

The Dakota Dynasty

Ecstasy Times Two

Candice has plans for her future. She is going to become a nurse, eventually find herself a nice man to marry, and lead a quiet, middle-class existence utterly devoid of emotional super highs and super lows. All of this makes perfect sense...right up to the time the town's ultra-alpha policeman decides to make Candice his own.

On that very same day, the boomtown's most gorgeous oilman billionaire also decides that Candice is the woman he needs to make his life complete. When passion erupts, unplanned and most definitely uncharacteristic, Candice's life is thrown into chaos.

Can Candice find fulfillment and lifelong love in the arms of two men so opposite from one another? Can these men, so strong in their own rights, share their love for Candice?

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Robin Gideon

MENAGE AMOUR



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DEDICATION

This one is dedicated to Keith, for his love and understanding.

ECSTASY TIMES TWO

The Dakota Dynasty

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Chapter One

New Oslo, North Dakota – June

The evening was going well enough for Candice Olssen as she worked her typical double-shift at The Cattleman's Paradise Bar and Grill. There were enough customers to make it a profitable evening for Aunt Meg and Uncle Rolf, but not so many that Candice was running around in a frantic effort to see that the oil rig workers and cattleman got their beers icy cold and steaks while they were still sizzling from the grill. Almost all of the patrons were male, though that was no surprise given the demographics of New Oslo. On this evening, none of the men were getting overly intoxicated. The only two customers who had a pretty good buzz going were discussing, in the very serious manner of moderate alcoholics, the relative merits and disadvantages of adding longhorn bloodlines into pure-bred Angus herds. Candice was keeping a very close eye on them.

The evening was so commonplace as to be nearly boring right up to the time that Dylan Amberson stepped into the saloon. Greatgrandson of one of the founders of New Oslo, and one of its wealthiest citizens, he was dressed in Levis, a simple button-down robin's egg blue Oxford shirt, and a herringbone jacket. His black cowboy boots were polished to within an eyelash of perfection. He looked at Candice, then flashed her the smile that had seduced more women than he could remember, or she could casually dismiss.

"I was hoping you'd be working tonight," Dylan said, approaching with a long-legged stride, his smile doing completely disastrous things to Candice's comfortable boredom. "I haven't seen you in a week."

Ignoring the skip in her heartbeat, Candice gave him an answering smile and asked, "Evening, Dylan. Will you be eating, or just having a nightcap?"

Candice was hoping for a nice, professional tone. At twenty-three and single, she was no virgin, but she certainly wasn't foolish enough to let herself get emotionally embroiled with any man with Dylan Amberson's well-known propensity for enjoying the companionship of women, but only on a short-term basis. The fact that he looked enough like a thirty-year-old Pierce Brosnan in need of a haircut, and had sufficient charm to make even the most resolute of woman consider themselves lucky to experience his passion, made him all the more dangerous.

That, anyway, was what Candice had been trying to tell herself for the past three weeks. Not coincidentally, that was how long the tall, dark-haired scion of one of the wealthiest families west of the Mississippi River, had been flirting with her. Candice had known him for years; it was only recently he displayed a romantic, or at least sexual, interest in her.

"Better bring a menu. It's been a long day. Mind if I take a booth in the corner?"

"Of course not," Candice replied, strongly suspecting that Dylan had specifically chosen a booth so that he could talk to her without anyone else hearing what he had to say.

She watched as he turned and walked away, his shoulders held squarely, his back straight, his black hair coming over the collar of his jacket. He was one of those rare men, Candice concluded, who was just as appealing walking away from a woman as he was walking toward her. Dylan went toward the corner booth, furthest away from the jukebox and the various cowboys and oilmen quenching their thirst and need of companionship with cold beer and jovial conversation.

She went to the bar and picked up a menu, ignoring the knowing half-smile on Uncle Rolf's lips.

"Dylan Amberson's here again," Uncle Rolf said, his tone faintly teasing. "Seems The Cattleman's Paradise has become right popular with that man. Why do you suppose that is, Candice?"

"Uncle Rolf," she replied sharply, the flinty look in her ice blue eyes suggesting she wasn't in any mood to get taunted, "don't start with me."

He had chosen to sit so that his back was toward the interior of the saloon. When Candice stepped up to the booth, Dylan looked up at her with a gaze that was direct, a bit bold, and more disconcerting than she would admit.

"It's good to see you again, Candice," he said, taking the menu from her. "Any recommendations on steaks?"

"Tonight, give the porterhouse a try."

"Okay. I'll have the porterhouse medium-rare with a baked potato, your house salad with french dressing, a double Jack Daniels on ice, and the number of your cell phone so I can talk to you when you're not working." He smiled, and one dark, arched eyebrow lifted. "I know you work a lot of hours, but even you must take *some* time off now and then. I'd like you to spend at least some of that time with me." His gaze was direct and a little unsettling. "As much time as you're willing to share."

Candice felt a warm flush of embarrassment go through her veins, and she wondered how much it showed. With her Swedish heritage, she was naturally pale-skinned, so it didn't take much discomfort for her to blush noticeably.

"Do you want the whiskey now," she asked, trying hard to not

grin, "or should I wait until I bring the steak?"

"I'd like the sour mash and your cell phone number now." He reached out and curled his fingers around her left hand. "If you give me half a chance, I'll show you I'm not nearly as wicked as the rumors in this little town suggest."

"Wicked is an understatement for some of the stories I've heard about you." When Dylan ran the pad of his thumb over the back of Candice's hand, she almost shivered. She tried to tell herself that the caress wasn't really that intimate, but it didn't prevent her from feeling naked and very responsive. "Did you really sleep with Betty Jo Brewster and Julie Harriman at the same time?" Now she was certain her cheeks flamed. She nibbled briefly on her lower lip, looking away. Shaking her head slowly, she murmured, "I can't believe I just asked that. Your love life is none of my business."

"Actually, that's my sex life, which is oddly disconnected with my love life," Dylan replied, not displaying even the slightest bit of apprehension about discussing such an intimate topic. "And as for who I have or haven't slept with, I make it a personal policy to never talk about my sex life with anyone. If you've heard stories of me being with women, it's the women who have told the stories, not me."

Candice looked into his navy blue eyes, considered what he'd said for a moment, and realized he was telling the truth. Julie Harriman had been in the saloon, with several martinis in her, bragging to several of her friends that she'd "bonked the incredible Dylan Amberson." She claimed that Dylan had given her have "a year's worth of climaxes in one night." Julie's only regret was that she wasn't given another night of passion from him.

"You look at women as casual playthings," Candice explained, her voice barely carrying above the sound of the jukebox. "I'm not like Julie Harriman or—"

"I know you're not," Dylan said quickly, cutting her off. He squeezed her hand a bit tighter in his. "You're not like any of the women who dance through my life, and that's only one of the many reasons why I find you so damned fascinating."

Candice looked briefly away again. Though she felt the sensation of intentionally sailing into very dangerous waters, she couldn't keep from asking, "What's another reason?"

"The sound of your laughter is music, and eyes the color of blue waters off Keys West. If you let me, I could take you there so you could see for yourself." He paused, and Candice's heart skipped another beat. "And, of course, there's your smile."

"My smile?"

He nodded. "And, to be truthful, you've got a body that has a way of focusing attention." His eyebrows lifted fractionally. "I can't tell you how much time I've spent in here looking at you but trying to keep you from catching me. Sometimes, you make me feel like a teenage boy." He grinned. "I can't say that I'm entirely thrilled with a return to my adolescent self. I think what's most sexy about you is that you really don't realize just how sexy you are."

Candice's shock and pleasure at the handsome man's boldness caused a sharp intake of breath.

"Dylan Amberson, you get away with *waaay* too much," she said, feeling an unbidden warmth slithering through her veins. "My cell phone is seven-oh-one-five-five-five-nine-four-seven-five. And now I'd better get your Jack Daniels before I embarrass myself even further."

* * * *

The steak was what Dylan Amberson's grandfather would have called bovine culinary perfection. Dylan wasn't surprised at the quality. In the little boom town of New Oslo, and in a radius of a hundred miles, everyone knew that the best steaks to be found were at The Cattleman's Paradise.

The fact that he got to see Candice Olssen at the same time only added a very delicious seasoning to the meal. Since finishing his steak, he had looked over the back of the booth three times, hoping to get the curvaceous blonde's attention. He wasn't in any particular hurry to leave, but he wanted her nearby again. Now that he had the number to her cell phone, he was determined to get her to agree to a date.

She had said she wasn't his type, and Dylan had to admit to himself that, if he looked at himself with a coldly rational eye, she was right in her assessment. But at thirty years of age he was rapidly growing bored with the seemingly unending parade of women sliding in and out of his life. The women he typically found himself with either wanted him for sex, for money, or, more often than not, for both.

Candice had a strange, pleasing way of making Dylan feel innocent rather than jaded by a life of intemperance. Additionally, she played in his thoughts much more than any women previously in his life. There were times in his recent past when Dylan awoke in bed with a woman whose name he couldn't remember. Those were what he considered the "sweetheart" moments of his life. Calling a lover "sweetheart" was a well-received endearment, while calling her the wrong name was a nightmare.

It was a lesson Dylan had learned the hard way.

Despite telling himself that he wasn't going to gawk at Candice like some swooning teenager, he looked over the booth's backrest once more at her. She was bent over a table, wiping it with a damp cloth. The sway of lusciously rounded breasts beneath the common, distinctly unattractive polyester waitress dress drew his gaze and held it. He imagined what she'd look like topless, wiping the table just as she was now, and he felt an immediate tightening in his throat. Another part of him, always ready for sensual stimulation, twitched and began to grow inside his Levis.

It was with some difficulty that he turned around, dragging his gaze away from Candice, and thought, The woman's got me acting like a high school virgin, hoping to get to first base! Dylan drank what little water was left in his glass from the melting ice cubes, silently cursing himself for letting any woman consume so much of his thoughts. He just wasn't the kind of man who was smitten with any woman, even if she did had a lushly rounded figure.

He looked at his wristwatch, a heavy, stainless steel Rolex Oyster. It was nearly ten o'clock. Sliding out of the booth, he glanced once more at Candice and saw that she was busy serving a round of beers to four men. Without waiting for his bill, he guessed the cost of the meal and drink at around twenty-five dollars, and peeled off two twenties from the folded wad he kept in his front left pocket.

When he turned around again, he watched as Candice said to Uncle Rolf, "I'm taking my fifteen minute break now, if you don't mind."

"Good. Take it now before the next rush," Uncle Rolf replied. "Harriet can handle things alone for a bit."

"I need some fresh air," Candice said as she disappeared through the swinging doors leading to the kitchen.

* * * *

Candice crossed her arms beneath her breasts and inhaled deeply of the cool night air. There were times when the endless din of the saloon really got on her nerves, but she knew it wasn't the jukebox that was bothering her, nor was it the cattlemen and oilrig workers. It was Dylan Amberson.

Why did I give him my phone number, anyway? And to her dismay, she knew the answer. Because he's got a dimple in his cheek, wide shoulders and narrow hips, and more charm than a man has any right having.

The sweep of a car's headlights startled Candice. She liked taking her breaks in the back of the saloon because it was dark, secluded, and she was never disturbed. A moment later a pearl white Cadillac Escalade rolled around the corner. Though she couldn't see inside the car's dark interior, she recognized the big SUV and knew who had driven around the saloon.

The car came to a stop, and Dylan Amberson stepped out, a smile on his lips. Candice returned his smile with one of her own.

"Are you stalking me?" she teased.

"You've discovered my secret." He eased the Cadillac's door closed, obviously making an effort to not make more noise than necessary. "I can't think of a better way of spending my time."

"You're incorrigible."

"I prefer to think of myself as determined. At least where you're concerned."

He stepped even closer, and Candice was aware of just how tall a man he was, though at just five-foot-two it didn't take a basketball player's height to tower over her.

Cast in shadow and pale light, Dylan was dangerously alluring. And in the herringbone jacket and Levis, he had the right combination of businessman and cowboy to intrigue Candice.

"Did you enjoy your..."

Candice's words drifted off into night when Dylan eased his right hand around her neck, and he slowly bent down.

Oh, God! He's going to kiss me!

Candice's eyes were open when Dylan brushed his mouth lightly across hers. But when his tongue traced the circumference of her lips lightly, moistening them, a soft sigh escaped Candice, and her eyes closed. Then Dylan slanted his mouth firmly over hers, the kiss deepening, becoming more ardent. Candice unconsciously lifted her hands, placing her palms lightly on his chest.

The hand at the back of her neck held her securely as Dylan's kiss intensified, his mouth opening, his tongue seeking entrance. Candice resisted him at first. The independent woman in her whispered that she shouldn't let this happen. The handsome rogue was only interested in sex, and she wanted so much more than just physical love. But that independent woman was rational, and when kissing Dylan Amberson, rational behavior was impossible. At least for Candice.

With a low moan of acquiescence, she opened her mouth in invitation. Dylan's tongue eased into her mouth to dance with her tongue as Candice's fingers splayed to caress solid muscles through a dress shirt and T-shirt.

Don't let this happen!

It was a futile to pretend that she wasn't responding to the kiss. When Dylan's left arm slipped around her waist and pulled her toward him, Candice's hands slid upward from his chest until she wrapped her arms around his neck. Her breasts compressed against his lower chest as she was bent backward.

Candice sucked his tongue more deeply into her mouth. Her nipples had tightened, elongating with passion. When he shifted his weight slightly from one foot to the other, she felt the heated tingles go from the erect tips of her breasts throughout her body. She tightened her arms around his neck, holding him close, feasting on his mouth while he feasted on hers.

Candice was not at first aware that Dylan was moving her until she felt the passenger side door of his SUV against her back, the white metal solid and cool. A moment later, Dylan's right boot eased between her ankles, and when he moved it to the side, she spread her feet a little wider apart.

That first passionate kiss finally ended, and Dylan straightened slightly to peer down into her eyes.

"You kiss like an angel," he said, his tone hoarse with sensual tension.

"But—"

He pressed his lips against hers, silencing further words. Candice was aware of the surface of her skin becoming extremely sensitive. At the juncture of her thighs, she was becoming increasing warm and slick with the nectar of her excitement. He kissed the side of her mouth, then cheek, then kissed her neck as he bent his knees, moving lower. He trailed kisses down her throat as his hands began lifting the hem of Candice's knee-length dress.

"But Dylan—"

"Shhh! Don't talk," he said, his lips warm and moist at the juncture where Candice's neck met her shoulder. "Just feel."

Chapter Two

Candice's hands were trembling slightly, resting lightly on Dylan's shoulders as he kissed her throat. His lips were warm against skin vibrantly alive to stimulation. Her nerve endings seemed to crackle with electricity. Candice's head was back on her shoulders, her eyes closed, her lips slightly parted as her breath came in quick, uneven gulps.

She was not at first aware that Dylan no longer had a hand at her neck, nor one at the small of her back. It wasn't until she felt the skirt of her white polyester dress sliding up her thighs that she realized Dylan was *not* going to be satisfied with just giving her a few of his spine-tingling kisses. He wanted *so* much more.

But did she?

"Dylan...you don't understand." She looked down and shivered when she saw and felt the wet tip of his tongue slide along the edge of her modest décolletage, simultaneously touching both her dress and her skin. "I don't—"

Dylan straightened his knees and kissed Candice demandingly, pushing her against the Cadillac, pressing the full length of his body against hers. She sensed his dominating physical strength as he leaned into her, his tongue delving into her mouth to swirl against hers, his hands at her hips. The cowboy boot between her feet once again moved to the side, forcing Candice to spread her feet further apart.

She was not conscious of the passage of time. It might have been only a few seconds, or perhaps several minutes. Candice could not confidently say how much time she spent with Dylan's lips pressed hungrily against her own, his tongue eliciting sensations of unprecedented force. His tongue was commanding, making her respond intimately. She sucked it deeper into her mouth, intoxicated by its ability to arouse.

When he finally released her mouth, Candice's breath came in deep gulps and her heart was racing, hammering against her ribs. She put her hands against his chest, unsure if she wanted to push him away or draw him nearer, but he quickly caught her wrists in his hands and brought them down to her hips. His determination heightened Candice's arousal.

"You're all I've been able to think about," Dylan whispered, his long fingers loosening around Candice's slender wrists as he kissed along the line of her left collar bone. "I find myself daydreaming about you. I keep thinking about your mouth, your eyes..."

Looking down, Candice watched as he opened his mouth wide, baring his teeth. "But—"

"Your breasts."

He pressed his mouth into the mound of her left breast and used his teeth lightly. Candice issued a strangled gasp. Heated lust surged through her system, emanating from her nipple. Unable to look away, she watched as he pressed his lips to her other breast, then bared his teeth and again tantalized her nipple with measured bites. The pleasure his teeth drew was so intense her knees buckled, and she slid partially down the door of the Cadillac. Her clitoris throbbed and the lips of her cunt were getting wetter by the second.

"Oh, Dylan." A sob caught in her throat. "You don't understand. I don't..."

The quiet words of feeble protest faded into the evening breeze as Dylan kissed Candice's stomach, folding his long legs beneath him until he knelt before her. Though she could not precisely feel his lips on her through her dress, the visual stimulation of seeing such a handsome man kissing her stomach was enough to make her extremely wet. Her clitoris felt tight, elongated with lust, tingling madly. It seemed as though her muscles were growing weaker by the second. Candice accepted as fact that there probably wasn't anything that Dylan could ask of her that she wouldn't do, and this mystified her since she prided herself on always making her own decisions.

Though she wouldn't admit it, Candice knew that she was powerless against Dylan's allure, his charm, his devastatingly seductive sensuality.

Letting her head loll back on her shoulders, Candice inhaled deeply and sought in vain to find the willpower to resist Dylan. He was just a man, after all, and she had resisted many men in the past. It had been months since she'd had sex.

She was smart enough to know that Dylan Amberson was the kind of charming gentleman cowboy that only a very foolish woman would get romantically involved with.

These were her thoughts, all of them quite rational and wellconsidered, until she felt his hands sliding up the outsides of her thighs beneath the skirt of her dress. A moment later, when his fingertips curled into the waistband of her panties, well-considered thoughts evaporated in an instant, disappearing as completely as though they'd never existed.

Her panties were tugged over the curve of her hips and down to her knees an instant later. When the panties were at her ankles, a hoarsely spoken "Lift your feet!" was too enticing to be ignored. She followed his orders and her panties were tugged past the comfortable Nike multi-sport shoes she wore weekdays at work.

He grabbed her right ankle and moved it to the side so that her legs were spread wide. Looking down, Candice felt as though she was in some kind of erotic dream. Could that really be Dylan Amberson on his knees?

Looking at her exposed pussy, he whispered, "Let me please you."

A moment later, as Candice held her breath, she watched him lean forward and press his mouth against her pussy. He kissed her twice before his pink tongue snaked out between his lips to flick against her clitoris. The shocking intimacy of the oral caress made Candice shiver. She closed her eyes and turned her face up toward the moon, her mouth opening, her breathing deep and uneven.

Each caress of Dylan's tongue sent Candice's senses spiraling out of control. She had been pleasured in such a fashion before, but never had it felt this electrifying. It was as though the caresses were simultaneously happening everywhere on her body. Her nipples, though currently neglected, throbbed with tension.

"Ohhh! Oh, *yes!*" Candice whispered when Dylan took her clitoris between his lips and sucked lightly on it.

She put a hand down, combing her fingers through his ebony hair as his head moved slowly. A finger was inserted into her without Dylan ever slowing the movement of his lips and tongue. Never in her life had she been so aroused so quickly.

"Look at me," she heard him whisper, the words faintly muffled because he didn't completely take his mouth away from her. "I want to look into your eyes when you come for me."

Dylan's words were as shameless, intimate, and arousing as his taboo kisses. Candice tilted her face down and opened her eyes. His face was cast in shadows. She could only see him from the nose upward because his mouth was pressed tightly against her.

Her insides clenched then, every muscle in her body suddenly knotting. She teetered at the brink of the abyss for several seconds before the climactic spasms started. Several fierce convulsions shuddered through her as she climaxed, her pussy flexing around the invading, pistoning finger as Dylan sucked on her clitoris.

She very nearly fell, and would have had Dylan not held her pressed against the door of his Cadillac. When the last on the contractions subsided, she couldn't withstand another lick from the handsome man on his knees.

"Stop. Please," she whispered. "I'm too sensitive now."

Dylan rose to his feet, and only then did Candice see that he had, without ever stopping his pleasuring of her, lowered his zipper and extracted an erection that was long, thick, pale, and fiercely rigid. "See what you do to me?" Dylan said, turning his hips so that the moonlight shone on his cock.

It was then, an instant before Candice was about to sink to her knees behind The Cattleman's Paradise saloon to give the most enthusiastically delivered blowjob of her life, that she heard her aunt call out, "Candice! Are you back here, honey? Come on in, girl! All the boys from the Circle-8 Ranch stopped in for a cold one!"

Candice put a hand to her mouth, her horror absolute. The Cadillac prevented her aunt from seeing Dylan's erection, and Candice suspected that alone prevented the sweet-natured old woman from accurately surmising what had been happening only moments earlier.

"I'm coming, Aunt Agatha!" she called out, doing her best to sound casual.

Under his breath, Dylan whispered, "In more ways than one."

To Dylan, she whispered, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

Then she hurried away, her body still tingling with the afterglow of a wrenching, satisfying climax, quite certain that Dylan Amberson now thought of her as nothing more than a cock teaser.

Chapter Three

When Nick Strellso walked into The Cattleman's Paradise, he saw Candice Olssen smiling as she served beers to four oilmen in dirty jeans and sweat-stained T-shirts.

Someday soon I'm going to have that bitch on her knees.

When she finished distributing the bottles, Candice said something that made the men laugh. Then she noticed that Nick had entered the saloon with his men, Pete and Digger, and she flinched as though she'd been physically struck by his presence. Nick liked that a lot. Even from a distance, he could see the fear in her eyes. He enjoyed inspiring fear.

"Don't bother getting a table," he said to Digger, his bodyguard and most reliable leg-breaker. "We're only here for this week's payment."

When Candice started toward him, he noticed the way her breasts moved beneath the unflattering white dress. Across the surface of his mind flashed the image of Candice's face, her features distorted in fear as he ripped the dress from her body, her screams of horror playing like music in his ears. The mental image was so intense, so arousing, Nick turned his face away and closed his eyes for a moment so that he could compose himself.

Candice appeared to be particularly pale when she stepped up to Nick. It seemed to be more than just her Nordic heritage. She was ashen-faced because she was scared. Nick had to force himself to keep from smiling.

"Do you have my payment?" he asked.

She reached into her apron pocket and extracted several folded

bills.

"Two hundred fifty dollars," she said quietly.

She handed the bills to Digger. Nick had already warned her that she was never to give him the money directly.

"Good," he said. "But starting next Monday, the fee is four hundred a week."

Candice's blue eyes opened wide, and her jaw dropped open. "We'll never be able to afford that!" she whispered hotly. "You already take two-fifty from our cash register every week, and we can hardly pay that sometimes."

Nick let his gaze go down to her breasts. He made sure she knew exactly where he was looking before his gaze returned to her face.

"It's four hundred a week, or accidents start happening. It would be a real crying shame if something happened to your aunt or uncle, now wouldn't it? They're getting up there in years and won't heal up so quickly, will they?" His mouth pulled upward at the corners. "Of course, we could keep it at a two-fifty, and you could get down on your knees to make up for the other one-fifty."

Contempt and fear shone in Candice's pale blue eyes. Nick almost laughed.

Movement drew his attention toward the front doors, and Nick felt a sharp stab of fear jab him in the stomach when Sergeant Alvin "Bulldog" Herndon of the New Oslo Sheriff's Department stepped in and looked straight at him.

"Come on, boys," he said to Digger and Pete. "We've got what we come for." He looked at Candice and added, "This time, anyway. Next time it could be a whole lot different."

* * * *

"You don't mind locking up?" Aunt Agatha asked, standing at the front doors to The Cattleman's Paradise.

Bulldog thought the old woman looked a little more tired than

usual, as though something was troubling her that she was keeping all to herself. He wondered whether or not Nick had anything to do with her fatigue, then reminded himself that he was prone to blaming the hoodlum for virtually *everything* that wasn't right about New Oslo. They had grown up together, and Bulldog didn't trust or like anything about the man. And he certainly wasn't going to underestimate him.

"Of course not. I just have to wipe the tables down and then I'll be out of here," Candice replied, smiling.

"Thank you for staying," Aunt Agatha said to Bulldog. "I always feel so much better when I know you're here with her when she closes up. I know she's safe with you."

"My pleasure, ma'am," Bulldog said, touching the brim of his blue Stetson felt cowboy hat with the badge in front.

Uncle Rolf, standing behind his wife, smiled and said under his breath, "Course it is...for a young man like you."

In a low, warning tone, Candice said, "Uncle..."

"We'll be going now," Aunt Agatha said, turning away from her niece and taking by the arm her husband of nearly fifty years, "before this old man makes an even bigger fool of himself."

Bulldog was smiling broadly as the elderly couple stepped outside. As a lifelong resident of New Oslo, he'd know them since his childhood. Their undeniable love for each other gave him hope that someday he'd find a similar all-consuming, life-long love. So far, all Bulldog had found were feminine diversions of varying degrees of permanence. The women were entertaining, to be sure, but always of a transient nature.

Bulldog walked to the door, watched the elderly couple get into their old Ford sedan and drive out of the parking lot. Only then did he let his attention turn back to the young waitress who had been consuming more and more of his thoughts lately.

She looked lovely and innocent in that polyester waitress uniform that Bulldog so thoroughly despised. At least she'd gotten rid of the apron now that the last of the customers were out the door. It was bad enough that she had to wear a stain-resistant polyester dress; wearing the apron added a certain level of pedestrian drabness that particularly rankled the youngest man ever to reach the rank of sergeant at the New Oslo Police Department.

"How've you been, Candice?" he asked, hooking his thumbs into his gun belt. "It seems like forever since last I've had the chance to talk to you." What he meant was *be alone with you*, but from Candice's reaction, he knew she understood.

Their time alone, lamentably brief in Bulldog's estimation, had resulted in two kisses. Neither of the kisses was nearly as intimate as he had hoped. He was happy to receive what attention from Candice he could, but still...he wanted more. Much more. And not just in quality. In quantity, too. Where Candice was concerned, Bulldog was an unapologetically greedy man.

"Just fine."

Was it his imagination, or was she finding it difficult to look him directly in the eyes? She shifted her weight from one foot to the other, and briefly nibbled on her lower lip. She was clearly uneasy with being alone with him, but it didn't seem like she was embarrassed. Was she fearful of something?

"Candice, if I went too far the last time we were together, I want to apologize right here and now." He took a step closer to her and reached out to touch a fingertip to her chin, tilting her face up so he could peer into her blue eyes. "A woman as beautiful as you has got to know that men are going to want to kiss her. Was it so bad to share a couple kisses with me?"

"It's not that," she said, her voice soft in the nearly empty saloon. "Your kisses were lovely. It's just..."

She turned and stepped over to the bar, where she picked up a damp wash cloth.

"Tell me," Bulldog prodded.

Candice began wiping a tabletop, even though it was already immaculately clean. Bulldog was certain she hadn't intentionally stood sideways to him so that he could watch the way her breasts rolled tautly inside her uniform as she wiped the table, but that didn't stop him from feeling the erotic, electrical charge that shot through him. Candice's presence was a continuous, low-level dose of eroticism straight into everything that was masculine and responsive in Bulldog.

"It's nothing, really."

Bulldog felt a tightening in his chest, and a faint twitching in the blue slacks of his uniform. He also felt a sense of protectiveness surge through him that wasn't just a professional lawman's response to possible villainy.

"I don't believe you."

She turned to face him, a glint of humor suddenly showing in her eyes. "Tell me, how far would you go to get a confession out of me?"

Bulldog knew she was intentionally changing the subject because he was getting too close to a truth she wanted to keep concealed. The lawman in him wanted to keep on the subject of her unease until he had the answer; the bachelor in him liked this sudden change.

"I wouldn't beat it out of you, that's for sure. No, a beating is definitely out of the question." His gaze went over her voluptuous figure slowly, and he made no effort to hide where he was looking. "But I might tickle it out of you."

"You wouldn't dare."

It was a challenge a man like Bulldog couldn't hope to resist. He bolted forward, hands moving toward Candice's stomach. With a smile on her lips and laughter in her throat, she retreated with short, quick steps, bending down to protect her stomach as she moved backward. An instant later a sharp corner on a slightly loosened stainless steel table edging caught the hem of dress. She was moving backward swiftly and was bent forward sharply at the waist. Candice's next hurried step caused her dress to rise well above her hips.

Bulldog watched as her eyes went wide in shock. She spun around

in an instant, slapping her dress off the edge of the table where it had caught.

But the damage was done. Bulldog had gotten a split-second view of the sweetly rounded cheeks of her bottom, and there was no doubt about it, those buns were sans panties.

"Candice Olssen, you don't have any panties on!" Bulldog exclaimed in delight as he watched her face turn pink. "I never would have thought you'd be one to go commando!"

"Oh, Bulldog, it's not what you're thinking." She stomped her foot in indignation, the violence of the action causing her breasts to wobble erotically beneath the layer of polyester.

"How do you know what I'm thinking?"

Candice continued to retreat, stepping backward between tables. Bulldog could tell that she was making *very* sure her dress didn't catch on anything. "I can see the Devil in your eyes," she added. "And you ask too many questions. I'm not telling you anything."

In a momentarily serious tone, he said, "But something is bothering you." His tone lightened as he advanced on the voluptuous waitress. "Tell me what's bothering you or the tickling starts."

"No!" Candice shouted gleefully as she darted between two tables, then wheeled around so that she had a table between herself and Bulldog. She snapped the damp wash cloth at him. "You'd better be careful. With a wet towel in hand, I'm armed and dangerous."

He was overjoyed that Candice was joking with him now, but her playful mood wasn't enough to make him forget that only moments earlier, she had refused to make direct eye contact. But the fact that Candice was without panties elicited a myriad of scenarios to slithered through Bulldog's libido, and he intended to find out whether she always went commando, or if tonight was an anomaly.

Bulldog took off his blue Stetson and tossed it onto a nearby table. Then he unsnapped the leather carrying case on his gun belt, Bulldog pulled out one of two pairs of regulation stainless steel handcuffs. He held them up for Candice to see. "A deputy's got the right to disarm a dangerous woman," he said with mock sternness. "In a court of law, the judge would sentence you to a damned good bare bottom spanking. And I've already seen for myself there won't be any panties to get between my palm and your bottom."

Candice's jaw dropped. "A spanking!" she exclaimed in mock indignation. "I'm twenty-three years old, and I'm not going to be treated like a misbehaving child."

She turned and started to run. Bulldog's blood was heated, the lust he felt for Candice surging through his veins. Her stride faltered, perhaps intentionally, and he caught her before she had taken four steps. He stopped her with the precision of a man who had done such things a thousand times before with far more dangerous perpetrators. In an instant he had her arms behind her back and the handcuffs locked around her wrists.

Taking her by the shoulders, he spun her around so that she faced him. She was breathing deeply, and with her wrists locked behind her back, her generous bosom was pressed even more firmly against the modest décolletage of her dress. Bulldog's gaze went down to her breasts. The bulge of a formidable cock was growing down the left leg of his blue trousers.

Bulldog's fingers tightened on her shoulders. In the back of his mind he knew this was wrong on countless levels. Members of the sheriff's department weren't supposed to handcuff innocent citizens, even if they had teased him into it. And they sure as hell weren't supposed to develop raging hard-ons because it was so goddamned erotic to handcuff a particularly lovely woman named Candice Olssen. His lusty emotions were countless times more demanding than any sense of logic or professionalism he might have possessed.

Pulling her toward him, Bulldog slanted his mouth down over Candice's, his lips firm and commanding but not brutal. It was the kind of possessive kiss that he had wanted to give her before, but he had sensed that she was a woman who accepted masculine dominance, but would rebel at dictatorial ownership. As he kissed her, his lips feasting on hers, his hands slid from her shoulders, moving downward past her lower back, then lower still. His broad-palmed hands cupped her bottom, squeezing firmly through the polyester fabric of her waitress uniform. He eased the pressure of his lips against hers, then used the tip of his tongue to trace the circumference of her mouth, his method instantly transforming from commanding masculine presence to feather-light seduction.

"Everything about you," he whispered, his tone hoarse with lusty tension, "excites the hell out of me." He raised the hem of her dress slowly, and Candice started to squirm in his embrace. The feel of her firm breasts against his lower chest added length and girth to his pulsing erection. "There isn't a part of you that I don't want to kiss."

Chapter Four

As Bulldog's hands cupped her naked buns, pulling her hips toward him so that she had no choice but to feel the long, hard bulge of his erection, Candice thought, This can't be happening to me!

She felt the tip of Bulldog's tongue seek entrance to her mouth. She resisted him, pressing her lips tightly together, but only for a second or two. Then, with a soft moan of surrender, her lips parted invitingly. His tongue filled her mouth, dancing with her tongue as his strong-fingered hands kneaded the globes of her bottom.

Candice was certain the Devil was in her soul. She surely had to be wicked to the marrow of her bones to find it erotic that her hands were behind her back and there were unyielding handcuffs locked around her wrists. But the lips of her cunt were quickly becoming slick with her own juices, and her clitoris was pulsating with desire. That alone was proof enough of lustful submission to Bulldog's dominance. Though his trousers and underwear separated his rigid manhood from pressing against her, to Candice it seemed as though the heat of his lusty erection was going straight into her blood.

Once more she tested the strength of the handcuffs, and once more she felt the solid metal bite into the flesh of her wrists. The awareness of the handcuffs added a fresh surge of honey to lubricate the lips of her pussy. The handcuffs were like a narcotic that flowed through her veins, making her head spin, her nerve endings heightened to sensitivity. She had never felt so aroused, so stimulated, or so ready for more pleasure.

Summoning within herself some small measure of willpower, Candice wrenched her face to the side, abruptly ending the french kiss that had ignited her passions.

"I'm not—"

It was all the protest she was able to utter before Bulldog claimed her mouth once again with his own. His tongue nudged its way between her lips to explore deeply, and it surprised Candice at just how erotic it was to have Bulldog be so commanding, so ardent in showing his lusty desires for her.

He pushed her backward. Candice took a single step before she was stopped by one of the padded stools bolted to the floor, running the length of the bar. Bulldog's right hand slipped around her hips, pushing her dress even higher as he reached between her thighs.

Candice squirmed in his embrace, but she could not get away, even when she tried to shift her hips. Bulldog's cupped her pussy, the heel of his palm pressing tightly and erotically against her pink clitoris. Delicious waves of desire pulsed from her clitoris at the contact.

Bulldog at last ended his deep french kiss. As his middle finger slipped easily between the slick feminine lips, he kissed the side of her neck and whispered, "You make me so hot!" His finger slid fulllength into her, prompting Candice to moan low in her throat. "You like the way I touch you, don't you? But it's my finger that you really want, isn't it?" He bared his teeth and bit Candice's taut throat. When she squirmed, he used his warm, wet tongue on her skin. "Say the words, baby. Tell me you want me as much as I want you."

He started moving his hand slowly back and forth, pulling all the way out to briefly caress her clitoris before sliding between her lips full-length once more. He entwined the fingers of his left hand into her honey blonde hair, pulling her head back on her shoulders.

"I'm powerless against you!" Bulldog growled through clenched teeth, his blue eyes dark with the unquenchable lusty hunger that Candice inspired. He put his hands at her waist and lifted her effortless so that she was sitting on the stool, the plastic, padded seat cool against her naked buns. Her feet were off the floor. "I'll get on my knees for you!"

A moment later, for the second time that evening, Candice found herself looking down at a kneeling, handsome man whose face was between her naked thighs, his mouth pressed against her intimately, his tongue inside her.

I don't do this! I'm not this kind of a woman!

But the thoughts did not translate into any kind of action. With her feet dangling inches above the floor, she was forced to lean back against the bar, her body shivering as Bulldog sucked her clitoris between his lips. She tested the handcuffs. She was Bulldog's until he chose to unlock the 'cuffs.

She heard the *thud!* and knew that Bulldog had taken off his gun belt. A moment later, just loud enough to be heard over the sounds of Bulldog lapping at her and her own feverish moans, came the sound of a zipper being lowered.

He's going to do me! He's going to give it to me hard!

As though in a dreamlike trance, she watched as Bulldog rose to his feet. The trousers of his blue uniform were down to the tops of his heavily muscled thighs, as were his underwear. His cock was every bit as long and thick as her imagination had conceived. The angrylooking, lusty cock jutted straight out from his body. A blue vein ran an undisciplined path along the upper surface beneath the pale skin.

With unblinking eyes, she watched as Bulldog guided the plump crown of his cock to her. He rubbed the conical knob up and down over her twice, then began a long, slow invasion. The delicate lips of her cunt stretched to accommodate Bulldog, and the moan of unbridled passion that escaped Candice's throat was different from any sound she had ever made before.

"Kiss me," Bulldog growled, his right hand sliding around the back of her neck while his left hand looped around her hips. "Taste your own pussy on my lips!"

His lips claimed hers, and when his tongue was thrust between her lips, Candice did indeed taste the essence of her own desire. Tasting the honey of her own passion created conflicting emotions in Candice.

It took four revolutions of his hips before he had buried his entire length into her. By the time Bulldog powered all of his unyielding flesh, thrusting inward until his pelvis pressed tightly against hers, Candice was already teetering on the brink of a climax.

Candice's curvaceous body trembled and shook, the breath being expelled from her lungs each time Bulldog drove home. His powerful body collided solidly with hers again and again. She had never before felt so helpless, nor so desired. The handcuffs had introduced her to a new sensation, one of erotic submission, and it made her clitoris throb with tension.

Her senses gave her very little warning before becoming overloaded with lust. Candice had Bulldog's tongue in her mouth with his hips churning between her tapering thighs when an orgasm of blinding intensity pulsated through her. She squeezed her eyes shut as brilliant lights of red and white exploded in her brain. She flexed and squeezed around Bulldog's invading and retreating flesh, her body gripping that which filled it as she quivered, her legs straightening during the orgasmic waves of pleasure.

As the last of her climax came to a pulsing end, Bulldog thrust harshly into Candice, then tossed his head back on his shoulders and emitted a leonine growl. Candice knew she was being flooded with his semen. She welcomed his deluge.

Eventually, he took a single, staggering step backward, dislodging from Candice. She looked at his virile flesh, which glistened in the blinking, flickering light of several neon advertisements for beer. Across the lust-distorted surface of her mind, she wondered if the deputy wanted her to take him into her mouth. She had already tasted herself on his lips; it would be infinitely more taboo, and exciting, to taste herself on his cock.

Now that Bulldog was no longer holding tightly onto her, the lewdness of Candice's position made its way into her consciousness. She turned her head and looked at the north wall of the saloon, which was mirrored from floor to ceiling. The image that came back to her was shocking. There she was, sitting on a bar stool and leaning back against the polished mahogany bar, with her hands cuffed behind her back, her dressed bunched above her hips, her breasts rising and falling inside her dress as she breathed deeply in her post-orgasmic lassitude.

Her hair was mussed, her cheeks pink with desire. She turned her gaze slightly and, in the mirror, looked at Bulldog in profile. His trousers were down to the middle of his thighs. His cock, though having lost some of its stature, was shiny with the combination of their love juices, the flesh dropping out away from his loins.

She felt the movement inside herself, and it brought with it a reality and awareness that she did not welcome.

"You'd better take the handcuffs off," Candice said softly, inwardly clenching. "If I don't get to the bathroom quick, all the love you put inside me is going to end up on the floor."

* * * *

Nick Strellso sat in the back seat of the Lincoln Navigator, and cursed softly under his breath. He had hoped to see Candice as she was closing up The Cattleman's Paradise for the evening. The more he thought about her, the more he wanted to feel her beneath him as he gave it to her hard and nasty. But instead of being alone, or at least busy trying to get the last of the stragglers to leave her saloon, Bulldog's Ford Explorer police department cruiser was parked in the lot. It wasn't that Nick had any particular respect for the police. He didn't. He avoided the police only because to do otherwise was bad business.

"Don't pull into the parking lot," he said to Pete, who was driving the Lincoln. "Let's call it a night. I can see another night. She's not going anywhere."

"She's damned pretty," Pete said.

Digger added, "And she's got one hell of a rack. You figure she had her tits done up?"

"No," Nick answered. "She's all natural. I can always tell. When I'm finished with her, if you two want to stick it to her, I've got no objections. But you wait until I've had my fill of her. Got it?"

"Got it, Nick," the two men in the front seat said in unison.

* * * *

Bulldog sat on the end stool at the bar, holding his blue Stetson with the badge in the front, and looked at himself in the mirror. There was a haunted look to him that he'd never before seen. Candice was in the bathroom, where she'd been for the past five minutes. In that time, Bulldog had pulled up his underwear, fastened his trousers properly, and put his gun belt back around his waist.

He had also put the handcuffs back into the carrying case on his belt.

What would her attitude be when she emerged from the ladies bathroom of The Cattleman's Paradise? Would she be furious with him for his seduction? Would she be flushed and drowsy with postorgasmic lassitude? He had felt how she'd responded to having handcuffs locked around her wrists. Would the forbidden thrill of her bondage bring a light to her beautiful blue eyes?

The bathroom door opened, and Bulldog's heart skipped a beat. Candice stepped out, smoothed her hands down the front of her white dress, then walked over until she stood close to him.

"I barely made it in time," she said, her voice hushed with the nature of the sentence. "You come a gallon."

Bulldog smiled. He breathed easy for the first time since removing the handcuffs and watching her rush off into the bathroom.

"You're okay?" Though he was alone with her, he barely spoke above a whisper.

"I've had sex before. I guess you could say I've even made love

before." She inhaled, then let out a long, soft sigh. "But now I know what it's like to get fucked. Thoroughly, completely, gloriously fucked." She closed her eyes and shook her head. "I can't believe the language I'm using. I can't believe what I've just done." When Bulldog reached to put a hand around her waist, she skipped out of his reach. "I don't think I'll get to sleep for a week. This evening is going to play over and over in my head."

"And that's a good thing or a bad thing?"

"It's a good thing, but..."

"But what?"

She shook her head. "Someday I'll tell you, just not right now." Though he was hellishly curious, he let the subject pass.

* * * *

Candice pulled into the parking lot of her apartment building, switched off the ignition of her ancient Toyota Corolla, folded her arms on the steering wheel, then placed her forehead on her arms and closed her eyes.

It wasn't just that she was exhausted from the sheer physical labor of working a thirteen-hour shift at The Cattleman's Paradise. That was tiring enough. What, in a thoroughly odd manner, made her feel both tired to the bone and more intensely alive than ever before in her life, was the vivid memories of her behavior that night.

Had she really, in the very same night, gotten her cunt licked by two of the most gorgeous men in North Dakota? It seemed unreal somehow. She wasn't sure if it was a fantasy come true or reality. Any woman would be thrilled to have Dylan or Bulldog turning passion-filled eyes in their direction. But to have both men, only a few hours apart, acting out their most desirous impulses on her? It was unimaginable for Candice...until it actually happened.

What was the single thing that was the biggest turn-on?

Candice found the question she asked herself an interesting one.

Had it been when Dylan first sank to his knees in the back parking lot? Just seeing Dylan Amberson kneeling before her was nearly enough to make her climax. Or was the single sexiest moment when Bulldog locked the handcuffs around her wrists? Though Candice would go to her grave before she admitted it, the handcuffs represented all of Bulldog's dominant masculine authority, and it had instantly made her clitoris so erect and sensitive that a quick, jarring orgasm had been assured.

Lifting her head up off her forearms, Candice whispered aloud, "Stop thinking about it or you'll never get to sleep tonight."

She pulled the keys out of the ignition and opened the car's door. The dome light did not come on. It had stopped working during the previous winter sometime, and it just wasn't important enough for her to spend money on fixing. Money was tight because Candice didn't plan on being a waitress her entire life. She had plans for the University of North Dakota, going into the nursing program. A nurse in a hospital, she figured, never really made a fortune, but it was a nice, middle-class living, and that would certainly been good enough for her.

True to her Midwestern and Scandinavian roots, Candice was a practical young woman who kept her dreams modest, her ambitions attainable, and her financial matters both humble and private.

Inside the apartment building which, like the rest of New Oslo, was populated primarily with men, there were at least two raucous parties currently in progress, despite the lateness of the hour. With the crews at the oil wells working around the clock, it was always someone's time to party hardy.

At the security door, she punched in the electronic lock's numbers, waited for the *click!* of the lock unlatching, then stepped inside. Her apartment was on the north side, the end unit on the third floor. She took the elevator, pleased she didn't meet anyone on the way, then headed down the long hallway.

She was almost to the front door to her apartment when the

stairwell door, just a few feet away, opened. Dylan stepped out, a faint smile on his lips, appearing just as handsome as he had earlier in the evening.

When she looked into his eyes, a shiver went through Candice. With her keys still in her hand, she turned to face him, her throat suddenly constricted, her heart feeling as though fingers were squeezing it.

"D-Dylan...you're here."

"In the flesh. I had to see you again." He stepped closer, and Candice's heart rate accelerated even more. "I was feeling a bit like a thief, so I had to see you tonight."

Her smooth brow furrowed. Dylan's unexpected presence made Candice feel dizzy. "Thief? I don't understand."

"I have something of yours." He raised his hand. Candice's panties dangled from his forefinger. She uttered a short gasp, her hand flying to her mouth. Seeing her own panties was a guilty reminder of her earlier behavior. "I thought the proper course of action was to return them immediately."

"This is a secure building. How did you get in?"

Dylan smiled a bit condescendingly. "Security? I got past it in thirty seconds." He stepped closer, his eyes intense even in the dim light of the apartment building hallway. He brought the panties to his nose and inhaled gently. "They remind me of you, when you're feeling passionate. But you didn't give them to me as a keepsake. Under the circumstances of our last meeting, I thought the right move was to put them in my pocket. A pleasant keepsake, to be sure, but an act of theft unless you actually meant for me to have them."

The timbre of his voice was a caress to the senses that Candice could neither ignore nor deny. The sight of her simple white bikini panties hanging from Dylan's fingertip brought back a flood of memories too erotic, too explicit, for the slick honey to not flow to the tingling lips of her pussy.

"You shouldn't be here." Her statement was whispered, delivered

with not nearly as much conviction as she would have liked. "It's very late."

"I had to see you tonight," Dylan replied, stepping so close she could smell the faint, pleasing aroma of his Ralph Lauren cologne. "I just couldn't stay away."

While still holding her panties with the tip of his right forefinger, he eased his hand around the back of Candice's neck to hold her steady, then leaned into her, slanting his mouth down slowly but very firmly over hers.

Chapter Five

It was at the exact moment that Dylan pressed his lips against Candice's that he realized he was in trouble. Big, deep trouble. It was a new kind of woman-trouble because, inexplicably, his heart was involved. On an emotional level, he'd always kept his heart and his cock far from each other. Far, as on different continents so their paths could never cross.

As an Amberson, he'd never spent a moment of his life when he wasn't a millionaire. There was always a bevy of servants, day and night, to see that he had his every whim and wish fulfilled. And as an Amberson, there hadn't been a day in his life when he hadn't been handsome to the eye. Unlike so many tall boys, he never really had a "gawky" or "awkward" period in his life. In many, many ways, nature had been generous from the very beginning.

Now, at the age of thirty, he had spent more than a decade indulging his libido with women, pleasuring them to the best of his ability while insisting that his lovers give as good as they get. Often this was not the case, though it wasn't because the women he seduced were heartless or indifferent to his satisfaction. It was simply a matter of skill. Dylan Amberson, in the sensual arts, was an extraordinarily gifted man. Few women could match him in the ability to give someone of the opposite sex total fulfillment.

He felt Candice shudder. Leaning into her, he pressed her against the door to her apartment, feeling the fullness of her heavy breasts compressing against his lower chest.

Ending the kiss, Dylan straightened and looked down into her eyes. "Let's go inside, Candice. Let me show you just how good it can be."

He was surprised when she shook her head in negation. It was nearly unprecedented for him to have a women say "no" to such an invitation after he'd already been on his knees and brought her to climax. His eyebrows lifted quizzically for a moment. He lifted her panties and sniffed them once again. Candice's scent filled his nostrils, and his cock, trapped within the confines of his underwear and slacks, throbbed and grew in response.

"You can say that I don't excite you, but your kiss tells me otherwise." He smiled. "Your body tells the truth when you shiver."

From down the hall, he could hear masculine laughter as young men drank beer. They could likely be employees of Galaxy International, and as such, at least to some degree personally employed by Dylan. What would they do if they saw him in passionate embrace with Candice? Would they even recognize him? They would surely recognize the curvaceous blonde in his arms. The Cattleman's Paradise was one of the more popular places for food and drink in the small community of just over twenty thousand.

"Yes, you excite me," Candice answered after several seconds. "But we're not looking for the same things in each other."

"Oh?"

"You're angry with me because I left you unsatisfied. You've a right to be angry." He was a little surprised when she leaned forward and kissed his chest through his shirt. Her hands came up to bracket his hips. "I'll make you happy. I know how to do that. But then we've got to go our separate ways. To you, I'm a new conquest; but I want much more than to just be another notch on your belt."

"It's not like that."

"Shhh!" Candice kissed the tip of her forefinger, then raised it to Dylan's mouth. "Don't say anything." Her voice dipped to a hushed whisper. "If you don't say anything, you can't lie to me."

Her back was again the door to her apartment as she sank slowly to her knees. As she knelt, Dylan's cock surged instantly to life, growing to its full length in a handful of seconds. With Candice on her knees, he could look down into her bodice, and the fullness of her pale breasts caused a low groan to work its way out of his throat.

Candice's hands were shaking slightly as she lowered the zipper to Dylan's fly. The sound of the brass teeth unlatching seemed particularly loud in the hallway. She reached inside his slacks and through the fly of his boxer shorts. When she wrapped her fingers around his pulsing shaft, Dylan groaned once again. It was a bit of a struggle for her to pull out a stone-hard erection through the fly of his slacks, but she eventually managed it.

Candice's breath was warm against the crown when she whispered, "You're very big."

It had been hours earlier than Dylan had been on his knees, sucking and licking Candice until she came on his mouth. Since that time, all he could think about was getting his cock in her mouth, in her pussy, in her tight ass, which he suspected was virginal. Now, to actually have her on her knees, the practiced charm and cavalier aloofness that was so much a part of his charm and seductive character had been stripped from him.

He thrust his hips, driving through Candice's fist. He pushed forward, invading the wet confines of her oral embrace until he threatened to enter her throat. He placed his hands on the apartment door, teeth clenched with the intensity of the pleasure shooting through his senses. Looking down, he saw that Candice was against the door and unable to relieve the pressure against her throat. Slowly, he pulled away, watching his glistening shaft sliding between her lips.

Dylan felt Candice's tongue moving against the sensitive underside of his crown. A low groan rumbled up out of his chest.

"Deeper," he whispered through teeth clenched in sensual strain. He filled her mouth again, not stopping until she had taken all she could. With unexpected honesty, he whispered, "I've never felt so hard. You excite me so."

Dylan withdrew slowly. Candice breathed deeply through her

nostrils, her breasts trembling slightly, her cheeks hollowing as she drew a firm suction. Retreating until only the very tip of his cock was still between her lips, Dylan felt her tongue flick against his slit, and the electrical charge of lust it elicited caused a shudder to ripple through his body. He filled her mouth again, pushing slowly but relentlessly between her soft, kneading lips until she was once again trapped between a solid cock and an unyielding door.

"It's not just sex, damn it," Dylan growled through clenched teeth. "I thought it was. I wanted it to be. But it's not just sex, Candice. You've got to believe me."

She sputtered, the breath rushing from her lungs and her cheeks puffing outward as her body protested. Dylan quickly retreated, guilt flooded his senses.

"I want more," Dylan said then, grabbing Candice by the biceps. "I need more. I want all of you."

He lifted her to her feet, and pressed his mouth against hers in a lusty, tongue-entwining kiss as he pulled her dress up above her hips.

* * * *

Candice wasn't sure what to do. She certainly wasn't a virgin, but she'd never had sex standing up. The closest she'd ever come to doing such a thing had happened earlier in the evening, when she had sat on a padded stool, leaning back against the bar, as Bulldog pleasured her with an almost manic intensity.

An instant later she realized that knowledge or experience on her part was unnecessary. Dylan was far too aroused, and unquestionably too determined, to let anything or anyone get in the way of their satisfaction. He would, with brute strength coupled with supple athleticism, simply position Candice to facilitate their mutual satisfaction.

He hooked his fingers around her left knee and raised it, pulling her leg up and aside. A moment later, Candice felt the plump head of his cock against the lips of her cunt. She hardly had time to mentally prepare herself before his hard flesh spread her lips, pushing deeply into her.

Dylan made a growling sound as he powered much of his cock into Candice. She looped her arms around his neck, hugging him close as she felt him invading deeper and deeper. His withdrawal was quick, instantly followed by another thrust. This time he did not stop until his pelvis was pressed tight against hers, and she was lifted up onto her tiptoes.

"Yes!" Candice whispered, her lips an inch from Dylan's ear as he withdrew. "Take me, darling."

The long, hard length of his cock, the sense of motion within her own body, the friction against delicate tissue, all excited Candice. But as much as all that stimulation aroused her body, what sent her libido soaring was the awareness that she had taken Bulldog's cock into her pussy only a short time earlier, and now she was hugging Dylan tightly as he pleasured her with long, passionate strokes, driving into her until he pummeled her against the front door of her own apartment.

She balanced precariously on one Nike-clad foot, holding onto Dylan as he plunged deeply into her. Each invading thrust slammed Candice against the door. It didn't matter that Candice was quite certain she'd have bruised on her hips by the time Dylan was finished, nor did it matter to her that she might get caught in the most compromising of all positions by one of her neighbors. All that mattered to Candice at that moment was that she was in the arms of Dylan Amberson. He had just made a declaration of harboring emotions that might not necessarily be love, but were something more than mere lust, that he was thrusting fast and deep into her...and that she was on the brink of another climax.

I'm almost there!

This thought had streaked through Candice's consciousness, and she was preparing to feel herself being catapulted backward against the unyielding surface of her apartment door one more time when it opened!

Several things happened simultaneously. Candice's roommate, Harriet, had turned the doorknob to find out what the pounding was on her apartment door at precisely the same time that Dylan reached maximum insertion. But instead of being stopped by the door, it was the combined weight of Candice and Dylan that sent the door swinging on its hinges, smashing into Harriet to send her falling onto her backside.

Candice thought for certain that she was going to fall, but Dylan was quite muscular, and lust seemed to heighten his strength. His hands cupped her naked buns to lift Candice's feet off the floor. She whipped her legs around his hips as he lifted her. He walked three steps into the apartment before turning to his left. A moment later, Dylan was again ecstatically plundering Candice, this time pleasuring her vigorously against the noisy folding doors of her entryway closet.

"Take me!" Candice gasped, the lewd words coming out between frantic thrusts by Dylan. She squeezed her eyes tightly shut, but imagined what her roommate looked like sitting on the floor only a few feet away, watching her get spectacularly fucked. "Make...me...come!"

She was screaming in Dylan's ear when she began a series of climactic contractions. She was still screaming when his roar of ecstasy rang in her ears. She knew that for the second time that evening, she was getting flooded with a handsome man's semen.

When Dylan at last became still, Candice felt as though her muscles had instantly lost all strength. If his hands had not continued cupping her bottom, she would have fallen to the floor. Her legs, which moments earlier had no trouble wrapping around his lean hips with the strength of steel bands, unclasped until her toes touched the floor.

He was still inside her. Candice had the strangely comical sense of being held in a standing position because of his cock. It took a while before Candice managed to get her feet firmly beneath her with her legs supporting her weight. Her arms were still around Dylan's neck, when she heard her roommate said, "Hi, Mr. Amberson. Um...it's good to see you again. Oh, God, that sounds so lame. Hi, Candice. I, um, I thought you'd forgotten your keys or something. I guess I shouldn't have opened the door, should I?"

"Harriet, say good night."

"Fine. Good night. But this is so *not* the end of this story." As she disappeared into her bedroom, she called out, "I insist on details, Candice! I want word-pictures, understand?"

* * * *

"Oh my God!" Harriet exclaimed later that evening. "I can't believe my ears! How lucky can one girl get?"

Candice sighed, closed her eyes, put her face in her hands, and mumbled, "Harriet, that's not exactly the kind of response I was hoping for from you." She spread her fingers to peer between them and looked at her best friend and roommate. "I haven't had sex in months. And then, completely without any planning on my part, mind you, I have sex with two of the hottest guys ever to walk this planet all in one night."

"Details, my lucky friend! The Devil's in the details, and I want to know what he's been up to!" Harriet was sitting on the floor in a thigh-length Minnie Mouse nightshirt. "I got a look at Mr. Amberson when you and he—what's the word for it?—disengaged. He's got a nice one, doesn't he?"

"Can we just decide to not get into the specifics of this evening?" Sitting on the small living room sofa in her apartment, Candice looked at the clock on the wall. It was nearly four o'clock. "Things like this just don't happen to me."

"I've never done it standing up." Harriet combed fingers through her hair and gave Candice a searching look. "Was that his idea, or yours?"

"His, of course. I'd never done it like that before, either." She inhaled deeply, then let her breath out in a long, slow sigh. "Dylan has been flirting with me for a couple weeks now, but he's such a player that I never took him seriously. The next thing I know, he's waiting for me in the shadows behind the Club. We're talking and what not, and the before I know it he's kissing me."

"Very cool."

"And then he's on his knees in front of me, taking my panties off."

"That's it, I'm getting out my vibrator and going to the bathroom the instant this story's over."

"Can we be serious here? I never—and I mean *never*—intended for any of this to happen."

"Did Mr. Amberson make you come?"

Candice nodded and looked away.

"You came because he was eating you out?"

"That's such an ugly way of putting it."

Harriet sighed theatrically. "I think I could come just from *thinking* about Mr. Amberson going down on me."

Candice pushed herself off the sofa. "I'm going to bed."

"I'm getting my vibrator and then going to the bathroom."

"Have a good time."

In a faintly envious tone, Harriet replied, "It won't be nearly as good a time as you've had tonight, that's for damned sure."

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Chapter Six

Kansas City, Kansas

Nick looked at Al "Big Al" Harriman and reminded himself for the nth time that the crime boss hadn't risen from street thug to crime czar by letting men who worked for him violate orders without paying a terrible price.

But Big Al's still just a man, and if he gets shot with a gun or stabbed with a knife, he bleeds and dies, just like everyone else.

It was with this thought that Nick took comfort in. Big Al was a legend in the history of crime in the Midwest, but he was a living legend, and as Nick knew, living legends eventually turned into *dead* legends.

If necessary, Nick intended to assist Big Al in becoming a ranking member of that latter clique.

"Your envelope's been a bit thin lately," Big Al said, thumbing through the common white #10 envelope that all of his top lieutenants used to deliver their weekly payments. He ran his thumbnail along the edge of well-circulated fifty and one hundred dollar bills. "You been having some problems out there in the prairie?"

"Over the next couple of months you'll see a real nice up-tick from me," Nick replied, leaning back in his chair and putting an ankle up on the opposite knee. Having gained more than thirty pounds over the past couple years, Nick had to grab his right ankle to pull the foot up onto his left knee. He looked around the family restaurant to make sure the few customers and one waitress weren't paying him any undue attention. "The Dakotas have been hit with this damned recession, just like everyone else."

"That's bullshit," Big Al replied. When he smiled, there wasn't any warmth in it. "I read the *Journal* just like any other businessman. North Dakota's got more millionaires per capita than any other state in the union. And with all that oil they're finding up there, it's about the only state where there's not enough strong men to fill the jobs they got. There's what? A twelve-to-one ratio of men to women in some of the boom towns in the western part of the state? That's got to leave plenty of room for a man such as yourself to see opportunities for profit."

"The envelopes will get thicker. Trust me." Nick kept his anger to himself. He didn't like anyone lecturing him about crime. He was a goddamned expert at it, after all. Never in his life had he ever had to stoop so low as to get an honest job to make a living. "I've got a couple plans I'm working on, new stuff to improve the revenue stream."

Big Al's dark eyes narrowed. "I like new ideas, just make sure you don't bring no attention to yourself."

Nick raised his hands palm outward. "You gotta know me by now. Whatever I do, it always stays under the radar."

The crime boss, whose headquarters was in Kansas City, but whose sphere of influence ran through both of the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Kansas, as well as some of Iowa and Missouri, nodded his shaven, bowling ball-sized head contemplatively. "Yeah. That's good. Just don't get too greedy. If we take a little, we get a lot. If we take too much, we get the FBI breathing down our necks."

Now that he's on top and he's got his mansion and his fortune tucked away in a numbered account in a bank in the Bahamas, Big Al's getting soft. He's afraid of losing what he's got. Five years ago, Big Al never would have told nobody to not get too greedy. Greed's the mother's milk of guys like us.

"Like I said, you ain't got nothing to worry about," Nick replied. "You'll get what you got coming to you real soon." Big Al stood up from his chair, signaling the end of the monthly meeting. "Good. I like getting what's coming to me."

Nick watched as his boss and mentor turned and walked away. As he watched the retreating, hulkish figure in the thousand-dollar silk suit, Nick was wondering whether he should pull the trigger and kill Big Al himself, or if he should give Digger the chance to make his bones and prove his loyalty.

For all the beatings that Digger had delivered under orders from Nick, he'd never killed anyone. Yet. On the other hand, Nick could prove his own toughness by handling the killing personally. Nick knew that in his line of work, there was always value in proving one's own ruthlessness.

* * * *

New Oslo, North Dakota

Dylan looked at the report in his hands and suddenly realized that he'd been reading the same paragraph for three or four minutes, and couldn't remember a single salient fact of the report's conclusion regarding the potential profit. The story was all about a new piece of legislation a neighboring state's senator had proposed regarding the exploration of oil in the prairie states.

"Damn," he whispered softly, to himself, sitting alone in his luxuriously appointed office. He dropped the report onto his desk, then swiveled his chair around to look out the windows down at the rapidly growing city of New Oslo. "Damn it all to hell." He inhaled deeply, let out his breath slowly, and whispered, "I'm not in love with Candice Olssen, and no one can convince me otherwise."

There was more hope in Dylan's tone than conviction. The millionaire had lived his life on his own terms. He was secure in the knowledge of his own wealth, intellect, and physical superiority. But he was discovering that at the age of thirty, he had finally met a woman who was a pleasure to be with even after they'd had sex.

In fact, the more time he spent with Candice, the more of her time he coveted. The more he made love to her, the more she excited.

She had turned his comfortable world upside-down. Everything he thought he knew about himself and his carefree bachelor's existence had turned out to be false. It had been two weeks since he'd first made feverish love to Candice, with her roommate, Harriet, as witness, and in that time he'd managed to get her alone to make love at a minimum every other day.

But the lovemaking did not satisfy him completely, because it was always frantic and in a semi-public place. His orgasms did not quench his sensual appetite for Candice.

Unlike all the other women who had entered and exited his life without causing much of a ripple on the surface of his emotions, Candice was in his thoughts almost constantly. And, most infuriating and frustrating of all, she refused to go out publically with him. She adamantly refused to allow him to let anyone know they were romantically involved.

She was continually turning his cock into stone and his heart into melted butter, and Dylan didn't seem to have a single clue on how to make her understand that, for the first time in his life, he *wanted* people to know he was romantically linked to a woman.

"But I'm just a waitress at a bar and grill," she countered when he had insisted they go public with their affections. "You're a millionaire a gazillion times over. The Ambersons expect you to marry a rich debutante and have many little Ambersons, all of whom will be millionaires the instant they're born. I know that sounds cold, but it's the truth, and I'd rather not be naïve."

"You just don't understand," Dylan had said, deflated by Candice's words because he understood their veracity.

"I understand you want me," she had replied, turning her back to him and lifting the hem of her white waitress dress over her hips to reveal white bikini panties stretching over the cheeks of her ass. She had placed her hands against the outside wall of The Cattleman's Paradise. "And I want you. So take my panties down and take me, Dylan. Hurry, darling. We haven't much time, and I need to feel you inside me."

Sitting in his office, a shiver went through him, and he blinked his eyes to chase away the reverie and bring himself back to the safe but boring here-and-now. He looked across town at the crane being used to build the new office complex. It would be a six-story building, matching the building in which Galaxy International was headquartered. City ordinance prevented any buildings being taller than six stories, and it rather irked Dylan that the building he had helped one of the top architectural firms from New York City to design would no longer be the single tallest building west of Minneapolis and east of Salt Lake City.

The vibration inside the breast pocket of his Savile Row coat informed him someone was calling his personal cell phone. He always carried with him two cell phones: one for business and one for pleasure. It was his private phone that was buzzing in his pocket.

"Hello?"

"My darling stud, I've gone without that magnificent cock of yours far too long, so I'm sending over my private jet to whisk you away to me." The voice had a heavy French accent, and belonged to one of the more famous Parisian actresses. She was a big hit on the Continent and in India, but was just now beginning to make a name for herself in Hollywood. "Do not tell me you are too busy because nothing can be more important to you than making love to me. I will not accept any excuses."

Dylan smiled and even chuckled a little, but the invitation didn't give him the enormous pleasure it had prior to his *involvement*, whatever the hell that singular word meant, with Candice.

"There is no need for you to pack your luggage," the actress continued after several seconds of silence from Dylan. "You do not need any clothes because I intend to keep you naked the entire time we are together." She issued that rich, distinctly self-absorbed laugh of hers that Dylan had learned to simultaneously love and loathe. She was as narcissistic as she was horny. "I'm in California. My plane will be there in a couple hours."

"Don't send your jet," Dylan said. The words came out without any forethought. They just seemed to escape his lips. "You know I have my own private jet."

"Let me fly you here. The least I can do for all that beautiful fucking you will give me is pay for the travel expenses."

"No. I can't leave New Oslo. I have to stay here. It's important."

"What?" exclaimed the actress. It was clear in her single one-word response that she would not graciously accept her invitation being rejected. Her accent became more pronounced with her rising anger. "Do you not know how many men would die to have me suck their cock?"

"Honey, don't take this personally," Dylan said quickly, sensing a disaster that he desperately wanted to avert. "Its work that's keeping me from you, that's all."

She harrumphed, and Dylan could picture her deliberating whether he was telling the truth.

In a softer voice, she asked, her French accent doing unsettling things to Dylan's libido, "It's not another woman? You know I have the sweetest pussy in the world. Remember how much you love to fuck me, then tell me that all the money in the world could not keep you away." In a whisper she added, "You can fuck my ass, if you want. Your cock is too big for me back there, but I will let you. So come to me, my darling cowboy stud. I will meet the plane at the airport, and suck your cock in the limousine all the way to my apartment."

"I'm sorry, but I really can't."

"You can come on my face."

Her voice was a sultry, obscene purr. She spoke as though she'd just laid down a trump card. Dylan had a difficult time remembering why he had found her sexy, to begin with. Now, she was to him an extremely attractive exterior hiding the self-absorbed and crass woman inside. He knew that it was Candice's entrance into his life that had made him see the actress for what she really was.

"I don't want to do that," Dylan replied.

"You do not tell the truth. I am beautiful and famous and you want to feel your cock in my mouth and see your cum on my face."

She sighed at the other end of the connection. Dylan felt his resolve hardening. The urge to see Candice immediately was nearly overpowering.

"So you will come to me because you cannot resist me and because I want you to." She laughed and said imperiously, "I should not have to beg. It is you who should beg me."

The words *I'll never touch you again* were nearly out of his mouth when the mental image of Candice, dressed in faded Lee jeans that hugged her bottom to perfection, flashed across the surface of his mind. He remembered how Candice laughed, and how her breasts were full and firm and succulent, and how she trembled and shivered and made that high-pitched squeak in her throat when she climaxed.

"I can't."

In a warning tone, the actress said venomously, "Dylan, you will have regrets if you do not come to me."

No, I'll regret the hell out of it if I do come to you.

"Sorry, my dear, but the answer is 'no." Dylan sighed and rubbed his eyelids with a forefinger and thumb. "I can't leave New Oslo for a myriad of reasons that I don't expect you to understand. Hell, I don't understand them myself."

"Bastard." She said sharply into the phone. "Selfish bastard!"

The line went dead, and Dylan closed his phone and returned it to his suit pocket. Selfish? Yes, Dylan thought, he probably was being selfish, but only because he wanted Candice so desperately that he couldn't think of doing anything that would displease her, and she'd already made it quite clear that she was *extremely* wary of his promiscuous past.

"Well, I'll be damned! I *am* in love with Candice." Dylan said, a smile spreading across his face as a newfound awareness filled his heart with unprecedented pleasure. In a whisper of amazement, he added, "Dylan, old boy, you are in *love!*"

* * * *

Bulldog was in his Ford SUV squad, driving through a construction zone in New Oslo. It was another day in the bustling, rapidly growing boom town. Since he was working the morning shift, before the serious drinking and carousing by the oilmen and cattlemen in the town started, there wasn't much to do but make sure that everyone was safe.

Bulldog was diving slowly, but his thoughts were moving rapidly. And they weren't on his driving. His thoughts were centered exclusively on the young daughter of first-generation Swedish immigrants, a woman with eyes the color of clean ocean water, and voluptuous curves that were so ostentatiously feminine that no man's libido could possibly not be inspired by them.

For the past two weeks, Candice had been the Sun which Bulldog's personal Earth revolved around. Constantly.

How many times in the past fortnight had he seen in his mind's eye Candice sitting on the bar stool, leaning back against the bar, her hands behind her back, her dress hiked up, her pupils dilated with passion? How many times had he recreated in his imagination the sensation of having her wet pussy surrounding the entire length of his cock? He could see his hands, as clearly as if he was watching a movie, as they locked the handcuffs around her wrists.

When he wasn't making love to Candice, he was thinking about it. When he was making love with Candice, he couldn't get enough of her.

It had never been like this. Never ever. Perhaps in the past there

had been a degree of fascination for a lover that stayed with him for a couple passion-filled days and nights. But it hadn't been like what he felt for Candice. Not to this all-consuming degree.

"What the hell!"

The shout brought Bulldog out of his reverie. Instinctively, he jerked the steering wheel hard to the right, and stomped on the brakes. In doing so, he managed to miss hitting two construction workers by mere inches.

"Hey, Bulldog, are you trying to kill us? Geez, do your sleeping at home, why don't you?"

Bulldog recognized the face of the man who had cursed at him, though he couldn't remember his name. Like so many of the recent arrivals to New Oslo, he was a construction worker in his twenties, there for the significant wages and steady employment opportunities that a growing town offered.

"Sorry, buddy," Bulldog said, giving the hardhat an old-boy grin. "Just thought I'd see if your reflexes were still sharp after all that drinking you did last night 'til past midnight."

Actually, Bulldog had worked the afternoon shift the previous day, so he couldn't possibly have seen the man at midnight, but the stunned look he received told the policeman his guess was spot-on.

"Come here a second," Bulldog said, affecting a fraternal tone.

The construction worked walked around the SUV to stand near the driver's side door.

"Next time you're drinking that hard, you take a cab home. Understand?"

"Yeah. Sure." The hardhat shifted his weight from one dustybooted foot to the other. "Listen, I never really intended on having that many, so I know you're right about me not driving like that."

"Don't let it happen again. Deal?"

"Deal."

Bulldog drove away, knowing that he had dodged a bullet just as much as the construction worker had.

But he still had another problem that didn't have such an easy answer to find.

What the hell was he going to do about Candice? She wouldn't even go to the movies with him, but her passion matched his in intensity.

* * * *

Candice stood under the hot, stinging spray of the shower and tilted her head back, letting the water caress her scalp. She was exhausted to the bone, but there seemed to be no let up in sight to her hectic schedule. For the past two weeks she had been living a life of utter and complete excess. She told her aunt and uncle that she wanted to work the extra shifts to make more money, and though she enjoyed the additional hourly income and the tips she received, what she enjoyed more was the fringe benefits of being a waitress at The Cattleman's Paradise. Namely, during the day she snuck out for magnificent, orgasmic bouts of lovemaking with the nearly inexhaustible sergeant named Bulldog Herndon. At night, almost without exception, the infamous and too-charming-by-half Dylan Amberson showed up at the saloon, his eyes sparkling with desire for her, his body lean and hard and ready to give her pleasure.

It was all quite much more than Candice felt she had any right to hope for. There were so few women in New Olson, and she had for herself two of the most gorgeous and loving men all to herself!

With her back toward the showerhead, Candice picked up a bar of soap and worked a thick lather between her palms. Then, turning sideways to the spray, she returned the soap to the dish and began touching herself. Her right hand was in front, slippery fingers soaping the slick, clean-shaven cunt lips. Her left hand snaked slowly around her hip to play with a newly-discovered source of exquisite sensation. She soaped her bottom liberally, and as the middle finger of her left hand slipped past the tight ring of muscle to enter her bottom, her right middle finger circled her clitoris briefly before sliding smoothly between sensitive lips.

I never used to do this, thought Candice as she began working the two fingers in and out of her tingling orifices. Not like this, anyway. A second finger made its way between her cheeks, pushing up into her forbidden passage. Candice felt the tightening within herself of an approaching climax. Someday, either Bulldog or Dylan is going to want my ass...and I won't tell him 'no.'

Her hands moved faster, pumping fingers deep, spreading the warmth of sensual desire throughout her body. Triangulating her fingers, she worked a third finger into her bottom. The sharp bite of pain lasted only a couple seconds.

Imagine making love to Bulldog and Dylan at the same time. Could I even take them inside me at the same time?

It was all Candice's greedy body needed. With the hot water splashing down upon her, and her soapy hands pistoning, she caressed herself as the waves of climactic desire washed over her.

In the end, she was so weak she almost collapsed in the shower.

Turning her body slowly, she rinsed off the soap and wondered just how many orgasms a woman could have before she could have no more. Was there a set limit?

No decent woman would ever fall in love with two men at the same time unless she wants to completely complicate her life. This entirely rational thought was followed with, I should get some vibrators. Which was immediately followed by, What would it feel like to have one vibrator in my ass, and the other in my pussy?

Chapter Seven

Nick was glad that he had changed the day of the week he collected protection money from The Cattleman's Paradise. He used to collect on Wednesday afternoons, when Candice wore her drab waitress uniform that did absolutely nothing to flatter her curvaceous form. Now he was collecting on a Saturday night, when she wore cowboy boots, jeans, and a cotton blouse she left unbuttoned enough to show a hint of cleavage. She never displayed more than a little of her extravagant endowment, but it was enough to please him and every man who entered the saloon in search of a hot steak and a cold beer.

Those big tits have gotta be double-Ds. He watched the voluptuous sway of Candice's breasts as she weaved between tables, balancing a tray of beers in her right palm at shoulder height, he felt a stirring in his groin. Someday soon, I'm going to fuck her tits. I'll teach her she's not too high and mighty for the likes of me.

Candice was smiling right up to the time she made eye contact with Nick. Then her smile vanished. Nick wanted to believe that he saw fear in her eyes, but he knew he didn't. He saw contempt, clear and undisguised. But he didn't see any fear. Not the way he used to. And he wondered what the hell changed.

She used to make a point of hiding her hatred of him. It wasn't a change for the better, he decided. But then, changes aren't necessarily permanent. He had frightened her before, and he could frighten her again.

Digger touched Nick on the shoulder from behind and asked, "You really going to let us have her when you're done with her?" "Absolutely. Ain't I always good to my word?"

"Damn straight, boss. Damn straight."

Candice distributed the beers from the tray, then crossed the saloon toward Nick. As she walked, she reached into the back pocket of her jeans. The move made her swaying breasts press more tightly against her shirtfront, and exposed slightly more cleavage. Nick felt his cock awaken. He knew at that moment that he wouldn't be a happy man until he had taken his satisfaction from the curvaceous blonde as many times as he was physically capable. Then he'd watch Digger and Pete have their fun.

"Here," she said sharply, looking at Nick but handing the folded bills to Digger. "Four hundred dollars. You're lucky you waited until nearly closing time or I wouldn't have had all of it."

"This week it's four hundred, but next week it goes to two-fifty, just like before," Nick said. Candice's scowl instantly transformed into a smile. He knew the smile wouldn't last. "The difference is that next week, after closing time, you and I will get more intimately acquainted."

Candice took a step back, the shock she felt visible in her expression. "No. I won't."

"Yes. You will." Nick saw fear in her eyes, real fear, and it gave him an almost physical sensation of elation. "You haven't a choice."

Candice's gaze went left and right as though searching for an escape. In a voice that carried just above the juke box and the laughter of the oilmen and cattlemen, she said, "You've got your money. All four hundred of it. Can't you let that be enough?"

Nick shook his head. "With the others who need my protection, it would be. But not you. You're just too beautiful for me to not get a taste of some sugar." He looked at her face and shivered at her beauty. "Digger and Pete know how to break a lot of bones without killing a person. Your aunt and uncle are old, and their bones are brittle. Think about that, then ask yourself whether you love them enough to drop down to your knees for me." He stifled the urge to reach a hand out to grope her breasts. "It's not a question of whether or not you're going to do me, it's only whether I need to have my boys bust up your aunt and uncle first."

* * * *

This time he means it, Candice thought as she looked into Nick's eyes.

For a long time now, he had told vulgar jokes about the sexual things he wanted to do to her. Having little choice but to pretend the comments didn't both her, she tried to slough off what he said. But this time there was a cold brutality to him that warned her he wasn't just being his usual despicable self. This time, he really meant it.

If she didn't relent to his wishes willingly, she had no doubt that Uncle Rolf and Aunt Agatha would end up in the hospital. Or maybe even the morgue.

And what good would her defiance accomplish? Sooner or later, she would have to give Nick what he wanted because if she didn't, she couldn't live with the consequences. The guilt of knowing she had caused physical harm to her aunt and uncle would be countless times worse than whatever guilt she'd feel in sexually satisfying a loathsome creature like Nick.

It was ten minutes to closing time. There were half a dozen holdouts, all nursing the last of their beers, all having been refused "one for the road" by Candice, despite their pleas. Her aunt and uncle had finishing cleaning the kitchen two hours earlier, and were long since gone. Harriet had left thirty minutes earlier. All that remained was for Candice to usher the last men out the door, take care of their empty beer bottles, and lock up.

It had been a busy night, and she had temporarily forgotten that Nick was scheduled to come for his protection money. Looking into Nick's eyes, Candice felt her insides tighten in an involuntary reaction to the presence of her nemesis. "You might just as well accept the inevitable," Nick said, his gaze touching Candice, defiling her in the cruelest ways. "I'm a man who always gets what he wants. If you haven't figured that out by now, you soon will."

The front door opened, drawing Candice's attention. She watched as Dylan walked in, tall and gorgeous, the twinkle in his eyes saying he was happy to see her once again.

A moment later, Bulldog walked through the front door, and it was at that moment that Candice knew with rock-solid certainty that this was going to turn into a long and complicated evening.

The instant her lovers saw Nick and his raw-knuckled men, their collective expressions changed from delight to low-level rage.

Please, God, don't let them pick a fight with Nick here tonight! I've got enough troubles without them getting involved!

"Hello, Alvin," Nick said, turning to square off against Bulldog. "Been a long time since I've seen you."

A shiver went through Candice when she watched Bulldog close the distance between himself and Nick.

"Go ahead, call me by my first name again," Bulldog said, his words a deadly challenge.

"Sorry," Nick replied without contrition. "I guess I forgot that you're a real up-and-comer in the New Oslo Police Department." He smiled nastily. "But then, New Oslo isn't exactly New York, now is it?" He looked briefly to his right and left, toward Digger and Pete, his smile simultaneously jovial toward his men and contemptuous toward the peace officer. "Of course, it ain't real hard being a big fish in a pond as small as New Oslo, now is it?"

"Do yourself a favor and walk away while you've still got two knees that work," Bulldog replied, his voice low, his face pale with fury. "And another thing. I want you to stay out of this place. I don't like seeing you here."

"You don't, eh? Well, that's too bad because now and then this gorgeous Swedish meatball and I have things we need to discuss, so that means I'll be stopping by whenever I like." Candice watched as his expression hardened, his eyes narrowing to slits as he looked at Bulldog. "And there's not a damn thing you can do about it, because this here's a free country." His smile was pure malevolence. "You don't have the power you think you do." He paused then drawled the final word out slowly, a syllable at a time. "Alvin."

Candice thought for certain that Bulldog would either start throwing fists, or draw his service pistol. But it wasn't Bulldog who reacted first, it was Dylan. He stepped forward quickly, saying, "Seems to me this is the right time for everyone here to be in a different part of the county. How about if you and your men hit the road, and I see what I can do to keep this sergeant from taking out his gun and putting bullet holes through you and these dumb fucks you think are protecting your sorry ass?"

It was clear to Candice that Digger and Pete wanted to take on Dylan for insulting them.

"Let's move," Nick said, in a pompous growl. "This place has begun to bore me."

As Nick and his men exited The Cattleman's Paradise, Bulldog turned to Dylan and said, "Thanks for the help. Now unless I'm mistaken, those men sitting over there work on one of your oilrigs. How about you escort them out the door, and you can come back another time for a nightcap?"

"Sounds fine," Dylan said, "except I'm coming back in." Candice watched his blue eyes become icy. "But don't you worry about shirking your duties by leaving. I'll see to it that Candice locks up and gets home safe and sound."

Bulldog shook his head slowly, and with a single finger against the brim, pushed his Stetson with the sergeant's badge on it back on his head. "No. Seeing to Candice's safety is my responsibility and no one else's."

"It's a responsibility I don't mind taking."

It was clear that Bulldog didn't like that comment. Candice

hurried two steps forward to stand between her two lovers.

"Don't," she whispered, putting her hands on Bulldog's chest. "Please, I'm begging you. I can't have you two fighting."

Bulldog looked her in the eyes, and when he smiled, she knew it was a false one. He said, "Don't worry. I'm just making sure that you're safe, that's all."

Dylan said, "I'll get my men out of here and headed home, then I'll be back." He hesitated a moment before adding, "I don't know exactly what the hell's going on, Candice, but I'm not leaving until I find out."

It was the last thing in the world she wanted to hear.

* * * *

That goddamned lawman has the hots for Candice! Dylan turned and headed for the last of the patrons in the saloon. He recognized the men, but couldn't remember any of their names. All of them worked for Galaxy, stationed with Well #21 near the Montana border. Maybe Bulldog is just taking his professional responsibilities a little too seriously. Maybe he really isn't trying to get into Candice's panties. Bullshit! Of course he's trying to get in Candice's panties! What man wouldn't?

Forcing such lacerating thoughts from his mind, Dylan approached the table of oilrig workers and said, "How many of you here know who I am?" All six confirmed they knew exactly who he was. In New Oslo, most folks recognized the Ambersons. "Good, then you know that I'm on your side." He put his hands on the table and bent low, his tone turning conspiratorial and authoritarian. "The cop knows you've been drinking, so unless you want to spend the night in jail, what I suggest is that you get the hell out of here right now. I'll stall him long enough for you men to drive away." He looked each man, in turn, straight in the eyes. "Now don't haul ass, but don't drive like your grandma. Just get out of here and go straight home. I'll stall the lawman this time, but don't think for a second that I'll be able to save your butts a second time. Get up, follow me out, and keep your mouths shut. Let's not give this cop any reason to stop and question any of you. Got it?"

Dylan watched as six heads nodded in unison, and it was only with great self-control that he was able to keep from smiling. He walked his men out the front door of the saloon. There were two pickup trucks and two SUVs in the parking lot that he didn't recognize. Only his own Cadillac and Bulldog's black-and-white squad SUV were familiar. Candice's car, he knew, would be parked near the back doors.

"Now guys, I want you to drive *very* carefully. Do you hear me? I'll keep the cop here, but I can't have you hurting yourselves or anyone else. Understood?"

Almost as a single voice, all six men answered, with respect and gratitude all but dripping off each of the two words, "Yes, sir."

It wasn't until the last of the red tail lights disappeared down the driveway and into the darkness that he turned and headed back toward the saloon, toward the woman he loved, and toward the deputy whose motives and conduct now created a host of suspicions in his mind.

In what he was quite certain was undignified haste, he returned to the saloon. His heart rate was steadily climbing, his palms becoming clammier by the second. Dylan's usually unflappable self-confidence was suddenly and inexplicably showing cracks in its foundation.

Dylan had fallen in love, which was something he hadn't planned on. He had lost all his sense of self-control of his heart, which he had maintained throughout countless affairs.

But with Candice, all of that was different. Everything that Dylan had thought he knew about himself had been turned upside down. And it scared the hell out of him.

He pushed open the front door to The Cattleman's Paradise with more force than he'd intended. The door swung on its hinges and banged loudly against the doorstop. The sound of the door slamming against the stop caused both Bulldog and Candice to stop their confrontation and look toward the cause of the noise.

A myriad of wildly conflicting images assaulted Dylan's highborne sensibilities in that next instant. He saw Candice, her face flushed, standing next to Bulldog. It was obvious that she was extremely agitated. Her right wrist was handcuffed to the policeman's left.

"What the hell is going on here?" Dylan exclaimed.

"She was going to run away. I had to stop her."

"So, like the policeman that you are, you resorted to form and slapped the 'cuffs on her?"

Bulldog lifted his hand. "On both of us, actually. I like having her close, and this seemed to be a nice way to guarantee it."

"I think we're going to need a drink," Dylan said. "Maybe a lot to drink." He walked behind the bar, found a bottle of Jack Daniels and two glasses and returned. "This is all so bizarre."

He looked into Candice's eyes, and despite his best intentions, he gaze flicked down to her bosom. He felt a rush of heat, just like he always did whenever he looked at her. Memories of their shared passion slithered through his consciousness, and for a moment he closed his eyes in an effort to organize his thoughts and emotions.

Bulldog went to a table and sat, leaning back in a chair. Candice stood for ever seconds, staring down at the policeman before she, too, took a chair.

"Policemen always carry two sets of handcuffs, don't they?" Dylan asked.

"It's not a regulation, but most of us do."

"Mind loaning me your second set?" When Bulldog handed him the 'cuffs, Dylan locked them around his own wrist, and then, without any forewarning, around Candice's free wrist. "There. If you're going to be bound to him, then you're going to be bound to me, too."

"Oh! You men!" she snapped, lifting her hands but not very far because of the 'cuffs. "Is this really necessary?"

"Might be," Bulldog said.

Dylan looked at the policeman. Though he was well acquainted with Bulldog, it wasn't as though they were good friends who bared their souls to each other. He poured several shots of sour mash into two glasses and pushed one across the table.

"We might just as well make ourselves comfortable," Dylan said, studying Bulldog's reaction. "And for starters, how about if I let you know right up front that I'm in love with Candice?"

He watched as her jaw dropped open. Bulldog was visibly shocked by the news, though he quickly shielded his emotions.

"Curious thing you saying you're in love with her, because that's what I was going to tell you. I'm in love with Candice, and I'm not the kind of man who likes to share."

Candice's head was down, her chin on her chest, as she whispered, "This can't be happening to me. This is *the* nightmare I desperately wanted to avoid."

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Chapter Eight

"So that's why she didn't have panties on that night," Bulldog said softly, nearly an hour later. He finished his glass of whiskey, poured bourbon into Dylan's glass, then his own. "You took them off her earlier in the evening. I'll be damned if you didn't have her first."

"Not really. Her aunt came to the back door and said she had to get to work," Dylan replied. "Without a backward glance, she walked right back in here and went to work. Left me with a cock as hard as your policeman's nightstick and not a damned thing to do with it."

Candice sighed softly, her face lowered, listening carefully as the men she loved put together the jigsaw puzzle of their collective lives over the past weeks. The secrets she had so carefully constructed and maintained had all been revealed under a glaring spotlight. During the days, she made love with Bulldog; during the nights, she blissfully accepted the pleasures that Dylan was so adept at providing.

"I'm in love with her." Bulldog's declaration was spoken in a tone of mystification. "That's just the way it is."

Candice's heart skipped a beat when Dylan's response did not immediately come. Finally, he said, "I never really planned on falling in love with her."

"You're in love with her. I'm in love with her. So what are we going to do about it?"

Candice moved both hands, looking at the shackles around her wrists. "You can start by taking off the handcuffs. And you can let me try to explain."

Dylan shook his head, then combed the fingers of his free hand through his hair. "No, when you talk, I believe every word you say." Bulldog added, "You could tell me the sun is going to rise in the west and set in the east from now on, and I'd probably believe you."

Dylan sighed and said, "So you just let Bulldog and I figure this mess out."

Candice started to rise to her feet, but was pulled down by both men. "That's so unfair," she said. "You don't have the right to decide on my life for me." Bulldog's gaze narrowed on her. "I didn't want to deceive you."

"Oh?" Bulldog asked, stepping toward Candice. "What did you want?"

"You," Candice whispered with simple honesty. She looked at Dylan and added, "And you. I wanted you both. I know that was selfish of me, and I don't blame you if you hate me for it." She closed her eyes. "I didn't mean for this to happen. Honestly I didn't."

She looked at the men, her gaze darting back and forth. She sensed their confusion, their anger, their surprise. The furious explosion of anger that she had suspected would happen at any second did not materialize.

"Come on," Bulldog said, getting to his feet. "Come over here."

He moved his hand and Candice felt the handcuff dig into the soft flesh of her wrist. She looked at the wrist locked to Bulldog's, then at the one locked to Dylan. For the past hour, they had discussed their mutual love for her, their lust for her, their surprise at not being the exclusive recipient of her charms. She felt drunk, though she hadn't had so much as a sip of alcohol.

"Remember, Candice, what it was like?" Bulldog said, leading her and Dylan over to the bar. He moved her so that she was standing directly in front of the stool that she had sat on when they'd made frantic, feverish love that first time. "Can you remember what it felt like to have me inside you? Remember what the handcuffs felt like around your wrists? That excited you, didn't it?"

She turned her face away and closed her eyes. She had played that scene over and over in her mind a thousand times. The staggering force of the climaxes that Bulldog had inspired that night still made her tremble.

She felt his fingers at her chin as he turned her face toward him.

"I'm the one you want."

Bulldog said it as a statement of fact. Candice opened her eyes a moment before he pressed his mouth down over hers. The kiss was firm, commanding in the way Bulldog's kisses often were. Candice tried to turn her face away, but he held her steady. When the tip of his tongue sought entrance into her mouth, Candice pressed her lips tightly together and turned her face away. She needed to think clearly and logically, to make sense of her world and her actions in it. All that she was absolutely certain of was that she *couldn't* think clearly when these men turned on their charm.

Bulldog moved his hand to the smoothly rounded mahogany bar, pulling Candice's arm away from her body. A moment later, Dylan did the same on the opposite side. With her arms outstretched and bent backward over a bar stool, Candice felt exposed, vulnerable, and fiercely desired.

"You need me," Dylan said in a tone hoarse with sexual tension. His lips brushed Candice's as he spoke. "I'm going to teach you that."

A myriad of conflicting sensations went through her as Dylan's mouth pressed against hers and his tongue, tasting pleasingly of bourbon, slipped intimately between her lips. It seemed wicked to respond so rapidly, so thoroughly, to being handcuffed and pressed against a bar by two gorgeous men. To have Dylan's tongue dancing with hers was ecstasy itself, yet the sensation was heightened when Bulldog kissed the side of her throat, then bared his teeth and nipped her skin.

Hands, strong and commanding, caressed her. Long fingers pressed into her left breast while the nipple of her right breast was pinched and tugged. Dylan thrust his fingers into her hair and clenched his hand into a fist to hold her fast as his kiss deepened, becoming firmer, more possessive. His tongue was deep in her mouth when Bulldog sucked her earlobe between his lips. Candice's legs trembled, her knees nearly buckling. Her body was being bombarded by desires she could hardly comprehend.

A hand slipped between her thighs, caressing her skillfully. Though the contact was through jeans and bikini panties, the sensation it drew from Candice was spontaneous and electrifying. The sparking embers of burgeoning passion came to life in her soul.

The kiss with Dylan finally ended. Candice wondered chaotically if her flesh was about to burst into flames. She felt the buttons of her blouse coming unfastened. She started to resist, but the handcuffs stopped her. The crisp bite of the steel surrounding her wrists, thwarting her efforts, excited her.

"I can't think when you kiss me like that."

It was all she managed to say before Bulldog's kiss stole her breath away, his tongue tasting her, caressing her.

There was a hand between her legs. She wasn't certain who it belonged to. Not knowing made the stimulation even more powerful. The hand moved firmly, confidently, sliding back and forth to tantalize her clit. The slick nectar of lusty excitement moistened the lips of her cunt, making her panties cling. She whimpered softly, unable to stop or even slow down the runaway freight train of her arousal.

She was sucking on Bulldog's tongue when Dylan said, his breath warm against her ear, "It turns me on to watch you kissing him. Maybe it shouldn't, but it does, and that's the damned truth of it."

Candice let out a soft squeal, the sound little more than a squeak as her mind and body were besieged with arousing sensations so powerful they were nearly frightening. The mounds of her breasts were tugged above the cups of her brassiere. She was dancing her tongue with Bulldog's when Dylan captured the crest of her left breast in his warm, wet mouth.

Each man had only one free hand, so they were forced to work together. And though there was much confusion and fumbling about, as Bulldog kissed her deeply, the waistband of her jeans were unsnapped, and the zipper jerked down. An instant later, her jeans and panties were tugged down to the tops of her cowboy boots. She felt the coolness of the air against the damp, heated lips of her cunt. Her clit literally ached with need.

Then Dylan's mouth, wet and warm and infinitely skilled, closed on her pussy. The jarring, jolting pleasure that his wickedly intimate kiss provoked made Candice want to scream out in ecstasy, though the sound was swallowed up by Bulldog's kiss.

Candice was by no means a virgin, and her activities of the past weeks had, in total, equaled more lovemaking than she'd previously done in her entire life. Still, nothing she had before experienced could prepare her for the sensation of kissing Bulldog while Dylan sucked lustily on her clitoris. Nothing.

She had the handcuffs around her wrists to keep her hands outstretched and pinned to the bar, and the jeans around her legs, rolled up tight against the tops of her boots, served a similar function. Candice felt vulnerable and wildly aroused. She had experienced cunnilingus from Dylan before. She'd even climaxed from it, her body spasming, her hips churning as his lips and tongue drove her to the edge of sensual endurance and beyond. But that was when she was experiencing his skills, and concentrating solely upon them. Bulldog hadn't been involved.

Bulldog's involvement, combined with the handcuffs, added *so* much more to the experience.

There was an orgasm approaching at galloping speed, and there wasn't an ounce of doubt in Candice's mind that when it arrived, it would have all the subtlety of a sledgehammer blow.

And she wasn't wrong.

"Oh, God!" she gasped, her body bucking and writhing as Dylan sucked on her clit and Bulldog drew a ravenous suction on her nipple as convulsing waves of pure, raw emotion shuddered through her.

The contractions were too powerful to be simply pleasurable.

They were ecstasy unleashed, and so fierce they held with them elements of mystery. *Deliciously* erotic elements of mystery. Candice's spine was severely arched, and she would have literally fallen on the floor had the two men not been there. Dylan's free hand cupped her naked buns to hold her firmly, keeping Candice as motionless as possible as he pleasured her through her climactic gyrations.

"Stop!" Candice gasped when the last of her contractions trickled upward from her pelvis through her spine to tingle pleasantly in her brain. "Too sensitive. *Way* too sensitive now."

Bulldog released her nipple with a moist, popping sound. When she looked into his eyes, just inches from her own, she saw a glittering quality of lust that was fierier than she'd ever before witnessed from him. And when she looked down, between the quivering mounds of her heavy breasts, and saw Dylan with his chin on her naked thigh, and his lips and cheeks and chin all shimmering with a light coating of her honey, she knew with unwavering certainty that she was in for an evening the likes of which she'd never before experienced.

"How many times have I made you come this way now?" Dylan asked, rising to his feet. He was a tall man with a narrow waist and broad shoulders, his height being enhanced slightly with brightly polished cowboy boots. Candice watched, speechless, as he pulled down his zipper and wrestled through the fly a formidable erection she had, over the past couple weeks, learned to crave. To Bulldog, he said, "I've never been one to share, but I guess it's something I've got to get used to."

She wanted to tell Dylan, honestly and sincerely, that she never meant to deceive either him or Bulldog. It hadn't been her *plan* to fall in love with both of them, it was just something that happened, and once it had, she was like an addict, unable to control her desperate passion for them.

This was what she wanted to say, but she didn't get the chance.

Bulldog's enormous hand gripped her by the biceps and pulled her away from the bar, shifted up onto her shoulder, then pushed downward. A moment later, Candice was on her knees, her hands cuffed to the men, her shirt unbuttoned with her brassiere tugged beneath her breasts, her jeans and panties in a tangled knot at the tops of her boots.

Candice raised her cuffed hands, wrapping her fingers around the shafts of her men. It was difficult to stroke them the way she wanted to because their hands were locked to hers, and because she had no experience whatsoever in pleasuring two men at the same time.

"Do it, baby," Bulldog said, his hips pumping slightly to power his cock through the circle of Candice's fingers. "Let me feel those sexy lips of yours."

Candice's looked at what filled her hands. It was surreal to see two hard erections, to feel them throbbing with lusty tension. Not in her wildest, most uninhibited fantasies had she ever thought of herself as a woman willing to get into a *ménage a trois*, yet here she was, on her knees between Dylan and Bulldog.

She looked at Bulldog's cock, seeing the pearl of fluid glistening at the slitted tip. Leaning toward him, she flicked her tongue against the tip, licking off the salty droplet. When Bulldog cupped her head in his free hand and pulled her closer, she offered no resistance as his thick, solid flesh forced her jaws apart and he filled her mouth.

She took him as deeply as she could, drawing a firm vacuum, her cheeks caving inward to conform to his girth. Bulldog held her securely, his crown pulsing against the back of her throat, a low groan of pleasure rumbling out of his chest. Candice shivered on her knees, stroking that part of him that she couldn't fit into her mouth as her other hand roamed over Dylan's length.

After several undulations, Candice released Bulldog from her oral embrace, turned toward Dylan, and sucked him in deeply. He, too, groaned his approval of her actions.

While holding as much of Dylan's erection in her mouth as she

could fit, Candice tilted her head back on her shoulders to look up at him. He was looking down at her, his eyes glassy with the passion she inspired. A sense of confidence she had not previously possessed slithered through Candice's consciousness.

I'm good at this. They love it when I'm on my knees.

Whatever she lacked in experience, she more than made up for with enthusiasm. Candice distributed her attention equitably, sucking and stroking and nibbling with her lips more ardently than ever before.

It was the high-pitched, startled "Oh!" that drew their attention. With Dylan's cock still filling her mouth, Candice shifted her gaze and found herself looked at an ashen-faced, wide-eyed Harriet, who stood twenty feet away at the end of the bar. In a whisper, she said, "I forgot my phone. I had to come back for it." She showed it to them, as though to justify her invasion of their privacy. "I'm sorry."

"Damn it," Bulldog growled.

Dylan said, "You seemed to have a flare for catching me with my pants down."

"She's seen you before? Did *everyone* know about you and Candice?"

"It's a strange story," Dylan answered, "and Harriet watching us definitely hadn't been in my plans. It just sort of happened."

"Seems like where Candice's concerned," he said, reaching down and grabbing her by the upper arms to haul her easily to her feet, "lots of things just sort of happen."

With incredible ease, he took Candice by the waist, lifted her, then set her upon the same bar stool that she'd sat on their first night together. Candice looked around, her brain spinning dizzily, trying to comprehend just what was happening in her life. To her left, she had her roommate and best friend, standing open-mouthed with shock. Harriet had watched her and Dylan making love, standing up in the apartment, bouncing noisily against the closet doors, so it wasn't exactly as though she hadn't seen her behaving intimately. Still, being handcuffed and simultaneously having the ardent attentions of two men directed exclusive toward her made the encounter infinitely more wicked and arousing.

When Bulldog tugged off one of her cowboy boots, he nearly pulled Candice off the bar stool. Dylan acted quickly, hauling her back into proper position. By the time Bulldog had her other boot off and was dragging her jeans over her calves and feet, Dylan was kneeling on a bar stool, his hand fisted in her silky hair.

Candice felt a strong hand behind her knee, lifting it and to spread her thighs wide apart. A moment later, she felt the plum-sized crest of Bulldog's cock rubbed against her.

As Dylan filled her mouth with his cock and Bulldog her pussy, Candice thought, What does Harriet think of me now?

Chapter Nine

Bulldog looked down at his own erection sticking out through the fly of his blue policeman's trousers. His cock was solid, pulsing with lust. His erection seemed harder than ever before in his life. The urge to thrust into Candice fast and deep was powerful, but he resisted this impulse. His size meant it was necessary to be cautious. Rubbing the crown of his erection against her pink lips, he entered her slowly, watching as she opened to accept his invasion.

"Oh, *yes*!" he hissed as Candice's warmth and moisture surrounded the crest of his cock.

He pushed in a little ways, then withdrew until over the very tip of his crown still separated her lips. Pausing several seconds, he felt the floodtide of passion coursing through his veins and knew then and there that he wouldn't have his usual sexual stamina. The lust that Candice inspired was burning too hotly for him to last long.

Holding her by the hips, Bulldog pushed into Candice a second time, thrusting slightly harder than before. He buried nearly his entire length in Candice, and the soft, purring sound she made told him everything he needed to know about her willing acceptance.

Candice sat on the stool, leaning back against the bar, her hands outstretched, level with her shoulders. Her face was turned to the side, her mouth filled with Dylan's erection. Bulldog watched, stunned that he wasn't in the least bit jealous, as Dylan pumped his hips, working the crown and shaft of his cock in and out of Candice's mouth.

"So beautiful," Bulldog whispered. "I can't believe I'm watching what you're doing to Dylan and all I can think about is how sexy you look." Bulldog thrust again into Candice and this time buried his entire length within her slick embrace. When his pelvis collided with hers, she rocked on the bar stool, and the mounds of her breasted swayed tautly.

Bending forward, Bulldog sucked the pink tip of Candice's left breast into his mouth. He worked his tongue on the elongated nipple, knowing from experience how much she loved having her breasts kissed and caressed.

An array of stimuli overwhelmed Bulldog's senses. Motionless with his cock buried inside Candice, he could feel her intimate muscles squeezing him, kneading his hard flesh. And from above his head, the sound of Dylan feeding himself to her was wetly erotic to the senses.

Releasing her breast, Bulldog kissed across the front of her body until he took her other nipple between his lips. He bared his teeth and bit her nipple lightly. She moaned loudly around the hard man filling her mouth.

Straightening, he slipped his free hand beneath Candice's knee to lift it so that her bare thigh wouldn't be scraped by his holstered pistol. Looking at the woman he loved as she sucked wantonly on another man's cock, Bulldog's hips began churning, pumping the long, hard length of his erection between Candice's slick lips.

Candice's breathing was coming faster and faster through her nostrils. Bulldog had pleasured her into orgasms enough times to know that she wasn't far from climaxing for him. As he plunged into her with increasing speed and energy, he watched her eyes open briefly then squeeze tightly shut. A moment later, as he seesawed between her feminine lips, her legs began quivering and the highpitched sound that came from deep inside signaled her orgasm.

"That's it, sweetness," Bulldog growled, feeling her contractions squeezing his undulating cock. "Come for me." He clenched his teeth, fighting a losing battle to postpone his own climax. "Oh, damn! I can't—" With a final, furious plunge into Candice, Bulldog's passion reached its summit. Engulfed in the warmth and wetness of her pussy, the policeman unleashed a torrent of semen inside the woman he loved.

* * * *

With one foot on a bar stool with the opposite knee on the bar, Dylan watched Bulldog's long cock pumping into Candice, his flesh glistening in the neon light with her freely-flowing juices. Her body was being buffeted by Bulldog's churning hips, her naked breasts trembling, rolling to and fro. He felt the urge to suck on her nipples, but his position was difficult enough to maintain as it was. Bending far forward would surely cause him to lose his balance.

A high, keening sound came from Candice, and Dylan knew that she was climaxing. Just seconds after Candice climaxed, words were ripped from Bulldog's throat, and he thrust full-length into her and then went motionless.

This was all new territory for Dylan, and there didn't seem to be a roadmap to tell him the right course of action to take. Though he had on numerous occasions been in bed with more than one woman, never before had he ever entertained a woman with another man present. Now it seemed that he was going to share the love of his life with a man who wasn't exactly the best friend he'd ever had. Added to all of that was the steel handcuffs that bound the three of them together.

If that wasn't novel enough for Dylan, he had just given a declaration of love to a woman. It was something he'd scrupulously avoided with the same discipline other men avoided falling off tall buildings.

He bent his knees, lowering his hips to slide a couple inches of his pulsing erection between Candice's lips. She was breathing deeply through her nostrils now, coming down from the orgasmic heights she had recently ascended. "You're going to make me come soon," Dylan said, a little embarrassed that he was so excited he couldn't hold his climax back the way he usually could. "Candice, your lips feel like heaven."

Straightening his legs, he withdrew so that she could flick her tongue against the slit at the tip, the way she always did, but this time she turned her face aside and released him.

"Come inside me," she whispered, a feverish quality to her tone. "I want your cum inside me with Bulldog's."

After a moment's thought, Dylan replied, "If the three of us are going to be one, I suppose that's the way it should be."

Changing positions, because of the handcuffs, was not done exactly smoothly. But soon enough Candice was bent over a bar stool with Dylan behind her, rubbing the crown of his erection over her lips as Bulldog, standing in front of her, fed her his cock.

"Oh, yesss!" Dylan sighed when he slid the length of his erection into Candice. He had his hands on the curve of her hips and, as he withdrew, watched his shaft sliding between the cheeks of her bottom. Someday soon, if she'd let him, he was going to be pumping hard and fast between those buns. But that was for another night. On this night, the woman he loved had asked him to release his cum inside her pussy, where another man already had.

Dylan got the feeling he was going to be doing a lot of things he'd never done before, now that he was part of a loving *ménage a trois*.

* * * *

"You've got to promise to never tell anyone," Candice said to Harriet after washing up in the restroom.

"Even if I did, who'd believe it?" Harriet shook her head as though shocked at the behavior, combing her fingers through her hair. "You are one lucky girl, that's all I've got to say."

"Do you really think I'm lucky?" Candice was making mild adjustments to her mascara. "To fall in love with two men at the same time isn't something I'd ever dreamed of doing. It certainly isn't anything that I had wanted."

"But once it happened?"

"My biggest mistake was not being honest with Bulldog and Dylan, not honest from the very beginning. Thinking that they would share me was just too much to hope for, I guess."

"Well, you guessed wrong."

She turned away from the mirror, dropping the mascara in her purse. "You don't think badly of me?"

Harriet shook her head. "I'm battling with the demons of jealousy, but that's my issue to deal with, not yours."

They stepped out of the restroom to find Bulldog and Dylan had also properly arranged their clothing.

"Someday soon, I'd like to get you *completely* out of that blue policeman's uniform," she said to Bulldog, "and you completely out of that Brooks Brothers suit." She lifted up on her tiptoes and kissed the tip of Dylan's chin. "I don't think I've made love to either one of you when you didn't have your boots on."

"What we need is to get away for a couple days. Someplace private where we can think this through," Bulldog said. "As a sergeant in a small town like New Oslo, I've pretty much got a spotlight on me constantly, and I'm not so sure the Chief of Police and the city council would be all that amused to find out one of their sergeants is one third of a threesome."

"I know just where to go. Bulldog, can you take three days off?"

"I've got almost four weeks' worth of PTO to take whenever I want."

He looked at Candice as her heart once again began to speed up. "And you?"

She did a quick calculation in her head and realized she didn't have to pay Nick for another week. For that, she'd have to be in New Oslo. Other than that, it would be good to get away from The Cattleman's Paradise for a couple days. She'd practically been living there for the past couple weeks.

She looked questioningly at Harriet, who said without hesitation, "I'll work double shifts. And all I want in return from you is stories."

From an inside coat pocket, Dylan flipped open a phone and touched a single button.

"Who are you calling at this hour?" Candice asked.

"The hangar." It looked like Dylan was about to say more, but he turned his attention to the phone. "Hello? This is Dylan Amberson. Is the Saab ready for flight?...How long to get it ready to go to Key West, Florida?...Great, we'll be there in forty-five minutes." He snapped closed the phone, gave a smile that had charmed countless people in boardrooms and bedrooms, and said, "Don't bother packing. I'll buy whatever we need in Key West."

Candice watched as Bulldog shifted his weight from one foot to the other. It appeared that Dylan might be perfectly willing to spend money lavishly as gifts, but Bulldog wasn't comfortable being the recipient of that generosity.

* * * *

It was just after five o'clock in the morning when Candice walked into the front lobby of the *International Waters Hotel*. The interior was done in Scandinavian minimalism, with lots of glass and polished brass.

The night manager, a man in his sixties with a full head of perfectly trimmed gray hair with matching mustache, wearing the hotel's requisite aqua blue suit coat, smiled warmly at Dylan as they approached the front desk. Candice noted that the manager's eyes hardly flicked left and right to take in her and Bulldog. She received the scantest of attention.

"Good evening, Mr. Amberson."

"Good evening, Mr. Sidney."

"Is this an unexpected visit?"

"I'm afraid so." Dylan raised an eyebrow sardonically. "You know how things just sort of crop up."

The manager raised his right hand and snapped his fingers. Two uniformed personnel, a man in his thirties and a similarly aged woman, hurried toward.

"I don't see any luggage," Mr. Sidney said. "Will you require a tailor, a modiste?"

"Neither. We'll take off-the-rack. We'll be here three days, so that means we'll need both casual and formal attire for my friend and me, and the lady here. Let's make sure that someone as attractive as she isn't walking through the lobby of *The International Waters* wearing something unbecoming."

"Of course not, Mr. Amberson. I'd never let that happen."

"And my usual suite?"

This time Candice saw the faintest hint of a smile touch the corners of Mr. Sidney's mouth, and his gaze went toward Bulldog for a split-second.

"It is being prepared for you as we speak." He looked at Dylan. "You have no cameras?"

"No," Dylan replied. "Of course not. I know the rules." He turned and looked at Candice and Bulldog. "And the only place you can use your cell phone is in our room. You can't even have your cell phone in your hand when you're outside your room."

Ten minutes later, Candice stepped into the largest single hotel room she'd ever seen. In one corner was a Jacuzzi. The bed was kingsized. The south wall was floor to ceiling windows, along with a balcony, that faced the ocean.

"So what's a room like this cost a night?"

She saw the annoyance come and leave in Dylan's countenance in a second. "Let's make an agreement, shall we? As long as we're in Key West, nobody gets to ask what anything costs, okay? Deal?"

"I didn't mean to make you angry."

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Dylan raised his eyebrows. "Deal?"

"Deal."

Both she and Dylan turned their attention to Bulldog. He scratched his cheek with the back of his thumbnail, obviously deliberating the matter carefully before finally saying, "I suppose it's a deal, but I'll make it up to you somehow. I promise you that. I'm a man who likes to carry his own weight."

Candice looked at the bed, and quite suddenly, all the hours and all the emotional turmoil of the day seemed to weight down upon her shoulders.

"I'm exhausted. Exhausted to the bone," she said quietly.

"Then let's go to bed," Dylan said quietly, stepping up behind her to put his hands on her shoulders. "All three of us."

* * * *

Candice awoke slowly, peacefully. She was warm, but not unpleasantly so. Though still half-asleep, she was conscious of feeling protected.

She had Bulldog on her right and Dylan to her left.

A soft, sleepy smile touched her lips. After nearly a month of feverish lovemaking with these men, standing up, against doors and walls, stretched over barstools, and once even sitting on the sink in the saloon's women's restroom, she had finally spent a night in bed with both of them. At last she had them both in a big, comfortable bed with her, and she hadn't so much as given either man a truly passionate kiss.

We were all too tired last night. But I know my men, and I know they'll make up for lost opportunities. They always do.

She moved the blankets very slowly, not wanting to awaken either man. Sunlight streamed through the oceanfront windows. The clock on the bedside table let her know it was nearly nine-thirty.

She looked at Bulldog and smiled. In sleep, he didn't appear

menacing at all. He often presented a frightening demeanor when he was on duty. Now, as he slept, even the snarling Bulldog tattoo on his huge right biceps didn't look so angry.

Dylan's longish hair, which was always artfully disarranged, was now just a mess, and Candice loved it that way. She'd never before seen him anything less than properly "put together."

She moved slowly toward the headboard. Bulldog groaned a little, and his eyes opened slightly.

"Shhh! Go back to sleep," Candice whispered. "I'll be right back."

Bulldog nodded, adjusted his pillow, and was snoring softly again in just seconds.

Candice crawled to the end of the bed and stepped onto the floor. She paused for a moment, hardly able to believe the bounty that was all hers right there on the bed. To be able to call either man her beau would have been a thrill, but to know that she had the hearts of both of them was almost beyond her imagination.

But she'd have to keep her love for them a secret while in New Oslo. Bulldog had been right when he'd said that their *ménage a trois* love affair would have devastating consequences should it become public knowledge. She'd be branded a tramp, or worse. And Bulldog, as a municipal employee of the police department, would probably end up losing his job. Only Dylan, from the lofty ivory pedestal where only extraordinarily wealthy people can perch, would be immune from public censure.

Worry about that later. You've got them all to yourself for the next three days. Nobody knows you here. You can love them as much as you want and there won't be a soul to criticize you for it.

Naked, she walked over to the open balcony door. The morning breeze was rather strong, quite warm, pleasing with the scent of salt water. Candice closed her eyes, loving the feel of the breeze playing over her naked body. She combed her fingers through her hair, fluffing the strands out over her shoulders. Her skin seemed to tingle. She looked at her men, sleeping in the bed nearby. A smile touched her lips as she turned and walked barefooted to the bathroom.

Chapter Ten

There was a flutter in Candice's heart when she stepped out of the bathroom some time later. She had showered, was freshly shaven, and done her makeup with what few items she always kept in her little purse. She wished that she had a pretty nightgown to put on. She wanted to look sexy for her men on that first morning together. She always thought she looked sexier when wearing a slinky nightgown or a lacy little teddy than she did completely naked.

Dylan and Bulldog were awake, sitting up in bed, leaning back against the headboard. They looked so different from each other, though each was distinctly masculine in his own way. Without his clothes on, the breadth of Bulldog's chest and shoulders seemed even more pronounced. And Dylan, without clothes, appeared more sinewy lean, like a lion in his absolute prime.

"Good morning," Candice said, keeping her voice low. "Did you get enough sleep?"

She saw the hunger for her sparkle in their eyes, just the way that she had hoped. Their desire for her hadn't slackened, hadn't been dampened by that first *ménage* in The Cattleman's Paradise.

Bulldog said, "You're looking lovely this morning."

Dylan added, "If you're breakfast, think of me as famished."

"They have a very helpful staff here," she said, walking slowly toward the bed. "I called the front desk and asked for tooth brushes, toothpaste, a razor, and some KY." She smiled. "They didn't seem in the least surprised by any of the requests."

"They've got the concept of customer service here down to a fine science," Dylan replied, the right side of his mouth pulling upward in a half-smile. "They know better than to ask questions."

She climbed onto the bed, positioning herself between the men. Her breasts swayed, and she saw Bulldog's pupils widen. He was particularly enamored with her breasts, a fact which more than pleased Candice.

"You're sure you got enough sleep?" Candice asked with mock sincerity. "I could leave you both alone for a couple hours if you wanted to really rest up."

Bulldog reached for her, but Candice leaned away from him, giving her head a shake.

"In a second," she said. "First, I want to look at you."

She pulled the blanket down just enough to expose their cocks. Both men had partial erections which were growing quickly. A soft purr came from Candice's throat as she looked at them. In the past month, the men had given her more pleasure, more passion, than she had thought possible. Now she had them together. It was more than she had hoped possible.

"I could get addicted to you two," she whispered, her gaze caressing the rapidly swelling cocks. "I probably already am." She looked into Dylan's eyes and held out her hand, offering the KY. In a whisper, she instructed, "Use this."

His eyes widened. Her comment couldn't be mistaken. Though she had pleasured Dylan many times and in many ways, they were about to sail into new waters.

She curled her fingers around the shafts and felt both Bulldog and Dylan swell to full stature in only seconds. She watched her hands moving slowly over the hard columns, and felt a tingling in her clit. It seemed as though the warmth of the cocks was going through her palms and straight into her blood.

"Don't let me disturb your conversation," she said, adopting as conversational a tone as possible under the circumstances. "Just pretend I'm not even here."

"Damned easier said than done," Bulldog muttered.

She leaned down and to the side, opening her lips to capture the crest of Bulldog's cock in her mouth. Her tongue swirled around the tip, and she felt him flinch as though he'd been given an electrical shock. He hissed a single word, an obscenity that was a compliment. Candice nibbled the shaft lightly with her lips, taking him deeper into the wet warmth of her mouth, not stopping until he was pressed against the opening of her throat.

"I don't know why it is," she heard Dylan say, "but seeing her giving you a blowjob is easily the sexiest thing I've ever seen in my life."

Candice released Bulldog from her oral embrace with a slurping sound. She flicked her tongue against his slit, kissed him moistly, then turned her attention to Dylan.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am," she said between kisses of the head of his cock, "that you like seeing me giving Bulldog pleasure. I couldn't stand it if the two of you were jealous of each other." She licked the crown of his erection until it glistened in the morning sunlight. "I love everything about you." A pearl of fluid formed at the slit, which she licked off. It was salty. Dylan's thighs were knots of solid muscle. "But I especially love your cock."

As Candice pushed her lips once more over the head of his cock, drew in a firm suction, and put her tongue in motion to tantalize nerve endings, Dylan groaned softly and commented with characteristic degage, "How fortunate for me."

The seconds ticked by almost leisurely. Candice went back and forth, sucking on the cocks of the men she loved, pleased with herself when she heard them sigh or moan in response to what she was doing. Though she was not receiving any of their attention, the lips of her pussy were getting hotter and wetter by the second. Her clit literally throbbed with the aching need of attention.

She lifted her head, dragging her lips up Bulldog's shaft. For several seconds she looked into his eyes as her hands traversed the lengths of two hard cocks. "Do you want me?" she asked, then quickly shook her head. "No, I said that wrong. I *know* you want me. What I need to know is if you *need* me."

"Yes," Bulldog replied without hesitation. "More than you could possibly know."

"Then show me," she replied. "I want to feel your need."

Bulldog slid down on the bed until his head was on the pillow. Candice straddled his torso with her knees, positioning herself so that the lips of her cunt were directly over his saliva-moistened cock. But she didn't need any artificial lubrication. Though she had yet to be touched, her pussy was slick, wet, the lips enflamed with desire. Just pleasing her men and feeling them respond to her lips and tongue was enough to excite her to the very core of her soul.

"Oh!" Candice gasped softly as she lowered just enough to take the crown of Bulldog's cock between the lips of her pussy. "I'm in heaven when you're inside me."

He put his hands on her hips holding her steady for a moment, not letting her drop down to take more of his rigid cock. Candice wiggled her hips a bit in protest, then smiled down at Bulldog. She scratched his nipples lightly with the edges of her thumbnails.

"You're teasing me."

He nodded. "Say you love me. I need to know that you want more than just my cock."

"I love you." Candice was surprised. She had wanted Bulldog to be as enraptured with their relationship as she was, but her insecurities sometimes kept her from believing it entirely. "I love your cock and your smile and everything else about you. Satisfied?"

"Not yet. But I'm sure I will be."

When he relaxed his grip on her hips, Candice impaled herself on his cock, sinking down until she had his entire length pulsing and throbbing deep inside her. Then she felt Dylan's hands slide around her body to cup her breasts, his fingers burying deeply. His lips were at the lobe of her ear a moment later, warm and moist. "And me?" he whispered.

"I love you, too," Candice said through a sigh. "I love you both. Yes, I love you both, and that's why I want you both inside me."

When Dylan took his hands from her breasts, Candice leaned forward and brought her mouth to Bulldog's. She kissed him full on the mouth, opening her lips in invitation. His tongue danced with hers, his kisses heightening the fire of arousal that burned within her.

The lube was cool against her opening, startling Candice a little, even though she had known it would happen. And seconds later, when the bulbous head of Dylan's cock was pressed against her entrance, Candice turned her face aside to end the kiss.

"Do it," she whispered.

She gasped at the sharp stab of pain that accompanied Dylan's first slow, powerful, measured thrust into her ass. Her eyes squeezed tightly shut, and her lips opened to an almost perfect "O" as he pushed deeper into her bottom.

"Should I stop?"

Candice shook her head. "Don't! Don't stop until you're finished!" She dipped her face down and bit Bulldog lightly on the shoulder. "Take me. Fuck me. Don't ever stop loving me."

The discomfort was short-lived. The supreme ecstasy she experienced at having the cocks of the men she loved pumping deep inside her, so close together, was something she could never forget.

Nothing had ever felt quite like having one hard cock filling her cunt, and another filling her ass, each pistoning with increasing lust, increasing fury.

"Yes, yes, yes!" Candice whispered as pressure built on pressure, and the approaching orgasm gained momentum. "Love me, my darlings. Oh, fuck me."

Her face was turned to the side, and she had Dylan kissing one ear, while Bulldog kissed the other. Her skin felt electrified, every nerve ending heightened to the possibilities of ecstasy. Though it took some time, she soon learned to hold herself up a little so that Bulldog could move beneath her. By holding herself at a halfway point between the men, both could plunge into her hard and fast, filling her, thrilling her in a thousand different ways that she had never anticipated.

Their breaths, coming heated and fast, roared like twentieth century steam engines in her ears. The harder that Dylan thrust into her, his torso slapping against the cheeks of her ass, the more vigorously that Bulldog thrust upward, filling her cunt with every ounce of energy he possessed. Beads of perspiration formed on Candice's upper lip, forehead, and temples. Never had she been plundered so completely, her body penetrated to completion, her senses overwhelmed by all that was being done to her.

"Oh, God! I'm going to come!"

The words seemed to have come from faraway, and had an otherworldly quality to them in Candice's ears. It took a moment for her to realize that she had shouted the words herself. An instant later, as her lovers labored furiously above and beneath her, her body began a series of harsh, climactic spasms, the intensity of which stunned her.

Even as the waves of pleasure surged through her perspiring body, Dylan and Bulldog continued their furious efforts. Candice felt crushed between the powerful men, her body not just penetrated by them, but possessed by them.

"C-Come," she managed to say, forcing the single word out at a moment when both men were retreating. The breath was forced from her lungs when two hard cocks again filled her. "Come for me!"

As if on cue, Bulldog arched his spine to drive as deeply into Candice as was possible, and made a growling sound. He quickly slumped back to the mattress as, behind her, Dylan continuing his manic pace for only another couple strokes before he, too, thrust fulllength into Candice's receptive body, then went motionless.

"Don't move," Candice said between deep gulps of air. "Don't anybody move." She kissed Bulldog's cheek, then turned her head enough to have Dylan kiss her on the cheek. "Nothing has ever felt like this. My sweet men." She shivered. "I thought you were going to stab right through me."

"Sore?" Dylan asked quietly. He was still inside her.

In truth, Candice was a little tender from the unconventional lovemaking, even with the liberal assistance of lubricant, but she wouldn't let Dylan know. He was so protective of her that she suspected if she let him know the truth, then he might refuse to love her that way again.

And if Candice was certain of anything, it was that she adored being between her men and being loved by them simultaneously.

"No," Candice answered at least. "Not much, anyway. My God, I need a shower. There isn't a part of me that isn't sweaty."

"We all need a shower." Bulldog kissed Candice's cheek, then her earlobe. "So why don't we all take one together?"

* * * *

Standing out on the balcony, Bulldog knotted the sash of the hotel-supplied white terry cloth robe and let the warm afternoon breeze coming in off the ocean caress him.

When Dylan stepped out, identically attired, Bulldog gave him a smile and said, "I want to thank you for all you've done. This hotel, the private corporate jet to fly us here..." His words trailed off into silence.

"Don't think about it."

"You're probably spending more money in a couple days than I make as a cop in a year. The New Oslo Police Department doesn't exactly have the highest payroll in the city. Oil rig workers make a lot more than I do."

"Please, don't worry about money. I have enough for all of us. We've got bigger problems to deal with." His eyebrows lifted dramatically. "For instance, how the hell we're going to have a *ménage* love affair in a little city like New Oslo, without having the morality police screaming for our blood? If you want to worry about something, worry about that."

Bulldog looked at Dylan, who gazed out at the ocean. Could it really be that the money didn't matter at all to him? Bulldog had scratched and clawed for every penny he'd ever earned in his life. With that as a personal history, accepting lavish gifts with nothing more than a "thank you" in acknowledgement did not sit easily.

"You're still thinking about the money," Dylan said, turning toward Bulldog. "Don't be impressed by it. I inherited much of it. And don't be intimidated by it, since it's just money, nothing more and nothing less. But don't be contemptuous of it, either, because having lots of money can make life easier for you, me, and Candice."

Bulldog smiled and looked away. "Thanks. I needed to hear that."

"And I needed to say it."

A rap of knuckles at the hotel door put an end to the conversation. Dylan hurried to answer the knock. Bulldog was conscious of the fact that his opinion of Dylan had just elevated even higher.

An exclamation of delight sounded from the hallway, and though the room's occupants were wearing only cotton robes, Dylan quickly ushered in a slender, middle-aged man with a pencil-thin mustache and eagle eyes.

"Bulldog, Candice, I want you to meet Monsieur Marcel du Montell, the finest wizard with needle and thread ever to escape France for the balmy climes of south Florida." Dylan was smiling broadly, and it was obvious that he was old friends with the Frenchman. "Marcel has been a godsend to me a couple times when I've arrived here with little notice."

Bulldog watched as Marcel's gaze darted from him over to Candice, then over to Dylan. What was he thinking? Despite his own acceptance of being in a *ménage* love affair, he wasn't comfortable with what other people might think, what assumptions they might make.

As Dylan made introductions and hands were shaken, Bulldog

began to feel uneasy being only in a robe. Dylan, inversely, was his usual urbane self, catching up on old stories with Marcel.

"How long will you be staying this time?"

"Three days, counting today," Dylan replied.

"So you'll need something formal for all of you, along with some casual yet elegant outfits, *mais oui*?"

"You understand everything."

"Swimming?"

"Probably."

Marcel clapped his hands, smiled at his new patrons, and said to Dylan, "You are to be first. Extend your arms, if you please, so that I can get the measurements." Bulldog was surprised when Dylan complied without resistance. "We'll see if you've put on any weight since last you needed my help."

Dylan extended his arms outward, fingers pointed. Marcel extracted from his shirt pocket a small, leather-bound notebook, along with a gold pen. He looked critically at Dylan for a moment, wrote something in his notebook, then stepped closer, unknotted his sash, and calmly opened his robe.

"What the—?" Bulldog muttered.

But Dylan was seemingly unfazed by the scrutiny. After several seconds, Marcel let the folds of Dylan's robe close then he resumed writing in his notebook.

Candice asked, "You don't use a tape measure?"

Marcel gave her a look that suggested the question itself was faintly insulting. "As Monsieur Amberson has stated, I am a wizard with needle and thread. Tape measures," he continued haughtily, "are for amateurs and imbeciles."

Bulldog felt a tightness in his chest when Marcel stepped up to him. He was not at all comfortable with this tailor, whose sexuality was a matter of some speculation, looking at his naked body.

"Do not concern yourself with *moi*," Marcel said as he unknotted Bulldog's robe. "I am a professional." He opened the robe, and Bulldog watched as Marcel's pupil's dilated, and he took a slightly quicker intake of breath.

"This is not the body of a man unaccustomed to the gymnasium. You have, as they say, pumped a lot of iron, have you not?"

Despite himself and his unease at being scrutinized, Bulldog replied, "Yes, I have."

"It's obvious. Your musculature is exquisite." When he released the halves of the robe, Marcel uttered a soft sigh, as though he'd been deprived of something precious. He turned toward Candice. "And now, my dear, it is time to measure you."

A new emotion went through Bulldog this time. Candice was *his* woman, and he didn't want any man other than Dylan to look at her.

Don't be a dumb-ass! Marcel's harmless. And you'd better get used to men looking at Candice, because she'd one hot lady. Men are going to look at her whether she's in a bikini or dressed like an Eskimo, and you're just going to have to put up with it.

He watched as Candice's pale cheeks turned a faint shade of pink when Marcel calmly opened her robe. A warm flush of desire went through Bulldog when he was given an unhindered view of her breasts, and her clean-shaven pussy. It mattered nothing that he'd made love to her an hour earlier. Already, he wanted her again, and he wondered if it would always be like this.

Chapter Eleven

"What do you mean she's not here?" Nick glared at Harriet, whose face was ghostly white now that his temper was flaring. "Where did she go?"

"All I know is that she's out of town," Harriet said after a moment. "She left New Oslo for places unknown."

"For how long?"

Harriet shrugged. "I don't know."

"You're her best friend. She tells you everything." Nick jabbed a finger into her chest, forcing the young waitress to take a step backward. "You're lying to me, you little bitch."

Her jaw dropped open, and she shook her head vigorously. "She didn't tell me anything. I didn't even know she was leaving until she phoned me from the plane."

Nick smiled. "She's got her phone with her then. Good. You tell that blonde bitch something for me. You call her on the phone and tell her she'd better have her ass back here at the Cattleman's Paradise by Saturday night, or there's going to be hell to pay. She'll know what I mean by that, so you tell her just like I told you."

Nick let his gaze go up and down over Harriet, his expression intentionally obscene, defiling. Once he'd had his fill of Candice, then Harriet would be next in line for him. She wasn't as lushly voluptuous as Candice, but she sure didn't have a tomboy's physique, either. Besides, she was scared of him, and if there was anything that really excited Nick Strellso, it was scaring pretty women.

"If Candice isn't here on Saturday," he continued, speaking quietly, looking Harriet directly in the eyes, "you and I are going to get intimately acquainted. Real intimate, if you get my drift."

He watched as a shiver of anxiety went through her and had to turn away so that she wouldn't see him smile in triumph.

* * * *

Dylan looked at Bulldog and smiled. "You've got to admit, the man's a genius at what he does."

Bulldog turned away from the mirror, dressed in khaki shorts and a Hawaiian-print silk shirt that fit him perfectly, with the exception of the silk being a little tight around his biceps. "And you're saying that he can, with just his eyes, measure us accurately enough to make suits and dresses?"

"Absolutely. Under the circumstances, he didn't have to make anything himself. He just did the shopping. But if I had requested a couple suits for us or a nice evening gown for Candice, he could have made it."

Candice was decked out in white tennis shorts and a robin's egg blue tank top. "My God, he even got my shoe size perfectly!" she said, stepping into a new pair of Nikes.

"Come on, let's go for a walk. I'm dying to introduce you to Key West. Now, neither of you have ever been here before, right?"

Bulldog chuckled. "Hell, I've only been out of North Dakota a couple times in my life, and then it was mostly to hunt elk in Montana or Wyoming."

"Biggest city I've ever been to is Minneapolis."

"Well, Key West isn't big, it's just different."

They took the elevator down to the lobby, and as they walked, Dylan kept a watchful eye on Bulldog and Candice. He wanted to see their reactions to the people they would now be surrounded by.

They hadn't made it through the lobby and out the front doors before a gay couple in their early forties walked by, hand in hand and fashionably attired, laughing about something. When they reached the revolving doors, they had to wait for the lesbian couple to step in.

"In New Oslo, there's a very rigid societal structure that we're expected to understand and follow," Dylan explained. He moved so that Candice was walking between himself and Bulldog. "But in Key West, it's more of a live and let live atmosphere. As long as you're not hurting anyone, it's really nobody's business what you do, and the fact of the matter is, nobody really cares." He took Candice's hand in his and squeezed it. "Take his hand, too. In Key West, you can let the whole world know that you're in love with two men. There's probably not a lot of people who'll be open-mouthed with shock."

"I'll be damned," Bulldog muttered, watching as two young men wearing nothing but leather thongs exchanged a heated kiss while sitting at an outdoor bar.

Dylan looked down at Candice and felt a surge of joy go through him. She was beaming with pleasure at being able to walk publicly hand-in-hand with both men she loved. He'd never before seen her smile quite so completely.

"I don't know how we'll do it," he said to her and Bulldog, "but we have to figure out how to create our own little Key West in New Oslo. Expecting the townsfolk to change their attitudes overnight just isn't feasible. So somehow, someway, we'll have to create our own little world where we can walk hand in hand and not have to hide our love for each other."

As they walked, Dylan played the tour guide, pointing out that this hotel was where Tennessee Williams used to live and had done some of his best writing, and here was Hemingway's extravagant house, with his writing tower in the back that was set now up like a shrine.

"How are your shoes?" Dylan asked some time later. "Nothing's too tight, nothing pinching?"

"Marcel's amazing. I had to adjust the shoulder straps to my bra, but other than that everything's perfect."

Bulldog grinned. "I don't know that this fancy silk shirt is really my style, but it sure feels nice."

"I like you in it," Candice said quickly. "It shows off your biceps, and it's nice and colorful." She ran her palm over his chest. "And I love the feel of your muscles beneath silk."

"Touch me like that again," Bulldog said, "and we'll see just how tolerant these folks really are."

Dylan, enjoying the light banter, slipped his arm around Candice's shoulders to pull her tight against his side. He felt the firm fullness of her breasts against him. He dipped his head to taste a quick, light kiss of her mouth, then straightened and said, "I have never been happier in my entire life. I hope you two feel the same."

"Never happier," Candice said, sliding her arms around her men.

"Without a doubt," Bulldog added, kissing her the top of her head.

Dylan was just about to deliver a significantly more intimate kiss to Candice's mouth when her cell phone rang.

"Hold that thought," she said to him as she dug in her purse for her phone. "It's Harriet. I can tell from the ring tone."

"That girl sure has a way of disturbing me at the worst possible times," Dylan said to Bulldog.

Candice opened the phone and gave her greetings. Then Dylan watched as, almost instantly, her smile vanished.

"And then what happened?" she asked softly into the phone.

There was something portentous about her voice that caught Dylan's attention. It wasn't open fear, but it wasn't mere curiosity. Moments later when he watched as the blood seemed to drain from her face, every protective instinct in his came rushing to the fore.

"But you're all right now? He didn't hurt you?"

Both Dylan and Bulldog made impatient motions with their hands, indicating they needed to know *immediately* what was wrong.

"Okay, don't worry, I'll take care of everything. And I'll be there before Saturday night," Candice said into the phone. "This is my problem, Harriet, and I'll be the one to take care of it."

The instant she closed the phone, Dylan and Bulldog were demanding answers.

"You'd better understand something," Bulldog said sharply, loud enough to draw the curious and somewhat worried attention of the people surrounding them. "From now on, whatever is your problem is our problem. None of us are in this alone."

"So starting talking, my love," Dylan said, his tone as sharp as the edge of a razor. "It seems there are some secrets you need to unburden yourself of." He paused, and in a softer tone concluded, "Bulldog and I are in love with you. Whatever is wrong, whatever the problem is, we should face it together."

Bulldog's tone was softly sincere when he said, "You can see that now, can't you? The three of us are one, so we shouldn't keep important secrets from each other."

"It's Nick Strellso," Candice said quietly. "He's been extorting money from my aunt and uncle, and now he wants something more than money."

Candice explained how she didn't want to tell them about Nick's extortion racket, didn't want to tell them how he had initially demanded money, and now was demanding sex. She wanted to keep this entire, terrible secret to herself, but she couldn't because she knew in her heart that if she had the right to keep important secrets, then so did they.

The words started slowly at first, like an avalanche that begins at the crest of a mountain with just a few snowflakes causing a disturbance in the airstream so insignificant it wouldn't move the softest hair on the coat of a rabbit. But then, the smallest of reactions begins, followed by greater responses. It isn't long before what had been nearly invisible was completely inescapable. The words, like the snow in an avalanche, came rushing forth, tumbling out in a wild, ungovernable rush.

Once the cold, brutal facts had been dispensed with, the sobs began. Candice cried for herself, she cried for Harriet, and she cried for her aunt and uncle who had done nothing to be treated with such swinish contempt and avarice. "Let's get back to the hotel," Dylan said. "I need to think, and I sure as hell can't do that with all these people looking at us."

Candice said teasingly, "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Dylan replied without hesitation. "We've just drawn a little more attention to ourselves than I'd like." He smiled. "Besides, I'd like you to see the nightclub at the hotel. You've got to be a guest to get in. Very exclusive and *very* private."

* * * *

They stopped at their hotel room to make a quick change of clothes. Candice put on a knee-length sundress of baby blue that showed a bit more cleavage than she was comfortable with, though her men assured her she looked stunning and not in any way trashy. At Candice's insistence, Dylan chose white trousers with a blue silk shirt. For Bulldog, she wanted him to continue wearing his Hawaiian print shirt. She liked the way the brightly colored shirt seemed to make his powerful chest and shoulders even more pronounced. The white slacks she selected fit him to perfection.

"Turn your backs to me, both of you," she said.

The men turned, and Candice took a leisurely view of their asses. It was impossible to tell whether she liked Dylan's ass more than Bulldog's, or if it was the other way around. Either way, just looking at them in the snug, white slacks made her clit awaken and honey ooze to the lips of her pussy.

"You know, if anyone in New Oslo ever finds out that I've got you two gorgeous men all to myself, I'll be considered the most selfish woman in the history of this country."

The men smiled at her compliment, but said nothing.

"It's a little early yet for the nightclub," Dylan said. "And since we're all in better spirits than we were just a little while ago, what about going to an interesting little bar not far from here. It's got quite a history, and the story goes that Hemingway used to drink there." "As long as they serve margaritas, it sounds perfect to me," Candice replied. "Though I should let you know that I'm not much of a Hemingway fan."

As promised, it was a short walk to the old bar just off Duval Street. The entire front wall opened so that it was as much an outdoor bar as an indoor one.

A musician playing a guitar and singing a ballad about new love and environmental destruction was crooning off in one corner, mostly ignored by the thirty or so patrons. He didn't have a bad voice, but Candice certainly wasn't awestruck by his talent.

The ceiling was so low that Candice almost could leap up and touched it if she wanted to. She was looking up at the ceiling when an odd shape caught her attention. Was that really a bra tucked up there in the rafters?

"Oh my God," Candice whispered slowly in stunned disbelief, a hand to her mouth as awareness dawned on her.

In the dusty old rafters, throughout the entire bar, were brassieres. Not just one or two of them. Not dozens. There were hundreds. It was obvious that some of the bras had been there for a decade or more, and others were more recent. Most appeared to have been signed and dated by the original owners.

A thousand images of what must have been occurring right before the owners of those bras had put them up on the rafters came to mind in an instant. Candice was chuckling softly when she asked, "What's the story behind all of those, other than lots and lots of margaritas?" She jerked a thumb toward the ceiling. "That's a tradition that's *not* going to get started at The Cattleman's Paradise."

"The truth is, I don't know if there is a story. Some things just get started and develop a momentum all by themselves. I do know there's a stapler behind the bar if you want to leave yours." He pulled out a chair for Candice to sit. "I'll get us a round of drinks and be right back."

Candice looked around the bar. It was a small, dimly-lighted place

that couldn't comfortably hold more than a forty or fifty customers. It seemed old and worn down, but as colorful as a fisherman's past. She suspected there were a lot of interesting stories that could be told about this place, and a lot that had been told in it.

"Enjoying yourself?" Bulldog asked.

"Immensely," Candice replied. She placed her hand over his on the small, round, much-scarred tabletop and squeezed. "I love being able to show what I feel for you and Dylan without having to worry about what people will think. I know you're a policeman and that you have to keep up appearances in New Oslo, but still...."

Her words drifted away because the truth in them was something she just didn't want to face at that moment. Dylan returned momentarily with a Jack Daniels on ice, a Budweiser in a big Bavarian stein, and the largest margarita Candice had ever seen.

"To our health," Dylan said, simultaneously sitting and raising his glass. They touched glasses. "To the three of us. May we live and love for a thousand years." He sipped, then leaned over the table to get closer to both Bulldog and Candice. "We've got time to figure out what to do with Nick. We don't have a lot of time together in Key West, so there's no reason we shouldn't make the most of it and enjoy ourselves."

Bulldog raised his stein, gave a cut nod, and said, "Reality's going to bite us in the ass soon enough. Let's be free while we can."

A group of six people, three couples in their middle to late thirties, sat down at a nearby table. The men, Candice noticed, gave her the once-over with their eyes. The women did, too, only they also looked at Bulldog and Dylan quizzically, as though trying to decide just exactly how the two good-looking men fit in her life.

They don't understand what we've got going. I'm not sure if I understand it myself. All I know is that I'm in love with Bulldog and Dylan, and they're in love with me.

On a whim, while knowing that she was being watched by the people at the other table, Candice got half out of her chair and pulled Bulldog close for a quick kiss, then Dylan.

"I couldn't resist," she said, telling her lovers only half the truth. "We're being watched, and I wanted them to know that we're a threesome."

When she looked back at the table of six, their heads were close together as they whispered. She suspected they were discussing her romantic entanglement with Bulldog and Dylan.

"They're talking about us," Candice said quietly, feeling a sudden twinge of apprehension at being in love with two men and having others know about it. Insecurities about the direction her heart had taken her were never far below the surface. "They know I'm making love with both of you, and now they're gossiping about it."

Bulldog gave her hand a sympathetic squeeze. Dylan just smiled, shook his head, and said, "I don't think so."

"You first!" one of the nearby women said.

Her friend shook her head vigorously, but the man beside her said enthusiastically, "Come on, honey, you're gorgeous. You've got nothing to be ashamed of."

"But Paul—"

"But nothing!" he shot back. "Put your bra up there with the others!"

She was in her middle thirties, and Candice wouldn't have been surprised if the woman had two or three children wherever she called home. She was married to the man on her right, who obviously was still very much in love with her, and the idea that she would remove her blouse, taking off her bra in public, then staple it to the rafters of a touristy bar in Key West, was clearly stretching her comfort zone.

She took the man's hand in hers, looked him straight in the eyes, and asked, "Really, Paul? You wouldn't think—"

"I'd think you were the sexiest wife in the whole world," he replied, this time with quiet sincerity.

She looked at the other people at the table then around the bar. When her gaze met Candice's, it held for a moment as though

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questioning her next move to make.

"Why not?" the woman said suddenly.

She wore a T-shirt with the flag of the fictional Conch Republic printed on it. The shirt came over her head, and Candice felt her heart seize for a moment. The woman's bra came off next. Her breasts showed the effects of having had children, but that obviously did not bother her husband, who roared his approval. She had the T-shirt on again as quickly as possible. Her cheeks were pink with embarrassment by the time she'd covered her naked breasts.

The other two women at the table took more coaxing, but they, too, removed their bras.

"Candice, are you going to put yours up there?" Bulldog asked, pointing toward the ceiling.

She shook her head. "I'm not that daring. Being seen by Harriet was bad enough. Besides, this is a brand new bra, and it's beautiful. I still can't believe how that man can know our exact sizes just by looking at us."

"I'll buy you a hundred new bras." Dylan eyes were warm on Candice as he spoke. "Not feeling daring enough?"

The three women at the other table were now busy signing and dating their bras, and stapling them to the rafters, to the gleeful delight of their husbands. Bulldog and Dylan watched the progress, and Candice was glad that their attention was diverted from her.

Another round of drinks was ordered. When they were halffinished, Candice felt Dylan's hand on her naked thigh, beneath the hem of her light sundress.

"Be honest now. Completely honest," he said. "Why won't you put your bra up there with all the rest?"

"I'm self-conscious of my breasts," Candice said after a moment, more honestly than she had truly intended. "I always have been. I was pretty young when the girls just sort of arrived on the scene. My peers hated me because I developed before they did, and the boys either stared at me like deer in the headlights or said nasty things about me. Early body images of yourself are hard things to change. They get set in concrete somehow."

"So that's why you always keep them covered as safe as Fort Knox," Bulldog said.

Candice slapped him lightly on the biceps. It felt like she was slapping a brick wall. "I do not."

"Well, I've never seen you in a blouse that puts the girls—to use your phrase—out there on display."

"Don't I dress sexy enough for you?"

Bulldog squeezed her hand and said, "There's nothing about you I'd change. Nothing."

Candice looked at Dylan, who appeared to be concentrating quite intently on all the bras, some of them very dusty with age, stapled to the rafters. It seemed odd to her that he should be scrutinizing them with such focus, then she watched his face break into a beaming smile.

"Candice, Bulldog—look over there," he said, pointing. "See the panties there next to the Pabst sign?"

It took a moment, but near the advertisement for beer Candice saw a pair of lacy pink panties dangling from a single staple. It didn't look as though the intimate apparel had been there very long.

Dylan leaned his elbows on the table, moving closer. The three put their heads close together.

"Do you think you can squirm that delicious bottom of yours out of your panties without drawing too much attention to yourself?" Dylan asked.

Candice's eyes widened, and she moistened her lips with her tongue. "But the panties are matching set with the bra, and they're brand new."

"That excuse was lame," Dylan said sharply, "the first time you trotted it out. It hasn't gotten any more valid with age."

Bulldog put his big hand on her knee beneath the table, then slid it up her thigh, caressing her naked flesh. Candice gasped softly, sat up very straight in her chair, but didn't push his hand away.

"Do it, babe. Do it for us."

It was the use of the pronoun "us" that let Candice know that she had to do it. The three of them now constituted "us," and that was an entity she did not want to disappoint.

She eased her sundress higher, slowly and carefully. She was conscious of the coolness of the hard wood beneath the bare cheeks of her buns. Looking around, she didn't seem to have drawn undue attention from anyone in the bar. And the three couples with the daring ladies who had put their bras in the rafters were engrossed in a riotous conversation among themselves.

Hooking her thumbs into the waistband of the bikini panties, Candice rocked slowly back and forth, inching the stretching cotton over the curve of her hips. She had them down to her thighs in only a few seconds and past her knees in a few seconds more. In order to take them off completely, she had to spin away from the table, but she did that quickly and efficiently.

"There!" she said triumphantly, putting her panties in the center of the table. "I've done it."

"Now all you have to do is put your name and the date on them," Dylan said, "and find someplace suitable to staple them."

Bulldog leaned to the side, slipping his hand beneath Candice's hair at the base of her neck. He pulled her so he could kiss her mouth, then said softly, "You can't even begin to imagine how impressed I am with you, or how much I want to make love with you. But I'm going to wait because we're all having fun, so we don't need to rush. Just know that tonight, you're going to get the best loving I've got to give." He gave her hand a squeeze. "For hours on end."

A shiver went through Candice. She knew he was telling the truth.

Chapter Twelve

Shortly after stapling the panties to the ceiling, Candice and her men walked back to the *International*. Even though she had drunk a couple margaritas and was beginning to feel their halcyon influence, she was aware every step of the way that she didn't have her panties on. She made a point of not walking very fast or taking a very long stride. She could feel the warm evening breeze off the ocean caressing her. Being able to walk while holding hands with both of her lovers out in public was like a continual caress all over her body. To not have to hide her new and unconventional affection seemed magnificently liberating.

I've never felt so in love, or so free. For the first time in my life I'm happy from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. My heart feels a thousand times bigger and a thousand times lighter.

They stepped into the lobby of the *International* and received a smile from the night manager. As far as Candice could tell, he wasn't in the least bit shocked with her open romance with both Dylan and Bulldog. She was liking this hotel, and Key West, more with each passing minute.

Off to the right, from an area she had yet to explore, Candice heard recorded music playing. The music was throbbing reggae tune she didn't recognized. Though she wasn't well acquainted with music of the Caribbean and hadn't much liked that music in the past, she decided to keep an open mind. Key West, she decided, was a place to keep an open mind.

"Bulldog, you've already told me you don't like to dance. Well, guess what? Tonight you're going to dance, whether you like it or not." She laughed, squeezed his hand, and turned toward him just enough so that the swell of her left breast brushed over his biceps. She knew how much he liked it when she "accidentally" brushed against him. "Humor me, okay? I'm in a good mood, and I love to dance."

"Anything," he replied. "Tonight, anything you want is yours for the asking."

The nightclub was dimly lit, about half full but showing signs that it would fill up as the evening progressed. The people all seemed financially well to do. All were fashionably attired in shorts and tank tops or lightweight sundresses by recognizable designer names. Many of the women were sporting jewelry, displaying ostentatious diamonds and necklaces of heavy gold. It was an eclectic assortment of swingers and gays with a smattering of lesbians included in the mix. As far as Candice could tell, she was the only woman there with two men as lovers. It made her feel daring, and she liked the way that made her feel.

Everyone seemed to be either absolutely in love with their partner, or at least wildly in lust with whomever they were with. Candice witnessed more public kissing in ten minutes than she'd seen in her entire lifetime in New Oslo. And she certainly saw more men kissing men than ever before. In a town utterly dominated by oilmen and cattlemen like New Oslo, an occurrence of gays kissing in public was unthinkable.

Just like it was unthinkable for Candice to believe that the people of New Oslo would accept without censure the fact that she'd fallen in love with both Bulldog and Dylan. The people wouldn't stand for it. They simply wouldn't.

For a moment, Candice closed her eyes and forced such thoughts away. There would come a time when she'd have to face that reality, but that time didn't have to be this magnificent night.

Candice danced the first thirty minutes without taking a break, first with Dylan and then with Bulldog. After a short break, and after quenching her thirst with a margarita, she danced with the two of them together. The four-inch strappy pumps that Marcel had selected for her fit to perfect and didn't pinch even a little as she danced. As she spun and twirled, gyrating to the recorded music, Candice was infinitely aware of being without panties, so she was constantly sliding her palms down over her thighs, smoothing her minidress down protectively.

"It's getting hot in here," she said, fanning herself with her hands.

"There's a smoking area through those doors. A nice breeze comes in off the ocean, and management here keeps the lighting discretely subdued," Dylan said. His smile took in both Candice and Bulldog. "Care for a little fresh air now? It can get a little crowded out there once this place really starting rocking." His eyebrows lifted momentarily with esoteric knowledge. "You can't be in this nightclub without having a room. Everyone you see is staying the night here."

Candice felt certain that there was more to Dylan's explanation than he was letting on, but since she suspected there was an adventure in this evening, she tamped down her misgivings and nodded. So far, whenever she'd followed Dylan's sometimes domineering guidance, she'd always been happy with her decision. Happy and usually multiorgasmic.

This time, when she walked between Bulldog and Dylan, Candice put her arms around their waists, and they did the same to her. Between them, she was certain she was safe, secure, loved, and protected against anything a cruel world could throw at her.

The enclosure was a fairly small balcony leading to a very narrow stairway blocked by a gate that led down to the water. The narrowness of the stairway, Candice suspected, was so that if someone should stumble, it would be easier to grab a railing and stop the downward momentum. A sign by the gate warned that there were no lifeguards on duty, and that the hotel was not responsible for anyone leaving its property, which apparently ended at the water's edge.

There were no tables in the smoking area, though there were a couple of stainless steel stools without padded seats. The salt-mist that

came in off the ocean would not mar the all-purpose stools. Along the base and upper edge of the redwood railing surrounding the balcony ran a string on lights as tiny as stars in the sky. The lights were meant to show where the railing was without illuminating anything more than absolutely necessary.

The moon was half-full, and its pale glow, though quite weak, displayed the balcony more than the string of miniscule electrical lights. The *International* was making a clear statement that whatever happened among consenting adults in the shadows on their smoking balcony simply wasn't any concern of the hotel's.

Candice walked to the railing and looked out at the waves rolling toward shore. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, filling her lungs with the ocean air, enjoying the scent of the salt water. She felt safe with Dylan and Bulldog, and secure in her surroundings.

"It's hard for me to believe that not that many hours ago I was in North Dakota. I feel a thousand million miles from New Oslo now." Candice sensed Dylan move close enough that she could feel him on her right, and Bulldog on her left. Their nearness made the surface of her skin tingle. "Did either of you ever imagine that something like this could happen? The three of us all in love?"

"I'm just a simple country boy," Bulldog answered, speaking in a whisper though there were no strangers to hear his declaration. "I never imagined something like this would happen to me."

From behind, Dylan kissed her on the temple and said, "I never thought I could experience such complete happiness. Now all we've got to do is figure out how to transport this bliss from Key West to New Oslo."

Candice turned slowly to face her men. She lifted her hands to place them on their shoulders. She felt a certain sadness because she was afraid that this kind of happiness was too intense to be anything other than transitory.

Don't think about tomorrow. Today—tonight—is all that matters. There was a narrow gap between the men, and Candice watched as three couples walked out onto the balcony. From the way they moved, it was clear that they were more familiar with the balcony than she was. Several of them had cigarettes at the ready. They gave Candice and her men only fleeting attention.

"I was going to give you both a kiss that you'd remember," Candice said in a whisper, "but I've missed my chance. Now we've got company."

Dylan looked over his shoulder then smiled down at Candice. "Nothing's going to stop me from kissing you."

Candice's heart skipped a beat when Dylan bent low to kiss her. She hesitated before tilting her face up to receive his kiss.

Candice wasn't quite prepared for the intensity of Dylan's kiss. She had thought that with three men and three women on the dark balcony with them that he would moderate his passion for her. She was wrong. This, after all, was the man who had completed his seduction of her against a closet door while her roommate watched. Dylan slanted his mouth down over hers, his right hand sliding simultaneously down from the small of her back to the rounded curve of one bun. When his tongue sought entrance between her lips, Candice's briefly resisted before relenting. Then, when his tongue slipped into her mouth, she trembled and sucked it in deeper.

She felt his fingers tighten on her bottom. Faintly, she heard the low murmur of voices from the sextet cease, and she was certain that she was being watched as she behaved intemperately with Dylan.

"It's so damned sexy watching the two of you kiss," Bulldog murmured before his lips pressed against Candice's throat. "It doesn't make me jealous. It just makes me want you more."

Candice felt cream moisten the naked lips of her cunt, and she was erotically aware that there were no panties beneath her minidress. She twirled her tongue against Dylan's, opening her mouth wider in wanton invitation.

The sound of approaching footsteps ended the kiss. Candice felt the warm flush of both embarrassment and passion go through her as Dylan straightened, his gaze holding hers, his hand sliding from her bottom.

The click of heels against the wood balcony ceased. The men turned around to face two women holding hands. One woman was in her early forties, stylishly dressed in white slacks and a white silk blouse. She was holding hands with a plump, buxom woman in her early thirties wearing a knee-length skirt and a tank top with a daring U-shaped neckline that put her breasts on display.

"If she was ours," the older of the two women said to Dylan, "I'd get down on my knees."

The younger woman stated, "I'd put her on a pedestal. That's where she belongs. On a pedestal."

The women smiled at Candice, then turned and walked away without another word.

"They're right, of course," Dylan said, his teeth showing starkly white in the dim moonlight. "You should be on a pedestal. Someplace up high where you can be worshipped."

Candice stepped between her men, a bit uncomfortable with such open adoration. Talk of love was one thing. Talk of being put on a pedestal was more than adulation. It seemed more like idolatry.

"Trust me," she said, walking away, "I don't deserve a pedestal, and I certainly don't deserve worship."

Bulldog's powerful hand closed around her biceps, turning her sharply so that she faced him. He took her by the shoulders and pushed her until her back was against the wall, just to the right of the door.

"Let me be your pedestal," Bulldog said, his hands tightening on her shoulders possessively. "I can be anything you need me to be."

He leaned into Candice, his chest pressing against the mounds of her breasts as his lips sealed over hers. As his tongue slipped between her lips, Candice sensed his escalating desire. A low moan was caught in her throat when Bulldog's hands went from her shoulders down over her breasts, his fingers kneading responsive feminine flesh. Her nipples tightened and tingled maddeningly.

When Bulldog got down on one knee in front of her, Candice's head was spinning, her heart racing. This was madness, she knew, but she couldn't summon the willpower to resist. Bulldog thrust his hands between her legs, drawing a gasp from Candice.

"I'll be your pedestal," Bulldog said with quiet determination. He curled his arms as he raised Candice. "I'll put you up where the whole world can see you for what you are."

It seemed effortless for Bulldog to lift Candice's weight. He placed his palms against the wall, learning forward sharply, his arms beneath Candice's thighs to support her.

"Are you insane?" Candice whispered, utterly shocked at the policeman's boldness. Her knees were spread wide apart by Bulldog's powerful arms. She pushed the skirt of her minidress down to cover herself, horribly aware that she had removed her panties earlier in the evening. Bulldog was smiling up at her with a naughty-little-boy grin on his face that, despite her embarrassment, made Candice want to kiss him. She said, "Everybody's looking."

She glanced at the sextet who had followed them onto the balcony. They were watching her, their expressions a mixture of awe and shock. The women, she noticed, were looking at her with expressions that also carried envy in them.

"Now I'm your pedestal," Bulldog said, no longer whispering. "And you're right where you belong, high up where you can look down at this silly fool who loves you."

Nothing in Candice's past could have prepared her for this singular moment in time. To be lifted to shoulder height as though she weighed nothing at all was stunning. For the first time in her adult life, Candice felt positively petite. She was sitting on Bulldog's arms, vertical to the ground as he leaned against the wall. His arms didn't even quiver as he held her.

"Come closer," Bulldog said, his tone hoarse with what Candice recognized was sexual tension. He turned his face to the side and

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kissed the inside of her thigh. "Slide closer. I want to taste you."

As though in a dream, Candice leaned back until her shoulders were against the wall. She slid from Bulldog's elbows to his biceps, her thighs being forced wider apart the more she moved, lifting her minidress as she did so. It was as though she was looking at someone else because the woman she knew as Candice Olssen simply wasn't the type of woman to do something this lurid in public. When her naked thighs were on Bulldog's biceps, he dipped his head down and pressed his mouth against the lips of her pussy.

"Oh, Bulldog!" Candice gasped when his slick tongue slipped between the lips of her cunt, then made its way slowly upward toward her clit. "This is insane!"

With her head and shoulders against the wall and Bulldog's arms supporting her, Candice breathed deeply, her heart accelerating, her senses reeling as her clit was sucked on. She looked to her right and saw that the three couples who shared the balcony were watching her intently while setting their own desires free. One woman was pushing her husband down to his knees with one hand as she frantically unbuckled the belt of her slacks with the other. Another woman was tugging down her husband's zipper without ever looking away from Candice.

She had never experienced such a vast myriad of erotic sensations. The lips of her pussy felt as though they were about to burst into flames. She felt beautiful and desired and very, very wicked. Bulldog sucked lightly on her clit, his tongue flicking against the erect bundle of nerve endings. Candice was being pushed relentlessly toward an orgasm.

Candice closed her eyes. She could feel the people watching her, accepting their voyeuristic pleasure from her even as she accepted her newly discovered exhibitionistic delights from them. Tiny tremors went through her, little twitches of passion as she responded to Bulldog's slick, slithering lips and tongue. Had cunnilingus ever felt so good, so wicked? From nearby she could hear soft, feminine moans. Was it the woman who had been busy pushing her husband to his knees, or were the sounds of passion coming from the woman who had jerked down her husband's zipper?

"Come for me." The words came out slightly muffled, because Bulldog hadn't removed his mouth entirely from Candice's pussy before he spoke them. "I want you to come on my mouth."

Candice opened her eyes. She looked at Bulldog, his nose pressed against her clean-shaved skin, his tongue slipping back and forth between the lips of her cunt. Below her and to her right, one woman was on her knees, sucking her husband's cock while looking up at Candice. Beside her, another woman was getting her pussy licked by her husband while staring with huge, round eyes up at Candice.

She was the center of all attention as Bulldog held her high and licked her pussy.

"Oh, God!" she gasped an instant before the climactic contractions began.

Her legs twitched, and she was conscious of kicking Bulldog's back with her heels as her body erupted. She grabbed her breasts, pinching the nipples hard through her dress and bra as wave after wave of sheer ecstasy washed over her.

"She's coming!" a woman exclaimed. Candice wasn't certain who had said it. "My God that man's got to be strong."

The orgasm only lasted a couple seconds, but once it was over, Candice was overwhelmed with the embarrassing reality of having been lifted high and then pleasured with more than a half dozen witnesses.

She grabbed the hem of her dress and tried to push it down to cover herself, though logic told her that nobody could see her naked pussy, though everyone could see the cheeks of her ass.

"Bulldog, you've got to put me down," Candice whispered. "I can't believe..."

Dylan stepped forward, taking Candice by the ankle.

"Not yet," he said, his tone commanding. "When you fall in love

with two men, you've got to be ready for twice the loving."

Candice felt like a toy, like a tiny doll that could be moved and positioned however strong men like Bulldog and Dylan wanted. Before she really understood what was happening, her thighs were up on Dylan's shoulders, and his strong hands were cupping her buns as his mouth pressed against the lips of her cunt. Candice was reclining, her head was on Bulldog's shoulder, his breath warm against her ear, his huge hands strong and secure beneath her shoulder blades. Once again, Candice was being held to shoulder height, only this time she was being suspended horizontally by both men that she loved, and now there were people all around her, watching her, devouring her with their eyes even as they pleasured themselves.

"Come again," Dylan whispered, his fingers kneading Candice's ass cheeks as he worked his tongue between the lips of her cunt, lapping up her juices as he worked his way toward her clit. "Everyone's watching you, adoring you. Come for me, my love."

Candice looked at the stars overhead. It was all surreal. This had to be an erotic dream. Not a reality that she was living through. Her legs were draped over Dylan's shoulders, and his lips were working their magic on her clit as he sucked on tender, excitable flesh.

The sound of a woman moaning drew Candice's attention. She turned her head on Bulldog's shoulder just enough to see that a woman was now leaning against the building, looking up at her over her shoulder. The woman's slacks were down to the middle of her thighs. Behind her, her husband's slacks were also down to his thighs, and he was driving a hard cock into her with sharp, fast thrusts. The man might have been fucking his wife, but he was looking up at Candice as he did it.

I'm a country girl from North Dakota.

It was a discordant thought to have a moment before her body began shivering as another set of climactic convulsions shuddered through her. She kicked her feet and was vaguely aware that one shoe came off. The sound and feel of Bulldog's breath, coming hot and fast against her ear, sounded like the roar of a steam engine running out of control. Her spine arched and flexed as her body, over-stimulated yet again in a staggeringly sort period of time, trembled. Her arms were outstretched, hanging slightly downward, hands opening and closing convulsively.

"Stop!" she gasped, her clit infinitely too sensitive for any more of Dylan's lips and tongue. "Please. Set me down."

She heard a sigh and a groan. Looking toward the sound, she saw the husband slumped over his wife's back. Both of them were smiling up at her with post-orgasmic bliss written in their expressions.

"My muscles have turned to Jell-O," Candice whispered. She felt a flush of embarrassment go through her. "Set me down. Please."

The men were careful with her, putting her gently back on her feet, all their earlier intemperance held firmly in check. Candice was breathing deeply, her heart still pounding. She looked around the balcony, shocked at the lurid behavior occurring all around her. The woman who had pushed her husband to his knees was looking straight at her when her face suddenly distorted. She put a hand to her mouth, made the softest of gasps, and then nearly fell to her knees. Candice didn't have to be told that the woman had just come.

Standing nearly the door, hardly more than twenty feet away, stood a uniformed waitress. She had a hand to her mouth, and held a large, round serving tray against her breasts as though to protect them.

"Never in my life," the young waitress said with awe and envy, "have I ever seen anything like that. Ever. Never."

Candice wore only one high-heeled shoe. She removed it, turned on passion-weakened legs toward Dylan and Bulldog, and said, "Get me out of here before I embarrass myself even more."

Chapter Thirteen

"Compliments of that table over there," the waitress said, setting down a silver bucket with a magnum of Dom Perignon in ice.

Dylan smiled and looked over at the table. It was from the sextet who had paid such close attention to their antics out on the balcony.

"Seems they enjoyed the show," he said, pulling the champagne from the ice. "And I, for one, could use a glass."

Candice was sitting with her elbows on the table and her face in her hands.

"This didn't happen," she said, her words muffled through her hands. "I didn't just do that in front of those people."

Dylan poured glasses for the three of them. He saw a strange look on Bulldog's face that he couldn't interpret.

"Something wrong?" he asked.

"I've heard of Dom Perignon before," Bulldog said. He picked up the delicate champagne glass carefully in his big hand. "Never thought I'd ever taste it though."

"The only thing that tastes better than Dom Perignon when it's icy cold," Dylan replied, "is Candice, when she's pistol hot."

Candice groaned and said, "Can we please not talk about me?"

Bulldog drained his glass in two swallows, prompting a smile from Dylan. "You're right," the policeman said with conviction, nodding his head. "That's second only to Candice."

"I want to disappear," Candice whispered.

Movement caught Dylan's attention. He watched as a woman from the table got to her feet, hesitated a moment, then began crossing the room toward him. He recognized her as the woman who had been leaning against the wall while her husband made love to her from behind.

The woman walked around the table until she stood behind Candice's chair. She put her hands on Candice's shoulders, bent low, and said in her ear loud enough for Dylan to hear, "Thank you, my dear. My husband hasn't shown that much enthusiasm for me in ten years. You turned him into an absolute animal, and I'll always be grateful to you for that."

She kissed Candice on top of the head then returned to her table.

Candice picked her face up out of her hands and looked first at Bulldog then at Dylan.

"I can't believe she said that."

"Believe it," Dylan replied. "You were the catalyst that started an awful lot of loving tonight, and people are grateful to you for it."

Candice looked over Dylan's shoulder and said, "Oh, no!" Then she buried her face in her hands again.

Dylan looked over his shoulder at an approaching man. He recognized him as the man who had been on his knees to lick his wife's pussy as together they watched Candice dance from one climax to another.

"I thought you might want this back," the man said, setting Candice's missing high heel on the table. "And I want to thank you for what you've done. I can't remember the last time my wife was that hot for me." He nodded his head toward Bulldog, then Dylan. "Take good care of her. She's a gem."

"Yes, she is," Dylan said.

"But don't worry," Bulldog added. "We know how lucky we are to have her, and we're not going to blow it."

After the man returned to his table and friends, Candice lifted her face once again from her hands. "Can we leave? Everybody's looking at me."

"What? And leave this spectacular champagne behind?" Dylan's tone suggested abandoning Dom Perignon was a high crime worthy of

being front page news. It was a felony, not a misdemeanor. "Besides, you said earlier that you wanted to dance all night long. The night is long from over."

"That was before I decided to make a complete horse's ass of myself."

"You didn't make a horse's ass of yourself." Bulldog reached beneath the table to adjust himself inside his trousers, grimacing as he did so. "You did make me as hard as steel, though."

Candice's hand flew to her mouth. "I'm sorry. I've been very, very selfish, haven't I?"

Dylan took her hand by the wrist, pulling it from her mouth. "Yes, you have been selfish, but I'm sure it's just a temporary phenomenon. So, in order to make it right, I'm sure you can promise us, here and now, that you'll get down on your knees whenever and wherever we say, and return the favor. Agreed?"

Dylan looked in her eyes, and a slow smile tugged at the right corner of his mouth.

"But...when will you ask me? And where?"

"That's yet to be determined."

"Will there be people watching?"

Dylan smiled and nodded.

She asked, "Many people?"

Dylan shrugged. "Not sure yet."

Bulldog scratched his chin, looking at Candice out of the corner of his eyes. "It's hard to say when the urge will strike." He leaned closer to Candice. "But when that urge does strike, you'll get down on your knees."

Dylan watched as the pink tip of Candice's tongue slipped out between her lips to moisten them. After many seconds of complete silence, she asked, "Will I have to satisfy you one at a time, or both together?"

* * * *

Bulldog was not a man who was easily frightened. He had more than just his word for this fact. It was written on parchment and presented to him by the mayor of New Oslo himself. So he had proof he was a brave hero who had risked his own life for the safety of the citizens of New Oslo. He'd run into buildings that were on fire to rescue people he did know. He had challenged drug-addled men possessing guns and holding hostages. He'd risked life and limb for the safety and protection of others.

So he wasn't a coward.

But he sure felt cowardly when he looked at the forty-foot Chris-Craft boat that was, in theory, about to take him out onto the ocean to go skin diving.

Bulldog had spent his entire life, with the exception of the time he'd spent in the armed forces, in New Oslo, North Dakota. For Bulldog, to the west were always the hills and valleys that were dangerous enough to have been called, with good reason, the Badlands. And to the north, south, and east he always had the endlessly flat plains, with the grasslands and wheat fields where buffalo once roamed in the millions.

Out there was water for countless miles. It seemed so much more vast than anything that Bulldog could comprehend.

It wasn't just the space. He'd seen great spaces before. If the Dakota prairies weren't great spaces, what were? But when he was home, he had land beneath his feet. He could lie on his back and watch the hawks circling overhead, searching with their extraordinary vision for mice, rats, and rabbits from distances that were unfathomable to the human eye.

"You can swim, can't you?" Candice asked.

Bulldog forced a cavalier grin to his lips and said, "Been swimming all my life."

"Okay," Candice replied. "You just seem a little apprehensive."

"It's nothing. I was just thinking of a case back home. Just

remembered a little something that I wanted to double check."

He hadn't been swimming all his life, of course. The number of lakes in North Dakota is approximately one-gazillionth of the number of cattle. And half the lakes it has are manmade. Bulldog had learned to swim at the local school, laboriously churning the arm-over-arm undisciplined method that prevented drowning but never won any speed championships at conference finals.

Candice walked away and a moment later, the man who had introduced himself as Wally, the boat's owner, stepped up to him on the dock.

"Hi," Wally said. "You ready to go?"

"All set."

"Listen, when we were doing the paperwork for the trip, I saw you trying to give your friend some cash to pay for your share."

Bulldog's eyes narrowed. "And?"

"If you want to do your friends a good turn, I'll cut the cost of the trip in half if you pay in cash."

Bulldog didn't have to think about the proposition for very long. He had been feeling uneasy about all the money that Dylan was spending, while he had contributed very little to this unplanned minivacation.

"You've got yourself a deal," Bulldog said, digging into his back pocket for his wallet. "And thanks. I appreciate this."

Wally held his hand out as Bulldog counted out the twenty dollar bills. When he had finished, he had only eighty dollars left.

"Don't say anything about this to the others," Bulldog instructed. "Dylan was going to pay you with a credit card when we got back, right?"

"Right. Right." Wally was fidgeting now, his eyes dancing from Bulldog to the boat. "You just get on the boat. Everything's fine."

Bulldog stepped onto the gleaming white boat. The day trip had nearly cleaned him out cash-wise, but he had the pleasure of knowing he'd paid for a full day's entertainment for the three of them. * * * *

"I feel like such a complete bonehead," Bulldog said, several hours later. "Here I am, a cop—a *sergeant* no less—and I get played for a sucker."

"You couldn't know," Candice said, putting her hand on his knee. They had just finished snorkeling for ninety minutes at their first location of the day and were headed to a second spot. "Ashley said he's addicted to gambling. She tries to do what she can to help him, but you can't help someone who doesn't want it."

"Dylan's paid for everything," Bulldog explained. "I just wanted to hold up my end."

Candice leaned to the side and kissed the bulldog tattoo on his biceps. "Stop beating yourself up. It was an accident, and we all make mistakes."

She looked up at the pilot's tower where Ashley, Wally's younger sister, was at the controls. The brother and sister owned the boat together, with Wally acting as captain and cook, while Ashley snorkeled with the customers and delivered a running commentary on the habitat and sea life they encountered.

"Do you think she's beautiful?" Candice asked Bulldog. "I think she is."

Bulldog hardly looked up at the woman before turning his attention back to Candice. "I suppose, but not as beautiful as you."

Candice guessed that Ashley, like herself, was a couple years over twenty-one. But age was about all they had in common. Ashley was barely five feet tall, a short-haired brunette, with a body that was compact and lean, showing the flattering effects of having spent a lifetime swimming for hours a day in the ocean. Though she had fine breasts and hips, she didn't possess the ostentatious curves Candice did.

"I envy her," Candice said quietly, honestly, looking up at the

woman in the fairly modest white bikini. "I've always wanted to be petite like that. I guess it's the Swede in me. It's not in our genes to be delicate."

Bulldog squeezed her hand and said, "I wouldn't change anything about you. I mean it."

"I'm glad that Marcel had the good sense to not provide me with a string bikini. You know the kind I'm talking about." She adjusted the top of her red bikini slightly. "With boobs like these, I need all the help I can get to keep the girls in line."

Sharply, Bulldog replied, "Will you please stop criticizing yourself? I love you. Everything about you." His voice softened. "Especially your breasts."

She let her gaze go slowly over Bulldog. Wearing only a swim suit with a towel around his neck, she could see all those glorious, masculine muscles resting beneath pale flesh. On a purely physical level, Bulldog's physique was so blatantly masculine that Candice had little choice but to react instinctively to him.

"I'm going to make you prove that last comment," she said, scratching lightly along the inside of his thigh with her fingernails, "when we get back to the hotel tonight."

"Count on it," Bulldog replied. "But if you don't stop touching the inside of my leg right now, I might not be able to hold off until we get back to land."

* * * *

Dylan floated on the surface of the water, breathing slowly and comfortably through his snorkel, scissoring his legs slowly. Ahead of him and ten feet beneath the surface was a five-foot nurse shark. He knew that type of shark wasn't by nature particularly aggressive, but he was keeping a safe distance from the fish anyway. One never knew when a shark was having a bad day and looking to vent a little frustration. He had always loved Key West, but never more than now. He loved the laissez-faire attitude of the people and the tourists. He loved the weather and the bath water warm ocean. He especially loved the shrimp, even if his cholesterol levels didn't.

Being the one to introduce Bulldog and Candice to Key West gave him a sense of pride. This wouldn't be the last time the three of them would be staying at *The International Waters Hotel*. What good was having millions in the bank if he couldn't spend some of it on the people he loved?

Suddenly, the shark turned sharply to the left. Dylan spread his arms out, palms forward in a braking move. The shark eyed him warily, but without either panic or aggression. Dylan's forward momentum slowed then stopped. Though he told himself the shark was only investigating its surroundings, that didn't stop Dylan's heart from beating more quickly.

With several quick movements of its tail, the nurse shark disappeared.

I wish Candice and Bulldog could have seen that. I'm sure they've never seen a shark anywhere but on TV.

Lifting his head out of the water, he looked around and saw that the boat was seventy yards away. Bulldog and Candice were sitting near the stern, and Ashley was up in the captain's tower at the wheel.

Next time I'll rent a boat and captain it myself. Bulldog and I should make love to Candice out on the ocean in the sunshine.

The thought made his erection start to form. Forcing any erotic thoughts from his consciousness, he adjusted his mask and headed for the boat at an easy pace.

Easy, Amberson. You'll just have to wait until tonight.

* * * *

"I'm sorry about your brother taking the money," Candice said, standing on the high pilot's tower with Ashley. "Bulldog feels

terrible about it."

"He shouldn't," Ashley replied. "There's no way he could have known what my brother is like."

"I'll see what I can do to make it right."

"Don't." Ashley's reaction was a little too swift, a bit too adamant. Candice's eyes narrowed. "What I mean to say is, don't put yourself in an awkward position for me." She combed her fingers through her hair. "I'm not exactly sure what you've got going in your private life. I don't know which one of those men is yours, but I can tell what you've got going is something special. I don't want to be the cause of any tension."

Which one of those men is mine? Both, my dear. But I could never tell you that. I could never tell anyone that.

Candice gave her a smile, then watched with an instantaneous sense of horror as Ashley's jaw dropped open, and a pinkish hue of embarrassment came to her cheeks. It was so obvious that Ashley had just discovered the truth of Candice's triangular love affair with two men simultaneously that she didn't even try to appear innocent.

"Yes. I'm in love with both of them," Candice stated quietly but with steely determination. She looked out to sea, unable to meet Ashley's inquiring gaze. "I won't deny it. And I could see in your eyes that you've figured it out."

"Look, I don't want you to think for a second that I'm judging you. I'm not." It was Ashley's turn to look away. "I haven't led exactly a monastic life myself. I just...just got caught a bit by surprise by you." She nibbled her lower lip for a moment. "So *both* of those gorgeous men are your lovers? Oh, honey, you don't look it, but you're a greedy woman. No one woman has any right to have *two* men so lovely to the eyes all to herself."

Candice relaxed slightly. "Trust me, it wasn't something that I'd planned on. In fact, if you want some advice, let me say that it's a damned stupid idea to fall in love with two men." She shrugged her shoulders and looked down where Dylan and Bulldog were seated, drinking beers with towels over their broad shoulders to protect their pale skin from the scorching sun. "It doubles your troubles, but it also doubles your pleasures. No, strike that. It more than doubles your pleasure. It triples or quadruples all the good things you can think of."

Ashley nibbled her lower lip again, then said, "Listen, if you want me to go below deck for an hour, or so, all you have to do is ask. I'll...um...take a nap or something. You can have this whole boat all to yourself, and I'll stay in my quarters." She tilted her face upward. "Two wonderful men who love you. The sun warm overhead. Not a cloud in the sky. Oh, Candice, you can't imagine how much I envy you." She patted Candice on the shoulder. "Will an hour be enough time?"

The unexpected offer of privacy caught Candice by surprise. At first she just smiled, then when Ashley started toward the ladder leading down to the main deck, she said, "An hour should be just fine."

"By the way," Ashley said, turning at the base of the ladder to look over her shoulder, "there's a giant-sized bottle of baby oil near the main deck wheel. I'm in and out of salt water at least four times a day, so I'm always putting it on, otherwise my skin gets so dry." She winked salaciously. "With two big men who just adore you, baby oil might help things"—her eyebrows lifted with salacious amusement— "fit more comfortably."

"I so owe you a favor," Candice said, but she was already talking to someone who was moving swiftly down the ladder, headed toward her own small cabin below deck. Nevertheless, she added, "Bless you!" just in case Ashley could hear.

* * * *

Dylan tried to swallow and found he couldn't. His throat was too tight and dry to swallow. Candice was walking down the ladder from where she'd been up on the bridge. The up and down movement of her buns inside the bikini bottoms as she stepped down the ladder was doing entirely disastrous things to the asexual aloofness that he'd been desperately trying to maintain while aboard the boat-for-hire.

"Could she possibly look sexier?" Bulldog asked out of the side of his mouth.

"Impossible," Dylan replied, sotto voce. "It's when she doesn't try to be sexy that she turns me on the most."

"Me, too."

Candice stepped off the ladder and onto the deck, turned, smiled at the men, then walked forward slowly. In her right hand was a large plastic bottle of baby oil.

"Ashley's just given me some advice that seems to make sense. She says that if you're going to go swimming in salt water, you've got to apply baby oil before and after or your skin dries out. Being a North Dakota girl, salt water's new to me, but what she says seems to make sense. Would you two mind?"

Dylan looked at Bulldog and whispered, "These are the times that try men's souls."

Bulldog chuckled softly and replied in an equally soft tone, "If you want to cut this snorkeling trip short, I'm all in favor of getting back to our hotel room as quickly as possible."

"What are you two whispering about?" Candice asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all," Dylan replied quickly. "So, you need some baby oil applied to keep that lovely white skin all lovely and white?"

"It doesn't act as a sunscreen, so I'll have to be careful about that, but the baby oil will keep the salt water from drying me out. Would you mind?"

Dylan wondered briefly whether he was being played. There was something in Candice's tone, an undercurrent that he couldn't quite comprehend, that was sending up in his mind the little red flags of warning. But when she held out the bottle, he cupped his hands together beneath it, and all suspicion vanished as quickly and completely as it had never occurred to him.

Candice squirted a liberal amount of baby oil into Dylan's palms, then into Bulldog's big hands. Then, with the appearance of absolute innocence on her face, she turned her backs to the men.

"Let's be fair about this," she said, her tone more conversational than flirtatious. "You two can split me up. Either one of you gets the right side and one the left, or one of you gets the front and one the back."

Being careful to keep as much of the baby oil in his hands as possible, Dylan looked up, let his gaze go from Candice's magnificently rounded breasts down to her curvaceous hips, and said to Bulldog, "What about you taking the left side and I'll take the right?"

"Sounds like a plan."

Dylan rose to his feet, feeling once again the tightness in his chest and a telltale stirring in his groin. With Candice, it seemed that he could never get enough of her. Making love to her didn't quench his thirst for it. It only fueled his desire to have her again, and again, and again.

When she turned sideways to him, his carefully put his hands on the front and back of her shoulder. She closed her eyes and issued a small, soft sigh that made his cock—always responsive to such stimuli, especially when Candice was involved—twitch inside his swimming trunks.

"That feels nice," Candice said, her voice a soft, sultry purr.

Dylan worked his hands slowly over her shoulder, then down the front and back of her body. He felt like a teenager, entirely lacking experience in touching a voluptuous woman and feeling her responding to his touch. The mere act of sliding his fingers beneath the neck strap of her bikini top to work the baby oil into her skin made what had been a slowly awakening cock turn rapidly into a fullscale erection. The urge to unknot the bikini top and to expose her breasts, with their pink areolas and responsive nipples, was nearly overpowering.

Needing to de-sexualize this seemingly innocent act, Dylan abandoned Candice's upper body, choosing instead to put the clear, slick oil onto her arm.

"More?" Candice asked, lifting the plastic bottle.

"Yes," Dylan replied, annoyed that he could so easily hear the tightness in his tone.

She filled his palms with baby oil, and he began slathering it over her arm, then along the side of her body beneath the strap of her bikini top.

To Candice, Bulldog said in a growl, "You realize, of course, that you're torturing us."

"Yep." Candice's reply was teasing. "You two always get whatever you want, so it seemed to me that this afternoon might be a good time to show you that you can't just have me whenever and however you want."

"When we get back to the hotel," Dylan said, his cock visibly swelling the front of his swim trunks now, "you're in for the fucking of a lifetime."

"We won't be making love?" Candice raised an eyebrow as she looked at him.

Dylan shook his head. "Maybe the second time, but not the first. You're in for a slam-fuck the instant we get back to the room."

"I strongly suspected that would be your reaction." She nibbled on her lower lip, and the urge to kiss her fiercely, commandingly, took Dylan by the throat with a painful grip. "It's impossible for me to say whether getting fucked by you two causes more climaxes for me, or if making love is the more satisfying."

"We'll all find out later," Dylan said. "You'll be getting both tonight."

He ran his hands along the upper edge of her bikini bottoms, fighting against the urge to pull them down. He was also resisting the need to free his erection, which was straining mightily against his swim trunks. He watched his hands sliding over her lower stomach and back, then turned his gaze to Bulldog's. From his expression, Dylan could tell the big policeman was having difficulty controlling his baser instincts. Whatever doubts Dylan had of Bulldog's inner conflict ended when he looked at his friend's swimming trunks and saw that he, too, had an enormous erections fighting to be set free.

"I'll need more," Dylan said, on his knees at Candice's side, holding his hands palms upward. She filled his palms with baby oil. "This is pure torture. You know that, don't you?"

"You can punish me later," Candice replied, a hint of suppressed laughter in her tone. "A spanking might be just the ticket to teach me a lesson."

Dylan put his hands high on Candice's leg. He watched as the clear oil trickled down her thigh, and a low growl rumbled out of his chest. When she spread her feet a couple inches farther apart, he eased his hand around her thigh. His forefinger ran along the seam of her bikini, simultaneously touching skin and stretching fabric. Her pussy was just an inch away. So close, and yet—

Candice's soft, tremulous sigh made Dylan tilt his head back on his shoulders to look up at her face. Her chin was down, her eyes closed, her lips slightly parted.

It would be so easy to slide my finger into the suit and touch her. She'll be wet. She always responds. That's one of the reasons why I love her.

With more discipline that he thought he possessed, Dylan pulled his hands down Candice's thigh, smoothing the slick oil into her thigh, knee, and then calf.

Chapter Fourteen

I'll come the instant either one of them touches my pussy.

Candice had intended on teasing her men, on playing a little game with them, like they sometimes did with her. But she hadn't counted on being as wrapped up in the game as her men were. She had hoped for a little objective detachment.

Both men were kneeling, each massaging baby oil into her calves. Candice felt the warm tingles emanating from her clit throughout her body. The men were looking down. Candice eased her hands slowly up her body and, stealthily, eased the cups of the bikini beneath her breasts. Her pink nipples were elongated, itching for stimulation.

"I should be honest," Candice said, finding the sexual tension coursing through her veins to be so strong that she could hardly speak. "Ashley promised me she'd stay below deck in her cabin. We can be up here on deck, out in the open and under the sun. I want you two so much it hurts."

She saw the shocked expressions turn to lusty grins.

"You've just been jacking with us?" Bulldog exclaimed.

Candice nodded.

"Now you're really going to get it!" Dylan added.

Candice was laughing when her men bolted to standing positions. She offered no resistance as they pushed her to her knees. An instant later, swim trunks were lowered and two long, hard cocks were finally set free.

"All mine," Candice purred, wrapped her hands around the shafts. "Only for me."

She was purring like a kitten when her lips slipped over the plump

crown of Bulldog's erection. Filling her mouth with his hardness, she rotated her face around him, drawing a firm suction on his cock as she put her lips and tongue in motion.

"I thought I'd lose my mind," Bulldog said, his tone taut. "To be touching you and yet not being able to touch you the way I wanted. It was torture."

Candice dragged her lips along the shaft and over the head of his cock. She looked up into his eyes, winked saucily, then pulled back enough to release him from her oral embrace.

"I wanted to play a little game to prime the pump." When she flicked her tongue against the underside of the head of his cock, his powerful body flinched. She smiled at his reaction. "Not that you've ever needed much priming."

She nodded back and forth, taking him in and out of her mouth several times as she ran her opposite hand over Dylan's throbbing cock. Sitting on the backs of her heels, looking up at her men as she pleasured them with her lips, tongue, and hands, she was once again astonished at the turns her life had taken, and how fortunate she was. To have two handsome, virile men wanting her sexually and loving her emotionally gave her a more profound and all-consuming sense of bliss than she had thought possible.

She looked at Dylan's erection as she stroked him and watched a drop of pre-cum form at the slit. She licked off the salty fluid, pleased with herself when her lover groaned his approval, though the taste itself was mildly unpleasant. An instant later she captured his cock between her lips. She took Dylan deep enough so that the fleshy crown was pressed snuggly against the back on her mouth. Holding as much of him as possible, she slid her tongue along the underside of his shaft.

As she continued sucking on Dylan, Bulldog eased her hand off his erection, and sat down on the padded bench seat.

"Sit down here, darling," he said, his hand around the base of his thick shaft. "I need to feel myself inside you. No matter how wonderful your mouth feels, it's just not the same as being inside that honey pot of yours." He made a vague, swirling motion with his hand. "When I'm inside your pussy, I feel more connected to you."

Any man as uncomfortable with words and emotions as Bulldog that can still say something like that deserves special treatment. And that's exactly what I'm going to give him!

Candice rose to her feet but bent at the waist so that she could keep Dylan's cock in her mouth for as long as possible. She released him with a slurping sound before rising up on her tiptoes to kiss him on the chin, then lips.

"Don't ever stop loving me," she whispered, looking into Dylan's eyes even as she walked slowly backward until she felt Bulldog's powerful hands on her naked hips. She looked over her shoulder down at Bulldog. "And that goes for you, too."

She straddled thighs that were thick with muscle and let Bulldog guide her downward. First she felt the plump head of his cock against the lips of her pussy, and she stopped for a moment, preparing herself for the bliss she knew was about to follow. Ever so subtly, she moved her hips forward and back, rubbing the slick lips of her cunt against the crown of Bulldog's cock. Only after twenty seconds had passed did she bend her knees and experience the exquisite sensation of having the man she loved penetrate her. When he pushed inside, he became a part of her.

"Oh, *yes!*" she said, her tone adding an erotic obscenity to the hiss of words.

Once she had the entire crown of Bulldog's thick cock between her cunt lips, Candice braced herself for a moment, and then dropped down upon his thighs, taking his entire length inside her slick, warm embrace.

She put her hands on his knees and moved her hips in a circular motion. Though she had just taken Bulldog's cock into herself, she could already feel the swelling tide of her emotions, a sensation that pushed her relentlessly toward an orgasm. With her eyes closed, she said, "That feels so—"

She would have said more, but Dylan didn't give her the chance. He hooked a hand around the back of her neck and pulled her forward. When the spongy crown of his cock struck her lips, Candice opened her mouth. She sucked his cock into her wet embrace, nursing wantonly on his throbbing flesh.

I've got Dylan's cock in my mouth and Bulldog's in my pussy and I've never felt so love in all my life.

It was a satisfying thought to have at a moment when rational cognition was not exactly her top priority.

"You played me for the fool," Dylan said, his voice a low growl. He put his hands on her head to hold her motionless as he began to pump his hips, sliding his erection back and forth between her lips. "I thought Ashley was going to be stepping out onto the deck at any second." He chuckled. "My cock nearly broke trying to break free of that damned swim suit."

Though she had little experience doing such things, Candice quickly figured out how to hold onto Bulldog's knees and lean forward so that she could avail her mouth for Dylan's pleasure while still pumping her hips up and down to blissfully impale herself on the policeman's thick cock.

Don't come, my darlings. Let me come first, and then I'll let you both in for a treat.

She slowed the movement of her hips. Bulldog was a man of great sexual discipline, but she'd teased him beyond a level of endurance that any young man could hope to attain. The more vigorous she pumped her hips, the quicker he would climax. His ultimate pleasure was *precisely* what she wanted. Just not yet.

When Dylan withdrew until only the tip of his crown was still between her lips, Candice turned her head sharply to the side. She looked at him and saw the disappointment in his expression, and his escalating lust.

"Don't worry, my love," she whispered, looking up at Dylan, her

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tone now as frantically lust-distorted as theirs had been earlier. "I'll give you everything you want, and *more*!"

She ran her hand over her stomach to get her fingers slick with baby oil, then reached between her legs to stroke Bulldog's erection, lubricating it with oil.

Looking over her shoulder, she whispered, "It's the only way you haven't had me. I'm yours. Everything. All of me."

She felt the slippery head of his cock press against her tight back entrance. The breath caught in her throat as she bent her knees, and felt the pressure against her ass increase.

Relax. You can do it. All you have to do is—

Candice felt a heated stab of pain when he spread the cheeks of her ass further apart, and entered her. She gasped softly, her eyes squeezed tightly shut. But the discomfort lasted only a couple seconds. She straightened her legs to release him nearly completely then bent her knees again, impaling herself on Bulldog's unyielding cock.

"Oh!" she sighed then opened her eyes. She looked at Dylan and whispered, "I want you in my mouth."

Dylan slipped his hand around the back of Candice's neck as he guided his erection to her mouth. She was purring softly, holding him deeply as her tongue slithered along the underside of his shaft, when her thighs came in contact with Bulldog's thighs. She at last had taken all he had for her.

She felt Bulldog's hands at her hips, his palms broad and warm against her skin. He held her tightly, securely, temporarily keeping her motionless as his cock pulsed hotly inside her tingling ass. When his hold on her loosened, Candice began slowly bouncing on his lap as she sucked on Dylan's steadily pistoning cock.

Dylan smoothed hair away from her face, touching the underside of her chin to turn her gaze up to his. He smiled at her then took a half-step backward.

"I know just what you need," he said as he got down on his knees

on the deck. "You're going to explode."

Candice was sitting on Bulldog's thighs, his cock buried deep in her ass, when Dylan capture her clit between his lips and sucked lightly on it.

"Oh God! Ohhh! That's so..."

Candice had never felt anything quite like the myriad of sensations shooting through her system. It was visually stunning to look down between her own wide-spread thighs and see Dylan's handsome face.

As he continued sucking and licking on her clit, Dylan slipped two fingers into Candice. Only seconds later she was crying out in ecstasy, her hips jerking as pulsing waves of ecstasy shuddered through her.

When the last spasm subsided, she fell back, reclining against Bulldog's naked chest as his cock throbbed wantonly in her ass. Dylan rose to his feet, looking down at her. His gaze was as blistering hot as the sun on her pale, glistening body.

"So sexy," he whispered.

Candice remained motionless, sitting on Bulldog's thighs, as Dylan moved over her, putting his right leg over her as he slipped his left leg beneath her.

"Yes," Candice said, watching transfixed as Dylan guided the head of his cock to the lips of her pussy. "I want you inside me. I want to feel you both inside me and hear your ecstasy when you come. I want—"

The first thrust was bold, penetrating deeply. Dylan leaned forward so that his chest pressed against her breasts. He tried to kiss Candice, but she turned her face aside. She was breathing too rapidly for her to be able to accept a kiss.

The labor, the sheer physicality of the ménage encounter, shook Candice to the core of her soul. She curled her legs around Bulldog's, placing her feet on the seat cushion to lift her hips slightly, allowing him to move beneath her. As Bulldog thrust upward, driving into her

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ass, Dylan plunged downward, filling her pussy.

She had wanted this to be for the pleasure of her men, but Candice was the first to come. Her high-pitched cry of desire was just fading when Dylan and Bulldog plunged full-length into Candice and released their desire.

Afterward, all three gulping in deep breaths, Candice stroked Dylan's hair and whispered, "Don't move. Just let me hold you for a while."

The post-orgasmic bliss was heavenly. To be pinned between Dylan and Bulldog, to have her body penetrated by them, to feel their chests rising and falling with their heavy breaths, was enchantment itself.

It was some time later that Candice said, with laughter in her tone, "You can't imagine just how much I need a bath."

"Well, fortunately for us, we've got an entire ocean to get clean in," Dylan replied.

* * * *

"You know, I've been trying to lose twenty pounds since high school," Candice said, studying a plate heaping with what the locals call "pink gold" and the rest of the country calls "jumbo shrimp." "And by the time we must unfortunately end this brief, idyllic vacation in the Conch Republic, I'll have twenty-five to lose."

Bulldog smiled at her and replied, "If you feel the need to go on a diet, then do it. But please, please don't think you have to lose weight to make me happy. There isn't anything about you that I'd change."

"Which only proves that love can indeed make you blind."

Bulldog chuckled, took another bite of the delicious seafood platter he'd ordered, and looked around the outdoor restaurant, then at Dylan and Candice. It seemed to him a complete mystery that he could change his attitudes toward love and romance so quickly, so completely. He'd never been overly possessive of his lovers because while he physically shared love with them, his emotional attachment came significantly short of actual love.

With Candice, his entire heart and soul was intertwined with hers. The fact that she was simultaneously in love with Dylan did not in any way bother him, which surprised him endlessly. When he watched her making love with Dylan, the sight of it only made him want to join in on the passionate activities. Jealousy didn't figure in the mix.

A couple in their forties stepped toward their table. Bulldog wasn't certain, but he thought he recognized them as guests at *The International Waters Hotel*.

"Pardon our intrusion," the wife said, "but we were wondering if you were going to be dancing at the hotel tonight."

Bulldog nodded. "Thought we might."

"Will you be...?" She blushed as her words trailed away.

"What my wife is trying to ask," the husband said, "is whether you'll be stepping outside sometime during the evening."

This time it was Candice's turn to blush. Bulldog padded the back of her hand, looked up at the couple, and replied, "Would you like us to?"

"Let's just say that my wife and I are behaving like newlyweds, and we've been married just under twenty years," the man explained. He didn't need to say anything more to get his point across.

Thirty minutes later, when Bulldog requested the check, the waitress said, "It's already been paid for." Bulldog described the couple who had earlier approached them and the waitress answered, "Yes, they're the ones."

When the waitress left, Bulldog looked into Candice's blue eyes and said, "If I get one more free meal or drink because of our completely unplanned show the other night, I'll have to let City Hall know that I've taken a second job. Rules are that New Oslo Police Department personnel must disclose all gifts and outside income."

"One of the great things about The International is that it's

private. Banning cell phones means that what happens there, stays there. It's like Las Vegas, only on steroids as far as security goes."

"Speaking of security," Bulldog replied, "we still haven't decided on just exactly how we're going to keep Candice safe from Nick."

"Why not just let me pay the protection money?" Dylan made a dismissive motion with his hand. "As distasteful as it is to put money into Nick's coffers, if it keeps Candice and her family safe, then I'm more than happy to do it."

Bulldog shook his head. "Don't dismiss this guy as just some lowlevel crook. Yes, he wants the money, but he also wants Candice, and he's determined to have her. The most that paying him is going to do is buy a little time. Sooner or later, he's going to say 'to hell with the money' and he's going to demand that Candice do exactly what he wants."

"You're a policeman. You can't stop him?"

Bulldog shook his head. "If I could, I would. But what's he done? There not one word on tape of his threatening anyone. He's slippery that way. Nick knows I'd love to get something on him, some good reason to slap on the 'cuffs. That's why he's always got Digger and John with him. They do his talking, they handle his money, they do his dirty work. Legally speaking, his hands stay clean."

Candice's voice was very soft as she said, "There's got to be some way to stop Nick. Some way that stops him from ever being a menace to me or anyone else ever again."

"I've thought of that," Bulldog said. "Believe me, I've thought a thousand times of whether I could just gun him down in cold blood. And the truth is, I can't. As much as I despise that bastard, I'm a policeman, not an assassin."

Dylan rose to his feet. "We'll think of something. But right now, I think we should put on our dancing shoes and trip the light fantastic."

Chapter Fifteen

Nick looked at the revolver in his hands, and did his best to keep from smiling. The weapon had cost his nearly two thousand dollars. Only a couple hundred was for the revolver. The rest of the expense was for the silencer attached to the muzzle. Nick had been promised that the silencer brought the revolver's roar down to little more than a cough.

He'd bought the weapon for the specific reason of killing Big Al. Every week, Big Al demanded his tribute, his share of Nick's illgotten gain. While at first it had seemed a reasonable expense to pay Big Al for his support, as time went on, Nick began to realize that he didn't need anyone's help in running a criminal enterprise. He'd been doing it successfully since his teen years, and there was no reason to believe that he wasn't getting better at it all the time.

It was a business decision, purely and simply. He'd kill Big Al without rancor or resentment. The man was an unnecessary expense, so he had to be cut from the business plan.

It was as simple as that.

But even before he dealt with Big Al, he had Candice to deal with.

Nick had said he'd give her to Digger and John, but it might take a while before he actually did that. There was something about Candice that made her stick in the mind, that made the image of her play endlessly with his thoughts. It wasn't just that she had a body that was sexy as hell, though that was certainly a big part of her allure. Nick wondered if it was her feistiness. She wasn't a woman who would be easily tamed, easily conquered. She wouldn't *want* to give in to Nick's lust for her, but she wouldn't have any real choice in the

matter. Nick was quite willing to make good on his threats of violence to her aunt and uncle if she didn't make his lurid fetishes an orgasmic reality.

When Saturday night rolled around, he'd put her on her knees, right where she belonged.

He could hardly wait.

* * * *

The sensation of soaring like an eagle, catching the warm updrafts to remain aloft without the need to flap wings, was so strong it nearly took Candice's breath away. Far below her was the ocean, and though she occasionally found herself with a fear of heights, Candice discovered that being harnessed to a parasail gave her a sense of serenity unlike anything she'd ever known.

She could see for miles and miles out to sea. And from her vantage point, she could see all of Key West. It wasn't, in fact, much bigger than New Oslo.

Below her, in the boat pulling her parasail, was Bulldog and Dylan. On their faces were enormous smiles, visible even from a distance. Earlier, her lovers had taken their turns together in the parasail, buckling into a twin harness. To watch them laughing at each other and at themselves was one of the greatest joys that Candice had ever known. She wondered how it was that she could have gotten so lucky to have found two men who could love her without being jealous of the other. It was astonishing, but it was true.

That evening, they were scheduled to take the private corporate jet back to New Oslo. For a few days, Candice had managed to escape reality, to immerse herself in a world that did not judge her, that did not condemn her for the offense of falling in love with two men.

Dylan has promised he'll find a way for the three of us to live together without all of New Oslo knowing about it. I won't ask for anything more if I can have them in my life for the rest of my life. The boat began to slow, and the electric wench started reeling in the cord Candice was attached to. Her parasailing was coming to an end. In less time than she would have liked, she would have her feet on the ground and have to deal with a despicable and vicious man named Nick.

* * * *

New Oslo, North Dakota

Standing near the windows in his office, Dylan looked down at the City of New Oslo. He was a powerful man in the small city. With his shares in the family's various business interests, he was also a powerful man throughout the world. But he was feeling particularly weak as he contemplated his future.

Nick's a monster, a mobster. You can't negotiate with monsters. Only the very naïve would think they can reason with someone like that.

His brief time away from the office and his corporate responsibilities, his precious hours and minutes and seconds with Candice and Bulldog in Key West, had been stupendously pleasurable. So how could he duplicate that golden experience here in New Oslo?

There had to be a way. All he had to do was think on it long enough, and then the answer would come to him. Dylan was confident in his abilities, but still—

His desk telephone buzzed, and through the small speaker, his secretary said, "There's a woman here to see you, Mr. Amberson. It's Miss Candice Olssen."

Dylan was surprised. He had kept his calendar relatively free of appointments so that he could catch up on all the reading he'd missed. Being an executive at a multi-national corporation the size of Galaxy was a ten- to twelve-hour-a-day job at least six days a week, it seemed.

"Send her in," he said after a moment.

He felt the strangest sensation of being a teenage boy once again when Candice stepped into his office and closed the door behind herself. She was dressed in faded denims, white athletic shoes, and a light cotton blouse modestly buttoned to not show so much as a hint of cleavage. There was nothing even remotely provocative in her attire, which perhaps added fuel to Dylan's instantaneous desire for her.

"I'm sorry for coming here without an invitation," she said, keeping her voice low as she crossed the office. "You're not angry with me, are you? If you want me to, I'll turn right around and leave this very second."

Dylan shook his head. "I couldn't be angry with you, even if you tried. I'm surprised, that's all." He rose to his feet, checked once again to see that the door was closed, then kissed Candice lightly on the lips. "What happy circumstance brings you here?"

The telephone buzzed once again, and Dylan's awesomely efficient secretary said, "Just a quick reminder, Mr. Amberson, that you've got a conference call with London at ten o'clock. That's just four minutes away."

"Thank you," Dylan said. He sat back in his chair and touched a button on his phone to disable the intercom. He looked at Candice, told himself that making love to her here in the office was completely out of the realm of possibilities, and asked, "Is something wrong?"

She half-sat on his desk, close enough that he could catch the faintest hint of her perfume. If she had chosen to wear her denim miniskirt instead of her jeans, he would only have had to reach out to stroke her silken thigh. It was a disturbing awareness for Dylan.

"I'm here to make a request, of sorts," Candice said quietly, with enough sincerity that Dylan felt a twinge of apprehension. "Bulldog came to The Cattleman's Paradise and...well...."

"And you made love?"

She shook her head. "No. We did not. We desperately wanted to, but that's against the rules we've all agreed on. You know how Bulldog is a stickler for rules and regulations and laws and all that other policeman stuff. We all promised that none of us would make love unless all three of us were together." She took his hand in hers and squeezed. "He's dying for me, and I'm dying for him, but neither one of us would break the rules. So I'm here to say that I *really* want to make love with Bulldog, but I need your permission to do it without you being there. And Bulldog thought that since he's asking for an exception, then you should be the first one to...um...be amused, so to speak." A slender, arched eyebrow lifted in inquiry. "And that's why I'm here."

"I see. And let me state that I'm impressed with the discipline that both of you have exhibited." Dylan was moved by the restraint Bulldog had shown. He wasn't certain he wouldn't have shown such good judgment. Where Candice was concerned, he was powerless against the sexual intemperance she inspired. "And thank you for your honesty."

Candice gave a slow, breathy sigh of relief. She smiled at Dylan, and an impish light came into her blue eyes.

"You've got a conference call in just a minute or two, right?" Dylan nodded. Candice eased off the desk, taking the arm of his chair to turn him toward her as she sank to her knees. "Just sit there. Let me take care of everything. And don't worry. I'll be quiet. Nobody on the conference call will know you're multi-tasking."

Dylan was conscious of his heart suddenly accelerating. Though he'd spent years seducing women all over the world, he'd always separated work from pleasure. Nothing sexual had ever occurred in his office. It was a personal rule he'd always lived by.

Until Candice became an integral part of his life and effortlessly stripped away any objection Dylan had of mixing work and play.

"I want to pay ahead, so to speak," Candice whispered, catching the tab of his zipper between her forefinger and thumb. "And don't worry about me. This time it's all about you." She dipped her head and kissed his thigh through his trousers. "Lord knows, if there's a ledger keeping score on orgasms, I owe you at least a couple dozen by now."

She reached in through the open fly, fumbled around a bit until she found the opening to his boxers, then tugged his cock out. He was not yet fully hard, but he was growing swiftly, just like he always did whenever Candice directed her attention toward him.

Dylan cleared his throat, and said, "You realized, of course, that this is quite insane."

She nodded. "That's what makes it so fun. Driving here, I was practically creaming in my panties just thinking about being on my knees in your office, sucking on your cock." Her hand moved up and down on a shaft that was swiftly losing all flexibility. "I never thought I could take such satisfaction in giving pleasure to a man, but you and Bulldog have changed me." She blew her warm breath on the hard cock in her hand. "When I look into your eyes and I see how much you want me, I feel powerful. And lucky."

Dylan stretched his legs out, bracketing Candice between his thighs. She leaned forward and delivered a quick, light kiss to the crown of his cock, which immediately grew to its full stature.

"Be ready for your call," Candice said, her lips brushing against the underside of the knob as she spoke. "I wouldn't want to do anything that would interfere with business."

"Business be damned," Dylan replied, his tone hoarse with the sexual tension the voluptuous blonde inspired.

"Don't say that, or I'll leave this very instant."

Dylan reached across his desk and touched a button on his phone. "The call goes to my secretary first, and she'll transfer it to me any second now."

"In that case, I can start."

He flinched as though having been given an electrical shock when he watched and felt Candice push her moist lips over the head of his cock. She moaned softly, soulfully, a woman clearly enjoying what she was doing, and Dylan felt his pulse throbbing in his cock.

His phone buzzed yet again, and the secretary announced, "Mr. Amberson, your conference call is on line three."

"Thank you." He picked up the phone. "Dylan Amberson here. Who all do we have on the line?"

* * * *

Candice wished she'd taken the time to put on something more attractive than just jeans and a simple cotton shirt before driving to Dylan's office. She always wanted to be pretty for him, to be dressed in a manner he would find flattering and sexy. Today she wasn't dressed in a dowdy fashion, but she certainly wasn't doing all she could do enhance her charms.

It doesn't seem to have bothered him any. He's already hard as stone.

She heard the secretary explain which line the conference call was on as she nibbled lightly with her lips, inching down the pulsing shaft of Dylan's cock. She rotated her face around the hard flesh when Dylan's cock was threatening to push into her throat. She held him like that for several seconds before pulling up, dragging her lips up and off him.

Sitting on the backs of her heels, Candice looked at the man she loved, marveling at the gorgeous masculinity she saw. He was in a navy blue suit with a red silk necktie, with only the big silver belt buckle and his cowboy boots testimony to his being the man he was instead of a financier from New York City. His black hair, parted on the left and combed back and to the sides, was mussed just enough for him to not have that carefully manufactured look of a metrosexual man. He was leaning back in his chair with his legs surrounding her, and though he appeared casually nonchalant, the fierceness of his erection was proof that Candice was having her desired effect. He was saying something to a man in London, exchanging a joke about something they'd done together while at a conference in Paris the previous year.

He travels the world, and he falls in love with a small-town country girl. Without a doubt, I'm the luckiest woman in the world.

It took some doing, but she managed to tug Dylan's balls out through the fly of his slacks. Once freed, Candice took them lightly in her fingers and, one at a time, sucked on the twin orbs. Judging by the way Dylan struggled to control his breathing, Candice could tell that she was pleasing him immensely.

Seconds ticked by at a leisurely pace. Candice was in no hurry to bring this tryst to its intended climactic conclusion. Pleasing her lover, especially when she was doing it with her lips and tongue, gave her an incredible sense of power, of being in control. As she sucked on his balls, she stroked his cock. He was throbbing with wanton virility in her fist.

"Are we any closer to getting the oil drilling leases we need from the Brazilian government?" Dylan asked into the phone.

Candice could hear the strain in his tone. Perhaps none of the people on the conference call would notice it, but she did. She knew him in ways that no one on the conference call could ever hope to. They might have known him longer, but that wasn't what was important. The important thing was to know Dylan intimately, to love him for the good and the bad. She knew the totality of the man. The other men on the conference call only knew Dylan as a businessman with a keen eye for profits.

With that thought joyously in mind, Candice used the tip of her tongue to lick along the underside of the shaft all the way to the tip. There, she tongued the tiny slit and once again prompted a short, harsh, clearly involuntary flinch from Dylan as he reacted to her oral ministrations.

"Excuse me," she heard him say into the phone, "there was a bit of static there for a moment. Would you mind repeating what you just said?"

He's mine. Maybe with those women in his past, he could remain aloof and detached, but with me he can't. I'm going to make him come so hard he'll be drained, and for the rest of the day, all he'll be able to think about is me, and the pleasure I gave him.

Candice resumed bobbing over Dylan, sucking him deeply but without the intention of pushing him quickly over the edge of ecstasy. She wanted him to come. She had made that fact abundantly clear. She just wasn't in any particular hurry to see her current activity reach its successful conclusion.

Sometimes in life, the journey is just as fulfilling as reaching the destination. Especially when she knew she was driving a very experienced rogue into a state of controlled frenzy which, with a little more effort on her part, might well become *uncontrolled* frenzy...which she would welcome.

"I'm sorry. There seems to be a bit of difficulty with our connection," Dylan said, the strain now readily evident in his tone. "Could you repeat that for me once again?"

Dylan's been on a million conference calls. This is the only one he'll never forget.

Candice battled a sudden urge to touch herself, to caress her pussy even if she had to do it through her jeans. She almost acted on the impulse. She actually scratched her inner thigh, just inches from her cunt, in anticipation of caressing herself. But after a moment she shrugged off the urge. Today, for this particular tryst, it was all about Dylan. It was his pleasure that was paramount. Though she enjoyed touching herself, especially when she had either Bulldog's or Dylan's cock in her mouth, to be giving self-administered pleasure when she was satisfying her men always, at least to some extent, diminished her ability to concentrate on *them*.

She wouldn't make that mistake on this afternoon. If Dylan was good enough to not be angry with her and Bulldog for wanting to unleash their passions, then she would do everything she could to see

to it that he was satiated beyond his wildest dreams.

Picking her head up, she looked into Dylan's eyes and mouthed the words, *Come for me*. She smiled and winked saucily. *Can you come in my mouth and still be quiet?*

She saw his reaction, and she loved the fact that she was slowly, sweetly torturing him.

Dipping her head, she took the crown of his cock between her lips, waited a moment to heighten the anticipation, then sucked him in to the opening of her throat. She felt his cock pulsing between her lips. Her man was excited beyond words, and she could tell that it wouldn't be long before he came.

She took her hand off his cock. The only stimulation he received would come from her lips and tongue. That would slow down the onrushing orgasm, she knew. It also seemed to make it more intense for him, and if there was anything that she wanted, it was to make this climax bone-jarringly powerful for her lover.

She was bobbing slowly while Dylan stroked her hair, running his palm over her silken tresses a couple times. Then he leaned forward and ran his palm down her back. Candice could sense the extent of his passion. He was trying his best to remain casual. When he reached beneath her to cup one breast, his fingers burying deeply enough for Candice to squirm on her knees from the pressure, she knew that he hadn't meant to squeeze that firmly. Temperance was impossible to maintain, it seemed, when Candice was delivering what she hoped would be her finest blowjob.

"Excuse me just a moment," Dylan said, taking the phone away from his ear.

Breathing through his nostrils, Candice heard him take in a lungful of air, then hold his breath. Candice swirled his tongue against the underside of the cock's crown, her cheeks caving in as she drew a vacuum. A moment later, Dylan made a soft, grunting sound through his nose, and his orgasm began. Thick streams of pungent-tasting cum raced through the length of his shaft to fill Candice's mouth. She swallowed several times, not missing even a single drop of the cream, though the taste of it was something she didn't care for.

Her lover sighed and said into the phone, "The Brazilian operation—is that going to work out for us?"

While still holding Dylan's cock in her mouth, Candice tilted her head back on her shoulders and looked up into his eyes. She winked at him, then resumed slowly bobbing over an erection that was swiftly losing its stature.

Momentarily, Candice let Dylan slip out from between her lips. She tucked him back into his trousers and tugged up his zipper, then rose to her feet. She blew Dylan a kiss and walked out of the office, knowing her lover was looking at her backside as she walked.

Chapter Sixteen

"We're going to be taking more control over the operation," Nick said to Digger and John as he sat in the back seat of the SUV, holding the silenced pistol in his hands. Since purchasing the weapon, it seemed he couldn't get enough of holding it. Just feeling the weapon in his hands made him feel invincible. "I was talking with Big Al on the phone, and he said he's going to come here the night after tomorrow. Wants to talk about some plans he's got for expansion. Says he thinks maybe I could take on a little more responsibility, more territory."

Digger laughed malevolently. "Cept you don't want a little more, you want the whole goddamned thing."

"That's right," Nick replied. "I want it all, and there's no reason why I shouldn't have it. What's Big Al ever done for us other than let us have whatever he was willing to give up? I'm tired of taking his handouts. From now on, boys, I'm going to take whatever I want whenever I want it."

Turning in the front seat, Digger looked at Nick and asked, "Doesn't that include Candice?"

Nick nodded. "Damned right. Tomorrow night I finally get my first taste of her. After that, she'll know that she's mine and nobody else's. She'll do what I tell her to because women are supposed to follow the orders of their men. I own her now. I might have to slap her ass around a bit for her to really understand it, so that's what I'll do." He resisted the urge to give his cock a squeeze. Just thinking about all the different ways he intended on sexually satisfying himself with Candice never failed to make his cock start to grow. "You boys are just going to have to wait until I have my fill of her before you can fuck her. When I'm finished with her, I don't give a rat's ass what you do to her."

* * * *

"You've got to keep an open mind and be able to use your imagination," Dylan said, pulling his Cadillac into the parking lot of an apartment building several miles outside of town. "The owner lives in Florida now. He's been an absentee landlord for six years. There used to be a superintendent on duty, but the guy quit two years ago and his position wasn't replaced. Since then, the tenants have pretty much trashed the joint."

Bulldog knew of the apartment building, and its tenants. He had been called to the address more times than he could remember, usually answering 911 calls for a fight in progress. The tenants were all men, most of them working in the oil fields. They tended to separate into tribes, with the men from one oil well becoming mortal enemies to the men working on another oil well. Alcohol was invariably involved, and sometimes stronger narcotics.

Bulldog had been inside the building many times, and he'd been in many of the apartments. For the life of him, he couldn't imagine Dylan ever even considering living in such tawdry conditions. And he most definitely didn't want Candice being anywhere near the lawless cretins who lived in the apartment building. This was one of the only places for rent in New Oslo where background checks weren't performed prior to allowing new renters to move in.

"Right now, there are four stories with eight apartments on each floor. Structurally, the building itself is extremely sound. However, the doors and cabinets and things of that nature have really been abused."

Though it was a little past noon, several young men in dirty Tshirts were already sitting outside at a picnic table, drinking beer. A few others were playing a game of horseshoes. When Bulldog got out of the Cadillac, all of them eyed him warily. He had arrested several of them on charges of drunk and disorderly conduct, driving under the influence of alcohol, and resisting arrest. Bulldog wasn't in uniform, but the men recognized him, and he could tell that, given the chance, they wouldn't mind giving him a thorough beating.

"Like I said, you've got to keep an open mind," Dylan continued, following Bulldog's gaze. "The renters here are all on a month-bymonth basis, so we won't have to evict anyone. We'll just not renew their rental option."

Bulldog glanced at Candice. She was looking at the unwashed young men who were staring at her in much the same way a starving wolf stares at a newborn fawn.

"Don't worry, honey," Bulldog said out of the side of his mouth to Candice, keeping his voice low. "They can touch you with their eyes, but if they get within ten feet of you, they'll learn the error of their ways."

She gave him a smile and replied, "When I'm with you two, I'm never worried about anything."

"I don't believe that," Dylan said, "but I appreciate the sentiment just the same. Come on, let me show you around."

They took a rickety elevator that creaked and groaned up to the fourth floor. Dylan pulled a key out of his pants pocket.

"I've got to tell you," Bulldog said, "that if this place was under new management, the New Oslo Police Department and the City Council would be nothing less than thrilled. Hardly a night goes by when we don't get a call to stop some disturbance here."

Dylan walked down the hall to the end apartment, and inserted the key into the lock. "I gave the renters a hundred dollars to let us have a walk through. You'd have thought I'd given them the moon they were so happy."

For the next hour, Dylan explained which of the apartment's interior walls were weight-bearing. Nearly all of them could removed

without structurally compromising the building itself. He stressed that the critical fact wasn't the apartment they were looking at, but what kind of penthouse suite they could imagine.

"We'll take the entire top floor, which will give us complete privacy. The building will have a front desk and security down in the lobby, exactly the same way that *The International Waters* has their lobby." Dylan made a motion of his hand toward a kitchen filled with dirty dishes and grimy pots and pans. "Of course, everything will be gutted and all knew appliances will be installed." He looked to Bulldog. "I figure we'll let Candice make most of the decorating decisions. I'm not all that fussy about my surroundings as long as you and Candice are in it and we're all living together."

Bulldog looked at Dylan, thanked his lucky stars that he had such a man in his life, then turned to Candice.

"I wish like hell that I could help finance this, but on my policeman's salary, I can't. But what I *can* do is simply stand back and let you decide what you want. Make it a home, Candice, that the three of us can be happy in."

He watched as tears formed in her eyes. She made a motion with her hand toward the kitchen. "What about marble counters? Oh, God, that sounds so lame. Um...since we'll have the entire fourth floor, we won't need eight separate kitchen areas, will we? I'm thinking a hot tub would be nice, a place where we can have an evening's libation after a hard day at work and just all relax together."

"That sounds like everything I could hope for," Bulldog replied.

"The other apartments will be luxury apartments, too. I'm thinking instead of eight units per floor, we do the renovations so there are only three or four apartments per floor. And we'll be *very* selective on who we let in. We'll keep the fact that the three of us are sharing the entire fourth floor a secret, but sooner or later somebody's going to figure it out, so we need to have people living here who keep an open mind, people who aren't going to spread rumors."

"I think this," Bulldog said, stretching his arms wide, "is perfect.

And I think you're a genius."

* * * *

Candice was standing at the end of the bar when Nick stepped into The Cattleman's Paradise, along with his hired muscle. She told herself that she had nothing to fear, that Bulldog and Dylan were going to protect her under any and all circumstances. But that didn't stop her mouth from suddenly becoming dry, or her palms from instantly getting clammy.

"You're looking good, Candice," Nick said, stepping up to her. "That's smart. I like you looking nice for me."

She held her hand out, palm downward. Digger took the money from her without looking, just as he always did.

"Forget about the weekly fee," Nick said. "Tonight, you and I are going to become real good friends. Seems to me, that being the case, I'll just waive your fee for the week."

Candice shook her head. "Better count it, Nick. You'll be surprised."

She watched his brow furrow. He gave a nod to Digger, who then turned his back to shield himself. He dipped his head to count the money as privately as possible in a crowded saloon. He quickly turned back to Nick.

"There's a thousand bucks here," Digger said. "Why'd she do that?"

"Because you're going to take the money and leave me and my family alone." Candice was so frightened it felt as though fingers were tightening around her heart. "There is a thousand dollars there. I'll give you a thousand dollars every week, but you've got to promise that you'll leave me, my aunt, and my uncle alone. Understand?"

"Where the hell did you get that much money?" Nick asked, taking a half-step closer to Candice.

"All you've got to know is that you'll get your thousand dollars a

week, but only so long as you take the money and nothing else."

Nick's half-smile was poisonous. "I'll take the thousand, and I'll take you. You're mine, just like I said. I can do with you whatever I want, and there's nothing you can do to stop me. I'll be back at closing time. Have something pretty on under those clothes. I like pretty panties on a woman before I rip them off her."

Candice shook her head. "Take the money."

"I'm taking the money. I'm also taking you." His gaze went slowly, obscenely over Candice. "Tonight, I'm going to teach you what fucking is all about. Hey, you ever take a facial?"

* * * *

"I could do this, you know," Dylan said.

Bulldog shook his head. "If it needs to be done, better I do it than you." He smiled and waved a hand at the neatly bound stacks of one hundred dollars bills. "Since you've provided the hundred thousand, the least I can do is deliver it properly." He inhaled deeply, and let his breath out in a long, slow sigh. "I really hope he accepts the thousand a week. As much as I loathe that bastard for running his protection racket, I hope he takes the money and just leaves Candice and her kin alone."

"Me, too. But like you said, Nick's not a man to underestimate. He's dangerous as a rattlesnake."

Bulldog was dressed from head to toe in black. His cell phone rang. He took the phone from an inside jacket pocket.

"Yes?"

"He took the money." Candice's voice was quivering with rage. "But he said he was coming back for me, anyway. The extra money didn't make any difference. I...I'm supposed to have pretty panties on for him when he returns so he can rip them off me."

"Don't change your routine at all," Bulldog replied, his tone calm, detached, his fury bordering on murderous. "We love you, and we're

going to take care of everything."

"I love you both. Promise me you'll be careful."

Bulldog closed the telephone and returned it to his pocket. He looked at Dylan and shook his head. "The additional money changes nothing. That bastard took the money and says he's coming back after closing for Candice."

"You were right all along," Dylan replied, shaking his head slowly. "I thought enough money would do what we've needed. I've always thought that money could buy everything. But it can't. Not with Nick, anyway. I underestimated him."

"You just don't know him or his kind, that's all." Bulldog smiled and patted his friend on the shoulder. "I'm a cop and you're a businessman. We look at the world through our own personal experience, that's all."

"Be careful."

"I will be," Bulldog said, checking one last time to make sure that he didn't have on him anything that might reveal his identity.

* * * *

Nick looked at the young prostitute and briefly considered getting a blowjob from her, then discarded the notion. He had Candice back at The Cattleman's Paradise, and he wanted to save himself for her. Candice was infinitely more attractive than the prostitute, who was already showing the corrosive signs of drug use.

"I'll be back next week," Nick said. "Have the money ready for me."

The woman smiled, showing teeth that were beginning to rot. Nick immediately decided that she was doing meth, not cocaine.

"Instead of money, how about if I work it off in trade?" she asked, standing in the doorway to the trailer home that doubled as her place of business. "I can do things to you like you ain't never even thunk."

"Just have the money ready for me."

Why bother with someone like her when he could now say with confidence that Candice was going to bring him to orgasm? And he could take her however he wanted! There was nothing that he could demand of her that she couldn't do. Could life get any better than that?

He turned away from the trailer home and was surprised to see a new Chevrolet Suburban was parked behind his SUV. His anger flared.

"Tell the dumb fuck to move that thing," he snapped to Digger.

Then he recognized the face in the back window, and the anger vanished. It was Big Al. What the hell was he doing here? Their meeting was scheduled for the following day.

Nick hesitated a moment. He looked at Digger and John and knew that both of them were carrying pistols in holsters beneath their suit coats.

"Be ready for anything," Nick said, keeping his voice low. "And keep a close watch on the big guy with white hair and a scar over his eye. He's Big Al's personal bodyguard, and he likes to shoot first and ask questions later."

He walked to the Suburban, affecting an air of nonchalance. Big Al wasn't smiling, but that didn't mean anything. Big Al didn't smile very often. The window rolled down with the hum of an electric motor.

"What's up, Big Al? I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow night."

"We gotta talk, and I don't want to talk in some low rent trailer park," Big Al replied. "Get in your buggy and follow me. What I gotta say can't be heard by nobody but you." He smiled then, and Nick felt better about the evening. "Big changes are coming, Nick. This is going to be a red letter day for you."

Nick got into the back seat of his SUV, with Digger and John in the front seat. From the pouch attached to the front seat, he pulled out the silenced revolver and checked its load once again. "Follow him," Nick said as the Suburban pulled away. "Big Al says there are going to be changes, but I don't trust him. Guys like him, you just can't trust."

"You figure he knows you've got plans to whack him?"

Nick shook his head. "If I thought either of you two sold me out, I'd have put a bullet in the back of your head already. Big Al's cautious, that's all. He don't know nothing about what I got planned."

They drove out of the trailer park and onto the county highway. To the south was what constituted a downtown for New Oslo. There were streetlights, and neon signs from the saloons, taverns, and restaurants. It was a community almost entirely male, and one that worked around the clock. To the north there were the flat, dark, endless Dakota plains. There were no streetlights. No homes. No sign of any life whatsoever, with the exception of the occasional glow of a deer's eyes reflecting the headlights.

Ten miles outside of town, Big Al's Suburban turned off the county highway onto a gravel road, then drove an additional mile before coming to a stop. Nick thought about his next move for a moment before returning the silenced revolver to the pouch on the back of the front seat.

Big Al got out of the Suburban, and so did three of his men. Nick got out and looked around. It didn't seem to be a setup. There wasn't any place to hide in ambush. And they obviously weren't followed. On the flat Dakota plains, headlights at night can be seen for miles.

"Keep your men in the car," Big Al said, nodding toward Digger and John. "You and I can talk alone."

Nick shrugged, pretending he wasn't hellishly curious and just a little afraid. But when he shook a cigarette out from the pack and lit it with a disposable lighter, his hands were steady, his palms cool.

"Something wrong, Big Al? It's not like you to show up unannounced." Nick took another drag from his cigarette, inhaling the smoke deep into his lungs. "Screws up your security, doesn't it?"

"Most times it does, but sometimes it's necessary."

Big Al walked thirty yards from the vehicles. Nick looked over his shoulder and felt a frisson of fear ripple up his spine when he saw two of Big Al's shoulders standing by the doors to his SUV, and a large man with a long, white ponytail open the hatchback to the vehicle.

"What's he doing?" Nick asked.

"Don't you worry about him. What you got to do is listen to me and do what I tell you. You got that?"

"Yeah. Sure, Big Al. I got that."

I got it just fine, Big Al. I hear you. But tomorrow when I squeeze the trigger and put a .38 Special through that skull of yours, you won't hear nothing because I bought a silencer for it, and those boys of yours won't hear nothing, either.

"How's business been?" Big Al asked. "You making sure my envelope always gets a fair cut?"

Nick adopted an air of indignation. "You get yours, to the penny and every week, just as right as rain."

"Really?"

Nick could feel that Big Al was needling him. "Really. That's the truth of it. Who the hell else you got is as consistent an earner as me?"

"You're something special? Is that it?"

Nick thought about his response for a moment before declaring, "Yeah. As a matter of fact, I *am* something special. And you know it, too."

The sound of footsteps on gravel drew Nick's attention. The big bodyguard with the shocking platinum blond hair he kept tied back in a ponytail that nearly reached his waist was approaching. He held a plain paper grocery bag in his hands. His face was utterly devoid of emotion.

"You find something?" Big Al asked.

The bodyguard nodded. A shiver went through Nick, and this time he couldn't keep it from showing.

"How much?"

The bodyguard shrugged. "I haven't counted it yet, but I'd say a hundred long, give or take a couple thousand."

Nick felt the blood turn to ice in his veins, and said, "What the fuck?"

Big Al said, "A little birdie chirped in my ear the other day. That birdie said you was holding out on me. Said you been skimming money off the top."

"Sir, you've got to believe me when I say—"

The bodyguard's right hand lashed out without forewarning. He slapped Nick on the back of the head in a degrading "bitch slap." It was a humiliating move, meant more to demean than to injure.

"Don't talk," Big Al said. "Cause if your mouth's open, somebody might put a bullet between your teeth." He turned to his bodyguard. "Where'd you find the stash?"

"Hidden under the spare tire."

Big Al's fleshy face transformed into an unfriendly smile. "A hundred thousand dollars in cash, eh?"

"Looks to be all one hundred dollar bills in wads of ten grand each."

"Paper bands, like at the bank?" Big Al asked.

The bodyguard shook his head. "Rubber bands."

Big Al turned toward Nick. "You say you ain't been holding out on me?"

"That's what I'm telling you!"

"Why would you have a hundred grand in your car?"

"I don't know." Nick felt the panic rising. "I swear to God, I don't know where the money came from!"

"So what you're saying is that you got yourself a gift from an unknown benefactor, eh? Someone thought you're a real sweet fella, so they gave you a hundred thousand dollars that you don't know nothing about."

"Yes, yes!" Nick said, though the unlikelihood of his statement rang like a gong in his ears. "That's what I'm saying! I've never seen that money in my life!"

* * * *

Bulldog stood respectfully, waiting for the county sheriff to approach him. Just down the gravel road some thirty yards was the burned-out shell of an SUV. Inside were the charred remains of what had been three men.

The county sheriff, a dedicated man who didn't like crime or criminals, especially when they happened in his county, walked closer. He had jurisdiction whenever a crime occurred outside the specific boundaries of the City of New Oslo.

"Nasty business," the sheriff said, "but I can't say I'm either surprised, or disheartened. Figure that's Nick Strellso inside? Nick and those low-life scumbags he always had with him?"

Bulldog nodded. "Seems like it. You'll have to do the chemical tests and all that, but it looks like that's his SUV. Wonder what he did that got him killed?"

The sheriff seemed unconcerned with the specifics. "As long as no innocent civilians were hurt, then it doesn't bother me much one way or the other. I knew that Nick would be trouble for the good folks of this county when he was still in his teens. I always wanted to get something I could nail him with, but he was always a bit too slick."

"I kept an eye on him," Bulldog said truthfully. "It would have been a real feather in my cap with the department if I'd been able to put him away for twenty years. Now I won't have the chance, though I can't say with honesty that I mind the way Nick met his end."

"As a charcoal briquette?"

Bulldog tried to silence his laugh, but didn't quite manage it.

The county sheriff glanced over his shoulder at the smoldering SUV and said, "What a fitting end to a ruthless bastard."

Epilogue

The carpenters had been working nearly around-the-clock, as had the plumbers. Anything over eight straight hours was time-and-a-half. If workers put in more than a twelve hour day, they made doubletime.

In tough economic times, there were a lot of enthusiastic employees at the apartment building. When they looked at Candice, they did so with admiration. And when she spoke, they listened very, *very* carefully. Rumor had it that her word was law and that a salacious look in her direction meant immediate dismissal.

The rumor had been started by Dylan, who explained that it really wasn't a rumor. It was a fact.

"What did she say she wanted?" Dylan asked the foreman of the plumber crew.

"She said she wanted this showerhead," the man answered, showing him a simple stainless steel showerhead, still in the packaging from the hardware store. "But why not give her something special, sir? Take a look at this." From a paper bag he extracted a shower head the size of a dinner plate. "You can adjust the spray to beat, pulse, alternate, whatever you want. You can even have a narrow stream, or a wide stream. It is more expensive, but considering what you're paying for the renovations, the extra cost is nothing."

"Go with the good one." He put a hand on the foreman's shoulder. "Thanks. You made the right call by asking me. Sometimes the lady tries to cut corners, and that's not necessary."

"Thank you, sir. It's good to hear that."

"And the other bathroom?"

"The bathtub doubles as a whirlpool. It's custom-made and should be here by tonight or tomorrow morning." He chuckled and said, "It's big enough for four people."

It's only got to be big enough for three people.

"What about the kitchen?" Dylan asked.

The foreman's smile widened even further. "As soon as the marble counters are in, I can finish with the sinks. Water-saving faucets on everything, just like she insisted. As soon as the refrigerator comes, I can hook up the automatic ice machine and the water supply."

"Your men-how are they doing with the timeline?"

"We'll finish on time, or maybe even ahead of schedule. With what you're paying, every man shows up ahead of time and works late. You've got the A-team working for you. This place is going to be beautiful."

So is the woman I'm renovating it for.

"Let me know if there's anything you need, anything the men need. We're not accepting second rate here," Dylan said. "I want perfection, and I'm willing to pay for it."

"You'll have it. You have my word on it."

Dylan smiled and turned away to find Candice and Bulldog standing at the doorway. Bulldog was in uniform. Candice was wearing her polyester waitress uniform—the one that Dylan intended to banish as soon as he could figure out how to get the headstrong woman to follow his dictatorial commands, which he strongly suspected was *never*. Both had expressions that said they were shocked at how much progress had been made, and in so short a period of time.

"Dylan, I was wondering if I could show you something," Candice said, sweetly innocent. "I had an idea for the renovation that I think has potential."

"Lead away," Dylan replied with a smile.

The urge to take Candice into his arms whenever she was near

was always overpowering. Though he'd hired outside contractors to do all the renovations on the apartment building that would soon be the home he shared with Bulldog and Candice, he still didn't want the workers to know the exact nature of their relationship.

Access to the roof was through the southernmost apartment. The space would be Candice's private den, and as Dylan walked through it, he wondered just how feminine she would make it. He didn't care the cost. He only wanted her to be happy.

She went to the ladder and pulled the cord, lowering the ladder. When she walked up it, Dylan was given a view of her thighs, and he felt his libido awaken instantly. When she opened the door and stepped out onto the apartment's rooftop, he was given a flash of white bikini panties. He wondered whether it was an accident or if the love of his life was intentionally taunting him with her charms when there were literally dozens of carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and masons all nearby, all working busily.

Dylan climbed the ladder after Bulldog had ascended. Of all the things that he had checked out prior to purchasing the property, he hadn't bothered to inspect the roof other than to ask if it was watertight.

"I know how you like to golf," Candice said, spreading her arms wide. "And with most of North Dakota being about as flat as a pancake, golf courses are few and far between. So Bulldog and I were talking, and this is what we were thinking. What if we turned this entire rooftop into a putting golf course? We can put in that artificial grass stuff, or whatever it's called, and put in bumps and hills and stuff like that to make it challenging. I'm thinking you could make a nine-hole putting course up here."

Dylan looked around the rooftop. There were all the usual items on the rooftop, all appearing dingy, unpainted, and neglected. How Candice and Bulldog had envisioned a putting range for him without any personal interest in the game themselves impressed him enormously. "Yes, I can see it." He looked around the rooftop, shaking his head slowly, astonished at the outside-the-box thinking the people he loved were capable of. "I'd never have thought of it on my own, but now that you've put the idea in my head, I can see it like a photograph."

"If you look around, you'll see that from up here, we look down on what few things there are around," Bulldog explained. "This is the highest building from here to New Oslo."

It seemed an odd thing to say. Dylan saw that, in truth, the apartment's rooftop was the highest building in the vicinity. Now why, he asked himself, would that be important?

He turned slowly toward Candice, and was surprised to see that the drab uniform dress was unzipped enough to show her breasts, exposed now with her brassiere tugged beneath the creamy mounds. Bulldog, in his blue policeman's uniform, was standing behind Candice, slowly pulling her dress above her thighs.

As he felt his cock coming to life, Dylan asked, "What is it you *haven't* told me?"

"That Candice thought this would be a wonderful place to sunbathe in the nude," Bulldog replied as he curled his fingers into her panties and began sliding them down her thighs. "And that it turns her on to make love to us outside, so she can feel the sun on her naked skin, like she did when we were all on that boat in Key West."

Dylan inhaled deeply, and for a moment tried to calm his nerves. He was, after all, a man richly experienced in ways of the flesh, and he didn't react instantaneously, like a tyro. But then he watched as Candice uttered a short, high-pitched gasp, and he realized that Bulldog, standing behind her and holding her by the hips, already had his cock inside her.

He walked toward them, pulling down his zipper as he did so. Bulldog was pumping into Candice by the time he reached them. He would have kissed Candice on the mouth, but she reached for his erection as he drew near, and it was clear what she wanted most from

him.

"Love," she whispered, guiding him to a mouth shimmering with a light coating of clear lip gloss.

"Oh, yes!" the billionaire hissed as he felt his world coming together as never before.

THE END

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Robin Gideon has been the featured author on the nationallysyndicated TV show *CBS Sunday Morning* was named 3rd Best Alltime for Sexy Romances by ListMania at Amazon.com, and is the author of numerous novels and novellas. She lives in what has been described as Frostbite Falls, Minnesota. She loves hearing from her readers and can be reached through her website at www.robingideon.com

Also by Robin Gideon

Ménage and More: Elysia's Passion

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