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Stolen

Altered Destinies 4

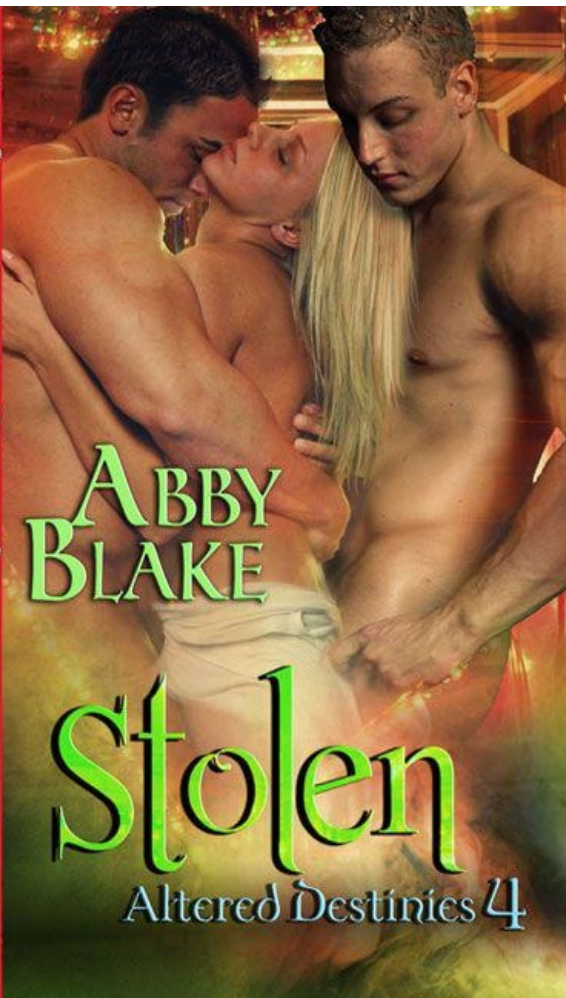
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Jason has been working undercover to try and rescue two of his sisters. He's never met them, but he knows that they were bred in an attempt to create superior humans. When he learns a young child was stolen from her mother, Dana—another of Jason's sisters—he finds a way to return the baby to her family but blows his cover in the process.

Cody and Bec have spent the past year trying to recover from bullet wounds sustained in the line of duty. Happy to be called back onto active duty, they manage to extricate Jason from his self-appointed undercover mission.

But when they find Jason injured, without a place to stay or a way to support himself, they invite him into their lives and discover there is more to the man than even he knows. Can love and respect grow amid tragedy, fear, and unusual behavior?

Note: Each book in the Altered Destinies series is a stand-alone and can be read out of sequence.

Genre: Ménage a Trois/Quatre, Paranormal, Romantic Suspense

Length: 21,543 words

STOLEN

Altered Destinies 4

Abby Blake

MENAGE EVERLASTING



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DEDICATION

For Rusty

STOLEN

Altered Destinies 4

ABBY BLAKE

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Prologue

Eight months ago....

The glass flew with surprising speed, smashed into the wall, and splintered into a thousand sparkly pieces. The old man's chest heaved as he dragged in a great lungful of air, obviously trying to calm his temper.

"Stolen! They not only stole my test subject, they've stolen my greatest masterpiece. I spent a lifetime perfecting my research, decades of trial and error and finally, *finally* I found the answers, and what happens? Stolen!"

He threw another glass beaker at the wall, easily avoiding the splintering shards of glass despite his age and fragile looking appearance.

His assistant stood in the corner of the room.

"Professor," Jason asked respectfully, his eyes lowered to the floor in the type of submissive attitude the professor expected from his staff. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Find her!" the professor snarled in exasperation. "I want what is mine. Take whatever help you need to get her back. That baby is mine."

Jason moved backward, never raising his eyes to take in the professor's irate face. Backing out of the door, he closed it behind him, carefully hiding the smile that tried to break free. Alana was safe, her baby was safe, and they'd both stay that way, especially if the professor expected him to find them.

Chapter One

Cody breathed deeply, lifting his knee straight, strengthening the muscle in his thigh. For almost a year now, he'd been doing intensive physical therapy, trying to recover fully from injuries sustained in the line of duty.

Beside him, his partner and best friend, Bec, jogged on an electric treadmill, concentration clearly etched on her face as she strove for the type of fitness they'd both enjoyed prior to being shot.

It had been the longest twelve months of both of their lives. First, the pain filled, blurry-to-remember days in hospital and then the months of physical therapy and recovery. The only good thing to come out of any of it was the blossoming relationship between himself and his gorgeous, fiery partner.

He'd worked with Bec for only a few weeks before they'd been injured, and even though they'd been as close as agency operatives needed to be, they hadn't really felt any sort of romantic connection. Now, however, after months of sharing first the pain and humiliation of being injured and then the determination to make a full recovery, a closer bond had been forged, and he'd started noticing his partner more as a woman. A woman he would very much like to pull closer.

He watched as her ankle rolled slightly, noticing the way she hid the expression that should've crossed her face. Thanks to his empathic skills, he could feel her sudden pain and marveled at the way she tried to hide it even though she knew he could feel everything she did.

He lifted himself away from the gym equipment he'd been using then very deliberately marched over to Bec and switched off the running machine. Angry eyes turned to face him, but he pulled her into his arms, giving her a quick hug.

"Don't, Bec," he said against her ear. She sagged against him, some of the fight leaving her as she acknowledged his wisdom. Pushing herself now would defeat the purpose. She needed to be fully fit for their physical next week, and reinjuring her damaged ankle would not exactly help her get back on to active duty.

Pulling out of his arms, she gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

"I'm going to hit the shower," she said as she turned to gather her stuff. Cody watched her leave the room, admiring the way her running shorts outlined the globes of her bottom. Many, many fantasies about that gorgeous ass had gotten him through some very tough days. She turned at the door, blowing him a cheeky kiss.

Yes, she knew he was interested, could feel every emotion that ran through him. Soon, very soon, he'd claim her.

* * * *

Theresa used every skill she possessed, straining to protect her team and herself against detection. They'd surrounded a large building believed to be a major medical

facility belonging to the group of terrorists who'd abducted Sandra almost a year ago. Thanks to some very helpful leads from a man on the inside, a man who claimed to be her brother, they were very close to liberating two children being held by the group under the guise of medical necessity.

Theresa knew from painful experience this group's only aim was to selectively breed and create children with advanced abilities far beyond those of the average citizen. Theresa and her twin sister Dana were two of the lucky ones. Considering what could have happened, what was actually happening to the children inside this facility, Theresa's miserable childhood seemed happy in comparison.

"All clear," Theresa's husband Caleb called to her telepathically.

Clearly, the rogues' experiments and research were getting them closer to their goal, and Theresa shuddered to think that her younger relatives were being used to create a superior race capable of manipulating and controlling other people's actions and thoughts. The children's skills were increasing dramatically with every experiment, and their potential for destruction seemed unimaginable.

She fervently hoped they'd be able to shut down the experiments once and for all and somehow convince the children the things they'd been taught by the rogues were very, very wrong.

Theresa jumped a little as she heard the stuttering sound of automatic weapons' fire. Most of the agents on this team were telekinetic and were able to disarm the guards without causing major injuries. That didn't mean, however, that they were safe from being shot at themselves. Every agent carried at least one gun, even Theresa. She hated the things with a passion that went beyond revulsion, yet it was part of her agent training so she'd learned how to use it. She practiced regularly, but she'd never, ever drawn it on the job. Her telekinetic abilities were far more advanced than most, and she'd found them a very handy alternative to the deadly weapon. It also helped that her precognitive abilities had saved her ass a time or two as well.

"All clear," Ethan sent telepathically. They just needed the all clear signal from Gabe and Rafe, and Pete and Sandra, and then her team could move in and pull the children out of danger. Her group included two doctors, a nurse, and several well-built agents armed to the teeth and ready to defend them with their lives. Their sole purpose was to get in, ascertain the children's physical status, and get them to safety as quickly as possible.

"All clear," Gabe called telepathically, his familiar enthusiasm leaking through. The man certainly loved his job, and Theresa allowed herself a small smile as she waited for Pete and Sandra to finish their task.

It happened so quickly that it literally knocked Theresa on her ass. Dazed, she shook her head, trying to understand the source of her pain, trying to pinpoint how and where she'd been injured. The doctors with her moved quickly to her aid, the agents immediately raising their guns searching for the source of the attack.

"Babe, talk to me. What's going on?" Ethan's familiar voice asked urgently in her

head.

"I don't know," she replied honestly. *"I don't understand what happened. I don't think I'm injured."*

She looked at the doctor beside her, who shrugged, unable to explain her reaction to what amounted to a phantom injury.

"Theresa," Caleb's voice asked steadily. *"Can you see Pete and Sandra from your position?"* She could feel his fear for her, but being the lead agent and responsible for everyone's safety on this mission, Caleb held it in check. She knew from experience his reaction would be far different once the danger passed.

"No," she replied, belatedly realizing she could no longer sense their presence at all.

"Stay where you are," Caleb ordered her team.

She sensed her husbands moving toward where Sandra and Pete were supposed to be, efficiently taking out the remaining guards.

"Theresa, get your team here now!" Caleb ordered, his voice sure and steady, only his heightened emotions allowing her to feel his unease. They moved as one. Her group, surrounded by agents, ran quickly into the building and toward the area Caleb and Ethan had just secured.

Sandra and Pete lay on the ground, crumpled like they'd been hit with a hail of bullets, but as with her, they showed no sign of injury. Theresa ran forward, dropping to her knees as Sandra tried unsuccessfully to lift herself from the ground.

"It's Dana," Sandra said weakly, her telepathic skills faltering as she closed her eyes. She hung her head, seemingly trying to find the strength to explain what she'd felt just before she collapsed. *"Theresa, Dana's hurt,"* she said softly, her voice no stronger than her telepathy. *"Call John. Call the agency. Do something, please."*

"It's already being done." Ethan's strong voice echoed in both their minds.

Theresa pulled the exhausted woman into a sitting position, helping her to lean against the wall so she could regain her breath.

Pete remained motionless, sprawled on the ground a few feet away from them. The doctor had checked him over quickly, assessed his condition as stable, and continued on with the rest of the team to try and extract the children they'd come to rescue.

Chapter Two

Jason kept his head down, knowing the professor was in the room. He entered the operating theatre through a side door, silently praying he wouldn't find a young woman strapped to the table, ready for him to harvest her ova. Despite having worked for the professor for the last three years, Jason had so far managed to avoid participating in tests done on the subjects, but he realized that sooner or later his luck would run out, hopefully not before he could locate and extract his sister Jenna.

"Jason," the old man growled. "Get over here and help me with this."

Jason's head snapped up at the burbling sound of a small infant. The professor held his hand against the stomach of a squirming baby girl. She was dressed in a pretty, pink, all-in-one jumpsuit with matching booties and a warm-looking beanie on her head. Bright blue eyes looked up to the ceiling as she blew little bubbles out of her mouth. Completely enchanted by the little sprite, Jason momentarily forgot himself, forgot the danger he would be in if his cover was blown.

"Hey there, little princess, where did you come from?" he said as he reached a hand toward the baby girl who promptly grabbed it and tried to put it in her mouth.

"Finally," the professor said in his most exasperated voice, "someone on my staff who has any idea how to look after a baby. Take her." He growled the words as he stepped away from the table. "A room is being prepared for her, and I'm flying in the nurse who should've been looking after the child Alana Giles stole, but neither will be ready until tomorrow. The baby is your responsibility until then."

The professor spun on his heel and left the room. Glancing over to the only other occupant in the room, Jason asked the question before he thought better of it. "Where did she come from?"

The man who stood lounging against the doorway on the other side of the room managed to look even more menacing as he smiled.

"Her mama found her way into the path of six or seven of my bullets," he said, clearly proud of his actions.

Swallowing his revulsion and trying desperately to sound casual, Jason asked who her mother was.

"Dana Michaels." The man laughed again. "Should've seen her go down. No way was that whore getting a chance to use her telekinesis on me. I shot her from a hundred feet away. Crazy bitch never had a chance," he said as he left the room still laughing.

Jason shuddered involuntarily, grateful the man had already left so that his reaction wouldn't be questioned. He lifted the beautiful little girl into his arms, tears filling his eyes as he thought of her mother. He'd never even met his sister Dana, but losing her hurt more than he could've explained. He held the tiny little darling in his arms as he

called telepathically to Sandra, desperate now to get this child back to her fathers.

* * * *

Theresa rushed into the hospital room, anxious to see her sister. Dana lay in an intensive care bed, numerous tubes and machines attached to her. Even with her height, she somehow looked small and beaten, nothing like her usual dynamic self. She'd survived six hours in surgery, but the doctors weren't hopeful she would survive the night, and doubted her chances to recover from such serious injuries.

Seven bullets had hit her upper body, several passing straight through her. The surgeons had repaired as much as they could, cautioning them all that if Dana somehow survived the next twenty-four hours that she would probably require more surgery. They'd placed her in a medically induced coma, hoping to give her the best chance to survive.

John lifted his head from where he'd had it pressed against the mattress, his eyes red-rimmed and swollen as his sister pushed past Theresa and flew into his embrace. He held her tight, his eyes making brief contact with Theresa as he tried to control his emotions.

Pete walked to the other side of the bed, his expression unreadable. He gathered his wife's limp hand in his own, whispered something to her, kissed her bandaged forehead, and left the room, his anger palpable even to those without empathic skills.

Theresa took his place, grasping her sister's hand, trying to give her own strength to Dana, trying to think positive thoughts, trying desperately not to crumble. She felt her husbands' presence, their solid support only a few meters away, but they held back, giving her time, giving her space.

"Dana," she whispered. "We'll find her. We'll find your sweet, little girl, and then we will shut them down for good. We rescued two girls today, just like we talked about. They're only six years old, but already they've seen so much sadness, so much loneliness. They need us both to help them through. They need their family to help them grow in a world so different to what they've been taught." Theresa swallowed painfully, very aware Dana was probably not hearing a word of what she said, but saying it anyway because she needed to hear it herself.

They'd rescued two more relatives at the same time Dana had been shot and her baby stolen, and even though Theresa realized she couldn't have been in both places at once, she felt guilty she hadn't been able to protect her sister or her tiny niece.

"I promise you we'll get her back. With everything in me, I won't stop until I can get her back to you, so you have to fight this, Dana, fight to survive, fight to live." Theresa's voice faltered, her throat clogging with tears as she felt a small spasm of movement in the hand she held.

"Good girl," she whispered, hoping, praying the small twitch was Dana's way of promising to fight.

She stood, gently releasing Dana's hand and tucking it onto the bed beside her,

careful not to upset the tubes and monitors surrounding the bed. She glanced over at Sandra and John, feeling their misery, their desperation for Dana to survive, and their fear for the child they loved. Slowly, Theresa backed out of the room, sending a telepathic message to them that she'd be back when she had their baby safe in her arms.

Outside the room, she found Caleb talking quietly with Pete, obviously trying to sway him from his current thinking. Pete stood in front of his boss, his fists clenched, his jaw held tight as his eyes glittered angrily.

"I don't care," Pete said loudly. "Without her..." His voice cracked. "Without her I'm not whole, I'm not...I'm nothing."

Caleb said something quietly, something Theresa couldn't quite make out from where she stood. Strong arms wrapped around her as Ethan pulled her into his embrace, turning her and pressing her face into his big body. She felt the slight tremor that wracked through him as he exhaled.

"She'll be all right," he said quietly. "She's a fighter, and she's not going to let a few little bullets take her down."

Theresa smiled for the first time in what felt like forever. Ethan was right, Dana would be really pissed that someone had done this to her, and she'd be fighting tooth and nail to pull through so she could extract vengeance. Theresa could almost see the look on Dana's face right now. Relaxing just a little, she held her husband tighter, grateful he and Caleb were here.

Theresa watched as her brother-in-law collapsed, his knees giving out as the emotions he'd been trying to hold burst from him. Caleb helped him into a plastic chair, shielding the distraught man from prying eyes. Theresa was still trying to decide whether Pete would want her help or not when the door behind her flew open and Sandra ran through.

"Jason found her," she said breathlessly.

Chapter Three

Cody's phone was ringing. It had been so long since his cell phone had rung he wasn't even sure where he'd left it. Rummaging through the mess scattered across the sofa, he finally snagged the little vibrating machine before it went to voice mail.

"Cody Evans," he said, trying to sound professional.

"Cody, it's Caleb. I have an emergency situation, and you and Bec are the closest agents. Consider yourselves both on active duty."

"Yes, sir," he said, glancing up as Bec walked into the room towel-drying her hair. She stopped when she realized the emotions emanating from him and quickly linked her mind to his so she could hear the conversation.

Caleb explained their mission. Locate, retrieve, and return his niece and the man who was trying to get her out of the rogues' medical facility about forty miles north of their position. Cody pulled his shoes on as he listened to Caleb's detailed instructions and watched Bec gather their equipment. As he hung up, she threw him his shoulder harness, then quickly opened the safe under the floor and extracted their firearms.

They were in the car and on the highway within five minutes of Caleb's call, speeding their way toward the most important assignment they could've ever imagined.

* * * *

Jason's heart was pounding in his throat, making it hard for him to catch his breath. He'd spent the last five minutes explaining the situation to Sandra via telepathy. She'd spoken to her supervisors and between them all they'd sketched out a rough plan. Agents were coming for him. He just had to time it so that he'd be out of the compound with his precious bundle at the same time the agents arrived. Hopefully, he wouldn't be missed here before they could get to safety.

Somehow, he needed to feign a calm he was far from feeling. Somehow, he had to pretend that looking after this beautiful little girl was just another of his duties as a doctor in this medical lab from hell. Somehow, he had to keep his cover for another twenty minutes, and then he could take a relaxed breath for the first time in years. Funny how, now that the end was so close, how much more difficult it seemed to stay undercover.

He briefly mourned the lost opportunity to extract Jenna from the rogues' hold, but he was damned if he would leave this innocent babe in their grasp a moment longer. He silently vowed he would insist Sandra help him find Jenna when this little darling was safe and his cover blown.

He held a bottle to the squirming child's lips, trying to get her to drink the baby formula that had been delivered to his office by a bemused lab assistant. The baby's tiny face screwed up in distress, obviously unhappy with the taste, hungry but unwilling to suck on the unfamiliar teat. Jason's anxiety notched a little higher. A screaming,

distressed child would be much harder to smuggle out of the compound without calling attention to what he was doing.

He checked his watch as he gave up on the bottle and tried to rock the little cherub to sleep. She cried for a few more minutes before wearing herself out and falling into a tired, red-faced slumber. Relieved to have one problem seemingly under control, Jason grabbed his backpack, and quickly checked that the information he had liberated was still stowed in the hidden space at the base of the bag. He filled the bag with as much of his stuff that he could, and left his office, carefully locking the door behind him.

His heart pounded hard as he stepped into the hallway.

* * * *

Bec felt the familiar rush of adrenaline spread through her veins. God, she'd missed this. Glancing over at her partner, she could feel his similar excitement tinged with a little nervousness. She understood his unease. They hadn't even been medically cleared for active duty and here they were charging in to rescue a child abducted after her mother had been viciously gunned down. The fact the child was their boss's niece should change nothing. They were well trained, well prepared, and more than capable of pulling off what should amount to nothing more exciting than a taxi service. Somehow, telling herself that didn't mean she believed it. This assignment was more important than anything they'd done before.

Her focus narrowed as they approached the rendezvous point, ready for anything, hoping for the easy outcome but expecting the worst. It was full dark by the time they rolled to a stop on the quiet country lane. She'd switched off the lights more than a mile back and had donned her night vision goggles to be able to maneuver the vehicle without hitting a tree. It was dark, and it was very, very quiet.

Speaking telepathically, Cody checked the time with her. *"We're right on time. He should be here,"* he said. She could sense he had his teeth clenched tightly.

"Give him a moment," she sent, sounding calmer than she actually felt. *"It can't be easy negotiating bush land like this at night with a small infant."* Her own words heightened her anxiety. How would Jason, a doctor, not a field agent, manage to keep the baby quiet and get himself through dense bush land in the dark?

After making sure the interior light was switched to the off position, Bec eased the door open slightly and carefully lowered one foot to the dirt road. Straining to hear any unusual sounds over the night insects, she thought she heard movement off to her left. She froze in place, once again trying to hear any sounds that didn't belong.

A small noise alerted her to Jason's presence at the same moment her empathic senses picked up on his distress. He was hurt, and he was bleeding, dragging his badly damaged ankle behind him. Without conscious thought she moved from the car and toward the injured man, sighing with relief when she saw him through her night goggles moving toward them. Her gun was in her hand before she really thought about it, her years in the field coming back to her as if the last year had never happened.

She reached Jason just as he stumbled again, jolting the infant in his arms. A small cry rang out over the area as the baby girl woke with a start. Speaking telepathically, she called his name as she approached, reassuring him she'd been sent by Sandra and her boss. She went to take the infant from his arms, but it was clear he wouldn't relinquish the precious bundle until he knew for sure they were safe.

She helped him instead, guiding him over the rough ground, grateful the baby had only made that single noise. She heard Cody start the car and throw the back door open for them as they approached. She guided Jason into the backseat, quickly following him in and closing the door, still trying to be quiet.

"Stay down," Cody told them telepathically, obviously aware of a danger Bec had missed while she helped Jason. He moved the car forward quietly as Bec struggled to get a seat belt around Jason and his precious cargo.

"Hold on," Cody ordered silently. *"We're about to have company."*

He planted his foot on the accelerator at the same time that he flicked on the lights. The car leapt forward, pushing Bec backward against the seat and then throwing her forward again as he slammed the brakes on and turned onto a paved road. The abrupt change in direction woke the baby, her tiny voice whimpering her discontent. Accelerating rapidly, Cody threw his phone over his shoulder to Bec, quickly sending telepathic instructions to her to call Caleb and request air assistance. They needed a helicopter, and they needed one before their many pursuers managed to box them in.

Bec glanced behind them as she pressed the speed dial, realizing for the first time they were being followed by several sets of car lights and more were traveling on a road running parallel to their current course.

The adrenaline kicked in again, slowing the situation around her, heightening her senses, enabling her to give clear, concise instructions to her boss. She spoke rapidly but calmly into the phone, her professionalism overriding the emotion of the moment. Slamming the phone closed, she checked on her passengers as she relayed the information to her partner.

"Get on the highway. Head north. They're going to land the chopper as close to the road as they can to extract us."

She saw Jason's eyes widen in terror as he overheard her telepathic instructions to Cody. Reaching out, she grabbed his hand and held it tightly, trying to reassure him that she and Cody would protect him and the baby with their lives if necessary. Bec's damaged little finger throbbed as he squeezed her hand in his tight grip and held the now screaming baby against his chest.

Several terrifying minutes and two more abrupt changes in direction later, they finally reached the highway. Cody planted his foot hard against the accelerator, pushing the car's engine in an effort to gain distance between them and their pursuers.

A helicopter approached from behind and hovered over them briefly before lifting higher into the air and disappearing into the darkness again. The phone in Bec's lap

rang again, and she quickly opened it, relief flashing through her as she saw the caller ID.

"Caleb," she said, her emotions leaking through her demeanor. She listened carefully, realizing that Cody was trying unsuccessfully to link to her conversation and keep the car moving at dangerous speeds.

"Got it, sir. Thank you," she said, once again slamming the phone closed.

"The pilot says we have at least four cars on our tail about half a mile back. They're going to land the chopper about three miles ahead and wait for us. It'll be close, but the more distance we can get between them and us, the more time we'll have to get on board."

Bec looked over at Jason and the wailing infant.

"Can you get her on the chopper?" she asked, concern lacing her telepathic voice.

She felt his determination, his absolute confidence that he would protect this little baby. He nodded once, lifting his eyes to her face only briefly before he again tried to quiet the terrified child.

"Here we go," Cody sent telepathically. *"Hold on."* He left the road, slowing the car as much as he dared, and then swung the wheel so they skidded to a stop with Jason's car door closest to the helicopter. With his head down, Cody quickly slid across the seat and out of the front of the car, turning to help Jason to his feet. Bec pushed him into a standing position from her place behind him. Then, flanking Jason on either side, Cody and Bec half-carried, half-dragged him and the baby to the helicopter and pushed them into the arms of the crew member by the door. Leaping quickly on board, they both held tightly as the helicopter lifted off the ground and into the night sky.

* * * *

Theresa shifted uncomfortably in the chair, and glanced over at Sandra. The woman looked terrible. Her usually gorgeous blonde hair hung limply down her back, her eyes bruised with deep shadows and her skin red and blotchy. Her brother John held her tired form tightly against his side, and Theresa could feel him trying to control his own raging emotions.

Caleb walked into the room, his stride purposeful as he approached the grieving siblings.

"She's safe," he said without preamble. "Lexie is on a helicopter that should be landing on the roof of the hospital in about twenty minutes."

Sandra lifted her head, her relief swimming in her eyes.

"Thank you," she said quietly. Caleb turned, heading toward the door, leaving the three of them once again with Dana and all of the medical machinery keeping her alive. Sandra pushed herself to her feet and stepped next to the bed.

Pulling Dana's limp hand into her own, she said quietly, "Did you hear that, Dana?"

Lexie is safe. Looks like Jason really came through for us.”

Nothing happened. Dana’s bruised and battered body remained still, the only signs of life the mechanical lift and fall of her chest caused by the respirator and the steady sound of the heart monitor.

John stepped up behind her, steadying her faltering balance. Theresa felt the devastation that flowed through them both again, washing away her hope, robbing her of her belief that Dana would pull through. Wrapping Sandra tighter against him, John bent over and lifted his sister against his chest. He turned and carried the exhausted woman from the room.

Theresa dragged in a deep breath. *“Fight, Dana! Please fight.”*

Chapter Four

As the helicopter landed and the blades stopped spinning, Jason let Bec lift the infant from his arms. He felt fairly certain his ankle was broken, and he held no wish to endanger the little one with a macho display of stupidity. He'd spent the entire flight trying to shield the child's ears against the intense noise of the helicopter and worrying about her overall health. He felt pretty certain he'd succeeded in protecting her hearing because about halfway through the flight she'd quieted and fallen into a calm sleep in his arms.

Cody helped him, steadying him as he stepped down onto the concrete. He watched as Sandra and a man he assumed was Dana's husband, rushed forward and took the sleeping infant from Bec's arms. He saw Sandra's expression as she held the baby close, the relief warring with the overwhelming fear for Dana.

She lifted her head, seeking him out.

"Thank you," she sent telepathically as she turned and went back into the hospital.

Bec walked back to him, sliding against his other side as she and Cody helped him into the hospital.

"Come on," she said a little too brightly. "Let's get you to the emergency department and get this ankle sorted out."

Several hours later, Jason sat in the emergency department, his left ankle elevated on the seat beside him, a heavy cast holding the broken bones in place. He'd been given pain relievers but was delaying taking them, trying to figure out his next move.

Basically, he had nothing and nowhere to go. He willingly sacrificed everything to save little Lexie and would do it again in a heartbeat, but that still didn't solve his current problem. He was homeless, broke, and probably in a lot of danger if the rogues caught up with him. He laughed aloud when he realized his incredible lack of foresight. Over the last three years he'd been so focused on finding Alana and Jenna and extracting them from the rogues' experiments that he hadn't really given much thought to what he would do once he'd accomplished his goals. He had money in a bank account, but considering that's probably the first place his ex-employers would watch in an effort to track him down, he probably shouldn't try to access it.

His ankle throbbed like the devil, and he again considered reaching for the painkillers, but gritted his teeth and tried to come up with a workable solution to his current predicament.

He'd been relieved to hear Dana had survived the initial attack, but as much as he wanted to see his sister for himself, he realized he had no place amongst these people. The only one of them he knew at all was Sandra, and there was no way he would impose his plight on her when she was dealing with so much already. Even Alana, the sister he'd managed to extract from the rogues' grip, knew him only as the asshole who'd handcuffed her to a bed in a cabin in the middle of nowhere.

“Take the meds,” a woman said as her hand slid onto his shoulder. “Trust me—you’ll heal faster if you aren’t in so much pain.”

Jason smiled as Bec took the seat next to him. He’d been so concerned with his problems he hadn’t even noticed her approach. He placed his hand over hers, slightly annoyed at the relief that washed through him when he realized she was still here at the hospital, that she hadn’t gone back to her life, never to be seen again.

“Ouch, looks painful,” Cody said as he joined them, a cocky smile spread across his features. “So, now what?”

“Good question,” Jason began. “One I don’t seem to have an answer to yet.” He smiled, trying to hide his emotions behind macho bravado and failing miserably.

“Well, it looks to me like you’re going to need a lot of rest while this heals and then intense physical therapy before you can even think about looking for a job or a place to stay.” Cody summed it up neatly, easily verbalizing the fears running through Jason’s head.

“Lucky for you, Bec and I have the perfect place, plenty of room, and heaps of gym equipment.”

Jason looked from one to the other, trying to understand why they would offer to help him. He was a stranger to them both.

“Not a stranger,” Bec said quietly, answering his thoughts. “The man who saved Lexie and Alana and somebody we both have a great deal of respect for.”

Jason’s emotions were playing havoc with his concentration. A part of him wanted to deny their respect, refuse their offer, and wallow in self pity, but another part of him warmed at the praise filling the lonely place in him that had been growing long before he went undercover to save his sisters.

“I’d appreciate the help, but only if I can repay you when I get back on my feet,” he said carefully, unwilling to see himself as a charity case.

“No problems,” Cody answered smiling. “Don’t suppose you can cook?”

Jason nodded, slightly confused by the quick change in subject.

“Excellent,” Cody said, rubbing his hands together in anticipation. “After ten months living with Miss Can’t-Boil-Water, having someone to share the cooking duties will be thanks enough. Come on, let’s get you home.”

Bec handed him a small plastic cup of water and took the bottle of pills from him. She shook two into his hand and stood over him as he dutifully swallowed. They both helped him to his feet and then stayed beside him as he awkwardly adjusted to moving with crutches.

* * * *

Several days later, Bec and Jason were sitting on the sofa watching an action movie, pointing out the ridiculousness of some of the stunts and laughing over how the

lead characters survived dozens of bullet wounds, but it took only a single shot to take out the henchmen. Bec knew from painful experience that surviving three bullet wounds took far more effort than any of these types of shows ever allowed.

She flexed her left hand, the familiar stiffness irritating the shit out of her. One of the bullets that had hit her over twelve months ago had passed right through her hand, shattering several of the bones. Doctors had pinned everything back together in surgery, but she'd been told that her current movement was about as good as she could expect. The only saving grace had been that she used a gun right-handed, so it hadn't been enough to put her out of active duty permanently.

"How did you end up working undercover?" Bec asked him quietly, finally giving in to her curiosity.

"After my mother died, I found a journal she'd been keeping. It was mainly research into the death of a couple of her friends. Mom believed they'd both been killed because neither would let the scientists who helped them have their babies, do experiments on them once they were born."

"The professor?" she asked, already realizing where this story was going.

"Yup, he created me, too, and when Mom realized that her friend's daughter, Alana, and I shared the same parents, she basically ran and hid me for the rest of her life. I'd just finished my residency when she died, and when I found her research I realized I had a chance to rescue Alana and Jenna." His reminiscent smile faltered a little. "Well, I didn't do so well with Jenna.

"But Alana is safe, and so is Lexie," she said, smiling, hoping to reassure him that he'd gone above and beyond to help his family.

"Visitor for you, Jase," Cody called as he entered the room. Jason twisted awkwardly on the couch, trying to see over his shoulder. She felt his surprised pleasure when he saw Alana beside Cody.

"Speak of the devil," Jason said happily as he tried to lever himself off the seat.

"Stay," Alana ordered, pointing at him as he tried to get to his feet. Moving quickly into the room, she stopped in front of him and bent to place a kiss on his cheek. "Thank you," she said quietly. "Thank you for saving me and my baby and Lexie." She hesitated, seeming a little awkward but determined to say what needed to be said. "I can't tell you how grateful I am, and I wanted you to know I'm really proud to have a brother like you."

Jason grabbed her hand as she stood in front of him, rubbing his thumb over the puckered scars left by the handcuff he'd used to secure her to a bed eight months ago. Bec knew he'd been forced to hide Alana from the rogues and had been unable to explain to her who he was at the time without blowing his cover. He'd had no choice but to make sure she didn't try to wander off before he could get someone there to help her.

Alana realized what he was doing, must've sensed the anguish that it caused him to

see her scarred wrist.

"It's okay," she said gently. "If you hadn't used the handcuffs, I'd probably still be stumbling around in the woods. I say a prayer of thanks every day for what you did for me and my daughter."

She pulled her wrist from his gentle grip and gave him a quick hug before settling into the armchair beside him.

"How's Dana?" he asked anxiously. Bec really hoped to hear good news but knew it was unlikely.

"They operated again last night to stop some internal bleeding, but she's still hanging on," Alana said, obviously trying to phrase her words carefully. "But the doctors have warned us she still has a very long road ahead of her. She hasn't been conscious at all since it happened." Alana's voice cracked a little, her love and fear for her sister evident.

Bec saw his stricken look, realizing he hadn't been into the hospital to see Dana, wondering if he felt unwelcome. Her suspicions were confirmed in his next sentence.

"Thank you. I've wanted to contact Sandra, but with everything she's going through I didn't want to get in the way."

Beside him, Bec felt the true depth of his anguish, his emotions tangling in her mind, her empathic skills more attuned than ever before. She slipped her hand into his, silently lending him her strength, her support.

"Jason." Alana hesitated, seeming unsure how to phrase what she wanted to say. "You know you can visit Dana anytime you like, right?"

Jason shook his head, his words anxious and too quick. "I don't want to get in the way. I may be your biological brother, but I'm not really family."

Bec's heart broke for him, realizing just how very alone he must be feeling right now, part of a family but not part of their lives, the outsider looking in. She squeezed his hand harder, ignoring the protest from her damaged fingers.

"Jason," Alana said, compassion and understanding pouring from her. "You are the reason I have a family. You are my family, and you are Dana's family, even if you haven't officially met. Come to the hospital, please. As a family, we need to be together, all of us."

She stood then, her eyes glassy and her hands shaking a little. "I need to go, but please consider what I said. You have a family. You are not alone. None of us are anymore."

With a brief smile and a quick hug she was gone.

Cody sauntered into the room with a cocky grin, a telling sign to anyone who knew him as well as Bec did that he was planning something. He perched on the side of the recliner Alana had just vacated and sat smiling at the two people on the sofa.

"So who's up for a road trip?"

Chapter Five

Between the two of them they managed to ride roughshod over him. Bec and Cody quickly convinced Jason that as a doctor it was his duty to check on Dana. He could make certain the rest of his family understood her condition and ensure that she was getting the best possible care.

Several hours later, he limped into the room, leaving his crutches outside so he wouldn't risk upsetting any of the machinery keeping Dana alive. Sandra looked up, smiling a little in greeting as she saw him. Grabbing Dana's chart from the end of the bed, Jason quickly familiarized himself with her current condition and read and reread the report from the initial surgery.

Holly hell! Seven bullets in the upper body. Jason had never known anyone to survive the trip to the hospital with such severe injuries, let alone endure this long. He read how several bullets had passed clear through her chest, deflating her lungs and nicking the side of her heart. He read how they dug out three bullets from her rib cage, two of them lodged in rib bone as they smashed through her back and tried to push past her sternum and the third removed from a vertebrae in her neck. He even read in between the lines of the doctor's report, understanding the information not written down. Even if a miracle occurred and she survived, her chances of being the same person were zero. She'd probably never regain the ability to breathe on her own, and any better recovery was unimaginable.

He fumbled for Dana's hand, his eyes watering as his gaze made contact with Sandra's tired eyes. His nose burned as he tried to hold back the tears, his head aching with the intensity of his anguish. Dana, the sister he'd never met but felt like he knew through Sandra, was gone, even as the machines pumped air into her body, the woman they'd known and loved was gone forever.

He lost track of the time as he held his sister's hand, his thoughts swirling with questions and ideas, desperately trying to think of any procedures or research he'd read that could help the woman who lay so lifeless in front of him.

The door opened a crack as Cody contacted him by telepathy. He and Bec had been trying to help Jason develop the ability as a way to pass the time while his ankle healed and they awaited official reinstatement to active duty.

"Do you need anything?" he sent to Jason's mind.

"A miracle would be nice," he thought despondently before he could stop himself. Cody smiled sadly at him as he backed away from the door and let it fall closed.

* * * *

Jason had managed to hold himself together through a quiet conversation with his sister, Theresa, and her husbands, Caleb and Ethan. The whole time he'd been trying desperately to shield his thoughts about Dana's hopeless situation. He'd stayed upright as he talked to the hospital doctors, falling back on professional detachment as

he discussed Dana's condition in more detail. He'd kept his anger and his rage in check as they traveled the two hours on the highway heading back to the apartment, but when he finally made it into the sanctuary of Cody's and Bec's living room, he lost it.

Lost his control, lost his temper, lost his hope.

Items started thrashing around the room, the smaller contents swirling in the air like they were caught in a hurricane. Larger items joined them as his rage peaked, the sound of glass breaking joining the chaos.

He was barely aware of the people beside him, hardly noticed the arms that pulled at him, the voices screaming at him to stop. His temper continued to rage as he released a lifetime's worth of pent-up anger on Cody's and Bec's apartment.

Small hands grabbed his face, pulled his head down, and soft lips kissed him gently. She deepened the kiss as he responded, pushing her tongue past his teeth, dueling with his, sliding past the sob that escaped him.

His arms lifted her against him, pressing her ass with his big hands, pushing her pussy against his hardening cock. She whimpered as he turned awkwardly on one leg and pressed her against the door, pushing her skirt up and wrapping her legs around his waist as his rock-hard erection pressed against her heat.

He was about to undo his jeans, about to plunge into her wet pussy and take her hard and fast, when sanity returned. He pressed his forehead against hers as he let her legs drop down to the floor. Taking a deep, unsteady breath he tried to apologize but was thwarted by her hand over his mouth.

"Don't," she admonished. "I was with you every step of the way," she admitted quietly.

He felt Cody's confusion, belatedly remembering the other man's presence. He turned to make eye contact, trying to find the words to apologize.

"Don't," Cody echoed his partner's words as Jason tried to talk. "I'm just glad you stopped wrecking the place."

Jason glanced around him at the destruction, barely able to believe what his eyes were telling him. "I did this?" he asked bewildered.

"Yep, looks like you have a lot more in common with your sisters than we first thought," Cody said casually as he returned the sofa to its upright position. "Come on. Take a seat while I get us some coffee. I think we have a few things we all need to discuss."

Bec helped him over to the couch and then busied herself tidying up the disaster area that was once their living room. Jason adjusted his cock again, dismayed that despite everything happening right now he still had no control over his body's reaction to Bec's nearness. Bec had righted most of the furniture and was sweeping up the broken glass when Cody returned carrying a tray with three coffees.

Taking a seat at the opposite end of the sofa, Cody patted the middle for Bec to sit between them. Hesitantly, she set aside the broom and joined them on the couch, pressing herself deeply into the cushion so she could see both men.

* * * *

“Bec,” Cody said, swallowing a little as his courage fled. “I need to know what you’re feeling. I can feel your attraction to both of us, and I can feel Jason’s attraction to you.”

He held her gaze for a moment, daring her to deny the undeniable, but broke eye contact when he lost his nerve, suddenly fearful of the words that may follow. They’d been skirting around each other’s sexual attraction for months now, their affection for each other obvious, but since Jason had joined them, he’d noticed the same emotions emanating from Jason and Bec somehow intensifying, not diminishing the attraction between himself and Bec.

“I’m sorry,” she said, her voice cracking and her eyes filling with tears. “I’m attracted to both of you, and I know it’s wrong, but I can’t separate my feelings between you.” She closed her eyes, twin tracks of tears flowing down her face and dripping off her chin. Both men went to comfort her, each hesitating as he saw the other’s movement.

Jason went to sit back, allowing Cody to pull her into his arms, but Cody speared him with his gaze, shifting Bec so that she was pressed up against Jason’s chest and wrapped in his embrace.

“Sweetheart, look at me,” Cody ordered quietly. She opened her eyes, and he lowered his mouth to hers, kissing her gently, the soft rub of his lips unhurried, undemanding. Sitting back so he could see both of their faces clearly, he said, “Jason and I both want you to be happy, and if it takes both of us to do that, then I’m sure we can figure something out.”

Two sets of confused eyes gazed at him, making him chuckle out loud. It was a ridiculous situation, really. Here he was, offering the woman he loved to another man simply because she needed them both. It helped that he and Jason had forged a friendship in the past few days. Mutual respect had solidified into a closeness he didn’t even share with his own brother. He tried to explain what was in his head and his heart, but Bec saved him the trouble when she lifted her face to his and kissed him deeply. Her tongue sought his in the same type of demanding kiss she’d laid on Jason just minutes ago.

When they came up for air, Jason tried to ask questions, but Bec silenced him as well, turning her attention to his mouth until Cody lifted her into his arms.

“Time to take this somewhere more comfortable.”

He turned and strode out of the room, Bec held tightly against his chest.

Chapter Six

Jason sat a moment on the sofa, stunned at the strange turn of events and again unsure of his place in all of this. His cock strained against his jeans, his body very clearly telling him where he wanted to be.

“Come on, Jase,” Bec called to him telepathically. *“Don’t overthink it. Please just be with me and forget everything else for a while.”*

Jason grabbed his crutches, levering himself up and moving toward Bec’s bedroom. As he entered the room he watched from the doorway as Cody kissed her, then lifted her dress over her head as he walked her backward. Her knees hit the mattress, and with a soft smile she fell onto the bed. Cody looked over at him, probably sensing his disquiet as Bec levered herself up onto one elbow and held her hand out in invitation.

Something unraveled in Jason’s chest. A need to be included, a need to be part of something special, and he found himself moving toward her, awkwardly removing his clothes as he neared the bed. He sat beside her as she helped him to pull his T-shirt over his head then lowered her hands to remove his jeans. She moved off the bed to get the denim over his cast and then pushed him onto his back as she straddled his hips and kissed him like the world was about to end. On and on she kissed him as she writhed against his hard cock, straining to get closer.

Cody’s hands smoothed over her shoulders, pushing the bra he’d undone over her arms, releasing her plump breasts. Jason groaned as they brushed against his chest, his cock straining against the cotton of his boxer shorts. She crawled higher up his body, clasping their hands together and stretching his arms over his head, her breasts swinging near his face until he latched on to one, sucking it into his mouth and worrying the nipple with his teeth. She cried out at the same time he felt Cody lift her slightly so he could remove her underwear. Then he pressed a condom into Jason’s hand.

Still greedily sucking her breast, Jason managed to rip open the little packet and sheath himself with the condom. Bec quickly fit her body to his and impaled herself on his cock. He released her nipple, groaning his ecstasy as the walls of her pussy rippled around his engorged flesh, the sensation more intense, more amazing than he’d ever known.

Jason gripped her hips, lifting her higher and then plunging himself back into her welcoming heat. He ground his teeth as his orgasm raced to claim him. It had been too long, way too long, and he wasn’t going to last. He kissed her hard as he anchored her hips to him and pumped into her a few times more before he exploded. He barely registered that Bec was coming as well until he felt her tight pussy spasm around his cock, milking the last of his cum.

She collapsed onto his body, her head tucked under his chin. They breathed heavily for a few moments, and then Bec’s breath hitched as he felt Cody lift her off him and

roll her under his body.

Cody kissed her hungrily. Jason could feel his intense need to claim the woman who had become the center of both their worlds. Bec kissed him fiercely, maybe sensing his need also. Cody pushed straight into her, then held still for a moment. Bec moaned as he lifted her knees over his arms, pushing his cock deeper into her dripping pussy.

Jason rolled onto his side, his hand gently caressing the breast nearest to him. He lowered his head to take the stiff nub into his mouth as Bec writhed against them both, desire tightening her muscles. Cody pulled back, pounding into her harder and harder as Jason found her clit and pressed it rhythmically, smiling when Bec let out a loud groan as her climax drew nearer.

* * * *

Cody watched Bec gasp for breath, writhing beneath them both. He lifted her legs higher against him, pressed into her harder, forcing her body into overload. She screamed as her orgasm hit, her body bouncing against the mattress as she moaned her release. Cody stiffened as her pussy clenched him, her entire body shaking in ecstasy, pulling him over the edge with her.

As his orgasm claimed him, he kissed her softly, reverently. Carefully he lowered himself onto her body, knowing he was too heavy for her but wanting for just a moment to imprint his shape onto hers. He felt Jason move, claiming her hand in his own, pressing kisses to her knuckles.

Slowly pulling his cock out of her body, Cody levered himself off her, kissing her gently on the lips before he moved away. He walked to the bathroom, quickly disposed of the condom, and returned to find Bec asleep in Jason's arms.

"I think we wore her out," Jason said with a small smile, still seeming a little uncomfortable with the situation. Cody sat on the edge of the bed, running his hand through Bec's hair.

"First time for everything," Cody replied, unintentionally summing up the situation.

"How can this work?" Jason asked him sadly, his eyes never leaving Bec's face. "How can we both be with her and not cause problems for all of us?"

Cody looked at Jason, noticing the emotions he tried to hide. Working undercover had stolen something from him, changed the way he saw himself, and since the abrupt end to his self-appointed mission, Cody had watched him struggle to find his balance again in the real world.

"We'll just take it one day at a time," Cody told him. "Don't overthink it. Just live in the moment and let the future take care of itself."

Jason nodded his understanding, seemingly still amazed at how easily Cody accepted the unusual situation. Cody stood, pulling his jeans on as he headed to the door.

“Since I’m such a nice guy, I’m going to put some dinner on even though it’s your turn to cook. Stay,” he said as he reached the doorway. “Hold her. Get some rest yourself if you can.” He watched a moment longer as Jason fell back against the pillows, and pulled the sleeping woman more firmly into his arms. He linked his fingers with hers as he rubbed his thumb over the puckered scars on her hand.

She snuggled closer against him, sighing as he kissed her on the forehead. Turning away from the tender moment, Cody tried to squash the doubts crowding his own mind.

Chapter Seven

An hour later Cody had dinner ready but found them both still sleeping. A sliver of jealousy wound through him. He'd loved Bec for so long, but somehow they'd never managed to go that last little step. Their relationship hadn't quite reached boiling point until Jason stepped into the picture.

Cody released the breath he'd been holding, annoyed at the direction of his thoughts. He had everything he'd ever wanted right here waiting for him, and Jason made things better for all of them. The fact he'd felt an emotional connection winding between the three of them from the moment they'd plucked Jason out of danger made the situation easier, not harder.

He rubbed his shoulder, the ache even more annoying than usual simply by its timing. He didn't want to feel melancholy. He wanted to feel whole. He wanted a day free of pain and some time free from worrying that he may never regain his former fitness.

Pushing away from his position against the door jamb, Cody strode into the room, intent on waking his sleeping beauty and the guy snoring beside her. When he got closer he noticed how Jason's arm was wrapped around Bec, and how his large hand held her breast, the nipple peaking over his fingers like he was lifting her to him for a taste.

Slowly Cody lowered his head to her breast, laving his tongue across the pink flesh, the nipple puckering against him. He blew a stream of warm air over the wet nub, watching it tighten further. Her eyes fluttered open, focusing on him with a shy smile on her face.

"Hello, beautiful," Cody said, smiling, all thoughts of jealousy and his sore shoulder fleeing as she lifted her arms to him in welcome. He went willingly, fusing his mouth against hers as he pushed off his robe and slid onto the bed beside her.

He sensed Jason open his eyes and glanced over to see the cryptic smile on the man's face.

* * * *

At first a little concerned Cody would flat out ask what was on his mind, Jason levered himself off the bed.

"I think I need a shower," he said, grinning. "Don't have too much fun while I'm gone."

Jason smiled at Cody as he felt relief run through the man, confirming his own thoughts. He'd spent the last hour holding Bec close, loving the way she felt in his arms, and trying to figure out what he and Cody would each need for this relationship to work. He'd realized that as much as he enjoyed what the three of them shared, he would want time alone with Bec, and Cody would want the same.

Smiling to himself as he sensed the emotions emanating from the bedroom, he limped into the bathroom and set about the tedious task of washing with a broken ankle and a cast that couldn't get wet.

* * * *

Bec watched Jason limp from the room, concern for his state of mind lifting her away from the pillow.

"It's okay, sweetheart," Cody said, framing her face with his hands and getting her full attention. "He's giving us some time alone, that's all."

She smiled at him as she realized the truth to his words. At first she'd felt only annoyance from Jason as he left the room, and it had taken a moment to realize the emotion was directed at his damaged ankle. The stronger emotion was his happiness, his ready acceptance of the situation and his determination to make this relationship work.

Lowering his head once again, Cody kissed her gently, his tongue licking along the seam of her lips, his teeth gently nipping the plump flesh. She sucked his tongue into her mouth and lowered her hands to grasp his rock-hard cock, pumping him with her fist, eager for his possession.

"No way." He chuckled as he grabbed her hands. "You are not going to rush me this time, sweetheart." He pushed her hands to the top of the bed, wrapping her fingers around the wooden slats of the headboard.

"Stay there." She smiled at him as she flexed her fingers, clearly ready to defy him. "Stay there or I'll find something to tie you down." Heat flared in her eyes as he wrapped his hands around hers, pressing them tighter around the bars. The position lifted her breasts up, the nipples puckering as his gaze slid up and down her body.

He sucked the dark pink nub into his mouth, flicking the hard flesh with his tongue over and over as she squirmed in delight. He held her in his thrall as he lowered his hand, smoothing along the taut flesh of her abdomen and lower to the nest of curls hiding her pussy. Slipping a finger in between the flesh surrounding her clit, he swirled around the swollen bundle of nerves, spreading her body's natural lubricant.

"Oh, sweetheart, you are so wet," he said, shifting his weight on the bed as his cock thickened even further and pressed hard against her thigh. He slid down the bed, his fingers delving into her heat, separating the flesh and pushing back the lips that hid her clit. He lowered his head to her swollen flesh and sucked the nub into his mouth, gently rasping his teeth across her. She bucked on the bed, begging with her mouth and her body for the release that raced toward her.

"Lie still," he ordered as he ceased touching her, "or I'll consider tying those pretty legs down as well." She whimpered at his authoritative tone but did as he ordered, holding still as he once again lowered his mouth to her sensitized flesh.

Flicking his tongue back and forth over her clit, he pushed three fingers deep into her weeping pussy, his other hand holding her pelvis, pressing her harder against the

bed, denying her the movement that her body cried out for. Harder and harder he worried the sensitive flesh, his fingers pumping into her faster. She felt her body spiraling out of control, everything else forgotten as she raced to an incredible explosion.

He held still, smiling at her whimpering cries, her body and mind begging for release. He pressed her harder against the bed, pushing his fingers deeper into her body, his mouth sucking on her clit, her body beginning to shatter.

She rode his fingers, unable to stay still, unable to think past the need to come. He bit her clit as he pressed a finger against her anus, pushing her over the edge, holding her as she moaned her release, her body shaking against him.

He held her close as she rode the wave of pleasure, kissing her stomach gently as she eventually stilled. "That's just the beginning, sweetheart," he promised, moving over her and kissing her on the mouth. "Roll over," he said, his voice promising unimagined delights.

He helped her to roll, then lifted her hips so he could place several pillows under her pelvis. He pushed her legs wide, and she suddenly felt very vulnerable as she lay open and exposed to his eyes. Blunt fingers traveled over her ass, dipping into her soaked pussy, spreading her wetness, swirling over the pucker of her anus.

She clenched the muscles, her body denying him at the same time that her mind craved his complete possession. She'd never had a man in her ass, never wanted that forbidden act of love, but with this man, with Jason as well, she wanted it all. She whimpered as Cody's finger pressed harder against her taut pucker. She took a deep breath and tried to relax the muscles and welcome him into her body.

"Relax," he said softly, smoothing a hand over the globes of her ass, caressing the quivering flesh. His finger dipped into her dripping pussy and then circled the puckered hole again as his other hand kneaded her ass cheeks, pulling the flesh apart. She moaned at the incredible feelings of her body's response. "Push back on me, Bec. Push that beautiful ass onto my finger."

She did as he asked, her body obeying her commands as his finger pushed through the tight ring of muscle and breached her ass. The sting lasted but a moment as he pushed deeper into her body. She felt another orgasm building as her breath caught in her lungs. He pressed a second finger into her ass, stretching her, preparing her for his cock. Again, she pushed back against him, her muscles contracting around the seeking fingers. When she was moaning loud enough to upset the neighbors, he added a third, carefully stretching the flesh.

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Cody dropped his other hand to her clit, rubbing the flesh, heightening her sensations. He pulled away, quickly sheathed himself with a condom and lube, and then pressed the head of his cock against her ass. He watched the muscles quiver as he pushed against her dark hole. Reaching under her again, he found her clit and rubbed it in small circles as he pushed slowly into her back passage.

He felt the exact moment the slight stinging pain passed and she tipped over into orgasm. Her entire body shook, and he held her close, pumping short, sharp strokes into her ass. Her muscles grabbed him, demanding his response. He pulled out almost completely and then slammed back into her as his own orgasm claimed him. He held her to him when she would've collapsed, kissing her neck, her shoulders, her face, as his cum continued to pump into the condom.

Finally sated, he gently lowered her onto her side, pushing the pillows out of the way and making sure not to hurt her. He moved away to take care of the condom and then collapsed on the bed, pulled her into his arms, and kissed her fiercely.

Bec lifted her hand to his face, placing it against the stubble on his cheek.

"That was incredible," she said, her eyes confirming her words.

"That it was," he agreed, "but I think I better put you in the shower before my cock starts to wake up." She swatted him playfully as he lifted her into his arms and carried her into the bathroom.

Jason still sat on the plastic chair in the shower, his leg held awkwardly out of the door, his face red with embarrassment as he looked at his rock-hard erection. He smiled a little when he saw Bec.

"Looks like my empathic skills are improving. I don't even need to be in the same room to know what you two are feeling anymore."

* * * *

Jason smiled as Bec laughed in delight. "Maybe I could help you with that," she said.

Cody helped her into the shower and then turned to leave the room.

"I'll serve up dinner," he laughed as he walked through the door. "Hopefully the kitchen is far enough away."

Bec lowered herself to her knees, gripping Jason's cock in her slightly calloused hand. She held his gaze as she lowered her mouth, licking his cock in one big swipe from balls to tip. Then she sucked on the head as her hand pumped him slowly.

Jason's eyes rolled back even as his head fell forward to watch her. Bec pressed her tongue into his slit, lapping at the pre-cum and then drawing him into her mouth more fully. She lifted and lowered her head once, twice, before Jason grabbed her hair, holding her in place, pressing her lower against his cock. She gasped then took him deeper. His arousal notched higher. Almost mindless with need, he set the pace, his hands lifting her head and then lowering her again. His breath caught as she cupped his balls, gently squeezing the sensitive flesh. She sucked harder, he moved faster, she squeezed tighter, and then he exploded, lifting her face from his cock and spurting thick ribbons of cum all over her breasts.

She sat back on her heels, a satisfied smile on her face as he leaned forward to rub his seed into her skin, a primitive, possessive emotion filling him as he looked at

his woman covered in his cum.

As she tried to stand, he pulled her over his lap, straddling his legs. Quickly he sank his fingers into her pussy, his thumb finding her clit. She writhed as he pinned her against him, held her still, and pushed her into sensual overload, her body convulsing over him, sucking his fingers deeper into her warm flesh.

“Wow,” she said, gasping for breath and trying to swallow.

He grinned pressing his forehead against hers.

Cody’s laugh echoed from the doorway. “Turns out the kitchen *is not* far enough away. I suggest you two get out of the shower or we’re never going to get to eat.”

Bec smiled at him as she stood and turned her face into the spray of water. Jason couldn’t resist touching her gorgeous ass as she twisted and bobbed in front of him, quickly washing away the sticky evidence of their love play.

She grinned and swatted his hands as she tried to step out of the shower, but he pulled her onto his lap and kissed her very thoroughly. He wanted to say the words he felt in his heart, wanted to declare his growing love for this woman and his deep satisfaction with this relationship, but he didn’t want to make her feel trapped. He knew he had nothing at all to offer her, he didn’t even have a job, and he wanted her to feel free to make love with him without worrying he was going to be a burden.

So he kept his mouth shut and his thoughts shielded.

Chapter Eight

Jason sat at the table eating the steak and salad Cody had prepared, savoring the delicious taste of beef cooked to perfection. Thank God Cody could cook. They'd let Bec cook just once since he'd been here, and the food had been so inedible that in the end they'd given up trying to be polite and ordered pizza instead. Bec had just grinned and happily eaten pizza with them. A small part of Jason wondered if that was Bec's evil plan all along. If she cooked badly enough the first few times, she could easily avoid the onerous task in the future.

He grinned as he tasted the baked potato with sour cream and fresh chopped chives. He'd tried cooking since he gotten here, but with his broken ankle it had been difficult to coordinate all of the ingredients, and so now when it was his turn to cook, he limited himself to casseroles and other dishes that could be cooked in the one pot. Cody had happily taken over the cooking for the most part, and Jason and Bec had been left to do the cleanup. Considering how well Cody cooked, it seemed a pretty workable solution.

Bec's cell phone rang, and she quickly left the table to snag the little vibrating machine before it buzzed itself onto the floor. She looked puzzled as she glanced at the caller ID, but she opened it and said hello in a casual voice.

Turning to Jason, she handed the phone over, taking her seat again. Jason noticed she at least tried not to listen in on the conversation, although she failed miserably, so she knew Dana had gone in to surgery again before Jason handed back the phone.

* * * *

Cody felt the lighthearted mood of the meal evaporate as it was replaced with Jason's impotent anger. He pushed his plate away, mumbling an apology as he untangled his leg and crutches from the table and limped toward his bedroom.

Cody could feel Bec aching for the loss Jason felt. They knew every time Dana went in for surgery, her chances of recovering were lessened. Bec sat fighting tears, her normal tough demeanor stripped away by the raw emotion emanating from Jason. Cody pulled her onto his lap, holding her as she cried, whispering words of love and comfort. When she had cried herself out, she straightened in his lap and kissed him gently.

"Go," Cody said to her, understanding her need to comfort the other man, happy he could help even in this little way.

Bec kissed him again and hurried to follow Jason.

* * * *

She found him sitting on the end of his bed, his head hung low, his shoulders heaving as he breathed deeply, trying to gain control of his emotions. Bec entered the room without a word, moved to stand in front of him, and wrapped her arms around his

shoulders. She felt him tremble as he pulled her into his embrace, his face resting against her belly as she held him tight.

She stood like that for several minutes, rocking slightly as she sensed his fight to control his emotions. He sucked in a deep breath as his hands slid under her shirt, pushing the material up over her shoulders, her unfettered breasts quickly claimed by his mouth. He pushed her pants and underwear down as he dragged her onto his lap, his hands seeking the swollen heat between her thighs. In just a few short moments he had her panting, straining against his solid grip, everything forgotten except the man in front of her. She gripped his jeans, forcing the buttons undone with trembling fingers, her hand sliding into his briefs to release his engorged cock. Mindless with need she pumped his flesh until he growled, pushed her hand away, pulled her down, and impaled her on his erection.

She held herself upright by her fingers on his shoulders as he gripped her hips and slammed her against him again and again and again. Her entire body shook with the orgasm that approached, threatening to blow her apart as he continued to pound into her quivering flesh. He growled again, grinding her pelvis against his hips as he exploded, his cum pulsing deep into her body.

She moaned as her orgasm hit her, waves of hot pleasure washing over her again and again. He held her close as her pussy clenched against his softening cock, her anus puckering as the muscles pulsed.

Completely spent, Bec fell forward into his arms, her sweaty body plastered against his chest, barely aware of the hands roaming over her as the man in her arms apologized over and over.

Suddenly registering his words, Bec tried to sit up, seeking his gaze, but he held her tight against him rocking slightly and still apologizing. She let him hold her for a minute longer before pushing out of his arms.

“Jason,” she said, standing in front of him, her hand reaching for his face, trying to get him to look at her. “Jason, I’m okay. You didn’t hurt me. In fact, I loved every moment.”

Incredulous eyes gazed at her as if he couldn’t quite believe what she said. He smoothed his hands over her hips and the reddened spots showing the evidence of his rough possession. She glanced at the marks, dismissing them with a shake of her head.

“I’m not breakable. You didn’t hurt me.” She smiled into his eyes when he looked at her again. He pulled her against him, lifting his face to kiss her tenderly. She angled him back onto the bed, then crawled over him to settle against the pillows. She patted the mattress, and Jason wriggled awkwardly out of his clothes then settled beside her, spooning her against him as he pulled her close.

She was almost asleep when she felt his body jerk as if remembering something important. She heard his groan just before he turned her in his arms, lifting her face to look into her eyes.

"Baby, I didn't use a condom." Thanks to her telepathy she could hear the small part of him wishing for her to fall pregnant with his child, but a much larger part mentally kicked his own ass for being so selfish.

"It's okay," she soothed, her hands running across the creases in his brow. "I have an IUD, so I won't be falling pregnant anytime soon, and I haven't slept with anyone besides you and Cody for more than two years. You?"

"I didn't have sex with anyone while I was undercover," he said, smiling.

"Good," she said, sleepily rolling in his arms and snuggling back against him. "Conversation over."

* * * *

Not content with just ringing the bell, their visitor hammered on the door as well. Cody sent his senses into the hallway, trying to determine who would be trying to belt his door down. He opened the door just as Rafe pulled his wife into his arms, laughing softly as she continued trying to reach the door.

"Relax," he said, "Cody's here now."

Cody opened the door wide, an amused smile crossing his features as Alana pushed past him and stalked into the apartment. Realizing the room was empty, Alana turned to face him, raising her eyebrow as she asked "Where is he?"

"By 'he,' I assume you mean Jason," Cody asked, a little annoyed at Alana's cryptic attitude. "Stay here, and I'll check if he's awake."

He could feel her agitation as he walked down the hallway. He stopped at Jason's room, knocking softly as he opened the door.

Alana pushed past him again, apparently not noticing that both occupants of the bed were naked, and shoved her wrist into Jason's line of vision.

"Look," she demanded impatiently.

* * * *

Jason blinked several times trying to come awake after a too-short, unexpected, but much needed nap. He tried to focus his eyes, but all he could see was Alana's wrist. Uncertain what she expected, Jason looked around her to see Cody standing at the door. Cody seemed as confused as Jason felt.

His annoyance getting the better of him, he pulled the sheet up to cover himself and Bec and then glared at Alana.

"What am I supposed to be looking at?" he ground out through tightly clenched teeth.

"The scars," she said, shaking her head.

"What scars?" he asked, still trying to come fully awake.

“The scars from the handcuff,” she said, rolling her eyes in exasperation. “The scars that tingled when you touched them and then healed completely.”

Shock coursed through Jason as he grabbed her hand, turning it back and forth, searching for the scars that he’d seen only a day ago. He grabbed her other hand, comparing the two, searching for differences and seeing none.

A quick gasp caught his attention as the woman beside him moved. Lifting her left hand, Bec held up the fingers that yesterday were mangled and damaged but were now completely free from injury. It looked as if she’d never been shot. She quickly moved the sheet, modesty apparently forgotten as she tried to see her scarred ankle. Carefully, Jason lifted her foot into his hands, running his fingers lightly over the puckered surgical scars.

Right there in front of all of them, the scars faded and almost disappeared. Bec flexed her foot, moving more freely than she’d been able to since being shot.

“How does it feel?” Cody asked, his voice tight with shock.

Bec flexed her foot again.

“Good, I think. A little residual pain, but nothing like the stiffness I’ve experienced day after day.” She lowered her foot to the floor, raising her eyes briefly to take in Cody’s taut stance. She stood, gently placing her weight on the injured leg, noticing the lack of pain. “It’s not one hundred percent,” she said carefully, “but it’s a big improvement.”

Cody moved forward to slap a hand on Jason’s shoulder.

“I knew you’d come in handy,” he said, smiling, effectively breaking the tension in the room.

Alana gasped suddenly, glancing from Bec to Jason, perhaps finally noticing the state of undress of the couple on the bed. Looking uncomfortable, she started to seek an exit.

“Um, I’ll just...um, go...so you guys can, um...” She was out the door before she finished her sentence, and the three left behind exchanged happy smiles.

“Get dressed, you two,” Cody said, moving toward the door. “We leave in fifteen minutes.” At first, Jason didn’t understand where they were going, his brain still sleepy and now overloaded with questions, and then it hit him. Dana.

* * * *

They all rushed into the hospital, Cody and Bec hovering close to Jason as he moved faster than was probably safe on crutches. Theresa’s head snapped up at the commotion, annoyance briefly crossing her features until she saw Jason. Looking confused and curious, Theresa stood back as Jason handed his crutches to Bec and limped through the door to Dana’s room.

Inside the room, Pete sat in a chair beside Dana’s bed. He didn’t even lift his gaze, his entire body language that of a beaten man. Jason hesitated, not explaining why he

was here, unwilling to add false hope to Pete's already overloaded emotions. He limped to the other side of the bed, and grasped Dana's pale hand in his own. He had no idea if this would work, and the doctor in him doubted that anything, even his freak skill of healing scars, would be enough to put back together Dana's broken body.

Still holding her fingers in one hand, he stretched the other toward her face, rubbing his thumb over the bruising that still marred her beautiful features. He held his breath as he watched the yellow-green skin heal, and be replaced by a more healthy pallor. Too pale still, but an improvement nonetheless.

He moved his hand to her sternum, carefully touching the skin, visualizing in his mind the damage done by the bullets and trying to imagine the healing that would be required for Dana to be whole again. Slowly he worked his hands up her throat, carefully touching the scars on her neck where a bullet had severed her spinal cord.

Jason could feel Pete's eyes on him but couldn't look at the man, his fear of failing Dana threatening to overwhelm him. He concentrated on the scars on her neck, trying to visualize in his mind the nerves and blood vessels that ran through the spinal cord. He imagined them knitting back together, healing the damage as if she'd never been injured.

He sat back, still holding her hand, unsure if he'd been able to promote healing of any of her internal injuries. He stayed there, barely breathing, fighting the fear that welled inside him, holding himself together by sheer will.

A choking noise startled him, and he stood abruptly, his medical training quickly assessing the situation.

"Get the doctor," he barked at her startled husband, sparing but a moment to make sure the other man pressed the emergency call button. Jason stood over Dana, her eyes open for the first time in ten days. "Relax, Dana, I'm going to turn off the respirator and remove the tube so you can breathe on your own."

Her eyes held his gaze as she used her telepathy to give her own orders. He laughed out loud at her demand that he hurry his ass up and then quickly disconnected the machine.

"Stay still," he told her in a stern voice. "I'm not sure exactly how much I've been able to heal, so no sudden movements, all right?"

She rolled her eyes but otherwise stayed still as he removed the tube from her throat and laid a hand on her chest as she took her first full and independent breath in ten days. He rubbed his hand over the puckered scar at her side, sensing a small amount of internal bleeding and healing it with his thoughts.

The door burst open, the doctor quickly taking in the scene, his irate voice cutting off in mid-sentence when he realized Dana was breathing on her own.

"I...I...don't understand this," he said as he grabbed up the chart, shaking his head in disbelief. "This just isn't possible." He moved over to the bed, checking Dana over, gasping when he noticed how the bruises had faded and how she was able to move

her limbs.

Pete clapped a hand on the doctor's shoulder as he smiled for the first time in what probably felt like forever.

"Doctor," Jason said, gaining the man's attention. "We need to run some more tests, check to see how much of the damage has been healed."

"But not here," Caleb said from the doorway. "Hey, Dana," he said as he approached the bed, a huge grin on his face. He grasped her hand briefly as he turned his attention back to the doctor. "We need to transfer Mrs. Nash to another facility before we do any more tests. The last thing we need is the press getting a hold of this."

The doctor shook his head, clearly agitated by this turn of events.

"We need to do more tests and figure out how she managed to heal the way she did. She's a medical miracle, and we owe it to the next patient to find out what happened here."

Caleb shook his head slowly. "I'm afraid that's not possible. The people who tried to kill Mrs. Nash won't hesitate to try again if they think she'll survive," he said, stretching the truth just a little. Her family knew it was unlikely the assassin would try again.

Jason glanced at Caleb as the reality of what had just happened began to sink in. He'd healed someone who really should not have survived her injuries. This sort of miracle was bound to attract attention, and the last thing they needed was the rogues figuring out the agency had someone with a skill previously thought impossible.

Jason stayed by the bed, his hand still smoothing over Dana's neck wanting to make sure the worst of her injuries were completely healed.

The doctor shook his head again, obviously conflicted between protecting his patient and identifying the source of her miracle cure.

Caleb placed a hand on the doctor's shoulder. "I'm sorry," he said sincerely, "but we need to get Mrs. Nash somewhere safe. Can I trust you to get the paperwork done to transfer her to another facility without letting anyone else know the extent of her recovery?"

The doctor nodded obviously resigned to the fact he would have to do whatever was necessary to keep his patient safe. Her miracle cure wouldn't be worth a damn if her assassin succeeded next time.

"Okay," he said, "but I wonder if I could ask a personal favor. If you find out how she recovered, could you please let me know? I've watched too many people die in the last few years, and it would be a great help to have the knowledge to be able to save a lot more."

Jason gave him a short nod, hoping Caleb or the doctors at the agency could help him come up with a plausible explanation that didn't include telekinesis and healing hands.

Chapter Nine

“Ah, hi,” the nurse said quietly into the phone when someone answered on the other end. “It’s Joyce, the nurse from the hospital. You wanted me to let you know when Dana Nash died.”

The voice on the other end grunted, making her nervous, but she forged on, focusing on all of the money she was earning with this single phone call.

“Well, she’s not dead yet. But they transferred her this morning to another hospital. But there was something strange going on because I called the other hospital and they knew nothing about her transfer. And the doctor wouldn’t let the nurses into the room, which is completely against protocol. And the family was acting strange, like they knew she was going to be okay or something, which is really weird because with injuries like that, that woman is never going to be okay,” she said in a rush, starting to wonder if she’d made a bad choice.

“Thank you, Joyce,” the voice said.

“When do I get my money?” she asked plaintively, but the line was already dead. Glancing around nervously, Joyce moved to resume her work duties, wondering if she’d ever get paid and cursing her own greedy stupidity.

Next time, she decided, she’d ask for the money up front.

* * * *

Theresa sensed Dana mentally shake her head in bewilderment. She wasn’t actually allowed to shake her head yet, and the neck brace made sure she didn’t forget, but she seemed to be having trouble absorbing all of the information Theresa and Alana were giving her.

Eleven days and several operations had passed her in a blur. She had only very vague half-memories of a sudden pain and then nothing. It must’ve been disconcerting to say the least, but judging by Dana’s reaction to the way Pete and Sandra and John had been hovering since she’d woken up, she didn’t believe a word of it. She’d eventually ordered them to give her some space, and they’d been quickly replaced by Alana and Rafe.

“*What happened to Lexie?*” she asked telepathically, her voice still sore from the breathing tube.

Alana looked really uncomfortable, shifting from foot to foot and glanced at Theresa beside her.

“*I know from the emotions swirling around all of you that something happened to Lexie, but nobody is talking. Every time I tried to raise the subject with Pete or Sandra or John, they gave me platitudes. Just tell me!*” Theresa felt Dana’s anger rising. Soon the whole room would be shaking.

“Lexie’s fine, Dana. You know that. You just saw her a few minutes ago,” Theresa butted in, trying to diffuse the tension.

“I know what I saw. What I want to know is what happened to her after I was shot!”

Sighing in resignation, Theresa told her how Lexie was stolen by the rogues and Jason had been lucky enough to be the doctor on duty when they delivered her to “The Professor”—the same man who had held Sandra captive over a year ago.

“Jason saved her, gave up everything he’d worked for, gave up his chance to save our sister Jenna just to get Lexie back to you,” Alana said quietly, her respect for the man obvious.

“Did they do any experiments on her?” Dana asked, even her telepathic voice sounding small and frightened.

“No, Dana. They didn’t get a chance,” Theresa assured her.

Closing her eyes, Theresa could sense Dana’s fight to hold back the tears that threatened. Lexie was safe thanks to the man who’d also managed to heal Dana’s severe injuries, injuries that she would not have recovered from otherwise.

“Where is he?” Dana asked, sounding angry. Alana bristled at her tone of “voice,” but Theresa knew Dana was angry at her own weak tears, not at the man who saved her.

“He’s right down the hall discussing with the other doctors what tests need to be done to make sure you’re healed enough to walk again,” Alana said, her tone defensive.

“I want to thank him,” Dana said, trying to catch Alana’s gaze.

“Oh. Um. Well, in that case I’ll send him in when he gets here,” Alana said hesitantly, squeezing Dana’s hand once more before she and Rafe left the room.

“Theresa, can you do me a favor?” Dana asked, sounding not at all like herself.

“Anything,” Theresa assured her readily.

“Can you make sure he knows...I mean...Hell, I’m no good with words and feelings and stuff...so can you make sure Jason knows that I’ll always be grateful for what he did for me and Lexie?”

Theresa nodded, smiling.

“Of course. What are sisters for anyway?” Theresa lowered her face to press a kiss against Dana’s cheek, knowing even as she did it her sister’s dislike for displays of affection. The only people Theresa had ever seen Dana comfortable with were anxiously waiting on the other side of the door.

“I’ll let them back in,” Theresa said with a smile. “They thought they’d lost you, so try to be patient while they recover, okay?”

Dana rolled her eyes, but her affection for the three was obvious. Theresa walked out the door, flattening herself against the wall as Dana's partners, sister-in-law, and daughter rushed back in. Theresa smiled when she saw Lexie happily blowing spit bubbles in John's arms.

* * * *

Hours later, Jason sat in a chair in Caleb and Ethan's office. The tests showed all of Dana's injuries had been healed, and she'd even taken a few steps. She was tired and weak, apparently Jason's gift couldn't heal that, but all of the damage caused by the bullets had been repaired.

He'd been stunned when Caleb offered him a job working for The Agency, but he was still trying to process what his skill actually meant. How could he hide a skill like this? Did he even want to? Was the world ready for a doctor who could heal with only his hands?

Caleb started to laugh, Ethan chuckling behind him.

"You're right. I don't think the world is ready. It sounds very much like faith healing, and I keep seeing long robes, loud music, and theatrical displays of supposed miracles," Ethan said, smiling.

"The other thing is that we don't yet know what it costs you," Caleb said quietly.

"Costs?" Jason asked, a little confused.

"We know nothing about this type of skill. Is it based on telekinesis? Can you heal using this gift because you're a doctor, or is that just a lucky coincidence? Does it somehow drain you? Take something essential from you each time that you do this? Does it work for everyone or just people you are close to? Is it based on anger, like most telekinesis, or on something else?"

Jason shook his head as Caleb's concerns swirled in his mind, understanding now why they'd been so anxious to move Dana before her miraculous recovery became public knowledge.

"Go home. Give it some thought, but try to keep a low profile until we can get a better idea of what's happening here, okay?" Caleb said.

Jason nodded slowly, relieved at the thought of returning to Cody and Bec's apartment while he sorted a few things out.

* * * *

Jason walked into the apartment for the first time without crutches. It had taken him several hours of wondering before he'd finally limped to the medical ward at The Agency and cut the plaster off his ankle. He'd spent almost ten more minutes looking at the pale limb, wondering if he was able to heal himself before he tried it.

He remembered the X-ray they'd done in the hospital that first night and then tried to visualize how much healing would have happened in eleven days. Then he imagined the bones knitting together just as they would naturally over the six to eight weeks that

he should wear a cast. He'd been almost stunned when it worked.

His leg still felt weak, the muscles atrophied from disuse, so he'd swapped his crutches for a simple walking stick and headed home.

Home. This was where he felt at home. Here with Bec and Cody he felt like he belonged, like they were a family. He smiled when Bec rushed over to hug him in welcome. He pulled her into his arms, loving the feel of her against his heart.

Cody walked over, clapping him on the shoulder. "Well, I see you finally decided to heal your own injury. I can't imagine why you didn't do that first."

Jason grinned, thinking the same thing. His only possible explanation was he'd thought Dana needed his help first. What if his skill had run out because he healed himself before her and then didn't have enough left to heal Dana properly? Cody nodded as if he heard every thought in Jason's head, which he probably did. The connection between the three of them had grown much stronger in the past few days, and Jason had noticed his own telepathic control increasing greatly.

"Well, you still look exhausted," Cody joked. "Why don't you two go to bed while I get some food organized?" Jason eyed him speculatively, realizing Cody was stepping back to allow him and Bec some time alone.

"One thing first, though," Jason said, heading into the living room. "Sit," he said, pointing Cody to the chair beside him. Cody hesitated, trying to make jokes.

"Hey, man." He held his hands up in surrender. "You're dating her, not me, remember?"

Jason grinned at him.

"Do you want your leg healed or not?" he asked, raising an eyebrow at the other man's obvious discomfort.

"It's okay, really," Cody said, macho bravado rolling off him in waves.

Bec wrapped her arms around Cody from behind, pushing him toward the armchair.

"Sit, behave," she said, kissing him affectionately as she pulled his track pants down and pushed him into the chair.

He sat there in his boxer shorts, trying not to show his embarrassment. He and Jason saw each other naked when they made love to Bec together, but Jason realized, for Cody at least, this was different.

"Relax, Cody," Jason said quietly. "I'm still a doctor."

Calming slightly, Cody let Jason do his thing, allowing him to rub his thumb slowly against the puckered scar on his thigh. Jason was a little surprised to realize he could feel it as Cody's scar began to tingle, the damaged flesh healing as he watched, the stiff muscle relaxing as the scar faded. He also felt Cody's relief to not be in pain anymore. Obviously, he'd been living with it for so long he hadn't even realized how bad it had gotten until it was gone.

“Okay, shoulder now,” Jason said as Bec helped Cody lift his shirt over his arms. Cody flinched at Jason’s first touch.

“Bec, maybe you could distract him,” Jason suggested, not trying to hide the amusement in his voice.

“Absolutely,” Bec replied, climbing onto Cody’s lap and kissing him with great enthusiasm.

Jason chuckled as he admonished them both to hold still. Cody’s shoulder was a mess, and Jason wondered just how much pain the guy had been carrying. It was amazing that Bec and Cody had managed to recover as much as they did, but even more amazing that they’d both wanted to get back in to field work where injuries like this had occurred.

Jason noticed another bullet injury lower down Cody’s arm and moved his hand to heal the ugly welt. Cody broke the kiss with Bec, quickly twisting away.

“Not that one,” he said quickly, winking as he explained. “Chicks dig scars.”

Bec swatted him playfully, but Jason noticed the expression on Cody’s face and wondered if there was more to it than that.

Sliding off the sofa with Bec still wrapped around him, Cody took a step toward the bedroom before looking over his shoulder.

“You coming or what?” he asked Jason.

Nodding happily, Jason followed them into Bec’s room.

Chapter Ten

Together Bec's men removed her clothes and quickly stripped themselves to join her on the bed. Jason claimed her mouth as Cody sucked a breast into his, flicking her nipple with the tip of his tongue just the way she liked it. She writhed under their attentions, her legs rubbing together to ease the ache they created. Two hands traveled down her body, smoothing over her softly rounded abdomen and seeking the folds of her pussy.

One hand found her clit, circling it gently, slowly, and the other hand sank lower, a blunt finger penetrating her body. She lifted off the bed, the twin sensations flooding her body with heat. Cody whispered in her ear, "Ride him, baby," as he helped her crawl onto Jason's big body. He turned to get condoms, but Bec held him back.

"It's okay," she said. "I have an IUD, and this is the first relationship for any of us in at least a year, maybe more. We've all been tested several times since then."

He looked to Jason for confirmation, and he nodded.

"I want to feel you, skin to skin, no barriers. Please," Bec asked, nearly breathless with wanting them both in her body.

Cody nodded as he helped her into position again. Jason shuffled down the bed so his knees bent and his feet stood on the floor. Moving to the foot of the bed, Cody held Bec's hips as Jason slid into her welcoming pussy. All three groaned at the emotions swirling around them. Cody lifted her and pushed her again onto Jason's cock, setting the rhythm while the other two were held helpless in their arousal.

Pushing Bec forward, he let Jason take over the rhythm as he played with her ass cheeks, molding and kneading the soft flesh, separating it to reveal her dark pink hole. Reaching into the drawer beside the bed, Cody pulled out a tube of lubricant. He spread it over his fingers and then ran them down the crease of her ass, holding her still as she tried to flinch away.

"Relax, baby, we're going to take good care of you," Jason said as he pulled her forward, holding her still in his arms.

Cody pressed his finger against her back hole, pushing deeper as she relaxed. Slowly he worked his finger in and out of her ass, adding another as she moaned her excitement. By the time he inserted a third finger, she was trembling with need and begging with her mouth and her body for their total possession.

Bending his knees, Cody pressed his cock into her ass, slowly working his way all the way in until his groin pressed firmly against her ass cheeks. She moaned at the sensation of being completely filled as they both held still in her body. She sensed deep feelings of satisfaction from both her men, and it seemed obvious that the three of them belonged together.

Slowly they began to move inside her, the men holding her still as they thrust into

and pulled out of her tight body together. Bec's mind began to splinter, fracturing into a million tiny pinpoints of light, her veins flooding with liquid fire, her breath catching as she moaned her impending release.

Jason and Cody moved faster, slamming harder into her, finesse forgotten as they raced to orgasm, her body pulsing, sucking around their cocks. Her orgasm slammed into her, the incredible sensations stealing her breath, shaking her mind.

With a hoarse shout Cody exploded, pulsing in her ass, pushing his seed deep into her body. Jason soon followed, his entire body tightening as he spurted his cum into her welcoming depths.

Cody collapsed onto Bec's back, sandwiching her between the two men, leaving her amazed by the feeling of being safe and loved at the same time that she couldn't breathe. Cody lifted his weight off her quickly, pulling her to him for a brief hug, his cock still pulsing in her ass.

"I love you," he said, kissing her neck, her ear, her throat.

"I love you, too," she mumbled between kisses.

* * * *

Jason tried to look away, suddenly feeling like he shouldn't be here despite the fact that he was buried balls-deep in her pussy. Two faces watched him, waiting for him to say something. When he didn't, Bec leaned forward, framing his face with her hands.

"I love you, too," she said, looking him straight in the eye.

Jason looked over her shoulder, trying to gauge Cody's reaction, a little bewildered when he saw Cody's encouraging smile. Jason smiled back.

"I love you, Bec. I have since the moment you met me in the woods wearing those goggles." He chuckled, remembering the bizarre appearance of her wearing night vision glasses. She swatted him playfully and then fell forward to kiss him soundly.

"Shower time," Cody said as he pulled his softening cock out of her ass and lifted her off Jason. Gathering her into his arms, he laughed as he left the room. "Your turn to cook." He lifted Bec over his shoulder as a broad grin spread across his face.

Jason levered himself off the bed, searching for his crutches before remembering he didn't need them anymore. He smiled as he went into the kitchen, a feeling of contentment settling in his heart.

* * * *

A few weeks later Jason wandered through the apartment, bored and restless. Cody and Bec had traveled to The Agency's head office for their final physical exam before official reinstatement to active duty. Jason knew they'd pass. Their injuries were fully healed, and they'd both worked hard to rebuild the muscles and get back to full strength. Now, they enjoyed the type of fitness they'd had before being shot over a year ago.

He'd spent the morning doing housework, catching up on all the things they'd set

aside while they'd spent hours and hours making love together. Jason had never expected to share a woman he loved with another man, but somehow with Cody, it seemed natural, just right, in a weird sort of way. He'd even discovered he possessed a few voyeuristic tendencies he'd never realized. He'd been amazed at how much he enjoyed watching Bec as Cody brought her to orgasm, her mind and her body completely open to them both.

He sat on the sofa as he contemplated the future. Once Cody and Bec were back on active duty, chances were they would be on assignment quite a lot, and he'd be left behind. The Agency had offered him a position on their medical staff, not needing to point out the advantage of having a doctor on staff who could heal bullet wounds with only his hands, but that was more than a two-hour drive from here, and he was sure the four hour commute would get very old, very quickly.

He'd even considered moving closer since Cody and Bec wouldn't be at the apartment a lot of the time, but still it didn't feel right. He wanted to be here with them, but he also didn't want to hold them back from doing the thing they loved. They'd both worked really hard to get back on to active duty, and he wouldn't dream of standing in their way.

Jason lifted himself off the sofa, annoyed at his thoughts, annoyed at his situation, and somehow annoyed at everything, including the fact that all of the housework was done so he had nothing else to distract him. He was considering washing the windows in the living room again when the doorbell rang.

At first pleased by the distraction, Jason moved quickly to the door, realizing at the last moment that he couldn't sense who was on the other side. Cautiously he used the spy hole to see who it was.

Standing on the other side of the door was a woman who looked very much like Alana. She had the same warm brown hair and caramel eyes as his sisters, but there was something harder about her, something dangerous. He opened his senses, realizing that even when he concentrated specifically on the woman he could see, he couldn't sense her presence at all. She was essentially invisible to his extra-sensory skills.

Puzzled, he hesitated until she called through the door.

"Hurry up, Jason. I need your help."

Swallowing his doubts, Jason unlocked the door and opened it a crack. He quickly pulled it wider when he realized she held her hand tightly over a wound in her leg, blood seeping between her fingers. The doctor in him overruled his caution, and he rushed to help her, grabbing her arm and leading her into the kitchen. He was tempted to use his skill to heal the wound, but something held him back, something felt off, and until he knew for sure who this woman was and what her intentions were, he wasn't going to expose his ability. He helped her onto the low bench, turning to grab his doctor's bag from his room. Right now, he felt very grateful that Alana had organized the kit through The Agency and had sent it to him as a welcome-home present.

He pulled on a pair of plastic gloves, snagged a suture kit, grabbed a hand full of surgical gauze, and pressed it tightly against the wound as he tried to stem the bleeding.

“Looks like you’ll need a few stitches. Are you allergic to anything?” he asked as he carefully pulled back the gauze, watching as blood slowly seeped from the wound. She shook her head, so he grabbed the kit, unrolled the absorbent pad onto the counter, and reached for the syringe full of local anesthetic. Pinching the wound together with his fingers, he pressed the needle into her flesh.

“Ow,” she complained. “You’d think there’d be a less painful way to do this.”

Jason avoided eye contact, concentrating on threading the synthetic suture fiber through the needle. He poked her damaged flesh gently, asking her aloud if the anesthetic was working yet.

She rolled her eyes, reminding him of Dana, so he began stitching the flesh together, working carefully to minimize the scar. When he was done, he cleaned up, placing all of the contaminants in a special container for later disposal. He cut away the damaged material of the woman’s jeans and threw the ruined denim in the container also. He then set about cleaning away the blood and making sure she didn’t have any more wounds. Satisfied, he covered the stitches with a sterile dressing.

Finished, Jason stood back, crossing his arms as he took in the woman sitting in front of him.

“Who are you?” he asked, trying to sound stern.

“Jason? God, you don’t recognize me. How the fuck is that possible? You spent three years working undercover looking for me and you didn’t even know what I looked like,” she said incredulously. “How in hell did you expect to rescue me if you didn’t know what I looked like?”

“Jenna?” he asked, trying for confused but sounding pissed instead. He was trying to hold it together here. Something wasn’t right, and every instinct screamed at him to move cautiously.

“Hallelujah,” she said, rolling her eyes in disgust.

“How did you find me?” he asked, watching her carefully, trying to discern if she lied when she answered him. She was annoyingly vague.

“Yeah, well, you learn a thing or two about tracking when you’ve lived a life like mine,” she said, waving her hand dismissively.

“What sort of life would that be, Jenna?” he asked, his irritation leaking through. He looked at the clock, wishing he had some idea when to expect Cody and Bec home. He had the awful thought that he might need their help before this was over.

“Oh, you know, the usual rogue propaganda. We’re the future of the world, superior beings blah, blah, blah.” she said as she slid off the bench and started wandering around the room.

“How did you escape?”

“Ahh, that was the fun part,” she said, smiling. “Turns out I can bend people to my will. You know, plant a suggestion for them to forget to lock that door so I can walk out without a fuss.”

“How did you cut your leg?” he asked, trying to sound casual

“Oh, geez, man, aren’t you taking this big brother shit a little too far? I’m here, I escaped the clutches of the evil bad guys, and I cut myself going over the fence. No biggie,” she dismissed.

Jason tried not to give away what he knew. Her wound had been straight, like a knife cut. If she’d hurt herself going over a fence, the cut would likely have been more ragged, less neat. He watched her as she roamed around the kitchen opening and closing cupboards like she belonged there.

“Got anything to eat? All this escaping stuff makes a girl hungry.”

Jason nodded, getting to his feet and then opening the fridge to pull out the makings for sandwiches. He watched her continue to prowl around the area as he tried to gauge her true intentions.

“I heard about Dana,” she said, startling him. “I heard she’s going to make a full recovery.”

“Where did you hear that?” Jason asked her, his heart pounding in his throat.

“Oh, around,” she said, again with that dismissive attitude. “What I can’t figure out is how she managed to recover at all from an attack that should’ve killed her outright. I mean seven bullets should be able to take down one little girl even if she is a badass with telekinesis.”

Jason found himself edging toward the doorway, her words sending slivers of ice through his veins. Jenna was fishing for information, trying to figure out how Dana recovered, which meant she was probably here working for the rogues.

“Where are you going?” she asked, her hand lifted in a signal for him to stop. His feet stilled, unable to move from their present spot, glued to the floor by her telekinetic abilities. She stalked over to him and slapped him hard across the face.

“You were supposed to be one of us,” she said sweetly, her voice at complete odds with her actions. “You were the professor’s special assistant. You were supposed to help him create the next evolution of humanity, although,” she said, placing a finger on her chin as if thinking aloud, “if he’d realized you and I were related he might’ve done things differently. I mean, after all, you’re as special as me, right?”

Chapter Eleven

Jason shook his head in denial.

"That's right," Jenna said still in that soft voice. "You aren't quite as special as me, are you? Poor baby has no idea how to use his skills. Can't even talk telepathically," she sneered. He kept his mouth shut, his mind racing as he tried to think of a way out of this.

"Now all you have to do is tell me how Dana made a miraculous recovery and I'll leave you alone. Very simple really, you give me what I want, and I'll let you stay alive," she said, pulling a large knife from her boot. It was smeared in blood, and Jason could only think that she'd cut herself with it before she'd knocked on his door. His blood ran cold again as he contemplated the type of fanaticism necessary to inflict such a deep wound on herself.

"Jason? What's wrong? We're downstairs, but we can feel your fear from here."

Jason almost sagged with relief at the sound of Cody's voice in his head.

"Jenna is here. She's working for the rogues, trying to find out how Dana survived," he sent silently, grateful for all the practice he'd had in recent weeks.

"We'll be there in a moment. Stay calm and follow our lead."

Jason almost nodded his agreement, catching himself at the last moment as Jenna eyed him thoughtfully.

"So what's it going to be, big brother? You going to come clean, or do I have to mess up that pretty face with my good friend here?" She waved the knife in his line of vision, very thoroughly making her point.

He heard the front door open. Cody and Bec entered the apartment, talking casually as if nothing was wrong.

"Yo, Jase," Cody called in his best California dude impression. "Where you at? We got exciting news."

Jenna put the knife away, raising a finger to her lips for him to keep quiet. "We're in here," she called brightly.

"We who?" Cody said as he entered the room, a huge smile on his face. "Hey, Bec, looks like we've got a visitor." He casually stepped out of her way as Bec loosed a volley of darts at the woman on the other side of the room.

One dart hit Jenna in the chest, but she managed to stop the other two with her telekinesis, accidentally releasing Jason's feet in the commotion. Her legs wobbled, but she refused to go down, turning quickly as she ran into the living room. The huge glass window exploded outward as Jenna ran full pelt toward it, leaping through the hole and falling to the ground. She seemed to use her telekinesis to slow her drop and landed on wobbly legs two stories down. She turned a mocking smile up to Jason,

Cody, and Bec, now standing in the window. She blew them a kiss as she casually rounded the corner and made her escape.

* * * *

Hours later Bec, Cody, and Jason flopped onto the couch, exhausted. The window had been repaired and the place cleaned up. Caleb offered to send over some help but had been happy for Cody and Bec to file an official report in the morning. The one thing he insisted on was moving them to a safe house tomorrow. For tonight, agents, all hidden in plain sight, hoping to apprehend Jenna or one of her “friends,” surrounded them.

“Well, I have to say life around you is certainly interesting,” Cody said with a big grin on his face. “Bec and I haven’t had this sort of fun in over a year.”

Jason grinned back, grateful to the other man for breaking the tension. He’d been tied up in knots all afternoon, worrying that just by being here he endangered them both. Intellectually he knew they were more than capable of protecting themselves and him also, they’d proven that this afternoon, but somehow it didn’t alleviate the guilt he felt.

“Come on,” Cody said, holding a hand out to Bec. “Let’s put some dinner on, and then we can go pack our stuff for the big move tomorrow.”

Jason followed them into the kitchen, noticing how Cody guided Bec onto the stool by the bench, effectively relegating her to the cheer squad. Jason grinned again, remembering just how awful Bec’s cooking could get.

Cody dove into the refrigerator, throwing the vegetables for a tossed salad over his shoulder, expecting Jason to catch them. Taking the hint, Jason moved to the chopping board and began slicing, peeling, and dicing.

“So you haven’t told me how it went today,” Jason said, referring to the physical they’d attended this morning. He tried to act casual while he waited for their answers, suddenly unsure he wanted to know. Active duty meant he’d see far less of them both, and he wasn’t sure he was ready for that just yet.

“Oh, we passed,” Bec said, filching a piece of tomato from the chopping board.

“Well, that’s...um...good,” Jason said, surprised at how disappointed he felt and really annoyed at how selfish that made him sound. “When do you go back to field work?” He continued cutting vegetables, despite the film of tears messing with his vision. God, he was losing it here.

The knife sliced through his finger, barely noticed until he looked down to see the blood welling from the neat little wound.

“Damn,” he swore as he stuck his finger into his mouth.

Bec slid off her stool and walked over to him. “Show me,” she demanded.

She grabbed his hand, easing his finger out of his mouth and pulling it toward her for a closer look. At first, the cut was obvious, and then the blood welled again,

obscuring the little nick. Smiling like she knew something he didn't, she rubbed her thumb against the side of his finger just below the cut. Jason watched, stunned, as the wound closed.

"What...?" he began to say but faltered, unsure where to start.

Cody stood beside them, laughing at the look on Jason's face.

"That's what we were going to tell you before Jenna so rudely interrupted our day," Bec said happily.

"We're not going back to field work," Cody said happily. "We've been offered positions in the medical research division, and we're both looking forward to developing our new skills."

Shaking his head, Jason reached for the nearest stool, sitting heavily.

"How?" he asked, still confused as hell. "How do you have the skill to heal?"

"Well, that's just it," Bec said, walking over to stand between his knees. "We don't, not really." He looked down at his healed finger, clearly missing something important in this conversation.

Cody took pity on him, trying to explain more fully.

"Basically we have the skill to heal," Cody said.

"Caleb thinks we got that from you. Something about the partners of your siblings getting a skill boost," Bec explained.

"But," Cody continued, glaring comically at Bec as she tried to interrupt again, "but we don't have the medical knowledge you do, so we can only heal superficial stuff like cuts and bruises. Caleb thinks if we had more medical training we could develop our skills into something more useful, and well, after twelve months of intensive physical therapy, I admit to being curious about how the body heals. I'm thinking of studying sports medicine."

Jason's gaze swung between the two of them. He felt ridiculously excited by this new development.

"So no more fieldwork?" he asked, trying and failing to hide how happy the news made him.

They both nodded.

"No more getting shot at?" he asked again.

Bec nodded, but Cody grinned and said, "Well, no more chance of getting shot than you do. We'll still be agency operatives, but most of our work will be done at head office, not in the field."

Jason whooped in delight, pulling Bec against him and spinning her in circles. When he caught his breath again he kissed her tenderly, his heart and soul surely in his eyes. Bec reached up a hand, touching his face briefly before squirming out of his hold to stand back and pin him with her stare.

“Caleb said they offered you a position as well, but you didn’t seem to want it. Want to explain that?”

Jason grinned. “Simple. I didn’t want a job that would take me so far away from you both, but since you’ll be there as well, I guess I better let Caleb know that I want it before he withdraws the offer.”

Bec threw herself into his arms again, her joy evident. Glancing over her shoulder, he watched Cody as he smiled at them both, seeming very happy with his decision.

Epilogue

Jason shook his head in amazement. Cody and Bec had taken to medicine like ducks to water. They'd only been studying for six months, but already they understood more than he did in his first two years at medical school. They'd both shrugged when he'd asked them how they knew so much so fast, explaining casually they'd spent a fair amount of time studying independently when they'd been recovering from their injuries.

Bec walked into the room, subconsciously rubbing her belly. She barely showed, but she was going to give away the secret long before they were ready to tell. She caught his eye, quickly moved into his arms, and kissed him softly.

He placed a hand over the soft swell of her stomach, his heart melting at the thought of a baby of their own. Technically, it was either him or Cody who was going to be a father, but they'd long since worked through their issues and had settled into a comfortable family life. And, since none of them was interested in knowing who the biological daddy was, all three were deliriously happy.

Jason shook his head in amazement. It was as if his life hadn't started until he'd met them, and now he couldn't imagine a future without either of them. Cody had grown to be a closer friend than any he'd ever known, and the fact that they both loved the same woman seemed to strengthen the bond, not weaken it.

"Time to hide," Cody said, laughing as he walked in the room. Right behind him was a furious Caleb, the emotions emanating off him strong enough even for a non-empath to discern. Ethan followed, the huge man carrying his wife in his arms. Theresa was smiling but obviously in pain, and both Jason and Bec moved toward the woman.

Smiling at his newest patient, Jason pointed to the vacant clinic bed, and Ethan dropped her onto it, his own anger palpable.

Theresa giggled, a sound neither Cody nor Jason had ever heard from the woman.

"What can I do for you today, sis?" Jason asked Theresa.

She laughed again as she pointed to her foot, the swelling and bruising increasing as he watched. He peered more closely at the injury, realizing with his extra-sensory ability that her foot was badly sprained but not broken. He moved his hand over the swollen ankle, his mind already imagining what needed to be done to fix it.

"Not so fast," Ethan said gruffly. Startled, every eye in the room turned to the big man. "Maybe we should let it heal naturally. Maybe you'll be less inclined to try stupid stunts next time." Turning to Cody, he growled. "It's all your fault, you know."

Bewildered by the sudden attack, Jason turned to Theresa for an explanation.

She dismissed Ethan's concern with a flip of her hand.

"Don't mind him, he's just pissed that I'm trying to fly."

"You're what?" Jason, Cody, and Bec all asked in unison.

Caleb walked forward to pull his wife into his arms.

"In your report about Jenna, you mentioned how she used her telekinesis to control her fall from the window. Well this one," he said, squeezing Theresa tighter, "has decided that anything Jenna can do, she can do better, hence the trying to fly part."

"Well, by the looks of this ankle, I'd say you need more practice on the landing part," Cody quipped as he efficiently healed the damage.

Jason tried to hide the sense of failure Jenna's name evoked. It still bothered him that he hadn't been able to rescue his sister, but considering how dangerous she was, it didn't seem possible that they'd ever be able to extract her from the rogues' control.

Theresa smiled at him, perhaps sensing his thoughts, but her head suddenly whipped around to pin Bec with her stare. Her suspicions were confirmed a moment later when Bec's hand fluttered over her belly.

"Congratulations," Theresa said quietly, moving over to pull Bec into a brief hug.

"Hey," Theresa groused as Ethan lifted her into his arms.

"I think I just had an idea on how to keep our lady on the ground." Ethan grinned wickedly. Theresa laughed, sounding delighted, as he carried her out the door, Caleb close on their heels.

Cody and Jason pulled Bec between them, hands skimming the slight swell of their child. "I love you," she said to them both. Even when he'd been undercover trying to rescue his sisters, Jason had never even hoped that one day he'd be this happy. He grinned at Cody as the man glanced at his watch, lifted their wife in his arms, and headed to the exit.

"Ready to go home?" he asked Jason as he turned at the doorway.

Jason nodded. A home. That's what he'd found with Cody and Bec, and he vowed to never forget how incredible it felt to belong.

He just hoped that one day his sister, Jenna, would find the same.

THE END

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Abby Blake prefers to read or write romance over just about everything else—except maybe chocolate. Most days she can be found hurrying to do what needs to be done so that she can curl up with her laptop and her latest bunch of heroes.

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