started with his pants. She buried her fingertips inside his waistband and began tugging his pants down. The soft sound of her gasp filled his ears and a hesitant look swept across her face innocent face. He grasped her hands and brought them to his hips.

“Go on,” he said thickly, and her eyes flew to his. “Help me take them off.”

Slowly, but surely Alicia slipped Carrington’s boxers passed his hips, exposing the most sensitive area on his body. She literally gulped when her eyes revealed the mystery beneath his undergarments to her curious mind.

Carrington’s heart froze in his chest when she narrowed her gaze to the swelling area between his thighs. *Did she think he was too long? Or too fat down there?* A head swollen to the size of a plum crowned his fat, massive dick. He was well-groomed and hard as a rock, lengthening out just shy of the size of a ruler.

Carrington had frightened many women in the past with his size, and even though many of them had still dared to take him on, they had each proven to be no match for his powerful cock.

Carrington averted his eyes and focused on his midriff as she eased his briefs down with much of his assistance.

After stepping out of his briefs, running shoes, and socks, Carrington moved closer to Alicia, causing her to take tiny steps back. He continued to stare at her, causing more butterflies to dance around in her tiny belly. He reached out and tugged her by the shorts, bringing her close.

“Let me finish undressing you. I mean, it’s only fair. I showed you mine, now show me yours,” he said in a voice so sensual it revealed the thoughts that coursed through his mind.

Alicia had barely enough time to process his words before he reached for her shorts and tugged them down, leaving her lacey bra and thong. He placed his hands on her shoulder blades and rubbed her bra straps down. The two rested limp on her shoulders, and Carrington’s hands continued their journey down her arms until they fell upon her narrow waist. He brought them around to her upper middle back and unhooked her bra, allowing the piece of fabric to hit the cold floor.

* * * *

His gorgeous violet eyes fell onto her breasts and burned her nipples as they strained for his approving gaze. Alicia blushed again when she saw the look of approval on his face.

Carrington eased his strong hands up her waist until he was touching the swell of her breasts. He ran his thumbs over her puckered nipples while watching her face, daring her to react to his touch.

Alicia gasped and gave Carrington a startled look.

Carrington shifted and leaned against the lockers with Alicia still in his arms. He lowered himself against the lockers so that their pelvises were aligned, and then pulled Alicia into him so that her pussy was touching his dick. He began to sweep his thumbs across her hardened buds again and watched her with intense eyes. Alicia’s breathing quickened, but she tried her best to hold her composure.

As if to have read her mind, Carrington whispered, "Relax, Babe. Just feel it. Enjoy it."

He covered her breasts with his palms and began to knead them.

"Mmm," Alicia moaned.

Her sweet sound sent shutters through Carrington's loins.

Alicia closed her eyes and grasped his shoulders. She loved the feel of his hard cock pressing ever-so-hard against her femininity and the feel of his hands kneading her sensitive breasts.

She opened her eyes before she arched her hips inward and wrapped her arms around his neck, leaning in to kiss him passionately. His lips parted instantly, and they're tongues began to glide against each other.

Carrington brought his hands around Alicia's back and then slid them down to her nicely rounded bottom. He grabbed her ass cheeks and pressed her against him so hard that he began to quiver. Feeling a greater need, he began to thrust his hips back and forth against Alicia as they kissed passionately.

She tore away her lips and gasped for air.

Carrington, too, was breathing heavily.

Alicia found his rhythm without trouble, moving in one fluid motion.

"Spread your legs," he grunted.

She obeyed him and was so glad she did. His long, thick shaft was beginning to stimulate her clitoris, sliding back and forth between her juicy thighs. Her pussy was becoming wetter with arousal, and her panties were beginning to feel damp.

"Oh yes," he said through a choked whisper. "That's right, open for me." He began to groan from the sweet agony of his dick brushing against her femininity and the friction created by her thighs.

Carrington placed his hand on the inside of her thong and cupped her bottom, slipping his middle finger through the crease of her ass.

Alicia shrieked and gently bit down on his deltoid as he fingered her anus. She wasn't used to feeling that, and it showed, but she adjusted rather quickly.

"I'm glad I'm spending this time with you," she gasped, and then leaned her head back to meet Carrington's gaze.

* * * *

Carrington watched her closely, but didn't say the words back. He knew that he was about to hurt her again, but he wanted to pleasure her first. He felt that he at least owed her that much. He leaned in and began to suck her neck. He sucked it hard, placing his free hand around the small of her back as he began to wiggle his other finger inside her anus.

"Ah!" Alicia cried out from the pleasure and pain.

Carrington thrived on that and buried his middle finger deeper inside her tight hole. He gently stuck his teeth in her flesh and began to thrust her with passion. She clutched his hair as she whimpered and arched into him more. He continued to bump his shaft against her clit as he kept their bodies close. The friction felt warm and tantalizing to his senses, arousing him far beyond what he could bear.

* * * *

Alicia sucked in a deep breath. She was about to have two orgasms, one in her ass and the other in her clit. Her breathing hastened and her heart beat profoundly in her chest. His strong masculine body felt incredible against hers.

"Oh, Carrington," she whined. "Carrington." Alicia closed her legs a little more and strained against him. This added more friction for them both.

"Mmmm," Carrington groaned aloud.

The sound was both surprising and arousing to Alicia. She loved that he was so turned on by her.

Carrington continued to thrust his hips back and forth, as he wiggled his finger inside her. His cock became a little harder and a little darker in color. He needed to come.

Alicia sobbed uncontrollably as she helplessly made herself vulnerable to her lover's dominion. She clutched his shoulders and then screamed his name. She was coming hard.

* * * *

Carrington watched with pleasure as she writhed in his arms. Her panties were damp against his cock and the cum from her pussy dripped down his finger, dripping mercilessly onto his hand. He loved the nasty mess they were creating. The thought of them producing sex-flavored juices was both naughty and arousing to his perverse mind. He exhaled deeply. Alicia's heavy breathing was like a sweet erotic song and her warm breath was tickling his lips. She was so beautiful when she came.

Carrington couldn't stop watching her. He kissed her forehead and then gave her another moment to calm down before preparing for his own orgasm. He pulled his cum-covered finger out of her ass, and then closed his eyes tight as he crushed her against him. He began to quiver, and his face turned cherry red as his sperm came jolting out like shotgun bullets. Globes of his semen hit the lockers behind Alicia as he hugged her tight during his erotic orgasm. Small bits of semen landed on the floor, and he continued to pump out more as his orgasm went on. Alicia lightly stroked his back and listened carefully to the tiny noises he was obviously trying to hold back. She'd never been more turned on in her life.

After Carrington released the final drop of his sperm, he slowly set Alicia upright before pulling away. He reached for his white T-shirt.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t realize I’d—”

“It’s okay. I had a really powerful orgasm, too,” Alicia assured him.

The previous thoughts Carrington had were coursing through his mind again. They must have been written all over his face because Alicia was giving him an alarmed look.

“What?” She asked.

Carrington saw the look of horror in her eyes, and it made him feel even more like a bastard. She was innocent, and so easy to love, but she was dangerous, much too dangerous. He knew it was a mistake running off with her and being as intimate with her as he was just now, but dancing with fire never felt so good. Curiosity came with temptation, and with temptation, desire. He’d dreamed of lying in her bed, loving her with all that he was, and making her scream at the top of her lungs. He still wanted that, but the price he had to pay for such an act was much too high. She was a guilty pleasure and a luxury he could not afford.

Carrington picked her up and then placed her on the wooden bench in front of them before he began to gather the rest of his sodden clothes.

“What’s wrong?”

“Alicia, get dressed. I never should have brought you here,” he mumbled.

“Why?”

“It’s complicated.”

“What’s *complicated*?”

When he said nothing but continued to dress himself, Alicia drew her own conclusion. She was dead-on. “It doesn’t have to be this way,” she pleaded.

He didn’t answer.

“Carrington.”

He remained quiet.

“*Answer me.*”

Carrington continued to dress himself. When the last of his clothing was placed on his body, he stormed out of the locker room and never looked back.

* * * *

Alicia's eyes clouded with tears as she fidgeted with her bra, trying to put it back on. After awhile of trial and error, she finally succeeded and followed through with her shorts, tank, and hoodie. They felt so cold against her bare flesh.

"It doesn't have to be this way." Her voice broke as she sank against the cold lockers and began to sob silently. "Why does he keep doing this to me?"

Chapter 6

“Yes, Jordan, they did. I saw them with my own two eyes. All the runners had just finished their morning run and were leaving the field. Carrington and Alicia were the only two who lingered on the field. I knew something was going on when I saw them together last Friday.”

Jordan sat with his hands cupped behind his head in his chair behind his old wooden desk. “What are you talking about?” He frowned.

“Last Friday, Carrington went clubbing with a group of guys, and Alicia was there. At first, they were just talking, but then I noticed him whisper something in her ear and then they went over to the dance floor. I honestly didn’t think much of it until I saw the way they were dancing.”

“How were they dancing?” Jordan frowned.

“Close. *Really* close. I would have presumed them to be lovers had I not known any better.”

Jordan tilted his head slightly and appeared thoughtful. He winced and his icy blues targeted the tall, dusty bookshelf in the corner of the classroom as he tried to imagine Alicia and Carrington dancing intimately with one another.

“He touched her,” came the answer to his silent question.

Jordan appeared startled and then confused. “Touched her?” When his source made a gesture, confirming what he’d alluded to, Jordan became annoyed, and from annoyance anger was derived.

Chapter 7

“Are you staying on top of everything? Grades still good?”

“Yes, everything’s fine.” Carrington rolled his eyes. He loved his mother dearly, but she was always nagging him about this thing or that. It was bad enough on the phone and even worse in person.

Carrington’s mother’s eyes watered as she gently touched his face. “You look more and more like your papa every time I see you.”

Carrington and his mother sat in the living room of his apartment, treating themselves to cookies and milk, Carrington’s all-time-favorite snack. He had his mother’s hair and eyes, but it was his father he resembled the most. Both were very much alike in build, and they had the same bronze skin tone and facial structure. They were indeed father and son.

Carrington missed his father just as much as his mother did. The subject was such a touchy one, and it was everything Carrington could do not to cry. “He was an incredible man.” Carrington forced a smile.

“Yes. You are so much like him, Carrington. In *every* way. It’s just a shame you’re not dating. Oh, I wish you *would*, Carrington. I would *love* to have grandchildren someday.”

Her eldest son snorted. “There you go again harassing me about grandchildren.”

“I am not *harassing* you,” she scolded. “Carrington, you’ll be thirty before you know it. How long do you intend to wait?”

“Soon I’ll already be off taking care of some unfinished business, and you of all people should know that that time in my life will not be fit for child conception.”

Catherine placed a slightly wrinkled hand upon her heart. “You don’t have to do this,” she whispered through watering eyes.

Carrington said nothing, but bowed his head.

Catherine sobbed at the thought of her son going away. “Why, baby? Why do you want to go? And after everything that has happened?”

“We’ve discussed this before,” Carrington grumbled.

“And I still can’t understand *why*. You can honor your father by living a successful life. Don’t you think his death was a warning to you?” She cried.

Carrington’s head shot up. He held a look of distaste on his face. “Don’t you dare try to turn this around,” he demanded.

“Your intentions are good, and you’re noble for them, but you’re paying at such a high price. Carrington, I’ve already lost Antonio. I can’t bear to lose you too! You’re my oldest baby!” Catherine sobbed.

Carrington sprang from his seat. “Whether I live or die is in God’s hands. If he wants me around, he’ll spare my life.”

“How can you talk like that? Carrington, listen to yourself! You sound as though you just don’t care anymore!” She waited for him to respond. When he didn’t, she hesitated. “Do you want to die?”

Carrington turned his back and bowed his head. “I want to be left alone.”

Catherine got the hint. She walked over to her son and touched his arm. “I’ll call you next week.”

Carrington watched his mother gather her things and walk out the door. It wasn’t long before he was grabbing his own brown leather jacket and making his way for the door. He needed time to think, clear his head, and hopefully relax. Perhaps the old, stuffy auditorium on campus would do.

* * * *

It was raining cats and dogs outside. This was probably the saddest day of the year. Alicia slammed her door shut and ran through the dark sky's hysterical tears. It roared and crumbled, flashing anyone who'd be willing to turn an eye to the light flashing within. Alicia allowed the heavy door to slam shut as she made a beeline for the stage.

She sorted through her music before choosing a classical song to listen to on her iPod. She climbed on stage as she inhaled and exhaled. The music had begun to play and Alicia was ready to dance.

She leaped across the wooden stage inside the aged auditorium. Its walls were made of brick and painted off-white. The air conditioning was limited in that particular area of the school, but Alicia preferred it overall because it was the most isolated and spacious. The seats were older and a little rusted, but still strong. Enclosing herself in this private setting enabled her to express herself without speaking or risking an intruder accidentally stumbling across notebooks of drawn-out sweet nothings.

Alicia danced her heart out and reached beyond the stars as she allowed the voice of music to direct her ways. She searched desperately for the place that could take her higher than any drug could even attempt, the place where no one could harm her nor find her but God. Tears burned her eyes as she tried to eliminate last night's memory of becoming one with her wooer's cousin and loving him while lying in his unmade bed. Two men and she was working on a third. But she didn't love the other two, nor did she love the game she was forced to play or the rules she was compelled to follow. Who would have thought that hell was the only thing that could save her from Antonio Marino's son, wherever he was.

Alicia wiped away her tears, afraid to hope for anything greater than what she felt she deserved. Who was she kidding? She could never have Carrington. She wasn't good enough for him, he'd said so himself. She felt dirty, impure, overwhelmed with loss and unwanted passion. She kneeled and stopped dancing, sobbing silently to herself.

Suddenly aware of a presence other than her own, Alicia jumped at the unexpected touch of a firm but gentle hand clasping her shoulder. Looking up with glossy eyes, she gazed at the very reason her heart was forever breaking. The one thing she needed to walk away from.

“Ally—” Carrington muttered sadly.

Alicia’s tears began to fall at the sight of the pained expression on Carrington’s face. It was like he always knew when she needed him the most. She wanted to tell him to go to hell, to leave her alone and that she didn’t want to see him, but she couldn’t. She loved him too much.

Carrington helped her to her feet and then gave her a hug filled with so much passion it made her sob even more.

“Aaahh, what’s wrong, Ally?”

He was the only person Alicia allowed to call her that. For everyone else it was Licia or Alicia, but never Ally. She’d always hated that name until it was whispered from Carrington’s tender lips, and she knew exactly how tender his lips were.

Alicia hiccupped and gasped. It felt so good being held by Carrington. “Nothing,” she lied. She didn’t have the heart to tell him the truth.

“Then why are you crying, baby?” he asked in a tender voice.

Alicia closed her eyes and didn’t answer, but the tears still flowed.

Carrington took a step back and the sudden loss of warmth caused her to open her eyes. He cupped her chin and insisted, “What’s bothering you? Ally, please tell me, I can’t take it when you—” He narrowed his gaze and released her chin from his grasp. He gnawed on the side of his jaw for a minute before raising his eyes. He looked straight ahead so that he was no longer looking directly into her eyes. “People don’t just cry over *nothing*. What’s bothering you, Alicia?” His voice was a little more impersonal.

I want you to tell me that you love me and just be with me. You’re the most beautiful thing I’ve ever known. Alicia looked up, saw the

expressionless look on his face, and found herself wondering where it came from.

“I’m fine, I was just”—she paused as she thought of the right word to say—“reminiscing.” She moistened her lips. She tried to sidestep him, but he blocked her.

She gave him a perplexed look, but the hurt in her eyes was nowhere near gone.

Carrington scowled at Alicia’s tears. “Ally, what *happened* to you?”

“*Nothing!*” she cried, and her tears began to flow again.

“Yes there *is*! It’s written all over your face! Did someone hurt you?”

Yes! Them, myself. And you. “What do you care? You do it all the time!” Her voice was higher than usual. “Yes, Carrington! There *is* something wrong, okay? Someone *did* hurt me. *People* have hurt me!” She stopped to watch him for a moment before adding, “You being one of them.” She shook her head and began to cry again.

Carrington pulled her into his warm body and held onto her for dear life. He closed his eyes and rested his cheek on her hair. When she pushed him away, he tightened his grip. Alicia squirmed, trying to fight him off, but he wouldn’t let go. Finally, she gave up and let him hold her.

“Carrington.” She wept. “Why, Carrington?”

* * * *

Carrington’s only answer was simply holding her closer and tighter. He didn’t want to tell her the truth. He didn’t want to tell her that he was irrevocably in love with her and that he dreamed of being with her every night. He didn’t want her to know that he always fantasized about making endless love to her and that at night he dreamed of kissing her whenever he wanted, making her laugh, and buying her things all of the time. Carrington wouldn’t dare say that he

wanted to be the one to make her smile from ear to ear or that she gave him butterflies every time he laid eyes on her. Letting her in on those secrets wouldn't do anything but make her insist even more on them having a relationship, and that was out of the question. It would only complicate things and make matters much worse than they already were.

"Why do you keep doing this to me?" She stood on her toes and buried her face in his neck.

Carrington could feel her warm tears moistening his flesh. When her sobs finally subsided, he drew her back and framed her face with his hands.

Alicia placed her hands on his deltoids and then slid them on to the sides of his neck.

Carrington held her gaze a moment longer before kissing her forcefully, parting her lips as he surged his tongue in her mouth, tempting hers until she gave in. His tongue passionately stroked against hers, leaving her breathless.

Alicia opened her mouth even more, allowing Carrington more access. Then she pulled away and looked him dead in the eye.

"Carrington, you can't keep doing this to me. You keep playing games with me and it's not fair."

"No one's playing games."

"Then what do you call this?"

"What about what you keep doing to me?" he roared. "What about everything they've done to me! What about that, Alicia?"

She frowned. "What are you talking about?"

Carrington ran his fingers through his dark, pretty hair and walked around her. He'd said too much.

"Carrington," Alicia demanded, turning around.

His back was to her. "Nothing." He closed his eyes tight. "I over-reacted, I'm sorry."

Alicia was skeptical and wasn't sure if she believed him, but chose to let it be.

* * * *

Carrington spent the rest of the night thinking about what he'd said to Alicia and how close he'd come to exposing himself. He was playing a dangerous game, but he couldn't help himself. The look of wanting she held on her face and the sweet sighing that slipped through her lips every time he touched her were like two powerful magnetic forces drawing him in. She wanted him badly and he wanted her even more.

Impish thoughts and dreams of her joining him in his bed did nothing to settle the ache he felt in the juncture of his thighs, nor did it quench the flame burning within. Unable to sleep, he rolled out of his messy bed and roamed through his dim-lit apartment wearing nothing but black pajama pants. He was lovesick.

Feeling a little hungry, he poured a cup of grape juice and made a ham sandwich. It quenched his hunger for food, but his craving for Alicia was still there. He sat pensively on his love seat and listened to the elegant music playing on the next floor. It was nice, he couldn't lie, but did nothing for his state of mind.

* * * *

Alicia closed her eyes and took several deep inhalations as she swayed to the soft music. It felt good to finally be back in her own place. Jordan was beginning to drive her insane.

She stood in the middle of her living room floor, completely comfortable and hidden from the glow of the streetlights veiled by her blinds, wearing nothing but her loose black pants. She rolled her head to the left, then to the right. She leaned to the left, taking both arms with her, and then shifted to the right. She held that pose for a few seconds before turning and opening her chest to the ceiling. She

closed her eyes and drew her arms behind her back, slowly standing up straight again.

Alicia's eyes flew open and she froze. She was startled by a sudden knock on the door. Glancing at the clock on her wall, she wondered who could be knocking on her door at such an ungodly hour. The stranger knocked again. She quickly walked over to her door and looked through the peephole. Her eyes widened, and she pressed her naked back to the door, struggling to catch the breath she'd just lost. She ran her fingers through her chiseled hair, and then turned to face the door again, briefly covering her mouth with both hands.

"Um, just a minute!" she called out before bolting to her bedroom to grab a shirt. She was back in record time.

Alicia stared at the knob for a second. Then she lifted a shaking hand and hesitated before twisting the knob.

Carrington stiffened when he heard the sound of the lock being unbolted. When the door opened, his eyes widened and his heart fell. Alicia looked irresistible in her fitted, light pink tank and loose black pants. She wasn't wearing a bra, and her hair was full with loose curls. She was sexy as hell.

* * * *

Alicia's heart pounded hard in her chest, and she felt incredibly sheepish. She watched as Carrington's eyes trailed from the crown of her head to her eyes, neck, lingering at her breasts, her stomach, hips, legs, and slowly back up again.

* * * *

Carrington cleared his throat when he saw the flush of red in Alicia's cheeks. Feeling a little embarrassed himself for being so conspicuous, he rubbed his nape and looked down. "Uh, you live here?"

* * * *

I was just about to ask you the same thing. "Yeah, I moved here the start of the school year."

"That's funny because I've never seen you around." Carrington eyed her quizzically and crossed his muscular bronze arms.

Maybe because I'm never home. "I can say the same thing about you." Alicia would never get over how violet his eyes could be.

"But you won't," he growled, unfolding his arms and taking a step closer.

Alicia tilted her head back and took in his size. Damn, he was tall.

"Will you?" He placed both hands on each side of her doorpost and leaned in even closer. She smelled lovely.

"Why did you come here?" she asked in nearly a whisper.

Carrington straightened but never took his eyes off her. "Your music was too loud. I came to tell you to turn it down."

Alicia arched both eyebrows. "You came to *tell* me?"

"I think I was pretty clear." His voice was sharper.

Alicia placed a daring hand on her hip. "You don't *tell* me to do anything."

Carrington took another step forward, and Alicia took one step back, taking her hand off her hip.

"You don't scare me," she hissed.

Carrington continued to move forward, and she kept moving backwards. When they were in her apartment, Carrington locked her door.

"What are you doing?" She gasped.

A smug grin spread across Carrington's face, and he placed a finger to his sexy lips. He motioned toward her in a macho sort of way. Alicia tried to turn away, but he caught her by the arm and held her firm.

"What are you doing?" she asked again, but this time her breathing grew rapid.

* * * *

Carrington grabbed her other arm and held Alicia firmly. He looked her up and down again. He did it slowly this time. The look of approval on his face sent sparks through her heart as he worshipped her body eagerly with his eyes.

Alicia sucked in her breath when he pulled her into his solid form and nuzzled his nose in her hair. The feeling of him running his brawny hands up and down her shoulders caused a massive heat wave to rush through her form. She exhaled slowly, trying as best she could to hold her composure as he slid his hands to her neck, and then to her cheeks. He framed her face with his hands and tilted her face upward, locking his violet eyes on her brown ones. He caressed her lips with his unrelenting gaze, appearing as though he was contemplating kissing her.

* * * *

Alicia watched his precious eyes turn from violet to gray and that familiar wrinkle form on his forehead as he drew his eyebrows together. He brought his nose to hers and nestled it there but didn't kiss her.

"God, I want you so badly," he said through a broken whisper.

"Then have me." Alicia wrapped her arms around his waist and stood on her toes.

Carrington moved his head back to give her room but still stayed close.

“Take me, I’m yours,” she pleaded in a whisper. “Carrington, you do things to me that no man ever has.” She drew in a shaky breath. “No man has ever touched me the way you do.” She looked down, then up into his eyes before circling her arms around his neck and holding him tight. She buried her face in his neck and pecked the warm flesh there.

* * * *

Carrington exhaled as he ran his hands down her shoulders, to the swells of her breasts, and then along her lean waist. He leaned down and pecked her forehead tenderly before moving to her mouth. He teased her, opening and closing his lips on hers, one kiss lingering a little longer than the last. He nipped her bottom lip and then sucked on it tenderly. Alicia clutched his shirt and stood on her toes, a silent plea for more. He parted her lips and gently stroked her tongue with his. He slid his hands down her sides and brought them around her back, rubbing it gently. He released her for a breath of air but stayed close. He nuzzled his nose against hers and then began to kiss her with the same tenderness again.

Alicia brought her hands around his neck and began to comb her fingers through his hair. She teased him, alternating soft pecks with passionate kisses. Carrington’s breathing grew ragged and his grasp tighter. This time Alicia pulled back.

“Do you want to be with me or not?” Her eyes were pleading.

Feeling weak from his constant battle with rejection and desire, Carrington placed gentle fingertips on Alicia’s cheek and looked deep into her eyes. *Yes! God I want you!* “Ally,” he whispered, stroking her softly. He said nothing for a while as he held her close. After a while, he stepped back. “Turn down your music and get some sleep. Remember, call time is at six thirty tomorrow. Don’t be late.”

“And if I am?”

Carrington glared at her for a moment. “Don’t push me.”

“Why? You do it to me all the time.”

Carrington didn’t reply. He simply continued to move towards the door without looking back.

Alicia stood in the middle of her living room floor and watched the man of her dreams forsake her once again. He was a master at playing games with her heart and more daring than he even knew for doing so.

Chapter 8

It was six thirty, the time all of the runners were to meet for their morning run, but Alicia wasn't going to arrive until 6:35. It was just enough time for her to start with the crew and just enough to test the waters with Carrington. Last night he warned her not to push him, but what would he really do to her?

It was 6:35, and Carrington was leading the stretching. When he caught sight of Alicia, he scowled. "Why are you late? Don't you know what *call time* means? Or do I have to explain it to you?"

Alicia would have cowered from the coldness in his voice if she didn't know him. "I know what it means."

"So what's your excuse? You're not officially a part of the team so you can do anything you damn well please?" He pierced her with his glare.

Everyone grew quiet and tense.

"My alarm didn't go off," she lied.

Carrington smirked and stared at her for the longest five seconds of her life. "Bullshit. See me when this is over." The tone in his voice was just as tainted as the look in his eyes.

* * * *

Carrington gave Alicia pure hell. She'd never known the true scrutiny of jumping jacks, sit ups, and endless sprinting until that morning. Sweat ran down her forehead and onto her nose. She could feel Carrington's violet eyes watching her with amazement. She knew she'd proved him wrong.

Carrington glanced at his stopwatch. “Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Time.”

Alicia collapsed on her back with her knees still perked up. Carrington watched the rise and fall of her breasts. She was alluring even when sweaty and out of breath.

“Ally,” he said softly, extending his hand and pulling her to her feet.

“Yes?” She was brushing the grass off the back of her shorts.

“Look at me.”

She looked at him.

“Was it worth it?”

She frowned. “What?”

“Was it worth it?” He arched both eyebrows.

“I heard you, but I don’t understand what you’re asking. If you’re talking about the workout, yes. I’m trying to lose about five pounds. You might have just helped me reach my goal.”

“Oh, come off it, Alicia. We both know why you were late, and why you stayed.”

“I was late because my alarm—”

“Bull—”

“And I stayed because you told me too.” She said it as if it was no big deal.

“Oh really?” He cupped her chin and then said in the softest tone, “You don’t always do what I tell you.”

“So I decided to cut you a break.”

Carrington arched an eyebrow and shook his head. “You’re a terrible liar,” he remarked, and then framed Alicia’s face with his hands. He leaned his head down and kissed her passionately. “Terrible, terrible, terrible,” he muffled against her lips.

Alicia placed her hands on his and then pulled away. Still holding his hands, she brought them down and held them. “Carrington”—she took in a shaky breath—“I can’t do this anymore. All of this back and forth—you’re confusing the hell out of me, and it’s not cute. You

keep teasing me and then walking away. I mean, just tell me how you feel and stop playing games with my heart. Carrington, I won't get mad at you for not loving me the way I love you. I just need to know how you feel."

"What did you say?" Carrington drew his eyebrows together and squinted his eyes as though trying to read Alicia.

"When?"

"Just now."

Alicia replayed her words in her head. She gasped on the inside. She didn't mean to say what she said. "I just need to know how you feel." She tried to cover up.

"No." Carrington wasn't convinced in the least. "Before that. Why do you care so much about how I feel about you?"

Alicia inhaled slowly and exhaled. She was hesitant in answering. "Because, I love you." Her voice was quieter and more timid.

Carrington's heart turned, and he wasn't sure if he should rejoice or be disappointed. The moment was so bittersweet and unanticipated. She loved him. She really *loved* him, but he couldn't be with her. It went against everything and was far too risky, but he was too weak to fight her anymore. As he cupped her chin, he looked her in the eye with an intensity that made her heart stop and blood run cold.

In a voice as tender as his touch, he whispered sadly, "Ally, we're so wrong for each other."

"We're *perfect* for each other." Alicia grabbed the hand that cupped her chin, brought it to her cheek, then slid it to her neck, her throat, and finally to the rhythm that made steady music between her breasts. She held it there for another moment before bringing his fingers to her lips, all while keeping her pretty, brown eyes fixed on his beautiful, grayish-violet ones.

Carrington shook his head slowly. "No," he whispered weakly with clouding eyes. He wrapped his arms around Alicia and hugged her tight.

Alicia pressed her hands against his chest and looked up. “What’s holding you back, Carrington?”

When he didn’t reply, she stood on her tiptoes and strained for his lips. Yielding, he lowered his head and completed the kiss. Alicia slid her hand down his middle and found his sex. She grabbed and began to feel, rubbing her hand up and down his cock. He arched his hips forward and gradually deepened his kiss. When Alicia began to move her hand in a circular motion, he helplessly convulsed into her hand. His dick was beginning to strain against her palm, strengthening until he was fully aroused.

“Alicia,” he grunted before reaching for her hand and tearing it away.

She hushed him with another kiss and tugged his shirt, pulling him into her more. She could feel his arousal pressing against her belly.

“Oh my God, you make it so much harder for me to walk away every day,” he whispered through their kiss.

“You don’t have to—”

Carrington pulled away and took a few steps back. “Yes I do.”

“No you don’t! God, Carrington, what is with you? What are you so afraid of?” she demanded.

He inhaled and exhaled but said nothing for a moment. His eyes were violet-gray, and his face was hard.

“*Tell me*,” Alicia urged softly.

“You just won’t leave it alone, will you?” He narrowed his gaze and came closer. He drew in a steady breath and towered over her. “Didn’t your mother teach you never to fool around with strangers?”

“I just want to know why you can’t be with me,” she whispered.

“If I tell you I’ll have to kill you.”

Somehow, she knew he wasn’t being pretentious. She stood before him, silent and stunned with wide eyes.

Carrington grabbed her arm firmly and led her to the parking lot.

“Where are you taking me?” Alicia trotted to keep up with him. When she saw where they were headed, her eyes widened.

“Get in.” He opened the door of his car and waited for her to move. Alicia, however, was too bewildered to do much of anything.

“What— Where are you— I don’t understand.”

Carrington grabbed her by the arm and urged her into the silver Mustang. “You ask too many questions.” He made sure she was adjusted before getting in the vehicle and fixing himself.

“Carrington, where are you taking me?” she asked when he pulled off.

* * * *

Carrington continued to stare out of his windshield. His violet eyes were dark, and it was as though he had tunnel vision, seeing nothing but the one thing he was determined to get. The cold spirit of fear wrapped its arms around her, speeding the tempo of her heart as it contracted slowly against her warm flesh.

“Carrington,” Alicia whispered timidly. She was beginning to wonder just how dangerous Carrington really was.

Chapter 9

“See what I mean?”

Jordan watched the silver Mustang drive off at a speed clearly over the limit. He rubbed his chin and said nothing while turning the key in the ignition and putting his old convertible in drive.

“Where are we going?” his partner inquired quizzically.

“Wherever they’re going.”

* * * *

Carrington and Alicia rode in silence the rest of the way. When Carrington parked in front of the familiar apartment, Alicia relaxed a little.

“Will you tell me now?” she asked, unbuckling her seat belt.

Carrington ignored her question and told her to get out of the car. When he pulled his keys out on the second floor and allowed Alicia to walk through the door of the apartment that clearly wasn’t hers, her question was halfway answered. She turned around and eyed him quizzically.

Carrington shoved her into the half-lit apartment, locked the door behind him and then firmly placed his strong hands on her shoulders. He backed her into his brown leather couch, never once glancing away, until he had her where he wanted her. He gently slid his hands across her deltoids, ran them down her neck, dragged them to her chest, and then groped her breasts.

Alicia gasped. The sudden feeling of him grasping her sensitive mounds took her by surprise. It was as though he was a completely

different person. He gave silence and mystery an entirely new meaning. His eyes were of a shade of violet she'd never seen before, and his aura was alluring in every way possible.

After dropping his hands, Carrington grabbed her arm and led her into his dim-lit bedroom. He never turned off the lamp on his nightstand. He closed the door behind them and then pulled Alicia into him. Before she could protest, he picked her up and then placed her on his unmade bed.

"Lie down," Carrington said quietly. "Go on." He climbed on his bed and lied on top of her, framing her head with his forearms. "You want to know what a man does when he really wants a woman?" His voice was husky now. He increased the pressure of his hips against hers so that she could feel just how aroused he was. "You want to know exactly what I want to do to you?"

Alicia swallowed and then nodded.

* * * *

Carrington grabbed her hands and pinned them beside her head. He kissed her passionately and released a moan when she interlaced her fingers with his. He plunged his tongue deeper into her mouth, stroking her tongue with great intensity and passion. He began to breathe heavily, and small moans escaped his throat every so often. He was greedy for more. He needed *all* of Alicia. Slightly lifting his pelvis, he adjusted himself so that his hips were pressed firmly against Alicia's. He licked her tongue with empowering desire as they kissed, making her want him even more.

Carrington surrendered to his greatest need and began to push his dick against the mound between Alicia's thighs. He pushed hard, thrusting back and forth as though trying to break through the layers of their clothing. It was as though his dick needed coverage fast and her pussy was the only place left. His breathing rate increased, and his hunger grew.

He tore away his lips and lifted himself just long enough to tear off Alicia's T-shirt. He aimed for her white sports bra next, being sure to gently lift it above her head. When she finally lied before him naked up top and fully exposed, he bowed his head until his mouth was covering her left breast.

* * * *

He opened his mouth around her shape, and sucked her with a deep hunger that gave her painful pleasure.

Alicia winced and dug her fingers into his hair, urging him closer. She arched her back and embraced the teeth that gently nipped her hardened nipple. She sucked in a light breath as her eyes rolled back from the feel of his tongue teasing her sharpened bud. She thought she might die from all of the pleasure. She began to pant heavily, and small sounds heaved from her throat.

Carrington lifted his head and played with Alicia's other breast, teasing it with his mouth, and then whirling his tongue around her nipple. After a moment of shared bliss between them, she clutched his thick, dark brown hair and brought his lips to hers.

"What are you going to do to me?" she murmured against his lips.

Carrington shushed her with a forceful kiss. "Shh." He kissed her again. And again.

Alicia wanted to fight him off, but she couldn't. She loved him too much and wanted him too badly. Would she regret her decision on giving herself away to him tomorrow? She didn't know, but at that moment she was drunk on love, and as toxic as he might be, he was the only drug that got her high.

"Carrington," she whispered as he tugged her shorts and panties down.

Carrington tossed her garments to the side and then removed the rest of his clothes. He held her gaze as he lied on top of her again. "Have you done this before?" he whispered.

Alicia nodded her head.

“And you’re sure you want to do this right now? With me?”

“Yes,” she answered softly. “I love you.”

Carrington kept his eyes glued to Alicia’s as he propped himself on one elbow and slid his hand down her middle with his free hand. He stopped at her bladder, then pressed one finger down on the top of her pussy, and then another. He stopped just before he reached her opening, watching her closely. Her eyes held expectancy and desire. He slowly feather-brushed his two fingers up and down her crease, boldly tormenting her. A light moan came from Alicia’s throat, and she sent him a look of wanting.

That look, *that* was the look he was waiting for. He lowered his head and began to softly peck her neck while taking his middle finger and stroking the opening of her cunt.

Alicia closed her eyes as he stroked deeper, and deeper, until finally, his finger was buried inside of her. She was warm and wet, silky and firm.

He took his thumb and began to play with her clitoris, plucking at it first, then circling it around and around firmly until she quivered. She was fully aroused, and more of her milky slime seeped out of her pussy. Carrington’s nostrils flared with desire. He loved the way she felt inside and the sound her pussy made when he played with her cream. Carrington moved his finger back and forth, back, and forth.

Wanting to see what he felt on his finger, he sat back on his knees in front of Alicia, and then bent her knees in while he spread her legs wide to gaze at her.

Her pussy was wet and her clit was fully erect, just like he wanted. He took his same middle finger, slipped it inside her hole again, and then eased his index finger inside of her anus. He wiggled both fingers and watched with pleasure as Alicia arched her back and cried out his name. She grasped his wrist as he continued to jerk his fingers back and forth inside of her. Milky fluid steadily oozed out of her

pussy in small amounts and the slimy sound it made was like music to his ears. The sight of it made his cock throb.

He pulled his fingers out and circled his middle finger around her clit, spreading her sweet milk over the swollen flesh.

* * * *

Alicia convulsed and nearly closed her legs. The feeling was electrifying.

Carrington pulled his index finger out of her ass and leaned forward to hover over her for a moment, looking deep into her eyes. "Alicia, I can't hold off much longer. I need you now. I can be gentle or rough, just tell me what you want."

"Start off gentle and then make it rough," she whispered, clutching onto his shoulders.

Carrington lowered himself onto her, never taking his ultraviolet eyes off her. They held the most sincerity and love she had ever seen.

"Ally, I will love you until the day I die," he whispered as he penetrated her slowly and smoothly.

His dick was thick and long, filling her warm mound as he pushed her boundary. He inhaled and closed his eyes for a moment. Alicia could see the appreciation splayed across his face. He exhaled deeply, and his eyes meshed with hers again.

The feeling was new to Alicia and like nothing she'd ever felt before. It was lovely, sweet, sincere, and honest. Her pussy felt full. He was *very* large down there.

"Carrington," she whimpered as she squeezed his shoulders. He was grinding her slowly and thoroughly.

"How does it feel, babe?" His voice was soft.

"Ah-amazing." Alicia was breathless and in awe. She never knew making love could feel this good.

Carrington buried his head in her neck, and she could feel him breathing heavily against her warm flesh.

“Damn, you’re tight,” he grunted.

The fire Alicia felt and the desire she had was stronger than ever. She clutched his hair and closed her eyes as Carrington satisfied her craving. He was moving his hips a little faster against hers. She inhaled. Exhaled. Inhaled, and exhaled.

Carrington bowed his back and almost completely withdrew himself from her, before he smoothly pushed his dick back inside her. He lifted his head and looked into her eyes, giving her the same warm gaze he had given before.

“I meant what I said, Ally. I’ll love you until the day I die.”

Alicia’s heart melted, and she felt tears burn her eyes. “I know. Baby, I’ll always love you too.” She swooned.

Carrington’s smile was genuine and sweet. He kissed her lips gently while bowing his back and almost completely withdrawing. He slid inside of her again.

“How does that feel?” He soothed.

“Good,” she rasped, “so good.”

“How about this?”

“Ah!” She cried out.

He added more force and began to thrust his dick in and out of her, never taking his eyes off her, challenging her to meet his rhythm.

“Ah! Ah! *Ah!*” Alicia clutched his shoulders and gladly allowed him to do as he pleased with her.

“Come on, baby, meet my rhythm,” Carrington demanded. “Come on. Faster! *Faster!*”

Alicia squealed as she submitted to her lover and met his rhythm. It was then that he quickened his pace. His breathing rate mirrored the rapid speed of his eager hips.

“Mm. Mm. *Ugh*—Alicia. Alicia! Oh God. Oh God, your puss feels so good.” He groaned, and at that moment Alicia was his territory. He pinned her hands back above her head. *You belong to me*, his eyes said.

Alicia wrapped her legs around his hips and squeezed him with her thighs. “Harder, Carrington,” she panted, “harder! Fuck me harder!”

Carrington obeyed her command and caused her to sob uncontrollably. Indeed, he was strong.

“Ah!” She screeched.

“That’s right, babe, feel me,” he said hoarsely. “Mmmm. That’s it. That’s it, baby. Deep inside...”

Alicia was on another planet. Bound by pleasure and trapped by the strength of Carrington’s hold, she entered the place of no return. She arched forward and buried her head in Carrington’s neck, as her peak was fast approaching. She squeezed Carrington harder with her shapely thighs, and then relaxed before spreading them apart, surrendering all of her pussy to him. The feel of his dick surging in and out of her was mind blowing, and she didn’t want it to end.

Alicia’s hands slipped from beneath Carrington’s hold, and she grasped the sheets at her sides, holding on for dear life as she closed her eyes tight. The tension in her clit felt promising enough and she wanted to make it all the way. At that point, her mind was only on herself and what her pussy felt like. All worries and insecurities she faced in the outside world were forgotten.

The powerful releasing of the tension in her clit was overbearing, and she thought she was going to burst. She bit her lower lip and arched her back even more, opening her eyes and then rolling them back. Her orgasm was strong and electrifying. She loved every moment of pleasure Carrington was giving her. She arched her hips forward until all of the feeling was gone.

* * * *

When Carrington felt her flexing and pulsing inside, he felt a tingling sensation at the head of his cock. Waves of overwhelming

pleasure increased with force and gushed through his shaft until he finally exploded.

“Alicia,” he gasped, locking his buttocks and savoring every moment. The sensation was powerful and his spasms were endless, prolonged by the clenching of Alicia’s internal muscles. He would never get over how tight she was.

It was a while before either of them reached their normal breathing rate again. Carrington pulled out and rolled from on top of Alicia. His dick was soft and wet from her warm pussy and felt damp against her thigh when he pulled her into him. He kissed her glistening forehead and held her tight until sweet dreams overcame them.

* * * *

Jordan and his messenger waited patiently in his red convertible for Carrington to come out of the apartment building. The day was partly over and the streetlights were coming on. After another hour of waiting and not seeing Carrington come out of the apartment building, Jordan called it a night. He and his partner simply concluded that Carrington would be spending the night with Alicia. They were both unaware that he and Alicia were living in the same building.

Raging and grossly perturbed, Jordan drove himself and his partner home in silence. The night was young but would soon end like the lives of those who broke the rules and had no regard for his feelings toward the ordeal.

Chapter 10

Carrington's mother eyed him suspiciously. She made it a point to visit him every other weekend, even though he insisted she not go through the hassle, but he understood. His mother loved him and worried about all of her children, regardless of their age.

"Carrington, you're happier. Anything I should know about?"

Carrington brought her a tray of cookies and milk and sat beside her while munching on one. "What are you talking about?" He took another bite of his chocolate chip cookie. He looked adorable in a boyish kind of way.

"You know what I mean. Carrington, I haven't seen you smile in I don't know how long. And your eyes. Carrington, they've been gray so long I thought they'd never be violet again."

"Well, I *am* getting ready to graduate."

"That's not it. It's something else."

"Like what?" Carrington could hide from the world but he was no match for his mother.

"Who is she?" Catherine tilted her head and sent Carrington a teasing smile.

"Who?" He played dumb.

"The woman."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Carrington was blushing.

"Carrington, you know darn well what I'm talking about. Now don't you try to pull the wool over my eyes. I know you like the back of my hand. *I* changed your diapers. *I* fed you, cleaned you, and raised you. I know my child," she said firmly.

Carrington sighed and couldn't help but smile. Indeed, she did know him and all too well. "She's five feet tall, about a hundred twenty pounds, nice curves, beautiful sandy hair, soft caramel skin, and a smile that will make any man melt."

"What's her name?"

"Alicia. Alicia Stewart."

Catherine thought for a moment. "How old is she?"

"Twenty-two."

"Okay." Catherine nodded, watching Carrington attentively.

"I kept trying to push her away, but she wouldn't relent." He snorted. "You know, I really didn't know how strong I was until I met Alicia. She filled a hole I never knew was empty." He drank from his cup.

"You love her, don't you?"

Carrington nodded and took another sip.

"Since when?"

"Since the day I first laid eyes on her." He looked at the floor. "I know it sounds crazy and I've never been one to believe in love at first sight, at least"—he paused, then turned to face his mother—"I didn't until that day. She was just"—he searched for the right word—"different. I don't know." He shrugged.

"Carrington, don't be afraid to fall in love. It's a beautiful thing."

"And so is she, which is why I'm not going to have her waiting here for me while I'm gone."

"Does she love you?"

"Yes, but that's beside the point."

"Then she'll wait."

"There won't be an *us* so there will be no need for her to wait."

"Why not?"

"It's too dangerous."

Catherine stopped in the mist of sipping her milk. "Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why is being in a relationship with her so dangerous?"

Carrington sipped his milk. *Because she's a part of the game.*

"Answer me."

"We've been over this." He set his cup down on his living room table and walked over to the window. He'd nearly slipped up and had already said too much. He turned around to face his mother.

"I want to meet her and her family."

"For what? I'm not going to marry her."

Catherine inhaled slowly and sent her son a sharp glare. "Why is it so damn dangerous for you to be with her?"

"The same reason it's so dangerous for you to be my mother. If I could temporarily change that fact until my business is taken care of, I would."

"I don't see why you have to leave this girl. You say you love her."

"That's why I can't be with her. It's too dangerous."

"Carrington, if she truly loves you, she'll be patient and wait for you at all costs. That's what I did for your father."

Carrington closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath. "I know, and that's one of the things that scares me."

Chapter 11

An intensified glare surged from Jordan's baby blue eyes when Alicia walked through the door. She wore black skinny jeans, a black turtleneck, with black boots and the sterling silver necklace Jordan bought her two years ago. She wore her hair in loose curls and her makeup highlighted her most delicate features.

Jordan stood to his feet and moved to the front of his desk, then leaned against it crossing his strong, lean arms.

The young woman held a notebook and large orange envelope against her chest. She cleared her throat. "Here." She handed him the envelope. "I thought I'd stop by early because I wouldn't be able to make it here by four. Thank God you were here." She tried to make light of the tense situation.

"Of course I'm here. Where else would I be?" He took the envelope. "It's all here?"

"It's all there."

"Good girl." A crooked grin spread across his face. "You're very useful and"—he did a once-over—"pleasing. It's just too bad you're such a whore."

Her glare told him everything she thought about his crude remark.

"At least, that's what your lover tells me."

She stiffened. "I beg your pardon."

Jordan stood to his feet. He was just as tall as Carrington. "He's watching you, you naughty little minx. And I am too. I see the way you look at him in class." He walked around her and stood behind her. He ran his fingers through her hair and then inhaled its pleasant scent,

nuzzling his nose in those sandy loose curls. “Carrington’s using you, Licia. Don’t trust him.”

Alicia turned to face him. “What are you talking about?” She was appalled.

“You know exactly what I’m talking about.” He placed his hands on her shoulder blades and ran them down her shoulders. “Carrington is no one to mess around with. Stay away from him. He’s dangerous.” His voice was low and almost convincing.

Alicia pulled away in disgust. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. You’re imagining things.”

“This is a dangerous game you’re playing, little girl,” he warned.

“No one’s playing games.”

“Oh, but you are, you naughty little minx.” He came closer again. “Forget about him, Alicia. He doesn’t want you. He’s only using you.” Jordan placed a gentle hand on her cheek. “Leave them and be with me. Let me give you every desire of your heart.” He ran his hand alongside her neck and was aiming for her breasts until she slapped his hand away.

“Don’t touch me!” She hissed.

“Don’t tease me.” He took a closer step.

“No one’s teasing you, you filthy pig! You forced me into this, remember?”

“That was before I realized how lovely you are.”

Alicia scoffed.

Inflamed by rejection and jealousy, he grabbed her by the wrists, forcing her still. “I forbid you to see that man again. You *will* remain faithful to me and obey my every command. The rules of the game will remain the same. For the time being, I will share you with my cousin, but only for a little while. Once this fiasco has been put to rest, you *will* be mine and *only* mine. Choose your battles wisely, you filthy bitch, and that’s the last time I’m going to tell you that.”

* * * *

Alicia found a folded piece of paper in front of her door when she walked into her apartment that night.

Meet me by the field tomorrow at seven thirty. I want to give you something.

Carrington

P.S. I love you

Alicia smiled to herself and couldn't wait for the morning to come. Jordan was a lying bastard. He was always trying to control her life. Over the years, Alicia learned to ignore his mocking words and simply deal with him. He'd touched her before, but it was nothing she couldn't handle. A few bruises never killed her, and she was always careful to keep quiet about her forced love affair with him.

Before Carrington, she was a ghost and had no hope for life or the blessings that came with it. But then he gave her something to hold on to, something to grasp and never let go of. He's the only man she'd ever loved and the only one she desired to be with, even when she was lying in another man's bed.

* * * *

Alicia's heart fluttered when she saw him standing by the field in his gray pullover and black jogging pants blowing in the wind. His back was turned. She walked happily over to him and placed her hands on his sides.

Carrington turned to face her and smiled.

"Hey, beautiful." He wrapped his arms around her back and pecked her softly, then teased her with short quick ones that followed.

Alicia giggled. She loved when Carrington played with her. He seemed more vulnerable and approachable. She wrapped her arms around his neck and playfully nipped his lower lip. Then nipped it

again, growing more serious and lingering there. Her mouth remained agape and Carrington closed his mouth on her upper lip, sucking on it gently. Alicia closed her eyes and sucked on his lower lip. Carrington's grip around her back stiffened, and he pulled away.

"Come on, let's get out of here," he whispered in her ear.

* * * *

"Hello. Yeah, I'm watching them right now. Jordan, I don't know how much longer I can stand this. I know, but still, I just don't feel right doing—I know, I know, I know, and yes, you're right, I do need the money. Okay, I'm watching them right now. I don't know. It looks like they're going into the men's locker room. I know and I will. I'm following them now."

Jordan's partner had been standing in the parking lot watching Alicia and Carrington kiss on the field. Jordan's partner in crime was dressed in running clothes accommodated with a baseball cap and had the look of an eighteen-year-old college boy, but was much older than that.

* * * *

Carrington put a finger to Alicia's lips and peeped around corners to make certain of their privacy. They were indeed alone. He closed the heavy door and then pinned Alicia against it, moistening his lips, and eyeing her seductively.

"What did you want to give me?" Alicia was entranced by the beauty of his violet eyes. "I'm *dying* to know." She smiled shyly as she pulled one of the strings on his hoodie.

Carrington smiled impishly, and Alicia's stomach turned. He was indeed a bad boy at heart.

Carrington carefully scanned the curves of her shape as if he was seeing her for the very first time. When he raised his head and saw her

blushing, he felt his blood rush. Something about the way she looked when she was feeling a little bashful turned him on. He grabbed her hand and led her to the shower area. "You'll see."

* * * *

Dear God it's cold as hell out here. "No, they definitely went into the locker room. No. I'm not sure." Jordan's spy walked in silence for another minute. "All right, I'm standing right outside of the locker room." His partner inadvertently arched an eyebrow and watched two girls walk by before slipping through the heavy door.

"I don't know but I hear a shower running. Listen, I'll record their voices and save it to my phone so you'll have proof. You can count on it. I always do."

Jordan's partner closed his phone and shoved it back into the pocket of his jogging pants, before peering around the corner slowly and prudently heading over towards the noise. The sidekick stopped shy of where the shower was. That was where the noise was coming from. The sidekick partner noticed two pairs of legs. One set was firmer and much more masculine than the other. There was definitely a male and female standing behind the curtain. Jordan's partner stood there for a little while and waited for the couple to speak.

Neither of the two said a word, but the movement of their legs and arches in the female's feet showed that they were doing far more than just showering. The one with hairy legs bent his knees forward while the other one stood on their toes, calf muscles flexing and all. She had beautiful legs. Both went stiff for a moment before laughter filled the room and the curtain moved in unison with their legs.

Just then, Jordan's partner's cell phone rang, and the laughter subsided in the blink of an eye.

* * * *

Alicia and Carrington's eyes flew wide open. The sudden sound made their hearts flutter and then the slamming of the door nearly shocked them dead. Carrington put a finger to Alicia's lips. Were they being watched? Had they been followed? He didn't see any legs standing in front of the curtain, but that didn't mean they were safe. Carrington peeped out of the curtain. No one was in sight. He returned to his lover.

"We've gotta get out of here," he mumbled and then turned off the water.

He *never* should have brought her there with him, never should have looked into those beautiful brown eyes, and he *never* should have kissed her. Love was a beautiful thing until it threatened one's life. It was blind, naïve, and a beautiful disaster, but he needed her, needed her *so* badly. He leaned his head against the shower wall and sent her a sidelong gaze.

* * * *

"You're right. We have to get out of here. That could have been *anyone*." Alicia had an idea of who it could be, but hoped to God that it wasn't him.

* * * *

Carrington continued to watch her closely. She looked *so* adorable and sexy at the same time. Her hair was wet and plastered to her neck, and her lips were still swollen from his kisses. He was still turned on. His eyes slid from her face, to her neck and lingered. He shifted his gaze to her breasts. His gaze lingered on her arms and then at her right hip. A frown formed on his face and Alicia's heart began to pound.

"How did you get those bruises?"

"Oh, um, I fell off a chair in my apartment." She giggled nervously.

He continued to scrutinize her marks. "One fall did that to you?"

Alicia began to fidget. "I didn't just hit the floor. It was kind of a nasty fall."

"What the hell were you doing?"

Alicia just laughed, but her cheeks flushed red with embarrassment. *Please don't figure it out.*

After another minute, he concluded that she didn't have a reason to lie to him, so he chose to believe her.

"Hey," she said softly, "it's rude to stare."

"I can't help myself, you're so beautiful." He turned to completely face her. Then he walked until he towered over her and cupped her juicy bottom in the process of lifting her.

"Carrington, we've got to—"

He hushed her with a kiss and squeezed her cheeks until she wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck. She moaned against his neck as he smoothly penetrated her. It was the sweetest sound to his attentive ears.

Carrington held her still for a moment, enjoying the warm feeling of his cock inside her pussy and the overall closeness of their bodies. Risky or not, he couldn't resist her.

Squeezing him with her well-defined, slightly plump thighs, Alicia held on for dear life when her lover began to surge his dick in and out of her pussy.

Carrington pressed her against the tiled wall and the extra stability enabled him to increase the power of his thrusting. He was becoming more aroused by the moment and could barely stay under control.

Alicia closed her eyes tight and buried her face in his neck as he rapidly moved his hips, pounding her deep inside.

"Ah, ah, ah, *ah!*" she continuously cried.

Carrington buried himself deeper inside and then grinded her with desperation, enjoying the sound of her whining. He slowly moved his hips, arching forward and being sure to stay in as deep as her body would allow.

Alicia squealed and then begged for mercy when he began to pound her again. He pounded her hard, fucking her with great passion and desire. “Baby, please!” She cried out. “You’re hurting *me*.”

Carrington relented and then stood still for a moment. “I’m sorry,” he muttered, breathing raggedly into her ear.

Alicia playfully nipped Carrington’s deltoid and then lifted her head to look deep into his ultraviolet eyes. She smiled at him and then nuzzled his nose. Her soft but ragged panting warmed the flesh above his lips.

“You’re such a bad boy,” she said in a breathy whisper.

Carrington’s cheeks became rosy, and he smiled bashfully.

“Awe, it’s okay. I still love you, boo-boo,” she teased, and they chuckled in unison.

Carrington pecked her lips softly and then took in a deep breath. His smile slowly faded and desire took over again.

Alicia placed her hand on the back of Carrington’s head and then whispered gently against his lips, “You wanna go ahead and finish, baby?”

The seductiveness in her voice sent sparks to Carrington’s cock and his heart began to pound. His facial expression changed as he began to roll his hips back and forth. She met his rhythm and embraced the sound of his shallow breathing as he reached his peak.

Carrington moaned as he drew his eyebrows together and closed his eyes tight. His orgasm was electrifying and pleasurable beyond measure. Carrington groaned and then locked his buttocks as hard as he could. “Ugh!” he gasped, and then held his breath once more. His knees nearly gave in. He had given her every bit of strength left in him.

* * * *

Alicia never took her eyes off him. She found both satisfaction and fascination in his bliss. She loved the way he looked when he came.

Carrington drew in a shaky breath as he pulled out and gently released Alicia. She slowly lowered her feet to the wet tiled floor. He was still breathing hard and she could still feel his cock in her pussy. What Carrington did to her was out of this world, sexy, pleasurable, and exotic. Just. Like. Him.

When Carrington pulled the shower curtain open, he stopped short. Tomas Robinson was standing before him with wide eyes, looking from him to Alicia and back at him.

Chapter 12

“Sir, I can—”

“Save it, Carrington,” Tomas cut in. There was disappointment and annoyance written all over his face.

Alicia and Carrington stood before the disgusted man, both on edge and wondering what the consequences of their actions would be.

With nostrils flaring and a fist just as tense, Tomas pierced Carrington’s eyes with his own. “I’ve known you since you were a freshman.” His voice was low and raspy. “I thought you had more decency than that. I mean, I’m speechless.” He looked at Alicia. “And you, I *never* allow estranged outsiders to come workout with the other runners. But you seemed determined and convincing enough, so I pulled some strings and gave you a chance, especially after this one”—he looked at Carrington, then back at her—“convinced me to.” He snickered. “What a fool I’ve been.”

For a moment, no one spoke and a pregnant silence filled the room. Finally, without charge, Alicia spoke.

“Mr. Robinson, with all due respect”—she took in a slow breath and gathered her thoughts—“Carrington and I, Carrington and I were just—” Her voice nearly broke. How was she going to explain *this*? “We were feeling gross and sweaty so we decided to stop and clean up.”

“Okay, I can understand *Carrington* being in the locker room, but why were *you* there, Ms. Stewart? I mean, you do realize that there is another locker room for *your* gender and that you do not have to—” He cleared his throat. “Excuse me. You are *not* permitted to use the male’s locker room under any and all circumstances.

“Robinson, please—”

“That’s Mr. Robinson to you.” The look he gave Carrington told him exactly what he thought of him at that moment.

“Mr. Robinson,” Carrington corrected himself. “Please don’t blame this on Alicia. It was my idea that she come—”

“I believe I was talking to Alicia, young man. I’ll deal with you in a minute.”

Alicia’s eyes clouded, and she was suddenly feeling as helpless as she was Christmas day fourteen years ago. “I was taking a shower,” she said quietly.

It killed Carrington to know that there wasn’t a damn thing he could do to save her.

“Okay, back to my original question. You do know that there is a locker room for *women* as well, don’t you?”

“Yes.” She nodded, eyeing the hideous bobble head in the center of his desk. It was obvious he’d been playing with it.

“And you do know the consequences of your behavior, don’t you?” He arched an eyebrow.

“Yes,” she nodded again.

“Now, I can’t prove what it is you two were doing in the locker room because I didn’t actually *see it*, but I have pretty damn good idea. A *real* good idea. I *can* however, prove that *you* were in there, Ms. Alicia, and you shouldn’t have been. You see, we may not have cameras inside of the locker room, but you better believe we have them outside.” His dark brown eyes never left the frowning face of Alicia. “Now, you have two options. You can either say nothing about the situation and I get you expelled, or you can come clean about what it is the two of you were doing and get the *both* of you expelled.” He looked her up and down in disgust. “So what’s it going to be, little girl?” His voice was still just as low and raspy.

Alicia’s heart fell, and she gained a bit of fury. That bastard knew damn well she wouldn’t do that to Carrington.

“I’m waiting.”

“Expel me and let Carrington stay,” she answered, still not looking up.

Jordan was going to kill her and Carrington. He told her he would himself the afternoon she delivered the documents to him. He grabbed her by the wrists, forced her on his desk, and let her know what he’d plan to do to her *and* Carrington if he ever caught them together again. He took her against her will, roughed her up, and called her cruel names while fucking her on his cold desk.

“What? No! Robinson, there has to be—”

“Carrington, I’d close my mouth if I were you. From what I understand, you’ll be graduating after this semester. Seven and a half years of school, I’d sure as hell hate to be put out now.”

“But this isn’t fair.”

“I’m giving you one more warning, Carrington,” Robinson warned.

Carrington sighed heavily and didn’t say anything else.

Robinson redirected his attention to Alicia. “You have twenty-four hours to pack your bags and get on a plane. In the mean time, I’ll be contacting administration. You’re dismissed.”

Carrington motioned to leave with Alicia, but was stopped before he could take another step. “I said *she* was dismissed.”

The two men of the same height waited for the young woman to dismiss herself. When she finally closed the door, Robinson proceeded.

Carrington ran his fingers through his damp hair. “Can’t you just give her another chance? I mean, if it wasn’t for me she wouldn’t even be in this mess.”

“No, there’s no way in hell I can do that, especially since the tape is going to be viewed.”

“What tape?”

“There are cameras everywhere, Carrington, you know that. And anyway, someone saw the two of you go into the locker room

together. So even if the cameras weren't on, it was bound to come out."

"Who informed you?"

"That information is confidential, but I will tell you this, and you can tell your little girlfriend, too, be careful who you call your friends, especially those you claim are closer than most."

* * * *

Alicia was completely blindsided and taken aback. She fell to the floor holding her cheek.

"Get up, you filthy whore, you filthy backstabbing bitch!" Jake growled, grabbing her by her neck and forcing her to her feet. "I should kill you right now!"

Alicia's eyes were wide, and she struggled to breathe. She grabbed the hand that was wrapped tightly around her neck and tried to do away with it, but his grasp tightened. Alicia tried to scream, but nothing would come out. Jake finally set her free and pushed her on the couch alongside the wall. He leaned forward and pinned her arms back when she tried to get off the couch.

"You just couldn't stay away, could you? Did you think I wouldn't find out? Huh? Did you think I was fucking around when I told Jordan to hand you those papers?" He hissed.

Alicia didn't answer him. She never even signed the papers. Jordan told her not to. He wanted to be *her* husband. Jake could rot in hell.

"Answer me, damn it!" he whispered through gritted teeth. "Do you think this is a joke?"

"I don't know what to think because you never tell me anything! Secrets, that's *all* it's ever been with you. Secrets, lies, and manipulation," she uttered.

"I was trying to protect you."

“You were trying to control me. You wanted me legally bound to you so that you could have me whenever you fucking wanted. Two years of being your fiancée, and I’m still going to bed alone!” She scoffed. She could be *very* pretentious.

“You know that we can’t live together, it would ruin everything and expose us away like red paint on white carpet. Most eighteen-year-olds fresh out of high school and brand new to college don’t have wives and a place of their own, for your information.”

“Twenty-eight-year-old men do.”

Jake gave Alicia a look of disdain. “I can think of a number of things I’d like to do to you right now.” His stare was stone cold.

“Would you be quiet?” She hissed.

“Why? Afraid your lover will hear?”

“Get off of me.”

He did.

Alicia stood to her feet and adjusted her clothes. She was still wearing the clothes she had on earlier. Her hair was damp and her natural curls hung loose.

“Take this expulsion as a warning. If I ever catch you with that bastard again, you’re dead. One way or another.”

Alicia was stunned and it showed on her face. “You’re behind this?”

That familiar crooked smile spread across Jake’s face, and all of the sudden there was no mistaking that he was Jordan Crane’s cousin. “Who did you think it was? Did you honestly believe I wouldn’t be keeping an eye on you?”

“You can’t do this!” She gasped.

“Baby, I can do anything I damn well please.”

“You can’t—what—That’s not fair!”

“What isn’t fair is you allowing that scheming son of a bitch to put his dick where mine should be! Do you know who he is?” Before Alicia had the chance to respond he followed up with, “That’s

Antonio Marino's son. That's the man who's been trying to find and kill your father ever since you mysteriously murdered his."

Alicia looked as though she'd just seen a ghost. She'd slept with *Antonio Marino's son*. "But my father's dead!"

"He doesn't know that. As far as he knows, Ben is still alive out there somewhere. He has no idea that he's been shacking up with his father's murderer."

Alicia felt nauseous.

"I mean it, Alicia. I have all the proof Carrington Marino needs. If you want to be with him go ahead, but don't expect me to protect you any longer."

She said nothing.

"Hmm, I wonder what Carrington would think if he knew he was sleeping with his father's killer." Jake circled around Alicia and then placed a hand on her waist, sliding it down sensually.

He'd hate me.

Jake nuzzled his nose in her hair. "So what's it gonna be, princess?"

Alicia closed her eyes, and clenched her jaw as Jake gripped her side. "I choose you."

"What was that?"

"I choose you."

"Good. I'll be flying in to see you in a few weeks. If I catch you anywhere near him, you're done."

After he released her, Jake watched Alicia storm out of the office. "You can come out know," he announced as he turned to face the third wheel of the partnership. "Here," he said, handing over the cash. "You've been a big help to my cousin and me especially. But there's one more thing I need you to do."

"Okay."

"Call Alicia if she doesn't call you within the next week. Document everything she says to you and remember"—he pointed a

finger to his faithful partner—“you don’t know that she’s going back to Oregon.”

“Yes, sir,” Rachel said, allowing her hair to fall down her back as she removed her baseball cap.

Chapter 13

Carrington wiped his forehead and then took a seat under a tall sycamore tree. Everyone and their parents hugged and applauded as they rested from their very last run of the season. The atmosphere was joyful and the sun was shining. Flocks of birds flew across the baby blue sky while the bees and dragonflies pounced from one grain of grass to the next.

Carrington sat quietly by himself, picking apart a daisy that tickled his ankle just seconds ago. His mind was on Alicia and how he'd have to say good-bye to her soon. He told himself that he'd break things off with her before he left, but after everything they'd been through, he wasn't so sure about it anymore. He loved her too much and couldn't imagine going through life without having her warm body to hold next to him or her soft lips to kiss whenever he pleased. Maybe he was being selfish, but all of a sudden, that just didn't matter. She was his everything, and he was hers.

* * * *

Carrington called Alicia as soon as he got home. She didn't answer, so he tried her again later on, and then a third time. Still, no answer. He waited until nine o'clock to go knock on her door. He *knew* she'd be home then. When she didn't answer, he went out into the parking lot. Her car was nowhere in sight.

Carrington sighed with despair. He was getting worried, this wasn't like her. It was as though she'd just disappeared without a trace.

Another day, several rings, and one voicemail after another was all he got. He left several messages, but she wasn't returning his calls. He tried knocking on her door and keeping an eye out for when she arrived home so that he could talk to her face to face, but for whatever reason she remained hidden and unseen. What was wrong? Was she hurt? Did she not want to talk to him anymore? What if? Oh God. What if they captured her?

* * * *

Alicia's heart broke as she listened to the last message Carrington left her. He'd left her several. He sounded upset and like he missed her. Lord knows she missed him more than anything, but she needed time to think. Who knew Jordan's house would turn into a convenient hide out?

* * * *

It'd been three full days. Carrington must have been worried sick. Alicia opened her phone and listened to his message again. She thought she'd die. Wanting to call and tell him not to worry, she pressed the first five digits of his number, not quite making it to the sixth, and hung up. She couldn't go back. Jake and Jordan warned her, and anyway, it was against the rules. She knew that much from the start. But she had to tell Carrington so he'd understand. She wouldn't tell him everything, but she had to tell him *something*. She hit the gas of her car as she opened her phone again and proceeded to call.

* * * *

Alicia parked at the recreational area a couple of miles from the school. She climbed out of her car, relieved to see Carrington standing beside one of the sycamore trees surrounding the area.

* * * *

Carrington's heart melted when he saw her. She looked beautiful with her reddened cheeks and baby hairs flaring out. He ran to her, crossing the freshly cut grass, and then picked her up, swinging her around as he held her tight against his aching body.

"What is it?" he asked frantically after putting her down.

"I would have said this over the phone, but I needed to tell you in person." Alicia swallowed, glanced at the ground, and then back up at him. "Carrington, I—"

* * * *

She struggled to spit the words out. She had everything planned out and knew exactly what she was going to say, but when she saw the look of concern in her lover's eyes, it killed her. She inhaled deeply, and then exhaled. "I can't see you anymore," was all she could say.

* * * *

Carrington's heart fell, but he showed no sign of emotion on his face, except in his violet-gray eyes, which became completely gray. "And why is that?" He drew his eyebrows together, the same way he always did when he was listening attentively.

"It's complicated."

"I've got time."

She sighed helplessly. "You said it yourself. We're all wrong for each other."

Carrington was completely caught off guard. “That was before.”

“And you couldn’t have been more right. I wish we never even met.” She bit her bottom lip as she narrowed her gaze.

“What?” He frowned.

“You heard me.” Her voice was still soft.

“Look at me and say it.” He was a master of lies and manipulation. No one played that game better than he did. Alicia wasn’t being truthful. He could see it all over her face.

Alicia drew in a shaky breath and slowly looked up. “Carrington, I’m tired of the stress our relationship has put on me. I can’t keep doing this.”

“If this is about you getting expelled, Ally, I can—”

She shook her head. “It’s not about that.”

“Then what?” He asked helplessly. “What, Ally? Do you just not wanna be with me anymore?”

Alicia’s eyes began to well up with tears.

“Is that it? ’Cause if it is, Alicia, tell me.” His voice croaked. “Tell me what it is I did and, baby, I’ll fix it.” Carrington grabbed her hands as he kissed her eyes with his deep gray ones. “Just don’t leave me. Baby, *please* don’t leave me.”

Alicia pulled her hands away from his. She looked him in the eye and said in the strongest way she could without shedding tears, “I’m sorry, Carrington, but I don’t want to be with you anymore. I thought I did, but after giving it some thought, I realized that I’m better off without you.”

Carrington ran his palm across his crown as he drew in a deep breath. He exhaled and then swallowed a sob. “Is this really what you want?”

“Yes.”

Her words were like a knife through his heart, and it was everything he could do not to cry. Especially because he knew how right she was. His eyes were almost black and the emotions pouring

from the hole in his heart were like quicksand, weighing him down until he drowned.

“Good-bye, Carrington.” Alicia walked away without waiting for him to respond.

* * * *

She made a beeline for her car, hoping Carrington wouldn’t chase after her. The cold wind blew her curls back and dried her tears before they could fall. When she realized she was walking away without Carrington running after her, she knew it was the end.

* * * *

Alicia wiped away two falling tears as she packed away the last of her clothes. Wearing nothing but a sheer nightgown and a white robe, she looked around at the dull, lifeless furniture decorating her apartment. She’d have to send for it. Jake would freak if he found out she threw it all out.

It was eight thirty and the night couldn’t have gone by any slower. Alicia went over to her dresser and picked up a folded piece of paper. She opened it to read it for what was probably the hundredth time that day. *P.S. I love you.* Those were the simplest of words in the English language, yet they meant more than anything to her, especially because they came from Carrington.

Alicia sniffed and then kissed the piece of paper before folding it up and packing it away in her small handbag. She’d hold on to it forever.

Alicia froze. There was a knock at her door, more like a pound, an angry one at that. Her heart jolted again. The sound grew louder. Her heart pounded harder and a little louder with every step she took.

“Alicia, I know you’re in there! Open up!” The pounding came again.

Alicia felt her heart swell. It was Carrington.

"I'll stay out here all night if I have to!" he yelled through the door. "Open up!" The pounding continued.

"Go away!" Alicia cried with teary eyes.

"Let me in!"

She moved closer to the door. "Go away, Carrington, I don't want you here!"

"Ally, please! I want to talk to you! I—" Tears clouded Carrington's eyes and his breath caught in his throat. "I need you so much right now." He leaned his head against the door. "Let me in, Ally!" He found the strength to say, "I'll stay out here all night, I swear to God I will! Come on, Ally, let me in!"

"No!"

"Please!"

"Go away!"

"Ally, please! Baby, I'm beggin' you. *Please!*"

Alicia closed her eyes as she turned around to lean against the door. She needed him so much and missed him terribly. "Carrington, why are you doing this?" She cried. Her tears began to trickle down like droplets of melting ice. She was giving in. "Why can't you just leave me alone?"

"Because I love you! Alicia, I love you! Why are you doing this to me?" Carrington bit his bottom lip to keep it from quivering as he wiped away two falling tears.

"Carrington." Alicia sucked in her breath and then turned to face the door. She placed her hand on it and held it there for a moment, contemplating her decision to let him in. She closed her eyes, took in a deep breath, and then exhaled. "Just one more night," she whispered to herself as she slowly began to unbolt the lock, praying to God that they wouldn't get caught.

"Why are you here, making such a loud ruckus at this hour?" she asked softly.

Carrington's nose was red and his eyes were a little puffy. It was obvious he'd been crying too. He wore a white T-shirt and burgundy plaid pajama bottoms. His hair was blown dry, falling whichever way it so chose, and his five o'clock shadow gave him a slightly new look.

"I need you," he pleaded.

"I told you to leave me alone."

"Why?"

Alicia shook her head and a frown formed at her brow as her lower lip began to quiver. Carrington made his way in, and then secured the door behind him. Alicia didn't fight him off, nor did she kick and scream when he carried her off into her bedroom. She missed him dearly and needed him just as much as he needed her.

When he was beside her bed, Carrington laid her on her back and then climbed on top of her. He framed her head with his hands and nuzzled his nose against hers before bringing his lips to hers. Alicia whimpered but willingly surrendered to his gentle embrace and welcomed his slithering tongue. They eagerly stroked one another's tongues with their own, breathing raggedly and moaning with satisfaction as their passionate kiss continued on.

Alicia spread her legs, allowing Carrington to slide between. She then shifted his head with her hands and tenderly kissed his stubbly cheeks. She'd never seen him with a five o'clock shadow before. She liked seeing him this way. It made him seem less intimidating and more vulnerable. She nipped his chin and then found his lips again, opening and closing her mouth on top of his.

Carrington stuck out the tip of his tongue and held it above Alicia's lips. Alicia lifted her head and pecked his tongue tenderly before pressing the tip of her tongue against it. Carrington exhaled a shuddering breath as he slipped his tongue between her lips, wanting desperately for her to suck on it.

Alicia wrapped her arms around his neck and did as he wished, sucking him as he plunged deeper into her mouth. She opened her mouth wider and tilted her head back, allowing him to kiss her as

deeply as he wished. The sounds of their heavy breathing filled the air.

Carrington bowed his back and firmly pressed his hardened cock against Alicia's womanhood. A frown formed at his brow, and he kissed her harder than he ever had before. *I've missed you so much. Don't ever leave me again*, his kiss said.

Alicia intertwined her delicate fingers with his hair as she kissed him good-bye. Tears burned her eyes as she reminded herself that this would be the last time they ever made love again. Carrington would fall asleep by her side tonight, he'd wake up in the morning, and she'd be gone.

Alicia whined when Carrington tore his lips away. He opened the front of her robe, exposing her breasts to the warm air around them. He pecked her nipples through the sheer cloth that covered them, before making his way further south of her body. He dragged his face down her middle, inhaling the sweet fragrance of her soft perfume. He kissed her belly button before raising her nightgown above her waist. She wasn't wearing panties. Carrington nuzzled his nose against the soft lips of her pussy. She'd grown a little hair there. He became more aroused by her natural smell.

Alicia sucked in her breath as she propped her knees up. She spread her legs wide, eagerly waiting for the wet stroking of Carrington's tongue. She sighed when he licked her crease. She combed her fingers through his hair, and urged his face closer into her pussy, rolling her hips forward every time her lover slipped his tongue deeper inside her hole.

"Baby, I love you so much!" She sobbed.

Carrington was hard as a rock. Semen oozed from his dick, wetting the front of his pajama pants. He groaned against her as he fucked her passionately with his tongue, groping her ass with his strong masculine hands.

“Mmmm,” Alicia moaned when he shifted to her clit. He’d never made love to her like this before. “Carrington, Carrington. Ah, ah, ah!” She continued to sob.

Carrington gripped her hips hard and crushed her juicy lips into his face as he ate her out. Alicia squealed and her pussy spasmed several times as she convulsed helplessly in his embrace.

Carrington began to French kiss every inch of his lover’s throbbing wet genital and continued to do so until her breathing subsided. When it did, he sat back to remove his clothes, and then Alicia’s.

Alicia framed Carrington’s face with her hands and kissed him passionately as he laid on top of her. Their tongues meshed and collided multiple times until Carrington pulled back for air. He shifted to peck her neck tenderly, nip her ear lobe, peck her nose, and then watched her closely as he penetrated her with the plum-sized head of his penis.

“More,” she groaned.

Carrington pushed his dick in a little more.

“More, Carrington, I want all of you.”

Carrington gave her a little more.

“Please, baby, give me more,” she begged, clutching his tight ass cheeks.

“Do you still love me?”

Alicia closed her eyes and buried her face in his neck as she tried to push more of him into her. Carrington didn’t budge. He was much too strong for her.

“Please give me more,” she whined, and her eyes began to water.

“Answer me,” Carrington said sternly.

“Yes!”

“Then why did you break up with me?”

“Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!” she cried.

“Look at me and answer me!”

Alicia laid back and met his intensified gaze. “Because I’m stupid,” she whispered.

“Were you afraid?”

“Carrington, please, I—*Ah!*”

Alicia clutched his shoulders and began to cry his name. His strength was incredible and his passion was unfathomable. He gave her pleasure and pain, both physically and emotionally. He was fucking the hell out of her.

“Just. In case. You didn’t. Know,” he growled, “This. Is how. Much. I. Love. You.”

Alicia’s eyes began to water, and she thought she was going to die. It was everything she could do not to wail at the top of her lungs, lest someone overhear and Jordan mysteriously find out about her encounter with Carrington Marino.

Carrington grunted as he reached down to grip her hips. He bit down on her pillow and groaned into it as he intensified his thrusting and deepened his penetration.

Alicia continued to sob. The constant rubbing of his shaft against her clit was tormenting her and provoking her second orgasm. The feeling of pleasure and pain was driving her mad with infatuation. The sensation was electrifying and was becoming stronger by the second.

Alicia arched her back, embracing what was about to come. The tension was stronger than ever. She shut her eyes tight and held her breath as she pushed. Her face turned red and sweat trickled down her head as she made herself come faster.

“Oh!” She gasped. “Oh! Oh! *Oh!*” Her orgasm hit hard and the release felt like lightning. Her pussy was throbbing and squirting juice like crazy as Carrington slid in and out.

The feeling left Alicia’s clit extremely sensitive and she wailed at the top of her lungs when Carrington bumped the swollen sex button again. He bumped it again and again, torturing her while loving her with his body. The feeling wasn’t painful, but electric, very electric

and intense. It made her squirm and scream until her lover finally came.

* * * *

Carrington's breathing became shallower and his face turned red. He closed his eyes tight as he grimaced. Making love never felt so good and Alicia's hot throbbing pussy felt incredible on his sensitive cock. He bowed his back and squeezed his ass cheeks as his cum shot out like a loose cannon. Millions of sperm soared from his manhood and into his lover's healthy body as he arched his hips against hers.

Carrington growled as the feeling went on. He thrust forward again, making the feeling last as long as he could. "Oh!" He gasped, and then fired in her hole one more time. His spasm was long and drawn out. He collapsed on top of Alicia, but kept his buttocks locked until he'd completely finished.

After several minutes of breathing hard, Carrington finally pulled out, sleepy and drunk from heavy lovemaking. He pulled Alicia into him, pecked her softly on the lips, and then wrapped his strong arms around her before closing his eyes to drift off into a place that could only be found in his dreams. He never wanted to lose her again.

* * * *

Alicia looked at Carrington one last time, pecking his forehead softly as she placed the folded letter beside his head. It was extremely early, just before the break of dawn. Her flight didn't take off until eight, but she needed to get out of there soon before Carrington woke up. She placed her spare key on her pillow, where he'd see it, and then left him lying there peacefully, without another word...

Dear Carrington,

Baby, this is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I wish I could I tell you everything, but I can't. So many things have happened in these last couple of weeks, and I've been dying every day. Baby, I love you so much it hurts, and that is why I'm saying good-bye. Please don't be angry, or hate me. If I could have it any other way, I'd be in your arms right at this moment, but that's not how it's supposed to be. You said it yourself. We're all wrong for each other.

Best wishes.

Alicia

P.S. I love you

* * * *

Carrington ran his fingers through his hair as he continued to stare at the letter. His heart was in his throat, and he couldn't believe what he'd just read. He climbed out of bed and made a beeline for her closet. All of her clothes were gone. Carrington swallowed hard and clenched his jaw. Warm tears clouded his lovely gray eyes, and his heart shattered into a million pieces. She was gone.

* * * *

Alicia gazed out of her window. She'd be landing in a couple of hours. She'd spoken to her mother recently about arrangements and asked that she be waiting at the airport to pick her up by ten. Her mother was still furious about her reasoning for coming home, but not as much as she would have been had she known how careless her daughter was about using protection.

Alicia wiped away a streaming tear. She'd only been away from Carrington for a few hours, and she missed him terribly already.

Chapter 14

Alicia stood by her queen-sized bed covered with a white fluffy comforter and maroon pillows while she waited patiently as the phone rang on the other end.

“Hello?”

“Heh-hey, Rachel, it’s Alicia.”

“Hey!” Rachel sat up. She was lying down on her living room floor. “Where are you? I haven’t seen or heard from you in days!”

Alicia chuckled. “Yeah I know. I’m sorry. I’m actually at home right now.”

“Do you need me to come over?”

“No.” Alicia chuckled. “I’m back in Oregon.”

Rachel nearly choked on her apple. “What? What are you doing over there?”

“It’s a long story.”

“I’ve got time.”

Alicia took in a deep breath and sat on her freshly made bed. By the time she was done telling the devastating story—leaving out Jake’s role—of how she wound up in Oregon, half an hour had passed. Of course that wasn’t all she and her friend talked about. There was the subject of how she and Carrington became an item. Rachel was starving for all of the juicy details and hung on Alicia’s every word, but Alicia reminded her curious friend that a lady didn’t kiss and tell, not even to her best friend, so the conversation simply ended at “We’re no longer an item so it doesn’t even matter.”

“Well, did you make it home all right?” Rachel was lying in the middle of her living room floor, watching an old film. She’d put the sound on mute when Alicia called.

“Yes, I made it home safe and sound,” Alicia sighed.

“What’d your mom say?”

“Well it wasn’t exactly an enthusiastic welcome, but it was better than I anticipated.”

“Well that’s good. What about Carrington? Have you spoken with him since the split?”

“No.”

“I wonder how he’s taking everything.”

“I don’t know.”

Hearing the bitterness in Alicia’s voice, Rachel ended the conversation.

“Yeah, I’ll have to call you later. I’ve still got a lot of unpacking to do. I wasn’t exactly productive yesterday.”

“All righty then. Touch base soon.”

“Definitely. Bye, Rachel.”

“Bye, Licia.”

Alicia tossed her cellular device on her bed. She’d just spoken with her best friend, but it was Carrington’s face she saw the duration of their time spent on the phone. She was home, but there was something about the medium-sized bedroom decorated with red and white roses that gave her an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia.

There was a knock on the door, which was already ajar. A woman with long dark hair and a face resembling Alicia’s walked in. She could have been her sister, but for all of her years Alicia had known her as her mother. They weren’t the best of friends, especially after Alicia’s father mysteriously died, but still, they loved one another and were all each other had.

Ben Foxworth left the house for Alicia in his will, stating that she could live there as soon as she was old enough to take care of herself. Alicia begged her mother to stay in the house with her, but Rebecca

refused. She said it was different not having her husband around and everything in it reminded her of him, so Alicia lived alone, but regardless of their relationship status, Rebecca did visit her daughter often.

“Hey,” Rebecca said softly. “I made dinner. It’s almost ready. Are you hungry?”

“No.” Alicia snorted. “Not in the least.”

“You barely ate your dinner yesterday. Are you sick?” She walked over to Alicia and felt her head with the back of her hand.

Sure if you consider nostalgia an illness. “No, I’m fine.”

“You sure?”

When Alicia simply nodded, she didn’t push the issue. “You dyed your hair again.”

“Yeah.” Alicia tossed a hot pink T-shirt on the floor.

“And it’s grown. You look more like yourself again.”

“Well I should, after all I am a natural brunette.”

Rebecca said nothing for a moment. She took the time to look around her daughter’s bedroom. She noticed the drapes and the rose petals, the white carpet and maroon walls. It hadn’t changed a bit. “So how’s everything with Jake? You did tell him, didn’t you?”

Alicia sighed. “Yes.”

“So he’s forgiven you?”

“Oh yeah, totally.” Alicia walked to the other side of her bedroom and began to unpack her large suitcase.

“So who’s the guy?” Rebecca folded her arms.

Alicia looked up, distracted from her work, and then it hit her. “Oh, him.”

“Yeah, him. The one who made you betray your fiancé.”

“He didn’t make me betray Jake. I made that conscious decision on my own.”

“Even worse.” Rebecca leaned against Alicia’s white chest of drawers. “What did Jake say?”

“He’s giving me one more chance.” Alicia continued to take clothes out of her suitcase.

“Good. He’s a wonderful man. You don’t realize how lucky you are, Si-Si.”

“Yeah, shame on me.”

Rebecca’s eyes scolded her daughter, and she stormed over to her, yanking her wrist and grasping it. “This is not a game. That man saved you from a multitude of punishments and spared your life after you murdered Antonio. He covered your tracks and made a bargain with Jordan. You owe it to him to remain faithful.”

Alicia snatched away from her mother. “He made a bargain with you. Jordan just went along with it. And anyway, how can he expect me to be faithful when he’s never around? Just two months ago he finally decided to go through with the wedding.” She tossed a royal blue wrinkled T-shirt to the side. “We’ve been engaged for two years now.”

“You’ll learn. I had to with your father, you’ll learn with him. It’s a part of the family business. You’ll learn to deal with it.”

Learn to deal with two wicked men at once? You could barely handle one decent man. “You never learned with Daddy. That’s why we’re in this predicament now.”

“Don’t try to put the blame on me. This is all of your doing. You, all by yourself, Mrs. Crane.”

“I am *not* a Crane.”

“*Yet,*” Rebecca scolded.

Never. “It is *not* my fault! I didn’t know what I was doing that night”

“It doesn’t matter, you still killed Antonio and you got engaged to Jake Crane. You think you know all there is to know about pain and misery, but you know nothing at all.”

“And you do?”

“I’ve been married in this family for a long time.”

Chapter 15

Carrington ran until his heart's content that night. Lying on his bed, wearing nothing but the red briefs Alicia loved, he stared at the ceiling wondering if he should call her. His strong bronze body was exasperated and his smooth manly skin glistened in the dimness of the light. He gnawed on his bottom lip as he remembered the way his dear beloved smelled when he held her close to him and the way her flesh felt beneath his as he loved her passionately until the night's end. Memories of her laughing hysterically when he tickled her and playfully screaming when he nipped her in various places filled his mind. Needing to call her, he dialed her number. It rang tortuously for five long rings before going to voicemail. Carrington left her a message and then laid his phone on his lap. He checked his phone's screen religiously every few minutes until sleep overcame him.

* * * *

Alicia ran all of her errands, and with the time she had to spare, she did what she could to make it fly. There were mornings when she'd lay in bed trying to sleep the pain away and others when she'd run around her neighborhood at late hours, hoping to forget about the anguish she felt from not being with Carrington, but still, none of her efforts did a thing for her state of mind. All they did was trigger more memories.

Running was one of the many things Alicia did with Carrington. When she pushed herself beyond the level of comfort, she remembered what Carrington said to her. Even now as she ran, she

saw not the paved sidewalk that led her to the dark forbidden woods, but the *forbidden trail*. She could hear Carrington coaching her in his deep, stern, authorized voice. *You can't overcome failure until you overcome fear.*

Tearing up the ground with her indomitable perseverance and eyes of doves, she began to pant heavily. Alicia widened her stride and clenched her small fists. A vein bulged from her head as she clenched her jaw, and it was then that she reached her breaking point. Unable to run anymore, she slowed down, stopping in front of the deep dark woods. She couldn't help but feel as though she was looking into the mirror and seeing the reflection of her own broken heart, dark and unyielding, deep and full of buried treasures. She loved Carrington so much and wanted more than anything to consume his unconditional love again. Oh how she missed him so.

Alicia lifted her face to the sky and admired the beauty of the moon as she inhaled the sweet smell of nature as the cool breeze combed through her pretty, dark hair of loose curls.

* * * *

Carrington closed his eyes and allowed the cool breeze to climb through his window and into his bed. His nostrils flared as he took in the incense of nature. He imagined Alicia lying there by his side. He loved the way she looked while lying on his bed wearing nothing but the bed sheets that covered only her bottom half. She looked like Christmas morning, like an angel, and was the closest to heaven he'd ever been. She never hid her body from him, but always blushed when she noticed the nakedness of her body being captured by his unrelenting gaze.

Carrington remembered the way her face lit up every time he walked into the room and the way she clung to him when he hugged her. The way she always fell into his arms when she cried and the way she always smelled. She always smelled of fresh flowers, like Jasmine

and roses. Carrington's eyes turned so gray they were nearly black when he opened them and looked out of his window. He wiped away a falling tear as he gazed at the moon. *I would live under a bridge if it meant I could spend the rest of my life with you.*

* * * *

Carrington's glare was just as cold as Jordan's. The two men loathed each other with a passion and both would give his right arm to see the other dead. But they had the same agenda, and though their motives were different as well as their reasoning, the result was the same. At the end of the day they were partners, had always been. Graduation had passed and Carrington had his game face on. He stopped by Crane's office the next day where he was officially sworn in.

Carrington knew that the only way he could possibly gain access to the information linked to his father's killer would be by joining forces with the Cranes' undisclosed organization. In doing this, he'd practically sold his soul to the devil. He was only afforded two options: Stay in or lose his life. He was sworn to secrecy, so *any* form of departure under *any* circumstance would surely end his life, thus playing by the rules was imperative. He was not to be romantically involved with anyone linked to or in any way involved with the CAA, Crane Assassination Association.

Being involved with the Crane family went beyond playing with fire because no one ever knew what they were thinking. When the family was notified or became aware that a member of their organization violated a rule or screwed up in some kind of way, they didn't make it known to anyone. They simply found their employee, the opportune place and time, and used that moment to strike. All dead weight was removed, the death remained a mystery, and the murder was never traced. When it came to the Cranes, perfection was key and the only answer to survival.

Jordan was the first to speak. He'd recently spoken with Rachel and was glad to hear that things were running smoothly again.

"It's about time, ass wipe. You're late."

"I was stuck in traffic, and my mother's flight was late, not that I owe you a fucking explanation, but I just figured I'd let you know, since you're standing here whining like a little bitch."

"That's okay. Keep talking, smart ass. You'll be shitting your pants in no time."

"Empty threat?"

"A guarantee."

"I've covered my tracks."

"But not your ass."

"What are you talking about?"

Jordan handed Carrington a small white envelope that laid on his desk. "The name of the person we've been looking for is in this envelope along with their address and other personal information."

Carrington's eyes widened. "How did you find him?"

"Everything you need to know is in that envelope. I won't be flying out to Oregon for another two days. Call me when you get there and *don't* do anything until I'm with you. I want to see the look on that bitch's face when we show up on her door step." He remembered the large orange envelope he'd kept hidden in his desk drawer up until then. "And take this, I think it'll be a great motivator."

* * * *

The hours in the day rolled by like turtles taking their sweet time. Carrington stopped his packing to go answer his phone. Heart racing at the speed of light, he hoped it was Alicia. His face fell when he saw who the caller was.

"Hey, Jake."

"You don't sound too happy," was the response.

"Well." Carrington rubbed his nape.

“When do you leave for Oregon?”

“Tomorrow.” Carrington gently squeezed the area between his eyes.

“Have you spoken with Alicia?”

“No. Why would I?”

“Well, word is, you two got caught shacking up in the men’s locker room, and now she’s expelled.”

Carrington frowned. “Who told you that?”

Jake hesitated. “It’s a rumor. I overheard someone talking about it. Is it true?”

Carrington sighed heavily and then rolled his eyes. “Yeah, it’s true.”

“Damn. Are you serious?”

“Unfortunately.”

“Well, how is she?”

“I don’t know. I don’t even know where she is.”

So she was sticking with the plan. I knew she would. “Mm.”

Carrington ran his fingers through his mussed hair. “Well, at least now I can do what I originally set out to do. Devote one hundred percent of my time to taking care of my own damn business.”

“Yeah, you’ve been saying that ever since I met you.”

“Longer than that, my friend.”

Their conversation ended shortly after that and Carrington carried on with his packing. When the morning came, he rolled out of bed, and for the first time since he was thirteen on Christmas night, he was ready to do some damage.

Chapter 16

Alicia could feel herself growing wearier as the reality of her greatest fear drew near. She lay curled in a ball feeling incredibly ill. She'd spent weeks running back and forth to the bathroom, regurgitating pesky undesirables lingering within. She was miserable and couldn't remember the last time she'd ever felt so sick.

The home pregnancy test rested on her bathroom counter. It'd been sitting there for half an hour, waiting for Alicia to come and see its response to her question. Alicia was afraid, terribly afraid. What if she was pregnant? What was she going to do? And how was she going to tell Jake? He was her fiancé and it wasn't even his. She hadn't been intimate with him for nearly six months. He was always busy and hardly ever around. On the days he was gone and nowhere near, Jordan was, and he made sure to be there for Alicia *every* time.

The whole arrangement was a sham. They were promised under false pretenses, and Alicia never even loved him to begin with. She was forced to spend the rest of her life with him because of her family's dilemma with the Marinos. It was an arranged marriage, an outlandish way to save her ass from the Marino's penalty for killing one of their own.

The idea was her mother's. Rebecca was tired of running and trying to cover for Alicia, so when Alicia turned eighteen, she handed her over to the Cranes for the sake of their own protection. The plan was that Alicia would go to Harvard, continue to live in Boston as Alicia Stewart, graduate, and then come back to Oregon as Sia Crane, never having to totally disappear again. But that didn't happen, and

now things were even more complicated because of her relationship with Carrington Marino.

Sia climbed out of her bed, slightly slumped over and holding her belly as she made her way to the bathroom. Her hands shook as she lifted the pregnancy test to read it.

Was it Carrington's or Jordan's?

* * * *

It was late when Carrington finally made up his mind to go searching for his father's killer. He'd arrived at his hotel in the afternoon and hadn't planned on leaving until Jordan was in town the next day, but the urge got the best of him. Jordan would just have to understand.

Carrington opened the white envelope that rested on his temporary bed. In big bold letters, it said *Ben Foxworth* and his contact information followed. He was listed as the owner of the house. Carrington looked at the large orange envelope. He didn't need a motivation to wring Ben's neck. His father's death was all the motivation he needed.

* * * *

It was snowing outside, and Carrington's nose was red from the cold. He wore black from head to toe and carried a gun in the pocket of his jacket with a razor in his boot. He wore leather gloves and black jeans.

This is it. Carrington held the piece of paper in his hand and identified the address on the fancy mailbox. A little flattery and extra cash got him through the guards. Now all he needed was to get into the old mansion. All of the lights were off except one. There was a room in the far right corner on the second floor. The curtains were closed and the silhouette was far from hidden. Carrington watched as

she drew off her shirt and pants. She was stark naked and seemed to be climbing into bed. She reached over and her upper half disappeared. A second later, the light went out. That was Carrington's cue.

* * * *

Sia lied stark naked between her sheets. She'd had another long afternoon with her mother and was glad to see her go. Sia's covers covered her lower half and her breasts were exposed. The moon smiled upon her through a tiny crack of her curtains and the sound of the wind brought fresh memories to her mind. She missed Carrington. Closing her eyes and hoping to drift off into a deep sleep, she turned her head on her satin pillow so that her face was towards the door.

Sia's eyes flew open and she bolted out of bed, reaching for her gun and robe. The alarm was going off.

* * * *

Carrington quickly pulled out the piece of paper and began to punch the code. After three failed attempts, he finally succeeded. His heart hammered, and he suddenly felt hot. He was completely caught off guard by the sensory detectors. Carrington glanced at the flight of stairs straight ahead. He drew out his gun and quickly found a hiding place. The sound of footsteps trickling down the stairs confirmed that the silhouette in the window was definitely not a figment of his imagination.

* * * *

Sia dared not turn on the lights. She knew that house better than anyone else, including hiding places. She held her gun with both hands, wrists set at her chest. It was cold downstairs and the tile was

like ice beneath her feet. She stood in the middle of the foyer, looking from her left to her right. The kitchen was on her left, another hallway was on her right, and the living room, plus forty other rooms, lied straight ahead. With all of the open space, she felt exposed and unprotected. The intruder could be anywhere.

* * * *

Carrington peered through the guest bedroom door, which stood ajar. He could see a small frame from where he stood, but couldn't quite make her out.

He stiffened.

The small frame was coming closer. As she drew nearer, he noticed the pistol in her hands. Carrington tiptoed backwards a few steps, and then stood on the side of the door hinge, against the brick wall.

* * * *

"Heerre, kitty, kitty, kitty. Come out, come out wherever you arre," Sia sang in a low tone of voice. She pushed the door open with one of her hands and walked into the room.

The door slammed and a large frame tackled her to the ground. A gun went off and glass shattered into pieces.

Chapter 17

Jordan waited as the phone rang on the other end. He was just getting off his plane and was trying to reach Carrington. He got his voicemail. “Hey, I’ve been trying to reach you all fucking day. I’m in town. I decided to go ahead and leave early, but since you’re not answering your phone I guess it really doesn’t matter.” He watched the snow fall hard onto the ground as he looked through the airport’s glass sliding door on the first floor. The sky was black and the trees were naked. “I’m in the mood to take care of some unfinished business tonight. If you want to join, call me back. If you’d rather fuck around I’ll do it without you. It’s your choice.” He hung up the phone and headed outside.

He stuck two fingers into his mouth and whistled for a cab. When the vehicle stopped, he climbed into the back seat with his duffle bag. He only needed one pair of changing clothes. After tonight he’d have no reason to stay. After closing the door behind him, he turned and looked at the other passenger with wide eyes. He was stunned to see his younger cousin sitting beside him.

* * * *

Sia squirmed beneath him. “Get off of me!” she screamed.

Carrington froze. He’d recognize that voice anywhere. “Ally?”

Sia tensed, no one in the entire state of Oregon knew who Alicia Stewart was, and only one person in the entire world called her Ally. “Carrington?”

“Oh my God.” He released her and quickly went for the light switch.

“How did you get in here?” she asked breathlessly, running her palm through her hair.

Carrington blinked twice. “You live here?”

“Yes, I live here!” She was stunned. Carrington looked stunning in his black jeans, which were showing off his sculpted thighs, and a black turtleneck sweater. His look was intimidating, but he was still sexy as hell with his dark baby bangs hanging at his brow. The masculine smell of cologne was the luscious scent he gave off, and his gray eyes were just as dashing. He looked like a true Italian, just like his father.

“But I thought—” He was at a loss for words.

Sia tensed. “How did you get in here?” she asked with caution.

“The guards.”

“No, how did you get into my house?”

Carrington rubbed his nape, inhaled, then exhaled. “I had a key.”

Sia’s eyes were wide. “You had a what?”

* * * *

Jordan gave it to him. It was in the white envelope. Carrington’s heart raced. A few minutes ago, everything seemed right. Everything felt right. He knew the plan like the back of his hand and wanted nothing more than to avenge his father.

“Alicia, I can explain.” His light gray eyes were pleading.

* * * *

Sia said nothing. To reveal that she knew anything about who Carrington was other than what he’d already told her would mean exposing herself and her connection with the Cranes. She glanced at the shattered glass on her floor. Her mirror was destroyed, and a

bullet rested in her wall. She noticed the folded piece of paper Carrington carried with him lying on the floor. She walked over to it and knelt down to pick it up.

“I was looking for Ben Foxworth.”

She averted her gaze to ask, “Why?” before redirecting her attention to the paper.

* * * *

Carrington’s heart caught in his throat, and all of a sudden, it became incredibly hard for him to speak. He didn’t want her to know that he was a killer or that he’d come to kill her father. “I just needed to handle some unfinished business, that’s all.” His pretty eyes were like pearly gray marbles.

“How did you get here?”

Carrington closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. When he opened them, he exhaled a trembling breath. “Ally.”

“Yes?”

He took another step closer. He was going to tell her, but then he changed his mind. “Where is Ben?”

He was too close to the truth. “He’s dead.”

Carrington frowned. “What?” How could that be? The documents told him otherwise. Or had he assumed? He hadn’t even bothered to open the orange envelope.

“Ben Foxworth is dead.” Sia looked up, and for the first time Carrington noticed that her hair was darker and had grown a few inches. It framed her face, and her bangs were no longer covering her brow. She wore no makeup and her cheeks were just as rosy as could be. She was stunning. “He died thirteen years ago.”

Carrington’s eyes grew wide. “How?”

* * * *

She shrugged. "Heart attack." At least that's what Jordan told her. She was too distraught to say anything to anyone for a while and when she was ready to talk about her father's passing, she turned to Jordan. He was older and seemed to know everything. He knew everything there was to know about the family secrets.

Already knowing the answer, she asked, "Why were you looking for him?" *And how the hell did you know to come here?*

"Alicia, I'm not who you think I am."

If only that were true. Sia trembled as she sucked in a breath, running her fingers through her chiseled hair. Chills ran down her spine and then bled through her veins.

"I'm your worst enemy and you're mine."

She swallowed, but remained silent, watching him closely.

"My father's name is Antonio Marino. He was great friends with Ben Foxworth, your father."

"You know my father," she said quietly.

"Yes, and I also know you."

Her heart faltered.

"You're not who you say you are. Sia Foxworth."

Sia took in a deep breath as she began to walk backwards. "How did you find me?"

He walked toward her. "I told you, I was looking for your father."

* * * *

He could smell the fear on her. "It's okay, Sia. I'm not going to hurt you. I know that you're innocent."

Sia's eyes began to water. She was far from innocent. "But you were coming to hurt my father."

"Yes," he admitted quietly. "But with good reason. He killed my father fourteen years ago!"

"How do you know that?" she cried.

"The evidence, Sia, how else?" he cried.

Sia ran her fingers through her hair as she shook her head and saddened tears began to fall.

“It was Christmas morning. My father was going to see Ben, your father.”

* * * *

Sia felt her flesh crawl. That day would haunt her for the rest of her life. *No, he wasn't. My father had left to go on a business trip.*

“So many hours in the day passed by and he still hadn't come home.”

Because he was with my mother. They'd been seeing each other regularly. Every time Daddy went away, Antonio came to stay.

“I waited and waited and waited.”

I didn't mean to. I heard my mother screaming, and I thought he was trying to kill her. She was panting heavily and crying out as he laid on top of her with his hand around her neck...

“I mean, I watched my mother pace the room, trying his phone every five minutes.”

The gun was heavy and felt cold. I'd never used it before, but I watched Daddy so many times. It looked easy and was the only way I could save my mother.

“And then we received a phone call that night.”

I'm sorry, it wasn't my fault. I was barely eight! I didn't know that they were lovers!

“The evidence was overwhelming, and it all went back to Ben Foxworth.”

Daddy came home that night and saw what I'd done. He was just trying to protect me.

“For fourteen years I've waited to meet that son of a bitch.” Carrington's eyes were raging. They were ultraviolet and blended with black.

Alicia was petrified, she'd never seen them like that, but in the time she'd spent getting to know him, she knew those colors could only mean one thing. Danger. And he was looking dead at her.

Chapter 18

Jake went with Jordan to book a hotel. He had no intention of staying at the mansion with his fiancée. He was furious and wanted to ruin her.

“I can’t believe that lying whore went behind my back anyway after everything I’ve done for her!” Jake pounded his fist on the nightstand near the bed.

Jordan filled Jake’s head with lies during their ride in the taxicab. *Carrington contacted me earlier today and said that he found Alicia. He said she called him and said she wanted to work things out.* Jake listened and took in every word. He trusted his cousin and never thought of him as one to betray his own blood.

“Easy does it.” Jordan was shrugging off his coat and hanging it in the closet. His room was a little stuffy but was quite suitable. The bed was exquisite and the view was breathtaking. Of course, he didn’t have time to appreciate those bits of details. He was there for business and business only. “I told you she couldn’t be trusted.”

“I bet you Carrington wouldn’t be with her if he knew what the hell she did.” He thought for a moment. “I wonder if that lying bitch filled him in and then told him some sick, twisted story to cover her ass.”

“Well, she is a *beautiful liar*. Alluring with her poise and convincing to the eye.”

Jordan’s plan was working out perfectly. Everything about Sia was in that orange envelope, including her engagement to Jake. He knew that Carrington would go rushing over to Sia once he learned that she was responsible for his father’s death. He’d break into her

house and then hold her at gun point. Sia would become afraid, spill the beans, cry crocodile tears, tell him about Rebecca's and Antonio's affair, that it wasn't her fault, and that she thought he was trying to kill her mother. Carrington, being as pathetic as he was, would consider what she was saying, eventually believe her, and by the time they were fucking on her bed, he and Jake would be there. Jake would kill Carrington, he would kill Jake, and just like she was thirteen years ago, Sia would be vulnerable, alone, and ready to come back to him.

* * * *

Carrington gripped Sia's arms and held her firm. "He killed my father and now he's resting in peace?" He roared.

"Carrington, please," Sia begged.

"I've had to live with the torment of not having my father alive for fourteen years and now I'm also suffering because of what his daughter did to me!" He tightened his grip.

Sia was speechless and terrified. The rage in his eyes was horrifying and his grasp was unrelenting. He led her to the bed and then pushed her so that she fell on her back. Her knees were propped up and her robe fell open at the bottom. Carrington saw her bare hips. She wasn't wearing panties. She stayed like that, afraid to move.

Carrington's eyes rose to the rise and fall of her breasts, and then his gaze fell to her hips again. They seemed a little broader than what he remembered, but were still firm. "You left me. No explanation. No kind of answer at all, *Nothing!*"

* * * *

Sia flinched at the loudness of his voice and her heart nearly stopped. There was no way in hell she was telling him the truth about what really went down with his father.

Carrington came forward so that his knees were touching the end of the bed. “Why?” His voice broke. “Why did you leave me like that, Ally?”

“That’s not my name,” she whispered.

“It is for me.” He swallowed, and then stood up straight.

Sia pushed herself off with her hands and moved back. She was breathing hard and some of her hair had fallen in front of her face. Carrington watched her closely. Regardless of what state of mind he was in, she’d always managed to make his heart melt and want her more. He was frustrated, angry, hurt, and stressed. He was taking everything out on her, and she was letting him.

Carrington tore off his jacket and turtleneck sweater. He needed to release, and her body was the perfect solution.

* * * *

After watching him remove his boots and socks, Sia climbed out of bed.

“Don’t go anywhere, get back in bed,” he demanded. When she stayed on her feet, he stalked over to her. “Lay down.” His voice was low and commanding.

“Carrington.” Sia’s voice was low and trembling. She placed gentle fingers on his chest and slid them down until her hands were on his hips. She followed her hands with her gaze. She looked up and her dark brown eyes held water. Warm tears streamed down her cheeks as she began to unbuckle his belt. “I’m so sorry,” she whispered.

Carrington lifted his hands and opened the top of her robe, revealing her firm, perky breasts. Those too were a little bigger than he’d remembered. He dragged her sleeves down until the top of her robe fell at her forearms. He pushed her hands away so that her robe could leave her body completely. Then he grabbed her by the hands and pulled her into him as he backed into the wall behind him. He bent his knees so that their pelvises were aligned before framing the

back of her head with his hand and kissing her passionately. He held her to him as he ran his free hand down the small of her back. Sia whimpered against his lips, and he could feel her warm tears moistening his cheeks.

Carrington kissed her tears and then wiped them away with his thumbs. He ran his fingertips down her shoulders and dragged them down her arms. Her skin was still just as soft, and her bruises had faded. He averted his eyes and looked into hers again, framing her face before giving her another meaningful kiss. *I love you so much*, his kiss said.

Sia pulled away. She looked deep into his eyes and found that he was still very much aroused. His eyes held both anger and sexual desire. His touch was still firm and his need was still great.

Sia unbuttoned his pants, slid the zipper down, and then got down on her knees. He needed this, deserved it. He'd been to hell and back, and it was all her fault.

* * * *

Carrington sucked in a breath as Sia tugged his pants down, then his briefs. She wrapped her fingers around his strong calves and then dragged them up to the front of his thighs. The feeling sent bolts through his loins and made his blood rush to his cock. Sia slid her hands across his hips and then onto his tight ass. His dick was inches from her mouth. She stuck her tongue out and began to lick his sensitive head as though it was the best ice cream she'd ever had. Carrington tilted his hips forward. He liked that. Sia stroked his head forcefully with her tongue a few more times before taking it completely into her mouth. She moved her head forward so that more of his dick was in her mouth. She sucked him, sucked him hard.

Sia slid her hands back across his hips and then brought them to his big round balls. She began to suck his dick softly as she rolled his balls around. Carrington placed his hands on her head and gently held

her to him. She was so, damn, *good*. Sia swirled her tongue around his swollen head, teasing him. Then she pulled her head back and swallowed his pre-cum. Carrington was watching her the entire time. She was beautiful.

Sia gripped his hips again as she continued to suck him with great passion and force. She sucked him like she hadn't had anything to drink for days. She began to moan and the vibration of her humming was pleasurable against his cock. Carrington closed his eyes and bit his bottom lip, drawing in a deep breath.

Sia leaned forward and deep throatied him.

Carrington pulled out. He didn't want to come inside of her mouth, he wanted to come inside of *her*.

"Get up." He grabbed her by the arm and forced her to stand.

He picked her up and then pinned her against the wall he was leaning against. Before Sia could react, he cupped her ass, lifted her, and then entered her hard. She screamed his name and wrapped her arms around his neck, taking in the power of his emotions as she unleashed hers. Carrington was breathing harshly and heavy against her neck. He grinded her deeply and thoroughly. Whimpers continued to come out of her throat as she gasped for air.

Carrington leaned back and took one of her breasts into his mouth. He sucked it as though trying to swallow it whole. He nipped it, and then sucked some more before letting it slide out of his mouth. Sia bit her bottom lip to stifle a cry as he brought it back into his mouth, nipping her over, and over again. When he released her this time, he brought his lips to hers, pecking her firmly on the lips, and then buried his face in her neck as he slowly pulled out part way.

"Ah!" Sia wailed at the top of her lungs.

Carrington pierced her, and pierced her hard. He pushed deeper, remaining quiet and breathing erratically as he fucked her passionately.

Sia gasped when he sank down to the floor with her in his arms. They were still one.

Carrington lied on his back and then rolled over so that he was on top of her. He used his hands to push himself, allowing all of the weight on his lower half to rest on hers. He began to fuck her again, driving her mad with devastating pleasure and dominion.

Sia arched her back as she wrapped her legs around his waist and dug her heels into his ass. Her breathing became erratic and her body began to tremble beneath his. He set her soul on fire.

* * * *

Carrington's nostrils flared as he watched her closely. He continuously clenched and relaxed his ass cheeks as he rocked his hips against hers. He felt Sia clench her pussy muscles and squeezed him inside. He grunted and locked his buttocks hard. The feeling of being inside her was sweet, so sweet.

"Squeeze me again, Ally." His voice was raspy.

She did it again.

"Oh, oh, Ally. Oh, baby." He continued to gasp. "One more time."

She did what he told her to do.

Carrington strained against her. He continued to increase the pressure of his pelvis against hers before pulling out halfway then surging forth again. He pushed his cock in and out of her pussy like a mad man drilling cement with his jackhammer. He repeated this motion several times, pumping her harder, and harder.

Sia sobbed loudly and uncontrollably, hanging on as tight as she could. She hadn't realized how great his need was until then. Her eyes began to water, and she could feel herself coming apart. She looked at Carrington and saw him looking at her. His eyes were ultraviolet, but they were watering too.

Seconds later, Sia squealed and quivered. Carrington bit down hard. Her pussy clamped down hard before it started pulsing wildly. Her breathing was ragged and she continued to squirm beneath him.

She was hot inside. The sound of his dick sliding in and out of her was music to his ears and he became more aroused as he listened.

Carrington closed his eyes as the world began to spin. She felt lovely, tight, warm, and wet, always wet for him. He slowed his motion and rotated his hips in a circular motion. He tensed and arched his hips inward as far as he could. He grunted and locked his buttocks as hard as he could. His cock was pulsing inside of her.

He stayed that way until all of the feeling was gone. Then he exhaled and relaxed his buttocks before pulling out of his darling Ally.

Chapter 19

Jake and Jordan sat in silence as they waited for the light to turn green. Jake had already had a rental car waiting for him so that when he arrived in town he wouldn't have to worry about riding in a cab everywhere he went. Last night was his last night in Boston and he would send for his things tomorrow, but tonight, he needed to take care of some unfinished business.

"Do you think he's with her right now?" Jake asked. "I mean, knowing how he felt about her, I wouldn't be surprised if they were fucking as we speak."

* * * *

"We'll know when we get there." Jordan patted his left jacket pocket. He was sure Carrington had already read the information provided in the orange envelope he'd given him, but just in case the bastard hadn't, he made copies. If there was anything Jordan learned over the years, it was that the best way to back up your shit was to have documentation. He looked at his cousin with a satisfied grin. "You ready?"

Jake gave a nod and hit the gas. Jordan looked out of the window on his side of the car and discretely patted the gun in his right jacket pocket.

* * * *

After settling on the bed, Carrington placed his hands on Sia's inner thighs so that the sides of his thumbs were touching the opening flaps of her pussy. She was leaking creamy white fluid and he wanted to taste her so bad. Unable to help himself, he bowed his head and tried a sample of her tasty treat with the tip of his tongue. Loving the way she tasted, he teased her again, and again. She tasted lovely and smelled wonderful just like the last time. He kissed his lover's clit, then closed his mouth on it and began to suck.

Sia moaned as she spread her legs wider, granting him full access to lick every part of her tingling genital. She closed her eyes and moaned. She dropped her jaw and squeezed the bedspread with her hands. Choked noises came out of her throat, and she quivered various times.

Carrington lifted his head slightly and looked at her pussy again. She'd leaked more cream for him. He bowed his head again and plunged his tongue into her pussy, stroking, eating, stroking, eating.

Carrington was in heaven. She never seemed to run out of tasty cream. The more he licked her, the more she made. Minutes later Sia convulsed helplessly again, and her cherry red clit was throbbing. Carrington smiled impishly to himself. He'd pleased her again.

* * * *

Jake swerved his car around a pile of glass. A flat tire was the last thing he needed. He sped past pedestrians and made every green light, even ran a few red ones. His eyes were like ice, just like Jordan's, and he drove with a vengeance. Clenched jaw and both hands on the wheel, he had tunnel vision.

Jordan had no complaints. He wanted to get to his woman just as badly and finally, finally eliminate all of the collateral.

* * * *

Carrington intertwined his fingers with Sia's and kissed her gently. He raised his head and gazed into her eyes. She was so beautiful. Her smile was breathtaking and her laugh was perfect.

* * * *

Sia couldn't help but grin from ear to ear as she looked into the eyes of her lover. His eyes were a lovely violet and the smile on his face was just as sweet as could be. He wasn't angry anymore, but calm. Nice and calm.

* * * *

Jake turned into the gate and sped past the other older mansions. Residents watched as the black Lexus drove by, recklessly turning at every corner. Jake was a mad man.

* * * *

Carrington nipped Sia's lower lip as she wrapped her legs around his waist. "You're so pretty," he whispered.

* * * *

Jake pulled up in front of his new home and jumped out of the car. Jordan followed behind Jake, both men slamming the car doors at the same time.

* * * *

"No, I love you more." Sia argued back. She was sitting on top of Carrington and rubbing his chest. "God, I've missed you, baby."

* * * *

Jordan closed the front door and the two men crept in the darkness. It was quiet and the only light shining through came from the moon. The two pulled out their pistols and held them low.

“Where do you think they are?” Jake whispered.

Jordan placed a finger to his lips. He looked to his right and saw the door of the guest bedroom ajar. He made a clicking noise with his tongue and then pointed to the staircase. If they were anywhere else in the house, it had to be upstairs. All of the lights were off on the first floor and silence filled every room. Carrington hadn’t answered his phone, so Jordan wasn’t quite sure if he was expecting him or not, but Jordan didn’t hear murmurs or voices, so that could mean one or two things—Carrington either murdered Sia or was joining her in her bed.

Jake continued into the foyer, he was eager to find Sia. Jordan lingered behind. He was still skeptical about the guest bedroom. He stared at the door for another moment and then motioned towards the foyer. Then the sound of a foot stepping on broken glass surged from the room behind him and he came to an abrupt halt. Someone was hiding. Jordan pointed his gun towards the cracked door and slowly made his way towards the guest room.

Opening the door with one hand, he peered into the darkness. The moon light reflected off the broken glass in the corner near the window. The house felt cool and barren, but this room was warm and held a very distinctive scent. The lights were off, but from what he could see the bed was unmade and two of the four pillows were laying on the floor. Carrington had been there. He had to have been. Jordan cautiously entered the room. The silence was so profound he could hear his own heart beat.

* * * *

Jake stood quietly at the top of the stairs. He looked to his left and saw that the light was off in the master bedroom. *Where would a whore and her lover hide?* He was headed towards a room at the end of the hall when he heard the sound of gunfire pierce the silence from downstairs. Heart racing, he whirled around and saw Sia dashing out of the master bedroom. He opened fire and watched her fall down the flight of stairs. She toppled nonstop, and her pistol fell out of her hand, remaining on the fifth stair as she tumbled down the rest of the way.

Sia landed on the hard cold tile and didn't get up. She laid still in a fetal position and blood drained from beneath her, covering the brisk tiled floor. She'd fallen down thirty-five stairs. Jake remained at the staircase and watched as his bride's life slowly slipped away. Her breathing subsided and her body remained immobile. If death hadn't taken her yet, it was coming soon.

Jake stiffened when he heard the sound of quick footsteps approaching, and then sighed in relief. He was glad to see his cousin alive.

Jordan, however, wasn't so pleased. He came to a halt and had a look of disbelief written on his face when he laid eyes on the woman he'd planned to spend the rest of his life with. He gasped and his breathing grew ragged.

"What have you done?" He screamed, kneeling beside Sia's motionless body.

Jake's eyes grew wide with fear and he struggled for words. "I—I thought, I thought that—"

"You son of a bitch!" Jordan screamed and tears began to form in his eyes. Jake ruined everything.

He lifted his gun and prepared to fire when a multitude of bullets soared passed him. His cousin began to jerk violently from left to right until he finally fell to the ground. Jordan whirled around and stood to his feet in one fluid motion.

He and Carrington stood face to face aiming their guns at the others' heart. Both were broken and had nothing to lose, so stealing the other's life wasn't a matter of concern but of who was going to pull the trigger first. Their icy eyes sliced the surface of one another's flesh in the shadow of darkness and neither of them surrendered in their silent challenge to one another. Their blood boiled and hatred overtook them like death on withering bones.

A deep sigh from down below caught their attention and the sound of soft breathy coughs gave them hope.

Carrington and Jordan lowered their guns, kneeling beside the one they claimed to possess, one feeling love, the other obsession. They said nothing with their mouths, but everything with their eyes, agreeing to be friends for the night and only for that night.

* * * *

Bright lights blinded Sia and voices were nothing more than indistinguishable murmurs clouding her throbbing ears. She opened and closed her eyes, fading in and out of consciousness. Everything came in doubles, toying with her delicate eyes until she lapsed back into her previous state of unconsciousness again.

"Doctor, she's not responding," a nurse said.

Victor placed the two metal plates on Sia's chest again. Her upper body jerked upward, but her heart didn't respond. Victor amped up the electric power and then shocked her again, and again. She wasn't responding.

* * * *

Carrington was going crazy inside. He couldn't lose Sia. Not now. Not again. He paced back and forth, trying as best as he could to persevere through the torment of suspense and worry. He walked over to an empty chair, bawling over as he sat, pulling his hair, and praying

to God harder than he'd ever prayed in his life. He was so overwhelmed with his concern for Sia that he literally forgot about his wounded arm. When a nurse asked if she could take a look, he pulled away, insisting that he was fine. Nothing meant more to him than Sia did. She was everything to him. A life without her was no life at all.

"Excuse me, sir," a gentle, familiar voice said.

Carrington lifted his head and laid eyes on Victor. He quickly stood to his feet and dried his tears as he made his way over to the middle-aged doctor. His eyes were red and puffy and his nose was still rosy. "How is she, doctor?"

Epilogue

Maybe it was his eyes or the stern expression he wore on his handsome face. Whatever it was, the mystery of the enticing man lingered in her mind and never failed to arouse her in such a powerful way. The pleasure she felt from simply being near him was heaven and the agony of lust she endured was no further from hell than she was from earth.

Sia watched with eager eyes in her black trench coat as the man of her dreams stood across the street on a sidewalk near a busy restaurant. The sky was hidden by a thick blanket of clouds, and the drizzle continued to fall from the sky. He was waiting for her.

“Sia,” a familiar voice muttered in her ear. His voice was just as thick and held a hint of coldness behind it.

Sia turned to face the only man she loathed more than her dead fiancé. “What do you want, Jordan?” Her eyes revealed the hatred she felt towards him.

“How are you this evening, Mrs. Crane?”

“My name is not Crane, nor am I a *Mrs.*”

“Oh, but it will be again and so will you,” he mumbled and then kissed the back of her hand.

“Over your dead body.”

Jordan glanced past her and saw Carrington standing on the corner across the street. “Or his.”

Sia turned around, and then back. “You better not. Carrington has nothing to do with this!”

“Carrington has *everything* to do with this.” Jordan took another step closer. “End it, or I will,” he muttered, and then walked off, disappearing like the ghost of Christmas past in the thick mist of fog.

Sia turned to look at Carrington again. He pulled a hand out of the pocket of his trench coat and checked the time. He was still waiting for her.

Sia inhaled and then exhaled, watching with a melting heart as the man she was determined to someday call her husband stood within a few feet from her. The game wasn’t over, it had just begun.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashley Brooke is very analytical and poetic, especially when it comes to studying the attraction between men and women. She finds great pleasure in writing and reading romantic fiction. Ashley also enjoys dancing, shopping, going to the beach when the sun is setting, and spending quality time with her family. She is a firm believer in possibility, even when the odds are against it. Ashley is a critical thinker who believes that even the stillest of waters run deep.



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