

Tell Me Something Good



Raven Knight

Red Rose™ Publishing

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Chapter One

When Lindsey Benton burst into her fiancé's bedroom one sweltering July afternoon she expected to catch him cheating on her. But when she skidded to a halt in his silent bedroom, she found that he would never cheat on anyone again.

Colin was alone and dead, his naked body lying obscenely on top of the sheets, a bloody knife in his chest, the rumpled covers on the floor. She took one look at his wide eternally unblinking eyes and felt her mind shut down. Her ex-lover stared at nothing and blood trickled from the side of his parted lips.

A horrified scream ripped from her throat as she stood frozen. And then hesitant steps took her to his bedside. Maybe there was a spark of life left, she had to check. She touched him recoiling when her fingertips touched the marble coldness of his flesh and was shocked when her fingers wrapped around the knife.

You can't mess with a crime scene, stupid! She wiped the blood on her clothes, gagging, almost vomiting, then screaming again. Her gaze landed on the nightstand phone. "9-1-1!" she said, whimpering, and lifted it up, finding the line as dead as Colin.

A familiar voice filled her head, that of her deceased mother. She always heard her voice during trying times so it didn't surprise her. "*Keep your head, darling. Keep your head.*"

"Right," Lindsey muttered to herself dropping the phone, and backing up to the window. Shaking, she threw open the sash praying for help. Relief surged through her when she saw an elderly man cutting his hedges at the house next door.

"Hey you. Call for help!" she shouted, her voice shaking dangerously. "Colin Avery was murdered!"

The man looked up at her as if she were crazy and didn't move.

"He's dead! Colin Avery is dead! Get help! Someone cut the phone cord here!"

The neighbor let out a gasp and dropped his hedge cutters, taking a panicked step back. "You killed him?" Then, with venom that shocked her, "*You blacks are always causing trouble and I don't care how rich your father is!*"

"I...what?" Before she could explain he spun and headed quickly toward his house. Well, he could find out what happened later. Stupid bigot, but Colin had warned her about his neighbor...she choked up a sob. Colin...dead. Thank god the neighbor had at least acted. Tears coursed down her cheeks when she glanced

back toward the bed. Colin hadn't been the man she'd thought he was, having a buxom blond on the side, but it hurt her that this had happened to him.

Lindsey heard the front door shove open and froze as her heart slammed against her chest. What if it was the killer and not the cops? Gulping in air, she jumped into martial arts position as a terrifyingly tall, tanned shirtless young man with wide shoulders and six pack abs slammed into the room. His short brown hair was sweaty and sticking up, but his dark eyes were round but almost calm. Cop or killer, the smart money said killer.

Stunned by his powerful presence she tried to remember the deadly blow her martial arts teacher had shown her. "Stay back!" she cried out. She blinked back tears and crouched into attack position. "I'm a black belt!" she lied, close to passing out. He was half dressed, and his jeans hugged his athletic lower body, giving her a glimpse of his well-endowed masculinity. She couldn't miss the fact that his cock was huge behind his jeans and hated that her shocked mind had gone there. What a warped thing to take in at a time like this, she thought, shaking inside, trying to hide it. "Th-the cops are coming."

"I know. I'm the cops. Detective Cruz here. Let's go out in the hallway, please."

She shook her head. What did he think she was, stupid?

She only had time to register his eyes narrowing before he jumped for her. Everything happened quickly after that. She found herself lying on her back with him on top of her, his heavy body pressing her into the carpet. The crazy thing was that he felt good, even comforting, lying atop her, his hot breath warming her face, his cock pressing against her sex. It would have been funny if she hadn't been so scared. She tried to shove him off of her as she screamed, but he rolled off on his own, then scooped her easily into his arms and carried her flailing body into the hallway. "Cripes, lady, stop it!" he snapped as she got several good punches and kicks in.

Once in the hallway, she could hear the sirens in the distance. "Put me down, you asshole!" She clobbered him on top of the head, and he cringed, but didn't lessen his hold on her. "The police are coming! They're going to get you now!" She continued elbowing and kicking him.

"Wrong," he said, hanging onto her even as she beat on him. "Stop that!" he shouted and, frightened, she did. She found him staring down at her with shimmering dark eyes so intense that they sent a shiver straight through her. "It's you they're going to get, fool. Did you do it?"

She furrowed her brow, thought about what he'd said, then suddenly gaped at him. "Did I—of course not."

“You were caught in the room with the victim. I don’t need to guess whose DNA is on that knife. Neighbor calls me and says you told him the man was murdered and to call for help. Only it’s too late for help, isn’t it?”

She held her breath, shocked. God help her, her mind had been so unclear that it hadn’t occurred to her that she looked guilty. And she was starting to believe that the handsome man who held her—and in such a strong, protective way—was a cop. “I-I-I couldn’t kill anyone.” Someone else was speaking. No, it was her. She started sobbing, but, to her surprise and maybe imagination, he started rocking her in an almost soothing way.

“Calm down lady. I don’t believe you did this,” he said, in a low, silky, almost seductive voice. “I—sort of have a sixth sense. What’s your name?”

“Lindsey Benton.” She rested her head on his shoulder, not sure why she was finding any comfort in the arms of the enemy, in spite of his deceptive words. But she did feel safe in his strong arms, leaning into his hard, hot body—as crazy as it seemed even to her.

“So you’re the daughter of the billionaire who owns Benton Discount stores. Big scandal revolving around you in New York, babe. You were on trial.”

She shut her eyes, thinking of her last legal mess. “I—I was acquitted.”

“But not everyone believed you were innocent, including your daddy, right?”

Why shouldn't he know her scandal ridden history the whole world did thanks to the tabloid press. She could only nod, as the room started spinning. "H-he wanted me tucked away here. I—I only agreed to come to Flowers, Illinois learn how to run a store. "It was so inappropriate to babble, but it temporarily took her mind off her deep troubles. And she trusted this Detective Cruz...swore his touch was making her pussy and ass tingle, but that was just plain nuts. She continued to talk, trying to stop the sizzling sensations that were coursing through her breasts to her stiff nipples. "After I get enough experience running this Benton store—I can open my own coffee house and bookstore—and leave my bastard father's clutches forever." She felt herself shaking in his arms.

He patted her and she wondered, through her fog, if she was actually trying to soothe her. "Your ex-boyfriend was convicted of drug theft from the pharmacy of a Benton Discount Store in New York. You'd gotten him the manager's job there. I remember it well—I followed that case."

She nodded, the room spinning faster as he brought back the humiliation.

"You sure know how to pick them," the man said under his breath. "Colin Avery was known for writing bad checks. Forged the checks of some rich ladies."

She looked up at his hardened face, uncomprehending. "He-he did?"

"Yep. He had a record."

God she felt like such a fool. “So that’s why he pretended to be so in love with me.” Tears overflowed as she thought of him dead. “Yes, he was the latest fraud to woo me because of the money he thinks I’ll inherit.” She laughed through her tears.

“This looks bad for you, darling.”

She lifted her gaze and stared straight at him, “I know, but I didn’t do it. I’m guilty of panicking, that’s all.”

“Things aren’t always what they appear to be,” he said, again in an almost soothing voice. She caught her breath, daring to feel hopeful. *And inappropriately horny.* “Let me handle this and keep quiet. The gang’s all here.”

She hadn’t even noticed that several red lights were circling around the room. She’d been so completely terrified, and so focused on this man who was actually being pretty nice to her, all things considered.

Before she could blink, a deluge of blue-clad bodies burst through the doorway, flooding the entire house. The head honcho was obvious both because he wore a suit and was barking orders. He was a good looking African-American man, young, bald-headed, buff, take charge. The man sauntered up to them and she heard her knight in shining armor calling him “Chambers.” They were talking about what had happened and the Chambers man seemed to be staring at her with

disdain. Finally, he said, “Off to see the body,” and Chambers seemed to disappear into thin air. She again buried her face into Cruz’s soothing shoulder.

“This looks bad, me holding you,” the sexy detective whispered in her ear, his warm breath tickling her in a pleasant way. “I have to put you down.”

Even with the warning, when he set her on her feet it surprised her. She could barely stand with her jelly-like knees and the room twirling around her. As she heard a young police officer shout at her, “You did it, bitch! You killed him!” she grabbed for Cruz, her nails scraping his bare chest. Before she passed out, she felt his strong hands catching her under her arms. “Shit,” she heard him mumbling.

In what was her recurring dream, she felt herself floating from the earth above and beyond the clouds into a beautiful pure blue realm of nothing but angels. At least, she thought they were angels. The main angel who greeted her and spoke to her was her mother and she descended down from a higher place to greet her once again. Her mother’s patient face smiled down at her, a shimmering gold surrounding her angelic form, her long dark hair flowing, her olive skin shimmering, her soft coffee colored gaze radiating love. Although Lindsey didn’t recall much about her mother she was a constant in her dreams. “Honey,” her mother’s gentle voice told her, “I know this is a hard time for you, but you have nothing to fear since you finally found *him*.”

“F-found Colin? Colin’s dead?” She felt confused as she floated, bobbing up and down in the air. A shiver ran through her. Although she was aware she was dreaming, it was one of those dreams that felt real. “Mother...”

“No, not Colin. You will deal with that later.” Her words had been impatient. “You never see the messages I try to send; the spiritual knowledge I attempt to bestow on you and I blame your father for your stubborn thinking...”

“Please.” She felt herself wincing. “Please don’t bring up dear old dad. What are you trying to tell me and I’ll listen this time.” May as well. It was better than waking up.

She paused and gave her an imploring look, yellow lights beaming from her eyes. “The man who holds you in his arms is your soulmate. I don’t know how to put it any other way.”

Lindsey laughed. “Mother, there is no such thing.”

“Bullshit, as your father would say. There most certainly is and he is yours!” Her mother’s otherworldly face frowned for a moment then she said, in a reasoning voice, “You know, your sexy detective’s mother has passed over here and we’ve spoken to one another...spirit to spirit...we know about your Fates. The lovely man who cradles you also hears his mother from this place we reside in, but he doesn’t try to pretend she’s just a hallucination...or a dream.” Her face changed and looked unhappy again. “Lindsey, stop shutting me out! Oh, hell, I see I’ll have to show you

what I mean because you're tuning me out again, just like you did when you were four years old." The voice was fading. "I need to show you something..."

Her mother's face faded and Lindsey cried out, a wave of terror overtaking her. She was by herself floating in the blue void. "No!" she cried out. "I know this is a dream, but I don't want to be alone even now.""

"You aren't," a male voice assured her.

She was in *his* arms again, but in this mysterious place above the clouds. God, he was beautiful, tanned skin and full lips, against the light blue background. "Why are *you* in this dream?" she asked, puzzled. Not that she was complaining...

He smiled, flashing sexy dimples and strong white teeth. He never spoke, but ran his hand across her body, and, like magic, her clothes just slid off of her body.

"Hey!" she said, lifting a hand to slap him, but he chuckled in such an endearing and sexy way, then fingered her pussy, wiggling her clit.

Lindsey gasped and shuddered, feeling the pleasure of passion at his clever ministrations. She had a sudden urge to touch him too, forgetting that this was just her imagination. Reaching down, expecting to feel his crotch behind his pants, she was shocked to touch his hard, hot cock in the flesh.

“You made me so hot, my clothes melted away,” he said, in a deep, echoing voice, then he laughed and she quivered with delicious tremors, no longer caring that this wasn’t real. As he played with her clit again, she jacked him off.

The hot detective stuck his fingers up her flaming pussy and bent them, hitting her g-spot and she arched and came. When her body finally quieted, she lifted her hand and found it full of delicious, thick cum. Meeting his heated eyes, she sucked her fingers and tasted his salty juice.

She was just about to ask him his first name when he suddenly disappeared and she was alone again, floating in the air. “Come back!” she called. “Damn dream!”

She heard her mother’s voice again, far away, yet with her. She did not see her face, but knew she was there. “If you finally tap into your psychic ability and stop thinking you’re a little bit crazy, you can have all your dreams, darling. And he is one of them. I need to go now. You’re going to wake up soon, but try to remember, you have the psychic powers of your gypsy ancestors. Don’t listen to your father’s doubts!” She frowned, then smiled again and said, Bye-bye.”

Lindsey felt better now, hot and sated, content to rest in limbo, wishing she could have the same dream all over again because she felt so wonderful and she knew that reality would not be kind to her...

Diego Cruz, called Cruz by almost everyone, was sweating and tired, but on high alert since being awakened by his neighbor about the murder. To the young cop with his false bravado, Cruz snapped, "Get back to work Raoul!" His younger cousin Raoul had joined the force two years ago, already twice sitting out on probation for anger issues. Although Cruz had saved his ass from termination, Raoul resented his success. Cruz often felt that his good looking, but lazy cousin knew how to get under his skin more than anyone else. "I don't want to have to write you up."

"For what heffe?" Raoul reverted to Spanish as he sneered at him. He motioned toward Lindsey. "Why you holding her like that fool? You got vibes she didn't do it? Is this one of your *feelings*?"

Cruz swore at him in Spanish and Raoul walked away laughing.

Cruz calmed himself at once. He had more important issues to worry about than Raoul. Instantly he changed his focus to the officers who were moving to check the body, take pictures, and secure the crime scene. This would be a high profile case with Benton's daughter the main suspect. There couldn't be any mistakes. The media would focus on little Flowers, Illinois. Cruz hugged the woman's soft form to his own, intrigued by the scent of her-- lilacs and summertime. His cock tightened and he realized how inappropriate it was to feel horny at a time like this. Worse, he was picturing her naked and wondering what

it would be like to kiss her, to lick her all over, to stick his hard cock inside of her, both in front and in back.

He shut his eyes to clear his head and calm his throbbing dick. Although he basically trusted his psychic powers, the others in the Flowers PD didn't, and Lindsey Benton appeared guilty as sin. "*Trust your feelings, Cruz.*" He heard his deceased mother's voice in his head. Carlotta was his spirit guide and did an excellent job of propelling him in the right directions. Once he'd accepted that spirits spoke to their beloved ones on earth, he'd tuned into her. She was a wise, as she'd been in human form.

"*Yes, Mother,*" he thought, knowing she could hear his silent words.

He looked down at the would-be murderess's lovely face, at peace in her sleep state. Her aura was loaded with sadness and disappointment, but also innocence. This investigation and possible jailing would be another nail in her heart. Cruz would do what he could, but there would be a regular investigation. Still, the glow around her was orchid, one of goodness and innocence. *I know she didn't do anything wrong. She just found him dead.*

Just as he was about to call for the on-site paramedics to see why she wasn't coming around, she stirred in his arms, and, relieved, he looked down at her. Slowly her curly long lashes fluttered open and honey-brown eyes stared up at him. She had long, soft black waves, caramel skin, and freckles. She wasn't

classically pretty and her thin face showcased sharply angular, high cheekbones, but he found her stunningly beautiful, just as he had on television. If anything, she looked better in person. Although other men had made fun of her for being too busty for her skinny frame, he'd found her body perfect. He sensed some exotic blood in her. African and something else. No doubt, Lindsey was special. Cruz felt his heart racing. Ever since seeing her on Courtroom TV right after her acquittal, she had somehow stuck in the back of his mind. She seemed almost familiar to him. He liked the feel of her warm cheek and soft hair against his bare chest. He swallowed hard, unhappy about having to drag her to the police station.

Cruz was hardly dressed to go Downtown, but kept a spare suit at the office. After his neighbor had called him, he hadn't wasted time even throwing on a shirt. Well, nobody was going to take her to headquarters but him. Nobody. She was under his protection.

Cruz reached out a hand to a passing older officer. The officer stopped his hasty walk and turned to him, looking slightly impatient.

Cruz gave him a hard stare, and he slouched, dropping his gaze, looking humbled. Cruz finally said, "I'm taking her Downtown, using a cruiser. Tell Chambers."

The police officer nodded. "Yes, sir." He was still staring at Lindsey.

"Go!" Cruz shouted at the officer.

Chapter Two

You're in deep shit with this one, Cruz. The other feelings you had were about innocent men—this woman has your underused cock stretching your jeans. And, even if you know she's innocent, it doesn't look that way. Cruz decided to get the hell out of there with Lindsey, barking orders to the officers as he walked down the stairs and through the living room. He felt a rush of relief as he stepped outside into the harsh sunlight. Lindsey was whimpering. "I really loved Colin," she whispered, in a sad, soft voice that shook.

He could feel that she had, but didn't say anything. Once he had her secured in the back seat of the patrol car, he drove off, angry that he couldn't comfort her as she cried quietly behind him. "Want some water?" he asked, gruffly, reaching for a fresh bottle he'd found lying on the seat. He checked in the rearview mirror as she shook her head. Her honey-glazed eyes reflected the sunlight and melted his hardened heart. Since Lydia Weatherspoon had betrayed him, he'd gone without a woman and planned on staying single forever. It was plain nuts that this murder suspect moved him so much. He didn't know anything about her except what he'd heard in the news. And that had hardly been positive.

"I'm going to read you your Miranda rights, Ms. Benton."

“I already know them. And there’s a copy back here.”

He recited them to her then asked, “Any questions?”

“I’m not stupid,” she snapped.

As he drove to the precinct, he pulled his personal cell phone out of his blue jean’s pocket and made a phone call to his consultant and best friend, psychic Destiny Powers. When she didn’t answer, he left a message. “It’s me. Come to headquarters as soon as possible, please.” As soon as he shoved his phone away, he checked Lindsey in the mirror again.

Lindsey was staring straight ahead, and he doubted she’d paid attention to his phone call. Good. “Are you all right?” he asked, trying to sound professional.

“Oh, I’ve never been better in my life.” She laughed through her tears.

Every muscle in his body tightened, including his distracting balls. “Why don’t you just tell me what happened. You say you’re innocent?”

“I *am* innocent. I’m not going to talk to anyone. Just my lawyer.”

“Okay,” he said, as he steered the car into the police station’s busy lot. Shit, it was perfectly within her rights to shut down and request her lawyer, but it never looked good to the cops when a suspect did that.

She burst into facetious laughter again, startling him. “I get that you want to question me. Maybe you’ll even ask me to take a lie detector test.” She laughed

again, but it sounded hysterical and when he glanced at her, her eyes were teary. “Those damn tests aren’t accurate and a lawyer would advise me not to.”

He wasn’t allowed to question her after she’d requested an attorney, but he did say, “I never mentioned taking a lie detector test.” Although he felt it would have been a good idea. He could still see her in his rearview mirror, her eyes glimmering, her chin held high. She had spunk; he liked that.

“I know you didn’t ask me,” she said, “and I wanted to make sure that you and your cronies don’t waste your time. I took the farce of a test in New York after Matt was arrested for stealing drugs from my father. I hadn’t even known what Matt was up to, yet the stupid test came back inconclusive. I’ll never take another one.”

“I see.” He was surprised that she had shared that with him. Or that she was talking at all, since she’d asked for an attorney. Did she feel their weird connection too? Is that why she’d confided in him? No, that was crazy. But why had she given him that information? Fear? The need to talk to anybody, even him, a detective? He opened the squad car’s door, getting out and heard her saying, “Yeah, let’s get this over with. If you’re going to put me in jail, do it so I can go to sleep and forget about this nightmare.”

Her cold words made his muscles grow stiff. He let her out and reached for his handcuffs, aware that his fellow officers would expect her to be wearing them. Then he felt her soft aura again and thought *screw it, no way*.

“Sometimes,” she said, in a sassy yet softer tone as he helped her up, “I even have wonderful dreams. I had one about you when I was unconscious.” She smirked at him and, for a moment, they faced one another, close enough to kiss.

Cruz turned away, his balls tightening as he escorted her to through the parking lot.

She looked up at him, her beautiful round eyes making him feel soft and vulnerable, two things he hated.

“I expected to be handcuffed,” she said. “Not that I’d mind. I’ve always wanted to be handcuffed by a handsome cop. Held prisoner too. That’s my naughty sexual fantasy.” Sarcasm dripped from her.

“Stop,” he said, sliding her a look. “Don’t be a smart ass.” But Cruz could feel himself becoming weak-kneed. What if she meant it? “I didn’t think I’d have to handcuff you,” he said, shortly, then he led her inside the busy police station. Although the other policemen and clerical workers tried to pretend they were disinterested, he could feel all the focus on them. Ignoring everyone, he steered her into an office where a young solid, pale police woman sat. She looked up at him when he entered with Lindsey.

“Search her, Officer Brown,” he said, regretting that he had to do this. “Bag her clothing and give her scrubs. Then take her to the sound-proof room and get her a phone. She wants to call her lawyer.”

“Actually, I don’t have one.” Lindsey burst into maniacal, tearful laughter again.

Cruz put a protective hand against the small of her back. “We can appoint one for you, but your father—”

“Won’t do shit to help me. Certainly you know about him...and what he thinks of me.”

Before he could feel too much anger at her father, she went on speaking.

“That’s all right. I have a distant friend who just joined a law firm. He’s fresh, but I’ll give him a call. There is no way in hell I’ll just cave and let you pin this on me.” She looked up at him with a hard expression, making him wish he could kiss her sadness away.

“Make sure she gets that phone,” Cruz said, having an insane moment of picturing the murder suspect, in all her naked loveliness, lying across his bare thighs, her sweet brown ass in the air, waiting with hot anticipation for a good, arousing spanking...He blinked to clear his head. “Will you do that?” he asked.

“Of course.” The young woman stood, eyeing Lindsey with hostility that seared Cruz’s soul.

Cruz leveled a sidewise glance at Lindsey, who swayed on her feet. For all her feistiness, she was terrified, he could feel her fear. It frustrated him that he couldn't prevent what would come next.

"Let's go," the officer said to Lindsey grabbing her arm roughly.

But as Officer Brown started leading her away, Lindsey glanced over her shoulder at him, her eyes huge and flashing dark brown. "Aren't you coming too?" she asked.

"No," he said, his heart sinking but his voice gruff.

"Good. I didn't want you to anyway, asshole," she said, which shocked him.

"Hey!" the female officer shouted at her. "Enough!"

Cruz had to force himself to walk in the opposite direction, leaving Lindsey to a strip search and DNA swabbing. He felt irritated and out of sorts. Not paying attention, he almost crashed into Chief Hamilton, but halted just in time. "Sorry, Chief. I'm sleepwalking."

Rick Hamilton was about his height, but had a large belly, and twenty years on him. His sun-burnt face was well-lined, his gray hair mussed, blue eyes bloodshot. "Yeah, tell me about it. I haven't slept for twenty hours. I'm having Chambers head this investigation. Cruz, don't argue with me. You're too emotionally involved. I saw the way you were looking at the suspect when you brought her in. You feel she's innocent, don't you?"

“She is.”

“Well, you know I put stock in your powers, but I can’t let you be in charge of this case. You can help Chambers...”

“Trust me, I’ll be helping him more than he likes. I’m going to catch the *real* murderer.”

“Good. Meanwhile, we found out the name of Avery’s other girlfriend and she’s coming down for questioning right now.”

Cruz nodded. “Maybe it’s her.”

The Chief shrugged. “No record at all, not even a traffic ticket...” He glanced out the window. “Ah, I see Roberts and Shoneberg have her already.”

“Good.” He didn’t bother looking at the other suspect; he just hoped to hell it was she who’d done it.

“Let’s go into my office,” Hamilton said.

Cruz nodded, feeling a gust of cool air at his back and heard some scuffling at the front of the police station. “Cruz! Diego! Help me! Help me!” a high soprano voice yelled, dramatically.

Shocked, he swung around, finding himself locking gazes with the violet eyes of the woman who’d broken his heart, Lydia Weatherspoon. The air pressed out of his lungs as he watched her standing there dressed in a low cut blouse, barely-there mini-skirt and spiked heels. Tears were running down her face.

“Cruz!” she cried out in her soprano voice when she saw him. She tried to run toward him, but a large male police officer held her back. “Cruz, save me!” she cried out again, struggling as the two men held her back. “I didn’t do it! The other bitch got jealous and did it! Colin told me she was violent!”

The entire police department had heard Lydia’s loud rant..

“Where’s your skunk of a cousin, Raoul?” she shouted. “Is he here?”

He wondered where Raoul came in. Raoul had always flirted with her. Maybe she thought he’d help her, and maybe he’d try. But Cruz wasn’t going to lift a finger.

“Get her in the interrogation room!” Cruz’s voice thundered.

“I’m going to take a lie detector test and prove it’s not me, that it’s her!” Lydia wailed as the cops pulled her away. “This is all your fault, Diego Cruz! You drove me to Colin by breaking up with me...” The rest of her words were lost as she was dragged through a doorway.

“What the hell...?” Hamilton looked at him, waiting.

“My ex,” Cruz mumbled bitterly, the memory still fresh. “Bitch cheated on me before I broke up with her.”

“Really! This is quite a coincidence. Maybe she’ll talk to you...”

“No way. Try to seduce me is more like it. I’m not playing her games in this murder investigation. Count me out.”

Rick Hamilton nodded, his chin firm. He seemed to accept it.”How does she know Raoul?”

“She met him through me and he liked her. It was one-sided.”

“Let’s get to my office,” the Chief said, quietly. “We both need to wind down a bit to prepare for what’s ahead.”

Cruz wasn’t about to argue, with Lydia’s screeching voice echoing through his aching head. So Lydia had been seeing Colin. Interesting. Both cheaters and liars—a perfect match. He couldn’t wait for Destiny to arrive to see how she psychically read the situation. But his own psychic abilities made him think that Lydia wasn’t the culprit either.

Who the fuck had killed Colin Avery? He knew one thing for sure. He was in a shitload of trouble and sure to get into more.



Lindsey sat on a hard chair in the small interrogation room, still in shock over being strip searched. She had fought tears, but had finally cried anyway, not looking at a stoic appearing Officer Carol Brown. After that, she had given her DNA without question, dazed. Then Detective Chambers had marched into the room, cocky, grinning, telling her they had proof she’d done it, even when she’d told him she had a lawyer and didn’t want to discuss anything with him.

Fortunately, her young lawyer had interrupted Chamber's attempt to break her down.

Now she wasn't sure why she was still alone in the room. Her lawyer, had left to go to his office to see if one of the senior lawyers could take her case pro bono. After all, it would be high profile. She hoped that Chambers wouldn't come back, he frightened her, although she'd never let it show.

Lindsey looked down at the now cold coffee that her lawyer had given her. She had had low moments in her lonely life, like the time her father had gruffly come home to tell her mother had died at the hospital. That had traumatized her so much that she'd been dreaming about her mother and hallucinating her voice ever since. She'd almost welcome a hallucination now because she felt completely abandoned.

The doorknob rattled and her heart pounded. Shit, was it Chambers?

Cruz stepped into the room, his imposing presence filling the space. Her breath caught as she took in his incredible male hotness, even more apparent now that he was dressed in a smart navy suit with matching tie. The white shirt under his jacket set off his dark, tanned skin. Right beside him stood a tall, slightly plump, olive-skinned woman with long dark hair. She wore looped earrings and reminded Lindsey of the gypsies in her mother's family; those who claimed they had psychic powers. Lindsey tensed, hoping for good news but not expecting any.

As Cruz and the woman stopped in the middle of the room, Lindsey was aware of the woman staring at her hard. She almost looked as if she were in another world; her cat's green eyes fixed as if in a trance. Lindsey's gaze slid to Cruz's for answers, but his stoic face gave away nothing.

"More friends," she managed to say in a sarcastic voice. "Am I going to be strip searched again? That was fun. Or maybe you're going to try interrogating me like Chambers did, although my lawyer told me not to talk? Which is it?"

Although he tried not to show any reaction, she saw him shut his eyes briefly. "I'm sorry." It was spoken almost too soft for her to hear and his words surprised her. Did detectives normally apologize for investigating suspects? She doubted it and somehow that made her experience a little less awful.

Cruz took a seat across from her and his animal essence surrounded her. The sheer force of him startled her anew, making her feel small and vulnerable, yet desirable, even now. What was happening to her? Was she experiencing Stockholm syndrome?

"That lady you brought in here looks like she's on drugs," she whispered, nodding at his companion who wasn't moving, not even to blink. "I hope she's not high up the food chain."

"She tends to block out all else when she's concentrating." He cleared his throat, an obvious cue to change the subject. "I wanted to make sure you're all

right. Are you thirsty or hungry? I can get you something.” He sounded rough, but she could see compassion on his face.

“They already asked me over and over again.” She laughed, bitterly. “Must have to make sure the suspect is well taken care of. I suppose I’m being recorded.”

He didn’t say anything.

“I’m not hungry or thirsty,” she said. *I just want you to tell me what’s going on and then have you carry me away from here. And I want to fuck you. Yes, that’s sick, I know.*

“Are you sure about taking that lie detector test?” When she turned her head, he said, “Well, you knew I’d ask. It could clear you.”

“My lawyer said absolutely not.”

“But if you’re innocent...”

“Those lie detector tests are pure crap.” She felt a wave of anger, remembering the only test she’d taken. “Or maybe the people who interpret them can be crooked. No.” She had often wondered if her last test had been skewed. “You’ve never known a lie detector test to be wrong, detective?”

He shrugged, looking noncommittal.

“Well, they can be. I don’t trust them.”

Lindsey could sense his disappointment almost like a strangely psychic wave of knowledge. And she could feel his weird affection for her. She must be

imagining this odd shit because she needed so badly to believe that he was actually on her side.

“Well, then,” Cruz said, “I have to go.” He stood up; towering over her and her heart sank. Odd shit or not, she wanted him around her. As she slid down in her chair, staring at him, she tried to plead with him not to go by using her eyes. He was gazing right into her stare and she prayed he could read her and would stay.

“I’ll see you later.” He backed up a few steps, but seemed reluctant to leave.

“Are they going to let me go? Or lock me up.” A coldness clenched her gut at the thought of being jailed.

“I don’t know,” Cruz said, then he ripped his gaze from her and caught the mysterious, olive-skinned beauty by the arm, nodding at her. The woman’s emerald eyes seemed to snap to alertness and she smiled at him as he escorted her toward the door. Lindsey wondered if she was his girlfriend and had an uncomfortable twinge of jealousy even though she had no claim to him. But as they left together, the sound of the shutting door echoing in her head, she knew they were not romantically connected.

How did she “know” so much about this stranger?

“Trust your intuition, Lindsey, my sweet.”

Lindsey's body jolted as she looked around the empty room. Her mother's voice again, this time not far away or in her dreams, but so real that it frightened her. Her heart was banging against her chest in a strange rhythm. The day just kept getting worse and worse.

Chapter Three

Cruz stood before the Chief in his office, feeling unsettled. Destiny stood beside him, a sober look on her face “Destiny says there’s no doubt she’s innocent, Chief. You know how potent Destiny’s psychic powers are.”

The chief shot Destiny an annoyed look. “I do, even though she refuses to help anybody but you and me.”

“I can only work with believers.” Destiny frowned right back at him, but then her expression filled with anguish. “Rick, I sense a blackness around Lindsey.”

Cruz felt his heart speeding up at the disclosure. “You didn’t tell me that.”

She looked over at him. “I wanted to inform both of you at the same time.” She turned back to Hamilton. “Her life is in danger but I can’t quite place the source. It *could* be in the general prison population. Her father is so disliked for so many reasons. Some hate that an African American is so successful in business. Others don’t like how he’s taken jobs overseas. Some just can’t stand his arrogance and power... *many* of the inmates would love to get back at him by doing her in. I wouldn’t put her in any prison population with the vibes that I’m getting.”

Cruz's gut clenched as he grimly watched Hamilton's ruddy face turn white. He wanted to ask a million questions, but couldn't find his voice, and now probably wasn't the right time. Getting Lindsey out of here had to take initial priority. The Chief spoke first. "What am I supposed to do with her? I can't set her free. The press would crucify me."

"Let Cruz take her into protective custody," Destiny said. "My psychic vibes tell that you should do this. It's her best bet."

"Why?" Hamilton asked.

Destiny rolled her eyes. "I don't know, Chief. I'm just the Messenger from the spirit world."

Cruz's entire body had tightened at her words. Having Lindsey to himself was just what he wanted. "Absolutely," Cruz said, running with it. "Maybe Colin's killer hoped she'd be there...maybe she was the real target..."

"I do sense a loose connection there," Destiny said with a nod at him.

"Shit," said Hamilton, covering his face. "I don't need complications like this." He dropped his hand and let out a breath as he stared at Destiny.

"You want a completely innocent, decent young woman to die instead?" Destiny asked, in a harsh voice.

Chief Hamilton scowled. "You both know better than that."

“Good. I’m taking her.” Cruz said, already planning their escape. “Nothing can stop me now that I know her life is at stake.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt you’ll do it. I’d have to shoot you to stop you.” Rick Hamilton looked tired as he sat back in his chair. “Fuck, I’ll have to go along with the hair-brained plan. How we going to sneak her out of here?”

“Basement exit to the underground employee parking lot. It's between shifts so it should be empty.” Cruz found Destiny’s alert gaze. “Can you drive your van around the back and take us to my country retreat? ” Now that Destiny had brought it up, he also sensed a blackness surrounding Lindsey and it seared him raw. He couldn't let anything happen to her. Screw normal police protocol.

Hamilton sighed. “I’ll call an emergency meeting so that everyone is in the front while you hustle her out. Give me ten minutes to round everyone up.”

Cruz caught Destiny’s stare. He bet he looked as relieved as she did.

“Thanks, Chief,” Cruz said.



"We're out of here, Chief," Cruz started leaving the office, then suddenly turned in the entranceway, sensing his boss’s apprehension.. “Don’t worry. I have a feeling this plan will go smooth.” He was strangely confident that only he could save Lindsey. It was so bizarre. He'd never felt anything like the solid bond he felt

with the pretty murder suspect. He turned and strode away, his hands balling into fists as he rushed.

When he busted into the interrogation room, a startled Lindsey looked up at him. The despair he saw in her eyes touched him. "Still waiting for your lawyer to return?"

"The rookie should be back soon. His partner's...they didn't want to get involved with me because of my father, even though he's not a factor. I guess they don't want to take any chances." She said it all with a brave smile. "So why are you here, Detective?"

He admired her spunk but he knew she would never make bail. "I've been authorized to take you out of here."

She winced, then seemed to pale. "Where?"

"Away from this place and into protective custody." He felt impatient enough to rip her off her chair and carry her away, but he needed her cooperation. "If you'll agree to the terms, you won't go to jail. At least not now and hopefully never."

"Wow! Well...what are the terms?"

"You'll be staying with me and you have obey me."

Her lips moved, but no words came out. After swallowing hard she said, in an almost smug voice, "I could just wait and be bailed out."

He gave her a grim smile that she returned. They both knew she was prison bound if she stayed here. "Look, sweetheart, I'm trying to keep you alive."

"Somebody wants me dead? *Who?*" She paled again.

He wished he knew. "I don't have details, you'll just have to trust me. You won't last long enough for anyone to prove your innocence if you go to jail." He hated to exaggerate, but he had to get her to agree to go with him.

"That's scary and so is my option." She laughed, but teared up.

"I think you believe I'm on your side." He felt impatience at not being able to explain about psychic energy right now. Seeing her roll her eyes, he decided to offer her something. "Look, your dad has enemies everywhere. Even some jail guard could have it in for him and try to hurt him through you."

"This is about my *father?*" She ran a hand through her long, shimmering waves of hair, never taking her gaze off of him.

"I don't have any details, sweetheart. I'll worry about the reason once you're safe. I'm able to give you sanctuary. Take it or leave it."

She shut her eyes. "Fine. I'll go with you."

He let out a breath he hadn't known he'd been holding, then quickly jumped on the task at hand. "Stay put. We only have a few minutes." As he left the room he felt her eyes on his back, but he had no time to explain his plans. He returned with a gaudy white sweater that would hang to her knees, some crooked wire glasses,

and a baseball cap. She looked puzzled as he shoved them at her. “Put them on and tuck your hair under the hat.”

“How exciting, a disguise. Funky clothes from an old girlfriend?” She managed to smile a little as she took the props.

“Some junk from the lost and found. Hurry!”

While she quickly disguised herself, he glanced at his watch. The meeting in the front office should have been in full swing for a few minutes by now. “Follow me and don’t say anything,” he said, noticing how pretty she appeared even with most of her hair hidden, overly large glasses sliding down her nose, and an open sweater hanging down to mid-knee.

As he put his arm around her, trying not to feel her sexual vibes, she glanced up at him, her unmasked gaze wide behind thick glass lenses, and he felt a jolt go right through him to his stupid dick.

She bit her lip. “I don’t say this often...but I’m really afraid.”

“Don’t be.” His heart had sped up. “Not around me.”

He had her out of the interrogation room and in front of the elevator that would take them to the underground garage before she could come up with a reason to change her mind. The elevator opened as soon as he pushed the button, and he nudged her inside.

As the car rattled, and the light flickered on and off, she grabbed his arm. He felt protective of her, and aroused as well, at the way she hung onto him. The car landed with a bump and the doors creaked open. He pulled her into the dark below-ground garage. As expected it was empty between shifts. He breathed a sigh of relief.

“It’s spooky here,” she whispered.

He tightened as her warm breath grazed his ear. “Shhhhhhhhh!” He slanted a cautious look around to make sure they weren't being watched and didn't see anyone but he still felt like a target. Fortunately, at that moment Destiny pulled up to them with her old van running, and he smiled at the driver.

“Who is she anyway?” Lindsey asked, suspiciously. “Why is *she* involved in this?”

Her questions made him hope that she was jealous, although he realized that she had things on her mind other than his charms.

“Friend and business associate,” he said, and he pulled open the van's rear hatch. “Get inside and lie flat on the floor,” he instructed jumping up first then pulling her in.. Then he scrambled besides her shutting the door, and pulled the old wedding ring quilt Destiny kept for emergencies over them. Cocooned in a warm bundle with her he whispered. “Stay low.” as the van pulled quietly out of the parking lot. Through the few shards of light he watched Lindsey close her eyes,

and felt her teeth chattering beside him. Her glasses and cap had fallen off and her hair was spilled haphazardly around her face. Along with her round eyes, she reminded him of him of a scared kid. It hit him hard. Shit, he couldn't stand seeing her frightened so he put his arm around her and pulled her up against him. His touch made her jump and stare at him in surprise. From close up he could feel her sexual heat.

“You seemed to need some comfort,” he said, in a gruff voice. “I’m not completely heartless.” She relaxed, melting against him and he felt his male hormones kicking up a notch. He knew she felt the ridge of his erection when her jaw dropped. He had to hold in a grin and he wondered if she’d mention it.

She didn’t say anything for a few moments. Suddenly she laughed in a bitter way and rolled away from him, out of his grasp. “Lord my hormones are screwed up. This should be an interesting date, but I don't go in for threesomes, stud muffin.”

Cruz’s lips curved up a little as he heard Destiny trying to muffle a laugh up front. “Funny,” he said, deadpan, and silently counted to ten, trying to soften his hard-on. His calming technique had little effect with Lindsey’s siren scent calling out to him. He glanced over at her and she flashed him a beautiful, unexpected grin that lit up her face. He was about to put his arm around her again, but her smile

faded so he hesitated. “Don’t knock threesomes if you haven’t tried them,” Cruz said, hoping for her smile to return.

Lindsey’s face tensed instead. “Are we going to be alone at your place or is the woman driver staying with us too?”

He wondered again if she were jealous? Her energy was giving him that feeling. He forced himself to appear stoic, although he did feel a bit self-satisfied. He desperately wanted her to think of him as a real person, not just some cop. “It’ll just be the two of us, sweetheart. I’m the detective assigned to protect you. Destiny is only the transportation.”

"I love you too, pal," Destiny joked as she drove.

Cruz ignored her to look deep into Lindsey's troubled eyes, trying to get a more solid read on her. “What’s the problem?” he asked, finding her energy field scrambled now. The chick’s moods were changing like the wind.

"You’re a man." Her bold gaze shifted to his hard-on.

"Thanks for noticing," he said wondering if she liked what she saw then berating himself again for thinking about sex at a time like this.

"I could hardly help it. How can you be hard at a time like this?"

He wondered himself, but said, “Look, I got you out of there, sweetheart. Don’t push it.”

Cruz watched the guilty look on her face and kept his mouth shut.

Destiny turned a sharp corner, causing Lindsey to slide fast and hard into Cruz's body. To his surprise and delight, she stayed there. Praying that she'd accept him this time, he wrapped his arm around her again. For the rest of the hour long ride, they didn't speak, but he was acutely aware of her sweet body pressing into his, her head resting against his shoulder as she closed her eyes. His cock strained against the material of his pants, making him wonder about the Guinness world's record for hard-on longevity. His cock seemed like Super-Dick today. *Why?* He didn't usually get a hard-on during times like these, even around beautiful women. Police business wasn't erotic.

And then she snored and he grinned, holding her tighter. It was hard for him to resist stroking her soft hair so he gave into the urge. Her hair was soft and he wrapped a few strands around his fingers, inhaling a lilac scent. He let out a long breath when Destiny finally pulled the van up the gravel driveway to his cabin and pushed the quilt off them. His privacy fence blocked out all six acres of his land and he had no neighbors. They could finally sit up and not be seen.

"We're here, babe," he whispered in her ear. When her response was an unladylike snort he chuckled then squeezed her shoulder gently and said, "Rise and shine, sweetheart."

Her eyes opened slowly and she looked confused for a moment, then her stare focused on his and she teared up. "Oh, god, it wasn't all a bad dream."

Shit, he should have realized she'd suffer from PTSD. He looked deep into her eyes, willing her to hear him as he said in his calmest voice, "You're safe now and Colin is in a better place. Come with me." He slid out the back of the van and, standing on the gravel driveway, reached in to help Lindsey out. Her teeth were chattering and he wondered if she was going to pass out again. "Grab onto me," he said holding her close, carrying her to the ground. Unintentionally, her breasts and sex brushed against his body as he lowered her, and his knees almost buckled. But he kept his cool façade.

Lindsey looked around as Destiny backed the van out of the driveway. "Wow," she said.

Cruz knew she was getting her bearings and decided to let her inhale the fresh country air. He knew how much she needed the slowed-down, soothing atmosphere. After she took it all in, he would take her inside his second home, soon to become her first home for an indefinite amount of time.

Lindsey felt a little bit comforted as she appraised the large rustic log cabin along with acres of land all surrounded by a tall privacy fence. The air smelled sweet and she liked the isolation. On the left side of the cabin was a glistening pond, leafy green trees and acres of mown grass. On the right, a bright red barn stood out in the distance.

Lindsey caught her breath and looked up at him. He was more stunning than ever in the sunlight. "It's beautiful here." And so was he. It was scary how important he'd become to her as soon as he'd held her in his arms. She was so relieved to be here with him and not in prison.

"I need to get you inside, sweetheart." He tugged on her arm and she walked with him to the side door.

As he pulled his keys out of his pants pocket, she felt a wave of dizziness and grasped his arm, weak, needing his strong support. A picture of dead Colin flashed in her mind and she knew she had to change her thinking or lose it. She spoke the first words that came into her head. "Do you have farm animals here?"

"Maybe one day," he said. "I don't stay here all the time." He took out his keys and shoved open the door. "Ladies first."

She smiled at him, charmed.

As soon as she stepped inside the cabin, she felt warm and soothed and her knotted stomach relaxed a little bit. They had entered a homey country kitchen that smelled like baked bread. As she and Cruz walked through the spacious, cheerful room, she admired his oak wood kitchen set. "That's a nice table and chairs," she murmured as they passed it.

Pulling her into the living room, he said, with nonchalance, "I built it."

She glanced up at him, feeling proud, not sure why. Then she looked around the living room and saw a few dark wood stained coffee tables. “Those too?” she asked.

“It’s a hobby,” he said, with a dismissive shrug.

It was more than a hobby. He had serious talent. Lindsey scanned the rest of the room and liked the atmosphere—manly but warm gold and brown stuffed furniture, a hearth with athletic trophies and pictures on the mantle, and a computer on a messy desk. The smell of baked bread wafted from the kitchen to the living room. “Did you make bread? I smell it.”

“No, but last night some lady I know made bread .” He cocked an eyebrow at her as if...what? Looking for a reaction?

Her reaction was a pang of jealousy which she tried to cover by looking away from him.

“Destiny is a good cook,” he said.

“Destiny?” She turned her head to face him, smiling.

“Yes. And she entertained a date for dinner here last night. I often let her use my place.” There was a glint in his eye as if he knew.

“So you don’t cook.”

“I burn water.”

She tried to hold in the relief that she felt. God help her if he figured out how she felt about him.

“Well, this beats jail,” she said, wanting to touch the strong contours of his cheek and jaw. “How did you manage to get them to let me come here?”

He turned to her and grinned a little bit, exposing a sexy dimple in one cheek. She hadn’t noticed it before. “Maybe its divine intervention,” he cracked.

She winced as she thought about her mother, but it was plain kooky to consider that she might have really been hearing from the spirit world.

“There’s no such thing,” she said. “Really, how did you work this out? I’m curious?”

“Just...accept it and shut up with the questions.” His tone and look made her feel like her hands had been slapped.

Maybe he sensed her reaction because he glanced over at her, his face softer. “The reason I could bring you back here...” He abruptly stopped talking and cut her loose, walking to the window, looking outside.

Intrigued, she followed him, staring at the soft looking brown hair cut neatly below his neck, then moved her gaze to admire the muscles straining the shoulders of his suit.

“What were you going to say?” she asked, just behind him, inhaling his delicious pine scent.

Cruz tilted his head back a little. “I thought maybe the Chief would put his foot down and try to stop me from taking you here, but he went along with it. Maybe somebody up there likes you,” he said. She couldn’t tell by his deadpan tone if he meant his words or was teasing her. “Seriously,” he tried again.

She chuckled. “I don’t think anyone up there likes me, Detective. My life has been shitty, and this is just another chapter. I don’t feel sorry for myself, but I do wish I’d catch a break once in a while. “

“This arrangement is a huge break.” He was still staring outside.

“I guess it could be worse.”

Cruz turned from the window and they both gasped as they found themselves almost nose to nose. She knew she should step back, but she didn’t want to, and he couldn’t because his back was against the windowsill.

“Maybe your luck will continue to change.” he said and his warm breath tickled her face, making her overactive pussy feel tingly. His huge, penetrating eyes hypnotized her and her breath caught.

“You can kiss him, daughter. He wants to kiss you, even though it’s against his rules. But if you do the kissing, he won’t be able to stop himself.”

Lindsey stiffened, not breathing. Her mother’s voice again and not part of a dream. Was she a developing schizophrenic or was she really hearing from the spirit world? She looked up at Cruz whose expression now appeared cautious.

“You look frightened.” He shook his head, frowning. “Damn it, you shouldn’t be afraid of me.”

Lindsey felt the light graze of a palm running down her cheek, although his hands were at his sides. The air seemed charged. “I—I’m not afraid of *you*. I—I swear, I’m hallucinating, going crazy. My dead mother just spoke to me.” She laughed at the insanity, backing up, as she realized her subconscious would tempt her to kiss him and then she’d be screwed. “Maybe you should take me to some psychiatric facility.”

“No, don’t be silly.” To her surprise, his fingers, warm and strong, lifted her chin and she again caught her breath as she stared into his imploring gaze.

“But...”

“How do you know it’s not really your mother?” he asked.

Was he serious? Was he humoring her? Was he nuts too?

“Maybe people speak to us from wherever they go when they pass.”

“Do you really *believe* that?” she asked.

“Yes, I really do.” He spoke matter-of-factly, as if he really didn’t find the idea appalling. “If you knew who I am...well, maybe you’ve heard me on a few talk shows. I’m known as The Psychic Detective.”

“Oh, of course.” She let out another disbelieving laugh. “Please, don’t mess with my head, Detective. I can’t deal with that today.”

“Sweetheart, I wouldn’t play with your mind, but it would be nice if you’d open it.”

Something about the way he rocked forward a little bit...almost ready to kiss her?... captivated her and she found herself nodding. “Open my mind?”

“Listen with your emotions, not your logic.” He put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed them.

She sizzled to her toes. “Yes.” *Of course. Anything.*

“My mother died when I was ten years old.” He looked deep into her gaze and she felt he was sharing a great intimacy with him. She listened hard, flattered, wondering if he shared any of his stories often. “Princess, I grew up in a tough neighborhood and my mother was murdered while she walked home from work. The bullet wasn’t meant for her, but she’s gone anyway.” He tried to remain stoic, but she saw a tic in his cheek before he continued. “The killer ran off and was never found. That’s what made me decide to be a cop.”

Lindsey swallowed hard, tears springing to her eyes for his pain.

“She speaks to me from the spirit world,” he said, lifting his chin, his eyes unwavering.

Lindsey’s lips tightened at the corners and she swallowed three times before finally saying, “That’s sad about your mother. I’m sorry. But *talking* to you?”

He didn't answer her. They shared a long gaze that made her feel glued to his stare; unable to look away. She had never heard of a psychic detective and wondered if he was mocking her after all.

"Damn it!" He tightened his jaw then said, "I knew you wouldn't keep an open mind, even though *you* have psychic abilities too."

She ran a hand through her hair as she tried to undo her confusion. She had psychic abilities? An involuntary chuckle erupted from her throat and he turned his back to her, cussing to himself. Now he was staring out the window again, his arms crossed. That wasn't what she wanted from him at all.

"Go to him, Lindsey. This is your one and only chance to break your bad karma. He's telling you the truth, you know."

Lindsey winced. Her mother's voice and scent were clear; spookily clear. "My mother was killed in a car crash when I was six," she blurted and was positive that an outside force had prompted her words. "My mother's voice is in my head a lot, but I haven't really listened until today. I--it does seem awfully real to me. I can even smell her perfume." She regained control of her own voice and quickly added, "Um, I can't imagine why that just popped out, but now you know. You're not alone."

He turned around and stared at her with those endlessly dark eyes. “Tragic for you, and I’m sorry. Guess both of us lost our mothers as kids and had shitty fathers.”

“Yours too?” Her heart contracted. “That sucks.”

Cruz nodded, then his expression changed to obvious distaste. “Yeah, dear old dad’s in jail now. He’s an addict and killed a gas station cashier for drug money. I lived with my aunt from the time I was ten.”

Not sure what to say to that, sensing his devastation, Lindsey tried asking, “Was she nice to you?”

“At first she didn’t want me there...she was single and money was tight...she grew to love me. I really don’t like her son, my cousin. He’s on the police force too...I don’t want to talk about him now.”

“This is the time, daughter! Kiss him! He needs you.”

Lindsey tuned into the voice that she usually tried to ignore, feeling that it was a symptom of craziness. Now that she had stopped fearing it, she could almost feel her mother’s arms around her, giving her strength.

Well, hell, if she was going to hear her mother talking to her, she may as well listen to her suggestion, especially since she wanted to. Being close to Cruz was overwhelming to her erotic senses. She tried reaching for his shoulders, chickening out the first time, but accomplishing the deed the second time. She felt

weak as she touched him. “Uh--tell me about the psychic detective.” Her hormones were running haywire as her body filled with flames. He responded to her touch by tensing up, but she didn’t want that. “You say you’ve been on the radio for being some psychic?”

He nodded, then turned to face her, his eyes flashing heat.. “But you really don’t want to hear about that now, do you?”

She leaned in, pressing her breasts into his chest as he held her tight, lifting her face, feeling again as if somebody else were making her do it. “I...no. I don’t want to hear about it now.” She tiptoed and kissed him, and electricity seemed to sizzle from him to her, forcing her to stay glued to his hot mouth. Coming to her senses, she tried to pull away, but he wouldn’t let her and she didn’t care. This was crazy, but also heavenly. When the kiss broke, it was he who slowly backed off, his gaze taking her in like a hungry wolf. She could barely breathe as her knees wobbled. “Why...why did that happen? The timing is so inappropriate...but I couldn’t help myself. Do you know what the hell is going on?”

He smiled, not answering.

Noticing his stare burning into her, she asked, barely above a whisper, “Why are you staring at me that way? It’s...hypnotizing.”

“I can’t help staring at you that way.” His breath teased her lips and she melted inside. “I’m your protector.” His words, husky and soft, slithered over her

skin like home-spun silk. Her protector. That was so sexist, and she was used to handling even the worst situations by herself.

“I’m more like your prisoner,” she said with a nervous laugh.

He nodded. “Yes, that too. But I’m nice to obedient captives.”

“You’ve—you’ve done this before? Had a woman in your protective custody?”

He shook his head from side to side then focused on her, then he smirked. “Well, the other captives came willingly, not because of police business.”

“Oh!” His nearness was making her weaker. Her pussy grew heavier and wetter.

He stepped closer, his arms wrapping around her. When they were so close that she could see the endless beauty in his deep brown eyes, she had a flash of sanity. “Detective, we could get into so much trouble. The case...”

“Who’s going to tattle on me? You?” His warm, mint-scented breath tickled her face and the room tilted, whirling around the two of them. He wrapped her arms around her and she lifted her lips, tiptoeing. Their lips touched and a current of energy blazed through her veins. *Ohmigod!* This was by far the most electrifying kiss she had ever received, even better than the first one.

He moaned into her mouth as his hands gentled her hair, then slid to her face, holding her cheeks as he pulled his lips back just long enough to say, “You’ll be mine.”

She took in his words, feeling giddy, but not taking him too seriously. She knew his hormones were at work, and she had heard all the bullshit lines from the men in her life. Still, she loved hearing endearments from him.

“I’m going to kiss you again,” he said and did, sweeping her back into his hot embrace, turning her bones to butter. Dizzy, her body craving his, she started losing consciousness as he bent her over his arm. His tongue swept through her mouth as he drank her in, his contented throat noises fueling her desire. She felt as if they were both tumbling through outer space, head over heels. His rough five o’clock shadow grazed her face while she savored his unique salty taste. *Hot, hot, hot!* She hadn’t realized a kiss could be swoonworthy. He teased her, varying the pressure of his mouth from tough to tender, slanting his lips over hers in different ways that drove her to the brink.

A light but potent tingling sensation spread from the top of her scalp to the tips of her toenails, whetting her appetite for more of him. She moaned into his hot mouth this time as he pulled her firmly into his chest. Shit, her nipples had hardened as her tingling breasts were crushed into his body and her pussy ached for him.

“I know what you’re thinking about.”

He forced his cock into her needy sex and she wished to hell they were naked. His dick felt huge. She was too intrigued with him to wonder if he really knew what she was thinking.

He walked her backwards and pressed her up against a wall, rocking against her, making her whimper. A moment later she found her feet off the floor as he lifted her up, his big hands cupping her ass and squeezing her cheeks. He pulled back from her lips just a little to whisper, “Wrap those sexy long legs around me, sweetheart.” She did and he whispered again, softer. “Eres bella. Te necesito.”

She saw black spots before her eyes. *You are beautiful. I need you.* And it sounded so much sexier in Spanish, a language she had learned in college.

“Eres necesito,” she whispered back, her legs gripping his torso tightly to get the full effect of his cock. The horror of the day seemed to fade away, and once more she no longer felt they were on earth. She blocked out everything except him, his feel, his pine and primal male essence, his lips and tongue, his enormous erection pressed against her open sex. She’d die if she couldn’t feel him inside of her.

“It’s time to show you more of my retreat,” Cruz said, his silky voice filled with sweet seduction.

“Yes. Sure. Anything.”

The room whizzed by her in a heated rush as he strode with her down a paneled hallway. She had no idea where he was taking her and she didn't care. Something magical was happening between them and she didn't want it to stop. Questions floated through her head. Why she was with him, how she had gotten to this point? Her memories faded as she clung to the hunk. He was all that mattered.

Cruz took her into a bedroom and swiped the covers off the bed with one hand. As she gasped, he set her down on a silk sheet then let go of her, staring with wicked eyes.

Her body screamed in protest. “I want you to touch me.” She reached for his hand, trying to pull him over her, down onto the bed with her. “I want you to fuck me.”

“I could never *fuck* you,” he said, in a scolding voice. “We would be making love.” He leaned over and slid an arm under her back. A second later, he flipped her to her tummy. Before she could process what was happening, he spanked her several times, hard and tight. In a flash, he'd turned her on her back again, leaving her flushed with white-hot ripples pulsing through her buttocks to her clit. “If you accuse me of wanting to fuck you again, then I'll have to set you straight again. Understand?” His voice admonished her, but sounded strangely exhilarating.

She couldn't speak as the sexual shockwaves rocked her world. Finally, she managed to blurt out, "How Neanderthal of you." He'd stunned her, but, damn it, she'd liked it! She couldn't let him feel he controlled her, even if he did. "You'll never keep me in line that way, if that was the point. Is this what you meant by I have to obey you?"

"I suspect you'll enjoy it."

She could only stare at him, her ass still on fire.

"You may have to even be restrained if you get out of control," he said, his voice light now.

She thought of him taking her while she was helpless, chained to the bed. "Oh, yes!" It just popped out and she wanted to catch her words and shove them down her throat when he grinned. She frowned and turned her head. "I...I'm not into that stuff. I'm a strong woman and I don't want a man telling me what to do."



He grinned at her, looking amused. "I know you're strong...but in the bedroom you want a man who takes charge. Two different things."

She opened her mouth to argue, but she couldn't. How did he know her naughty sexual fantasies?

"If you truly object, I'll stop. I get no pleasure out of doing anything the women don't enjoy."

The women. Of course, a gorgeous hunk like him had had his share of women, but she didn't want to be reminded of that right now. "I'll let you know," she said, ungraciously, jealous that he was so much more desirable than she was.

The hot intensity of his gaze made her sex drip nectar. If he was a pervert, she was too. Her head was spinning, but in a good way, like she'd drunk too much vintage champagne. She felt light-hearted, flighty, very aroused. She arched toward him, her nipples so tight they were like rubies and her pussy clenching emptily.. She tried to remember how she'd gotten here again, but her thoughts were all muddled, except for her need of him. "I give up. Look, if you're waiting for permission to do anything to me, the answer is yes!"

His Adams Apple was bobbing up and down, but now he seemed frozen, unable to join her.

"I know I'm not pretty," she said, an image of her angular face taunting her. "You're probably used to beauties. But I'll make a confession to you." She felt her face heating as she admitted, "I *do* like kink." He just stood there. How humiliating it would be if she offered him her body and he turned her down. She'd thought that he wanted her too, had she read the signals wrong? Somehow she remembered that men never turned down sex, even when women weren't that hot. "Don't you want me?"

“Of course I want you,” he said, his gaze ghosting over her body, back to her face. “But you seem like you’re under the influence of the paranormal. There are good and evil forces, and I want to make sure a demon isn’t driving you to seduce me. Is any presence telling you to let me have my way with you?”

“The only demon here is me!” She was so ready to fuck him. His indecision was driving her nuts. “My mother’s voice, that you believe is from the spirit world, was actually the one telling me...to kiss you.”

He smiled a little. “That’s excellent.”

“You don’t think it’s odd that I feel like my mother is urging me to have sex with you?”

“No. It’s a sign this was meant to be,” Cruz said, and he looked up at the ceiling, or maybe the heavens. “Don’t steer me wrong,” he said, in a soft voice. “But I don’t suspect you are.”

Cruz had never felt a psychic force as strong as the one pulling him toward the woman. It was beyond his control because certainly he knew he shouldn’t touch her. *Why shouldn’t I?* He’d forgotten how or why she was at his cabin. And he didn’t care either. His need to take her was making his dick go crazy.

“She needs you, Cruz.”

His mother had never delivered a sexual message before. Falling beside Lindsey on the mattress, he gently pulled off a jail smock. Had he brought home a

prisoner? He didn't care. All he knew was he had to mate with her, possess her, make her his. "Deliciosa," he murmured, pressing his lips between her ample breasts. She moaned, grabbing the back of his head, mussing his hair, pumping her sex up against his body.

"You're what I've been waiting for," she said, breathing hard.

Cruz had never been so turned on in his life, although, in the back of his mind, he knew this alliance was dangerous. *She is my captive.* He knew this, but not why. It didn't matter. The thought still turned him on both erotically and emotionally. But, behind his wild passion, he felt a strange calm, as if this were right. One hand squeezed a plump breast and he wrapped his free arm around her, holding her. Their gazes collided and he smiled then rolled her to her side and kissed her. Damn, but she tasted so sweet and womanly. He snaked his tongue around her mouth and when she responded, he teased her by pulling away.

"Hey!" she protested.

He laughed, then stripped off her pants. When he saw her laying in the middle of his huge bed wearing only her lacy white bra and panties, he could feel the air leaving his lungs. Her slender neck reminded him of a beautiful dark swan and her abs and legs were long and lovely. His gaze fixed on her tits. . Most thin women didn't have the chest she did. His gaze took in her seductive form. *Who is she?*

“I know I’m not built very well...”

“Shush.” He grinned and tugged on her bra’s shoulder strap. “This needs to go.”

“Oh! Yes,” she said, her lovely caramel complexion tingeing pink..

He cradled her panty-clad pussy in his hand and squeezed it, making her wail. She writhed and moaned and his own excitement mounted. “The briefs have to go too,” he said.

Her eyes looked misty and hot and he wasted no time pulling her up. He climbed behind her and unhooked her bra, resting his cheek against her sweet smelling, course yet soft hair as he slid the bra off her arms. He tossed it to the ground then turned his face in her smooth, thick lilac-scented strands. Gently he kissed the top of her head and then reached in front of her to grope her boobs again. Strumming his thumbs across her nipples, he felt his belly quivering as she mewled. “Lay back down again,” he said scooting beside her, pinching her hard buds.

“Ow! Oh, but it felt good. I—I’m out of c-control!” She pulled away from him, but quickly threw herself over his body , slithering down his chest to his belly and then grazing his flaming hot cock with the side of her face.

Shit on a shingle! Seeing stars, he slid to the side of her and slowly pulled down her panties, his hands trembling. He let out a primal growl as he tossed her briefs

aside. In a manic frenzy, he threw off all of his clothes, tossing them to the ground, then he sat up, naked, to stare down at her, his cock on fire.

She opened her legs for him and he knew she wasn't usually this responsive, although he wasn't sure how he knew. Nor did he care. Drawn to her tuft of tight curls, he untangled her hair with his fingers, then slid his forefinger down her wet slit. She shuddered, watching him, as he tasted the nectar off his finger. "Sweet," he said.

"I need you. Take me now, Detective!" she cried out, her eyes tightly shut, her fists balled above her head.

"Cruz," he said, softly. "Call me that."

"That's your real first name?" She was panting as she spoke, but she opened her eyes a little, telling him she was at least half listening.

His cock distracted him, but he managed to answer. "Diego Cruz, but everyone calls me Cruz. Call me either, but if we're going to make love, don't just call me 'detective.' What's your name again?"

"Lindsey." She touched his cheek and he could feel the sweat on her palm. "All right...Cruz. I want you inside of me. Please."

He settled between her legs and licked her cunt and she screamed. Pumped, he then slid his sweaty body up her form, his flesh flaming as it rushed against hers. They both gasped as he anchored himself over her—Lindsey, his captive.

Soon she would belong to him. She was his for the taking, and he planned on accommodating her wishes. And his own.

Lindsey's pussy was ready and waiting for him to fill her emptiness. The slow, hot entry of his cock's head made her gasp and grab onto him. "Oh!" she heard herself say, as her pussy sent shivers to every cell in her being. She tilted her head back and purred like a kitten, both cold and hot at the same time. He pumped into her, the gentle rolling waves digging deeper and deeper inside of her. She hoped she wasn't suffocating him as she squeezed him. Tickles of light sensation rode through her pelvis, bringing tears to her eyes. Just when her tension rose to a peak, he pulled out of her then thrust inside again, this time hard and high, and his rhythm sped up as he rocked his body completely into hers. His power overtook her and she heard little cries coming from her throat as his cock filled her clear to her womb. "Cruzzzzzzzz!" she called as he rode her harder and faster until the mounting tension was ready to overtake all of her.

Colored lights exploded behind her eyelids, as she heard Cruz's wolf-like growl. Warm seed blasted inside of her and she raked her nails down his back. She shuddered while her pulsing pussy milked every drop of his come.

When their bodies quieted, they lay close together, holding one another, breathing hard. She had one arm around him and the other stroking his sweat-drenched hair. She never thought she'd catch her breath again.

He didn't pull out until he was soft and then he sat up, panting, staring down at her with a shocked expression on his face. As the contact broke, Lindsey's memories returned in a flash and she froze, her gut clenching as her jaw dropped open. They stared at one another until tears filled her eyes and her heart started beating erratically. "Colin's dead," she said, in a hoarse voice. "And...I'm the main suspect...and you're a detective." She swallowed hard, disbelieving. "This was...wrong. Colin just died...how could we?"

He pushed his hair off his forehead, frowning.

"I...must have lost my mind...and you took advantage of me..." But her heated body told her otherwise. "Okay, I know I wanted you," she said, "but I wasn't in my right mind. I didn't remember ...anything. "

"I didn't remember anything either. Do you believe me?"

"Yes." She knew he was telling the truth, although she wasn't sure how she knew it. "What happened?" she asked, but it only came out in a whisper.

"The spirit world, Lindsey. It was meant to be. A force bigger than us wanted this to happen."

"It was consensual," she admitted. "In fact...if you hadn't taken me, I would have embarrassed myself by begging. But that's not like me."

“Apparently it is like you, when you’re with you’re the right man.” He twisted a strand of her hair around his finger. “We’re both hearing from the spirit world that I’m the right man for you.”

She felt a strange energy in the air and inhaled her mother’s scent. “You know, I’m starting to believe you about this psychic stuff,” she said, fighting dizziness and, at the same time, trying to calm her still hot body. “Nothing else makes any sense. If you’re psychic, can you make me do anything you want?”

He laughed and held her chin and she sobered, looking into his dark eyes, something she was starting to really enjoy.

“No, nothing you don’t desire,” he said.

And she knew that was also true so she closed her lips. With the certainty of her knowledge, she suddenly felt a pang of fear, but not for herself. “If you’re this psychic detective,” she said, and now she connected the words to him, “what am I? The psychic murderer?” She smirked, coming back to reality. She was in a shitload of trouble whether or not this man could give her mega-orgasms.

“Stop that.” He pulled her head against his chest, stroking her hair. “If I have to leave this world doing it, I’ll find the real killer.”

She started trembling, simply at the frightening thought.. “I don’t want you to die.” She couldn’t bear it, because she loved him. *But how can I love somebody I barely know?*

Cruz brushed his hot lips against her ear, sending goosebumps down her spine. “Nobody really dies. They just go to another place.”

“Well, I don’t want you to go there unless I go too.”

He squeezed her shoulder. “When it’s time, it’s time. I refuse to have you waste your earth life in jail for something you didn’t do.”

“Why do you care so much?” Her heart fluttered. Would he say he loved her? She wanted him to! Then she’d know she wasn’t feeling this alone...

“I don’t like innocent people going to jail,” he said.

Her heart sank, and she was just about to ask him if that was all it was when they were interrupted by a loud pounding at the cabin’s front door.

“Diego, I know you’re in there!” a deep, frantic voice called out. “Open up!”

“Ah, shit, it’s Raoul, my asshole cousin,” Cruz said, getting off the bed. He quickly started dressing.

She felt a chilly breeze, not sure why. “He’s not a good guy, is he?” she asked, frightened.

Cruz laughed. “He’s a cop, and my younger cousin, but he’s more of a fuck-up than a good guy. Come with me.” He finished closing his last shirt button, then grabbed her hand and pulled her off the bed, surprising her. He brought her to a lightswitch. “See this?” he asked, in a whisper. She nodded. He flipped the switch

and the wall rolled back, exposing another room, a chair, bed, sink, refrigerator and walled off toilet area intact. Lindsey gasped.

“Stay in here, it’s a safe room,” he ordered. “I don’t want to take any chances of him seeing you here.”

“No, me either,” she said, her heart slamming against her chest. “Do you have to shut the door? I...I’m claustrophobic.”

“Yes, I do,” he said, in a no-nonsense voice. When she let out a breath, he softened and grabbed her hand. “You won’t be in here long. If I have to kick his ass like a football, I will.”

She pulled herself together, not wanting him to see her too vulnerable. “I’ll be okay.”

“All right. I’m leaving.” He winked at her then stepped out of the room and she froze as he flipped the switch again.

The door shut quickly and a light went on automatically when it locked. Lindsey took a few deep breaths and walked to a leather chair, sitting on it, closing her eyes as she leaned back.

Cruz didn’t even bother to put his shoes on as he marched into the living room while his cousin banged on the door and yelled for him. *What a moron.*

Raoul knocked again. “Diego!” he yelled. “Please Diego! Answer!”

“Shut up!” Cruz threw open the front door to his cabin, but stepped outside, closing the door behind him. His cousin was still in uniform. The clean-cut young man was tall, fit, and attractive with baby blue eyes and curly brown hair. Still, to Cruz there was something seedy about him that took away from his handsomeness.

“Oh, I’m so glad you’re home, Diego.” Raoul said, with exaggerated happiness. He took handkerchief out of his pocket and mopped his brow. “First of all, cousin-to-cousin, where did you take Lindsey? I won’t tell anyone.”

Cruz felt a huge wave of psychic darkness. He decided to play it cool and not tip his sleazy cousin off. “I can’t tell you. Cousin-to-cousin or not.”

“Some think you have her. But that seems too obvious.”

Cruz figured that some would think he had her and he couldn’t verify it in any way. Still acting calm, although not feeling it, he said, “Look, I’m tired. Forget about me. Why do *you* need me? You in trouble and you want me to talk to Hamilton on your behalf? Well, I won’t do that anymore.” He turned to go back inside, but Raoul grabbed his arm and turned him around, annoying him.

“I’m not in trouble with the department.”

Cruz rolled his eyes. “What is it then...and make it snappy.”

Raoul nodded fast. “Yes, yes, I know how busy you are, Detective.” His jealousy was almost hidden, but Cruz caught the thread of underlying sarcasm. Dismissing

it, he waited for Raoul to go on. “After the meeting, I went home and the house had been ransacked,” Raoul said, his eyes almost popping out of his head. “Everything...thrown around. Some electronics taken!”

“A robbery. Don’t you lock your doors?” Cruz heard his loud voice echoing and willed himself to quiet down. But he didn’t want this complication right now and prickles of annoyance persisted. “Well, you’re a cop. You know what to do.”

“Somebody wants me dead.” He reached into his pocket and handed Cruz a note.

Trying not to look impatient he read the computer generated message. “*Leave town or I’ll make sure you leave town forever.*” Looking up he said, “Somebody you arrested, no doubt. You think being a cop is a safe job? You should have been an accountant, except of course you would have needed me to pass your CPA.” He handed the note back to his bug-eyed cousin. “Take care of this yourself.”

“I think this is serious and wondered if I could stay at this retreat with you until I catch my enemy. You have such good security and I feel like I’m being hunted.”

Cruz thought about Lindsey and wanted to rush back to her. Over his dead body would he have let Raoul stay in his retreat even if Lindsey wasn’t there, but she was. His fists balled at his sides. “You’re armed.”

“Do you...well, you know I think that psychic shit is crap, but do you feel any vibes?” His cheeks turned red as he looked away. More acting to get sympathy? And what the fuck was this about his psychic vibes. Raoul teased him non-stop about how his psychic abilities were nonsense. Now he wanted a reading. Well, he could feel something, but it was vague. He *did* get the sense that Raoul was somebody’s target, but, damnit, cops were always at risk. He couldn’t get a sense of who his enemy could be. “Look, somebody wants you dead, but I don’t know who.”

Raoul flinched and gasped, turning pale.

Cruz stared at him. “Man up, will you? You can handle it. If something comes to me, I’ll let you know. *Even though the paranormal is pure bullshit.*” He made sure he kept a stoic face.

Raoul scowled, but then his expression turned desperate and he grabbed at him, Cruz stepping back in time to elude his repulsive touch. “Don’t do that, man!”

“Hide me, Diego. I’m begging you, for my mother’s sake. I’m afraid I’ll get killed and I—I can’t, not now.” His mouth twisted. “And everyone at on the PD is concerned with the death of that Colin guy, not just you. They don’t care about me.” He looked terrified and Cruz, against his will, felt a tad of pity for him, if only because he was such a weak man.

Well, even though Raoul was hopelessly flawed, he couldn't not help him. "You can stay at my small cabin near the border."

Raoul glared at him. "That's pretty far from Flowers, a real hike to work."

Cruz shrugged. "Nobody knows about it so you'd be safe. Look, I'll get you the key. Wait here." He turned to go inside, anxious to do the deed and be done with him.

"Diego, I'm so hot...I'm shakin,' man.. Can I at least come in for a beer?"

Cruz felt a stirring of dark energy and froze. The feeling passed quickly, but he wanted Raoul out of his space and far from Lindsey. "I'm all out. Stay here." Cruz went inside, got the key to his cabin then came outside again. He held up the key. "Don't trash my place," he said, coldly. "Now get lost or I'm going to give you a sendoff of my own."

Okay!" Raoul walked away, shaking his head. "You didn't have to be such an asshole. I'm your cousin, and you don't give a shit about me..." He was still rambling as he slammed into his car. The kid wasn't cut out to be a cop. Or anything that required courage.

As Raoul backed the patrol car out of the driveway Cruz stared to make sure he was really leaving. He smirked when Raoul turned on the siren simply so that he could blow off the few traffic lights on the country road and drive fast. What a complete jerk. As soon as the screeching squad car was out of sight, he

went back inside, anxious to check on Lindsey. He hurried back to the panic room, to find her curled up on the chair her eyes squeezed shut. He picked Lindsey up off the chair she sat on and set her on his bed. "I'm so sorry about that," he apologized, noticing her eyes were shut. Was she sleeping or just blocking out the world?

She turned to her stomach with her eyes still closed and his heart melted as he climbed in beside her, stroking her hair. "You all right? He's gone," he said, feeling a strong wave of protection.

His answer was an unladylike snort and he grinned. Then he slid under the covers beside her and pulled her limp body into his. Nobody would get to her on his watch. He was honored that powers greater than himself had entrusted her into his care. "Thank you," he said to the gods above.

Chapter Four

Raoul raced the squad car down the darkening country road as he told what had happened with Diego to the pretty blond who sat in the back seat. When they'd been at Diego's place, she'd been hiding on the squad car's back seat floor. "You could thank me for trying, you know," he said after he was finished and she remained mute. His cock was rock solid, even though she wouldn't sit near him.

"You didn't get inside to see if he has her," she said, in a bitter voice and he wouldn't tell you who does so I'd call it pretty useless."

Raoul glanced at her pretty face in his mirror and felt anger swelling inside of him. "You better appreciate all I'm doing for you. I expect payback."

"All you did so far is get us banished to Wisconsin!"

"It's not Wisconsin."

She laughed with derision. "Close enough. You won't get your reward until you find Lindsey, put a gun to her head, make her write a confession, then kill her. My nerves can't handle the investigation focusing on me in any way. I need to be cleared in everyone's mind."

"Ivy, I know. I'll find her and do it."

“ I’m a esteemed preacher’s daughter and Sunday School teacher,” she said, her voice rising, almost hysterical, “and you’ll get your reward for me when Lindsey is the presumed murderer! Case closed!”

He tried to calm himself, like his bitch of a mother had tried to teach him to do. He could still hear her screaming at him in Spanish. “*You’re like your no-good father with his bad temper! Why can’t you be like Diego? I wish he was my son instead of you! Count to ten!*”

“Slow down the damn driving!” The frightened soprano voice from the back seat snapped him back to the present. “You’re going over one hundred, Raoul!”

“Sorry.” He slowed to ninety-five, banishing his mother from his thoughts. He took a few deep breaths, then said, “Look, can we fuck at the cabin? I did try.”

“Hell, no. ” She sounded incredulous. “Sorry, but that’s a reward and you didn’t earn it yet.”

“You promised to marry me.” He gritted his teeth.

“Yes, yes. I will.” She cleared her throat.”But not until afterward.” Suddenly she coughed up a sob. “Look, it all went so wrong. I was pissed at Colin, but I didn’t want him to die.”

“I know. Sometimes things go wrong.”

“When...when I put the drugs in his drink...I wanted to take it back. It was too late. But, I swear, someone else was there after me. I didn’t stick a knife in him. Do you believe me?”

He didn’t really care. In fact, he thought she sounded too guilty about the whole thing. He’d never felt that murder was a bad thing if you had a good reason. And Colin refused to stop seeing Lindsey, so he had been in essence cheating on her. “Sure, I believe you, sweetheart,” he said.

“I wouldn’t put it past Cruz to have Lindsey in his house. Maybe that’s why he didn’t let you in.”

“I doubt it. He has never let me inside his retreat. I’ll have to think of another way to find where Lindsey Benton is.” Raoul’s mind wandered. The chief wouldn’t be stupid enough to let Diego look after Lindsey, would he? It had been obvious to all that he had been attracted to her. Still, Raoul had wanted to look inside the cabin, maybe have a chance to go through Diego’s things as his cousin slept. Hell, he’d love a chance just to find out Diego’s secrets, even if they had nothing to do with Lindsey.

Raoul’s mood blackened. He thought about Diego’s psychic vibes that had told him that somebody really *did* want to kill *him*. That was odder than hell since nobody had actually broken into his house and he’d typed his own threatening letter. So where had those vibes come from?

You're losing it, Raoul, if you start believing your cousin really has magical powers. He probably just said that to scare you.

"I'm so pissed off!" The young woman's high, bitter voice brought him back to the present again. "Cruz caused this mess with Colin. Indirectly, he did. He's guilty."

"I have always wanted to ruin his career." He laughed, rage overtaking him. "I would kill him if I could get away with it." Actually, before he disappeared, he had hoped to do just that.

"You can't," Ivy said, sounded as if he were an idiot, which ticked him off. "You'll ruin everything. We can't have two dead bodies." He heard her sob and it went to his heart. "I don't really want *anyone* dead, but with my dad a preacher and my DNA in that house...my life and, more importantly, my dad's life will be ruined if anyone isn't sure I didn't do it." She wiped her eyes.

"You sure love your dad." He'd never understood their weird connection.

"Yes, I never even loved Cruz the way I love my father. He's special to me. We share so much."

"Fine, sweetheart. I'm here to serve you." Raoul could see her in the squad car mirror wiping her doll-like gray eyes with the back of her hand. She was acting more vulnerable now. Good. Shit, he loved her. "I won't cheat on you when we marry..."

“Stop talking about that! Crap, just stop!”

Raoul felt his heart thumping against his chest and bit his lip and tasted blood. He licked his wound, hoping Ivy didn't see it and get grossed out. . Whether she wanted to marry him or not after the mission was completed, she wouldn't have a choice as far as *fucking* him. She had signed her life away by asking him to risk himself for her. She'd promised to marry him, but, if she went back on her word, it didn't matter. They'd be married in every way except legally.

He forced himself to do deep breathing and thought of the pleasant part of things. If need be, he'd kidnap Ivy to his hideaway forever. Eventually, she'd come to see the soft, tender and loving side to him; the man who only wanted her devotion and who'd fulfill her every wish...except allowing her to leave his trailer in North Dakota. Nobody knew he owned it or that he'd driven there a few times fixing it up. His plan to get back at those who had wronged him after his taking revenge against them had been in place for many years.

“Are you hungry?” he asked, feeling suddenly empowered. “We can pull over at a truck stop. You stay in the car and I'll bring you something.”

“No,” she said, moodily. “I just want this to be over.”

“All the same, I'm stopping,” Raoul said, willing himself to take control of her. He had to be a man, like his father and mother had always told him.

“*Take good care of my sissy son,*” his father had laughed at his mother just before slamming out of the door for the last time.

“Raoul!” the high voice screeched. “You’re driving off the road! Focus!”

“Oh! Sorry!” He straightened the car and clenched his jaw, trying to clear his mind of ugly memories. After he did some deep breathing, he said, “I’m going to pull over and buy some food and you *will* eat.” *Sissy, my ass!*

She didn’t say anything and he took this as a good sign. Ivy Weatherspoon had been the love of his life since Cruz had snagged her. It was his pleasure to do anything for her, even wrong. But he never did favors for free. “Hamburger?” he asked, spotting a small dive in the middle of nowhere.

“Whatever you want,” she mumbled.

He pictured being in bed with her and her saying “*Whatever you want, my love.*”

His mouth watering for Ivy, not a hamburger, he pulled into a parking spot and got out of the car. “Stay here,” he said.

“I don’t exactly want to be seen.”

“I understand.” He got out of the squad car and whistled as he entered the greasy dive.

Chapter Five

When Lindsey awakened, even before she opened her eyes, she felt a sense of dread in the pit of her stomach. *Colin!* When a warm hand caressed her cheek, brushing her hair back, she opened her eyes and instantly felt relief. “Cruz,” she whispered, a warm feeling calming her down inside. He lay on his side, propped up on his elbow as he stared down at her. His dark eyes flickered with deep concern. She was awed at how good he looked with his tousled hair and dark five o’clock shadow. He wore no shirt and his bottom half was hidden under the covers. She wondered if he was nude. “When did you wake up?” she asked him, feeling a rush of excitement inside of her.

“I’ve only slept for short periods of time. Mostly I’ve been watching you since I came back from getting rid of Raoul.”

“He’s gone. Good. How long ago was that?”

“Twelve hours . It’s 8am the next day.”

She gasped in shock. “I slept all that time? How did I sleep at all, with everything that was going on? I don’t remember being tired.”

Cruz lifted his eyes briefly. “I’m sure a guardian angel, perhaps your mother, put a sleep spell on you. You needed to rest badly.”

“I did.” Her body suddenly jerked under the covers as all the memories flooded back to her, good and bad. “Unfortunately, I remember everything. Even...” She caught her breath as her pussy tingled. Considering all that had transpired, how odd and inappropriate of her to feel sexual right off the bat.

He frowned as he stroked her hair. “Don’t think about that now.”

She had actually been thinking about their wild, kinky sex, but since he meant Colin, that was what now flooded her mind, bringing her way down. “I’ll never forget finding him.” She shuddered. “And, yes, it was terrible, but...it wasn’t a *completely* horrible day...because...”

“We found each other,” he finished, his expression softening. “It’s okay that we enjoyed one another on the day Colin passed.”

“It’s disrespectful...”

“Only humans feel that way. Spirits want us to move on with our lives. And that’s what you need to do.”

She swallowed hard, then grabbed him around the neck, feeling his cock pressing into her pussy. He turned her on, but, on a psychic level that she didn’t understand, she felt she knew him as a person already and she cared for him way too much. “Cruz,” she murmured, wanting to say so much more, but the words were stuck in her throat. *What should I say? I think the spirits want me to love you and I’m getting there fast?*

“Yes, novia.”

“Are we...supposed to fall in love?” She felt fluttering in her stomach. “Is that what’s going to happen?”

He ran his hands over her back’s hot flesh and set his cheek against the top of her head. “Soulmates have to work hard and pass many obstacles to earn being together.”

“Oh!” Her body stiffened. “Does everybody have a soulmate?”

“No. But it seems that you and I do.” His words sounded soft, soothing, like hot chocolate on a wintery day.

Lindsey’s mind was growing tired from all the lessons she’d learned in such a short period of time. For the moment, she shut off her thoughts and concentrated on his hands as they lightly caressed her skin, causing her flesh to prickle with heat. When he cradled her ass, she startled at the white hot sensations rushing through her veins. . “I...if we’re soulmates...I want to know more about you, your life. Why...you and Raoul don’t get along. I want to know everything.”

He licked her ear, which drove her insane. She only barely heard him saying, “And you will, novia. “ He pulled back and stared down at her with his penetrating, dark eyes. “First, though, I’d like to take a shower with you...we could both relax that way.”

Her pussy tingled. “Um, yes. I would like that...but I...don’t have any clothes except my jail scrubs to change into.” She laughed.

He pulled her as close as possible and her breasts melded into his chest. He angled his hot lips over hers, making her head spin. When he pulled back, he said, “You can wear my clothes, although they’ll be big. I’ll ask Destiny to buy you some clothes in your size. Maybe sexy clothes. She’s good friends with a woman who owns a sex shop.”

She gulped. “That would be good.”

He looked self-satisfied. “And now...” he said, standing up and reaching for her.

The idea of sex in the shower with Cruz sent a monster shiver through her body. He grabbed her, making her giggle as he hefted her over his shoulder. She laughed heartily now, as he carried her through his room and into the adjoining bathroom. She kicked her feet, protesting. “You really are a caveman!” she said, as he opened the beveled shower door and brought them both inside.

After he set her on her feet, facing him, she looked up at his mischievous smile and her knees turned to jelly.

He turned on the shower and warm water sprinkled over their heads. She watched him, awed, as his long, dark brown hair grew wet and hugged his skull and his athletic, muscular body with its wide shoulders dripped beads of clear

liquid. Steam billowed up from the floor, giving her an otherworldly feel. No surprise with all the paranormal stuff she was starting to experience.

Cruz adjusted the water temperature then grabbed a bar of pine-scented soap off a ledge. His balls jerked as he reached over her shoulders to lather her back and delicious ass.

“Oh, yes,” she whispered, in a dreamy voice.

Aroused by her reaction, he stuck a slippery finger inside her tight back door and she jolted straight up, squealing with surprise. Then she let out a pleased moan arching back at him as her ass rippled on him. His cock stirred at the sign that she was interested, but he pulled his finger out wanting to take things slowly.

“Tease!” she pouted pretending to slap him, but missing his cheek on purpose.

“You’re tight,” he said as he slipped his soapy hands all around her now, finally stopping to squeeze her sudsy boobs. He molded her nipples while she moaned, squirming a little, then he stood back to stare at them. Tweaking one then the other, his cock swelled as he took in a huge breath. His entire being shook with passion and want of her loveliness.

She smiled, eyes shut. “You have such good hands.”

He continued using those hands to lather her thin yet curvy body, the one that was perfect for his tastes; his feel. Then, with quick movement, he piled her hair on top of her head and eased the soap into its thick strands. "This doubles as shampoo," he explained. "Very expensive stuff, this is. Very beautiful hair you have, princecita." He lathered her hair as she sighed. His cock was filling up. Breathing faster, he said, "Turn around and throw your head back so I can get the suds out of your hair." She obeyed him at once and he smiled as her chest stuck up invitingly when she tilted her head back.

There was something extra sensual about water and a lovely naked lady...*his* lady. After the last of the soap slid down her back, he pulled her into him hard, making her gasp. Her back pressed against his chest, her hot ass bumping his erection. His cock was filled aching for her as he pressed it harder against her sexy round butt and kissed her neck. She dropped her head forward and he nibbled on her soft nape. She mewled with pleasure, rubbing her ass against his shaft. "I've got to have you," he whispered into her ear.

"I want you too," she said, in a husky voice.

He stepped around, in front of her, and his bones melted as his heart leaped to his throat. "What are you waiting for?" she asked, flashing him a beautiful grin, droplets of water raining over her.

He picked her up, his hands cradling the globes of her ass and slid her wet body up and down his own, torturing them both. She gasped then grabbed him tight around the neck and held on, her boobs brushing against his chest, her pussy rubbing against his quickly expanding dick. He kissed her jaw, her neck, her shoulder, all the while feeling his need build up as she laughed and cried.

“Cruz,” she said, and he loved the sound of his name on her lips. “Crrrrrrrrrrrrruz,” she said again, this time teasing him a little, rolling the “r.” “Omigod! You feel so good, I could hold you forever. And ever and ever and ever...” It ended in a moan.

His belly and legs were trembling, not to mention his manhood. Twirling her around, he braced her back against the wall, then pulled his body away from hers just a little and looked into her round honey-colored eyes. They told him to come and get it as he surged inside of her, making them one. She cried out, her pussy milking at him and he almost blew his load.

He pulled out and she cried “no” as he surged his cock back inside of her, rocking into her now, setting a driving rhythm that left them both fighting for air. His shaft climbed as high as it could go and he saw stars. They rocked together, harder and faster, his hands holding her ass cheeks as they pumped. And then she was coming, crying out as she climaxed.

The stars before his eyes turned to black dots and he felt his body erupting as his seed blasted inside of her. He heard his own animal cry while she shuddered against him hard, her tears rolling down his neck.

Slowly, he turned them in a half circle and backed himself into the shower's wall again and slid to the ground with her in his arms. They ended up in a corner, her legs around his torso, his cock still inside of her, her head on his shoulder. Breathing hard, he tipped his head back against the shower's tile walls. He wondered if he'd ever catch his breath again.

The warm water sprinkled over them both. Besides the shower, the only sound he heard was their panting. It was at least fifteen minutes before he gently set her beside him, stood up on trembling legs and shut off the water. Stunned by the intensity he had felt, both sexually and emotionally, he stepped out of the shower and grabbed a dry towel from the linen closet. When he returned, she smiled at him as he entered and he saw a sparkle in her eyes. His psychic powers told him that she was feeling him beyond just lust. But he couldn't be sure. Psychics could often tell other people their fate, but weren't very good at reading their own. He knew he was in deep and hoped that she was with him on this.

"I'm cold," Lindsey murmured and her arms covered her body while her teeth chattered. "Would you mind lending me the towel, Cruz?"

I can be such an insensitive ass. Quickly, he knelt beside her and wrapped her in the towel.

“You must be cold too,” she said, in a sweet voice, opening the towel for him.

“No,” he said. He was actually still too hot to feel the cool air. “I’ll be okay.”

When even her hair had dried to curls around her face, he picked her up and carried her to his bed, laying her in the middle of his mattress, afraid of how much she meant to him. Fated or not, it was scary to come face-to-face with his soulmate who just happened to be in a hell of a lot of trouble.

Lindsey was still quivering from the sex, ready for more of him. He stood beside the bed, his hair drying, but his body still slick and inviting. The strange look in his eyes, deep and passionate, moved her in a way she couldn’t understand. And right now she didn’t want to analyze it because she needed to touch him. He felt better than anything in the world. “You should join me,” she said, in a kidding voice and, to entice him, started playing with her pussy.

His gaze riveted down to her busy fingers that strummed her clit and she kept it up both because it felt good and because Cruz was staring at her, breathing heavily. She knew he was enjoying her show, damn it, he’d driven her nuts; it was his turn. After her eyes teared from the clit play, she shoved all of her fingers up her sex and gasped, arching, aware his stare never left her. While she shuddered with

her climax, she set her hands over her heaving abdomen and watched him through blurry eyes.

Cruz was rubbing his cock between his hands. “That was exciting, novia,” he said, “but from now on, I tell you what to do and when. Understand?”

A flutter of excitement rushed through her belly at his dominant command. “I’m sorry. I never had to ask before.”

“Forgiven.” He took her hands and pulled her off the bed, making her face him. Then he sat on the edge of the bed, and before she knew what had happened, she was on her belly over his lap being spanked with hard, tight smacks. “Don’t come until I say so,” he said. His hand struck her cheeks, driving her mad with pain that quickly melted to delicious pleasure.

“How can I...hold it...” She was trembling from the shockwaves of desire.

He smacked her harder and water filled her eyes as she bit her lip. Her pussy wanted to erupt, but she managed to hold in the mounting climax. Her clit was twitching. How long would he make her wait? How did he expect her to hold together?

“I like how your ass is trembling,” he said. His hand rained down on her ass with steady, strong blows and she couldn’t think straight. The tension inside of her would make one hell of an orgasm once she could let it all out...

“Now,” he said, in a cool, seductive voice.

And she let go, feeling like an overstretched rubberband that had been released. Her body erupted madly as ripples of icy, hot sensations exploded throughout her being. She shuddered again and again as she saw dancing lights behind her eyelids. After she finally collapsed over his lap, limp as a rag doll, she realized that she had come all over his thighs.

He was too sticky for the juice to only be her own. He'd also come and she wanted to lick him clean. She could feel his eyes on her so she looked up, not surprised to see his heated gaze catching hers. "I want to drink your come," she said. "May I do that, Your Caveman-ness?" She added a pretty smile. "I asked."

He rolled his eyes, but she could see the corners of his lips fighting a smile. "If I'm a caveman, what are you? You like it."

"Your willing sex toy." She watched him take in a shaky breath. Good, he'd liked that! He may think he was in charge, and she loved his dominance, but she had ways of calling the shots too. "May I?"

"Yes. I'd like to watch you do that."

Eagerly she lowered her head and lapped his come off his thighs, his dick, and the bed. Then she slid off of him and got on her knees, licking the rest of the seed from his legs. His leg hair tickled her tongue, a strangely erotic feeling. She could hear him moaning and finally felt his hands stroking her hair as she continued to lick him clean.

When her tongue returned to his balls, he let out a primal growl and bent over as he shuddered like an earthquake. A bit more come spilled out and she was more than happy to clean him up all over again.

Finally, he pulled her to his lap and she sat there, her head resting on his hard shoulder, her hip scraping his cock. He was holding her tightly. She couldn't have gotten away this time if she'd tried, but she didn't want to.

“Oh!” she said, shutting her eyes. “Cruz...no man has ever done to me what you do.”

“You've had many experiences?”

She thought he sounded jealous and tried hard not to grin. “Look, you know I'm not chaste, but at the same time I never enjoyed any of the guys. And...” she felt her face flaming, “...none of the other men did anything spicy. They were boring...and I had to fake my climaxes.” She looked up at him and saw the satisfaction in his eyes. “It's totally different with you,”

“It is for me too,” he said, and his words shocked and excited her. The only words that could have made her happier were if he'd said he loved her. She already felt love for him.

Chapter Six

After the exciting day off from work that he'd had with Lindsey, Cruz forced himself to focus as he threw on his detective clothes, a white shirt, blue tie and matching slacks. After dressing, he walked into the bathroom to comb his hair. His short, military-style cut was growing out and he'd be hearing about that from the chief.

Sweet memories flooded his head, blocking out his image in the mirror. It had been so nice yesterday after the hot morning sex. He smiled and relaxed as he'd remembered sitting on the sofa with Lindsey, his arms wrapped protectively around her as they'd watched funny movies. Afterward, she had taken him to the kitchen, insisting on cooking a good spaghetti meal. He'd watched her cook, obviously comfortable in the kitchen, and the sauce had smelled terrific. When the meal had been finished, she'd served him, pretending to be a ditzy waitress, until he'd doubled over laughing. He hadn't ever remembered laughing so hard...usually he was reserved. When dinner was on the table, they'd sat next to one another, eating, feeding one another, and talking about unimportant topics. He sobered. Neither of them had brought up the unavoidable problems ahead...he had wanted

to distract her from that and she'd acted as if she'd wanted to pretend they weren't going to happen.

After dinner he'd wiped her cute face then carried her off to bed and they'd made love half the afternoon and night. While deep in the throes of his passion, he had done all he could make her his, but every trick he'd tried had backfired on him, making him more and more her slave. He'd never tell her that. It was incomprehensible. No woman had ever wrapped him around her finger before. And even though he knew that fate wanted them to fall in love, he didn't feel right caring for her so deeply. In fact, his heart contracted as he thought about how vulnerable this situation made him.

He let out a breath and tossed the comb back to the sink counter. *At least I got her to smile even if I gave her my heart.* He didn't want to think about that now. There was still a murderer to catch to keep her out of jail. Picking up his cell phone off the sink he called Atkins Security, people who knew him well. After making arrangements for guards to come right out, he shuffled out of the bathroom and halted, staring at his angel. His agitation melted as he saw how lovely his Lindsey looked, laying on her back sleeping, her hair sprawled on her pillow around her thin, delicate looking face. A big blue quilt covered her to her neck and she appeared as if she were a beautiful exotic doll with freckles sprinkling her nose and cheeks. *Once you catch the bad guy, she leaves you, Cruz.*

He'd find a way to keep her. With renewed confidence, he strode to the bed, and sat down beside her. He hated to wake her, but laughed when she let out her now famous sleep snort. Then he shook her shoulder and her eyes shot open at once.

"Cruz," she said, and broke into a smile that lit up her sleep-laden gaze.

He couldn't hold in a smile he as gently stroked some errant hair strands off her cheek. "I have to go to work and I wanted to tell you."

"Well, I'll be all right alone." But she didn't smile and looked away from him.

His stomach twisted at her show of distress and he reached under the covers for her hand. "I have to help Chambers interrogate some people. I'm better at it than he is."

"Then go. I want this solved and I'm sure you're the better man." She reached out with her free hand to caress his face.

His entire being flooded with affection as he stared hard at her. "As long as you stay inside and don't answer the door to anyone you'll be fine. My security system is the best. I also have some private duty guards coming out as insurance."

"Cruz, I'm not afraid to be here alone. I'll just miss you while you're gone." Her lashes shielded her eyes as she blushed.

I'll just miss you when you're gone. He savored the words even as he worked hard to keep his facial features straight, but couldn't resist cupping her chin in his palm.

“I wish you could handle a gun.”

To his surprise, she sat up and her face brightened. “I can. Do you think police officers are the only women who can shoot?”

He felt a wave of relief as his heart sped up. “You look so feminine, I didn’t think you’d ever held a gun.”

“Well, you couldn’t be more wrong. I’m a regular Annie Oakley.” Her honeyed gaze twinkled at him. “You must own a gun or two,” she went on. “Give one to me, if that’ll make you feel better. My dad taught me how to shoot. I’m pretty good, thought of joining the military.”

Cruz smiled wider, his muscles relaxing. Amused, he said, “I have a few guns, novia.”

“Great! Let’s me see them.”

He stood up and took her hand. As she also stood up, dressed in one of his tee-shirts that fell just above her knees, his eyes crossed. She was sexy even in his shirt. “Let’s go to my gun cabinet,” he said, swallowing a lump in his throat.

After showing her his guns, she picked out a Beretta and she loaded it herself, sliding in the clip. He could tell she was definitely comfortable with guns. Good! After that, he led her back to his room and gave her his terry cloth robe which was laughingly too big for her. He gazed at her with affection. She looked

tiny and cute in it. “Don’t you dare peek outside for any reason,” he said, sternly. “The guards don’t need to know why they’re here.”

She looked at him, all big eyes and dark curls. “I promise.”

He chuckled. “You’d better behave. I’m going to check to make sure every window’s drapes are completely drawn. Sit.” He took her by the shoulders and settled her on the edge of the bed, his cock stirring. “Stay.”

“Sit. Stay. You sound like a dog trainer.”

He laughed as he walked to the bedroom window, beginning his sweep of the cabin. However, her talk of the dog trainer had given his cock a jerk and he had an idea so she’d remember him until he came home.

Five minutes later, he was back. She was still seated on the bed, her arms crossed, her pointy little chin lifted. Most women in her situation would have been a mess of tears, or at least that had been his experience. He glanced at the gun in her lap.

“Annie Oakley,” he said his hand behind his back. “I have something for you.”

He saw her face tinge red. Grinning, he held out his prize in his palm, two straight golden pins. She took them, got off the bed, and held them up.

“Nipple clamps,” she said, sounding intrigued.

“Put the gun down.”

She laughed and set the gun on the nightstand, her eyes bright.

“Think about me when you wear them today.”

“Trust me, I will.” She stroked them with her finger.

His hands shook a little as he slipped off the robe then pulled up her tee-shirt, throwing it off of her, exposing her plump breasts. Focusing on her rose-colored nipples, he fastened the nipple clamps then admired how hot they made her look, hanging and jiggling from her hard nubs . Whistling low at her caused her to grin and play with her gifts.

“I’ll wear them as much as I can stand it,” she promised. “Lordy...the sensations are unbelievable.” Her voice lowered. “These are something else.”

Cruz wanted to fuck her once before work, but his cell phone rang with the chief’s jingle.

“*I Fought the Law and the Law Won?*” she asked, laughing at the song.

“Yeah.” He frowned, not answering, knowing Hamilton wanted to make sure he was on the way. He glanced at the gun on her nightstand. “Have to go or the Chief will get pissed off. The security guards will be here any minute.”

“I’m good,” she said, glancing at the gun too, then back at him. “Go now,” she said. “I don’t want you to get into trouble because you’re watching me.”

He sighed knowing she was right. If the Chief fired him they were both doomed. It was always possible because some higher ups thought he was a fraud,

and the chief was under pressure to get rid of him. He couldn't give his foes any ammo.

Cruz reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet and handed Lindsey his business card. "Sweetheart, call my cell if you need me. Don't hesitate."

She nodded.

Cruz didn't want to go, but he kissed her quickly, tugging on a nipple clamp as he did, liking how she grabbed his crotch. He forced himself to pull away or he'd never leave. Turning around he headed out of the bedroom, stopping just outside the doorway, twisting around to face her. "Remember, I'm available to you all the time. Call my pager if you need me." He gave her one last look, almost running back to her. With a lot of effort, he winked at her and she hotly winked back. Then he turned and made his legs head out the front door.

As soon as Cruz was gone, Lindsey sprung up from her chair, her nipple clamps shooting hot flames from her breasts to her pussy. How was she supposed to deal with being turned on all day? For all her big talk she was saddened that Cruz had left her, even though rationally she knew he had to. She took a few steps toward the middle of the room and realized how empty it felt without his powerful presence. Then her eyes fell upon his desk and she brightened. Maybe there was something interesting to explore, something to help her get to know Cruz better. She took a few steps, then stopped, her conscience gnawing at her.

How would you like it if Cruz looked through your drawers when you weren't home? In spite of her guilt, her curiosity was stronger and she found herself walking to his desk and opening the drawer.

“Wow,” she whispered to herself, picking up a stack of faded old-fashioned color snapshots. To her delight, she breezed through pictures of Cruz that spanned haphazardly from his childhood to his police academy days. A few younger pictures were shot with a twenty-something woman who looked a lot like him...his mother...she just knew it, could feel it. At an older age, he was in a few photos with a chubby woman with curly hair who held his hand and that of her son, Raoul. She knew this to be factual as well. Raoul's photo, even as a boy, gave her the chills so she put the pictures away and was about to shut the drawer when she spotted a larger picture, stuck in the back of the drawer, one that she'd originally missed. It was hidden under a notepad. Curiously, she picked it up and looked at it, her heart stopping

A saucy-looking young blond woman stared at her with flirty lime green eyes. Her thinly plucked brows gave her a look of doll-like surprise, but she was still beautiful. Lindsey turned it over on impulse...or was it?...and read the flowery writing. *“I worship you, my sexy Latin Lover. Your cock is to die for. From your main squeeze and love forever, Ivy Weatherspoon.”* A wave of jealousy rippled through her.

This Ivy person had made love to him...Cruz had loved her once. But, Lindsey, that's not fair. You made love to other men too and loved them. Or thought you did.

She quickly shoved the picture out of sight, shut the drawer and walked back to his nightstand, deciding not to look anymore. Swiping his tee-shirt off the floor, she pulled it over her head, then slid onto the bed, picking up the television's remote control. She put on a game show, avoiding the news, but couldn't get her mind off of lovely Ivy Weatherspoon. How in the hell could she have a chance with him if he dated women who looked like that? Even if he thought she was his soulmate, did she really stand a chance?

She heard a car pull into the driveway. Good, the security guards were here. Suddenly the room seemed cool and she frowned. Psychic vibes? Had she picked some up from Cruz? What it possible? She tried to relax. It had to be her vivid imagination. A car door slammed, which she sort of ignored, but a few seconds later she saw two shadows outside her window and heard two loud male voices. Curious, she muted the television's sound and listened.

One said, "About time he drove off. I got so tired of watching the house."

Lindsey stopped breathing. What was the man talking about?

"Yeah," the other voice said and Lindsey sat up and stiffened. "Cruz didn't leave the house all day yesterday. You'd think he was keeping a woman in here, hmmm?"

“Lindsey?” the other man asked and he howled.

Lindsey reached for her gun, trembling, and also grabbed the cell phone Cruz had left her.

“Look,” the first guy said, “I’m no hero. Let’s call the boss and tell him Cruz is on his way to work. That’s all we’re supposed to do. The boss is gonna get him to spill the beans about where Lindsey’s at.”

She aimed the gun at the window with one hand and tried to call Cruz with the other, but it was hard to do with her left hand.

“Maybe,” the other man said, “we should bust into his place and see if Lindsey’s in there. After all, we disabled the alarm system, so we can’t get caught.”

“No way! Why risk anything? He may have another system set up inside. I don’t know what rich people do. Let’s call the boss. That’s what we’re getting the thousand smackers to do. He didn’t tell us to do anything else. Okay?”

Lindsey finally managed to call Cruz, but was alarmed when his cell phone went straight to voicemail. Damn it, he’d forgotten to turn on his phone or it needed a charge. How careless of him!

“Okay,” one of the men said, quickly. “It’s done. Let’s go!” The shadows before the drapes disappeared and Lindsey ran to the window, throwing open the drapes, uncaring if she was seen. She had to somehow scare them into telling her what was going on so she could save Cruz.

But by the time she got to the window though, they were backing out of the driveway and the little white beater had no license on it. The car screeched out of the driveway like a bat out of hell.

Lindsey stood there, shocked, for a long time. Finally, she shut the drapes and walked back to the bed, shaking. In fetal position, she tried to call Cruz again but got voicemail again. She sent him a text to call home, but needed to do more.. Looking at the contacts in his phone, she found a bunch of unfamiliar names and then Destiny. She didn't remember her babbling at the psychic but Destiny's voice was concerned yet calm.

"I'll alert Chief Hamilton. Cruz is spacey about his phone."

"G-go see if he's all right. Go to his work. Or I'll go..."

"No. If you go you'll make it worse. Stay there and I'll call you as soon as I see he's all right."

"Destiny," she said, her teeth chattering, "I don't think he's all right. It's like I'm getting dark vibes from him." Her belly was trembling. "I just know he's going to get hurt."

She heard Destiny sigh. "Stay by the phone." She hung up just as Lindsey heard another car pulling into the driveway. This time she bolted off the bed and peaked out the window, ducking low, trying not to be seen.

A blue car with *Atkins Security* written on it had pulled up to the garage. Two brawny men in uniforms with guns stepped out of the car and she let out a breath of relief as she shut the drapes again. Then she slowly walked across the room, dazed, to wait to hear from Destiny or, better yet, Cruz himself.

Chapter Seven

Ivy drove quickly down the country road back to Raoul's cabin. He hadn't been happy about her leaving without him to go to the convenience store, but she'd promised him she'd come back. *Like I have a choice in this. Like I can just run off on him, at this time!* She needed Raoul right now. Shuddering at the memory of him pinning her against the wall, trying to kiss her, she told herself it wouldn't be forever. He'd eventually end up in jail and she'd be free. There was no way they'd pin Colin's murder on her. She'd make sure of that. She didn't really care much about herself, but she did care about her father. Her mind wandered, blurring the road before her.

Ivy and her father had always shared a very strong bond...a forbidden bond that she knew nobody else would understand. Her father had always done anything he could to make her happy so she had done some unorthodox things to cheer him up after her mother had passed away. After all, he had been so lonely...how could it be wrong to let her father touch her and to touch him back? It wasn't as if he'd had actual sex with her. She knew she should be horrified and disturbed because of her father's unusual way of showing his affection, but she had always felt special to him. And he

had never let her down, nor could she let him down. She loved him more than anyone on earth, had loved him even more than Cruz.

Her father didn't touch her that way anymore and she sort of missed it. She could never hate her father for what he'd done. Unlike some perverts who had touched her when she had asked them to stop, her father had always assured her that he would quit if she didn't want him to do it anymore. But she'd never told him to stop. He'd stopped when she came back from college the first semester. They had never spoken of it again, but still shared a strong, unbreakable connection. The fact that Ivy couldn't remember many of the times they had been together, puzzled her, but she pushed any worries about that aside. She even had some false memories of her father allowing Jack Peters, a boy he had taken a shine to and tried to mentor, also touching her while he watched, but she knew that was just her jealousy over Jack's relationship with her father. Her father would never ever allow even Jack Peters, his son by proxy, to touch her...he was jealous of all her boyfriends. She thought of her father's sweet kiss and smiled. If you loved somebody, it was all right if they touched you. Period. No matter what society said.

As if on cue, her cell phone rang and she answered knowing it was her beloved father. He always called at 8am, before he started his busy day, doing good

works for the community. “Hi, dad,” she said, in her most upbeat voice. “How are you? Take your blood pressure medication?”

He laughed, but there was a worry in the sound. “Yes. But I’m concerned about you, Ivy. I hired a lawyer, Dean Barnes. I want to protect my little girl.”

“Oh, daddy!” She had to make light of this so he didn’t have another heart attack. “I’m fine, really. I’m staying with a friend at a cabin near Wisconsin.”

“Who?”

Although he knew she was no virgin she didn’t want to bring him added grief about sex. She knew it made him jealous. *Let him think I’m with a woman.* “This is someone who taught first grade at St. Paul’s with me last year, daddy. She subbed for Valerie when she was on maternity leave.” Her stomach knotted. He could actually check out her lie since he was the Minister at St. Paul’s, but she knew he wouldn’t bother. He always took her word for everything.

“Why, that’s nice of her.”

“Yes, she heard about Collin and my ordeal and wanted me to rest.”

“Well, now, so do I, sweetheart. I’m glad it’s summer and you don’t have to work right now. This nasty business will be all figured out by the beginning of the school year. That tycoon’s daughter will be behind bars where she belongs. Cold-blooded murder is a terrible sin. The police called me to try to find you. Want to talk to you again.”

“Great. This won’t be over for me that fast. Maybe I should just go down to...”

“No! I’m going to have the lawyer call you, so keep your cell phone on. You don’t talk to anybody without him.”

“Thank you for hiring him.” But of course her father would hire a lawyer for her. He wasn’t a bastard like Lindsey’s old man. For some reason, that just made her sadder. She bit her lip as tears filled her eyes, blurring the road blurry. In the worst way she wanted to drive into a pole, but she couldn’t shame her father by committing suicide. That would ruin him in the eyes of his parishioners...his daughter killing herself. That was such a terrible sin against God. *Touching your child is supposed to be a sin too, but it can’t be in our case. I liked it. If only I could remember more about it...*

“Ivy, honey? You all right?”

“Y—yes.” She cleared her throat and her voice took on a more confident quality. “Daddy, I think we’ll find out Lindsey did it. Don’t worry, I’ll be cleared.”

“Well, everyone is innocent before pronounced guilty, I guess,” he said, “but that little tart has been in trouble before. Spoiled brat with a rich father. She thinks she can get away with anything.”

“I think it will be all right, Daddy,” she said, feeling nauseous.

“Don’t talk to anyone without Dean. He’ll help you; he’s the best. Only the best for my precious little girl.”

She held in a scream. “Thanks for loving me, Dad. I love you too.”

“You are everything to me. I have to go now. But I’ll be praying for you all day.”

“And I’ll pray for you too.”

“Praying will get us through this. The Lord will make us strong. I have to go now, honey. Bye.” He hung up.

Ivy pulled over to the side of the road to sob into her hands. Her entire body shook as she thought of her mild mannered, silver-haired father. *It will hurt him more than me if they put me through a trial. I don’t care if I die, but I care if he dies. He’s such a do-gooder, the world needs him.*

After several minutes of weeping she dried her eyes and pulled herself together. Once on the road again, she lifted her chin. Raoul wasn’t about to see her looking pathetic.



Cruz had his siren on so he could get to headquarters quickly, but when he saw a young woman on the side of the road, her arms waving for help, he instantly slowed his car. While he pulled over, he noticed her hair and face were both so muddy he couldn’t even tell what she looked like. Her clothes were torn and she

was screaming. He stepped out of the car and the young woman ran to him. “Oh, help me, please!” She motioned to a beaten up farmhouse behind her and said, “My boyfriend beat me and he’s still in there! Hurry!”

He felt strange, deceptive vibes from the young woman, but pulled her inside his cruiser ordering her to stay put. His hand on his gun, he burst into the unlocked house, his aura dark, somehow connected to Lindsey. But before he had a chance to look around, he was hit on the head from behind while two or three other people covered his head with a pillow case and knocked a dizzy Cruz to the ground. He struggled, but there were too many of them, at least two heavy bodies sprawling over him.

The blow to his head had made him feel like passing out. He knew he couldn’t lose consciousness or even stop being as alert as possible. When he felt a sharp blade at his neck he got his act together, speaking without sounding fearful. “You kill an officer and you’ll get the death penalty,” he said, in a rough voice, praying they backed down.

The knife was still there, but at least the pressure hadn’t increased. “Where’s Lindsey?” The voice asking the alarming question had been deliberately distorted and disguised.

Cruz’s heart sped up. “I let her off somewhere, but I don’t know where they took her.”

Another disguised voice said, "Dropped her off where? This is life or death for you, Detective."

One of the thugs had loosened the pressure on his hand and Cruz slowly felt for his gun. These yahoos were amateurs, to put it mildly. "I don't know."

"We've got all day," a thug said.

Then they weren't going to kill him anytime soon. He reached further down and grabbed his gun. Shutting his eyes, suddenly encased in Lindsey's loving vibes, feeling them giving him superhuman strength...the strength only a soulmate can pass to the other, he shot the gun at nothing, but that was enough to scare them off of him as they screamed and cussed.

"Let's go!" a female voice shouted. "He doesn't know!" It was the girl who he'd stopped to help. He heard pounding footsteps and by the time he'd pulled the pillow case off his face and ran outside, his gun ready, they were disappearing into the woods. "You'll all be in worse trouble if you don't stop!" he shouted, not wanting to really shoot at any of the would-be teenage attackers, more strong vibes telling him that none of them could actually kill anybody. He took a shot in the air, hoping to scare at least a few of them into freezing or tripping, then he bolted into the woods. The muddy girl was the only one still there, hiding and crying behind a tree.

Cruz was satisfied he'd caught one of them and dragged her to his cruiser, this time as a prisoner. He locked the car and started driving away although his head pounded and there were dark spots before his eyes. He didn't want to stay in the place of his attack in case they came back. And he wasn't in any shape to ask the girl questions. He pulled into a nearby empty parking lot in front of a defunct business and radioed headquarters. He hoped to hell that his call to Hamilton was coherent.

"Raoul set this up!" the girl suddenly cried from the back seat. "He's guilty, not me!"

Cruz wasn't sure he wasn't hearing things. That was the last thought he had before passing out.

Chapter Eight

An hour later, Lindsey was on the verge of busting outside and revealing herself to her guards, begging them to take her to Cruz. Destiny had already filled her in on his attack and told her he was being treated and released. But she wouldn't relax until she saw him herself. Then she heard him coming, making a joking comment to one of the guards, and felt the weight of the world lift off her shoulders. The door opened and she stood there knowing the love she felt for him shone in her eyes. Before he'd taken two steps, she grabbed him and hugged him for dear life and his arms wrapped around hers. "I'm all right, I'm fine," he murmured into her hair.

Tears spilled onto her cheek. "You could have been killed!"

He kissed her gently and she pressed her lips hard against him, feeling desperate. When they broke the kiss they stared at one another. "Babe, it was just a slight concussion."

"You were lucky." She wiped her eyes.

His lips twitched up a bit. "I felt your vibes. They helped."

"I was so scared..."

“Your concern was with me. That’s why I told Destiny to keep calling you to reassure you.”

She hugged him again. “It didn’t help that much. I wanted to be with you.”

He lifted her chin to face him, his eyes both soft and intense. “I’m here now. Hey, I’m a cop and things like this happen.”

She swallowed hard, noticing his furrowed brow and his pale complexion. He was in pain, but trying to hide it. “Don’t go out again tonight, Cruz.”

“Let’s lay down in bed and relax.”

She knew just how much he needed that so she helped guide him to the bedroom, fretting at how he seemed unsteady. But after he lay on the mattress on his bed, he said, “Come lay beside me, novia.”

She would have done anything for him as she settled beside him, throwing her arm over his strong chest, feeling his breathing. “Raoul is evil,” she whispered, a cold, icy feeling flooding her veins.

He lay still, staring at the ceiling. “All those years...trying to be his brother...well, that’s down the tubes.”

“He set you up.”

He pulled her closer and turned his head to kiss her forehead. “But I didn’t tell the teenage misfits he hired where you were. Nothing could have made me tell them.”

She choked on a sob. “Any of them talking?”

Cruz let out a long breath. “All of them, but they did it for the money. They know nothing of his motives or his whereabouts.”

Lindsey buried her face in his neck, wetting his skin. “Did Raoul get arrested?”

Cruz threw an arm over his eyes, put fiddled with her ear. “Nobody can find him. He’s missing. I wanted to go look for the motherfucker, but Hamilton sent me home to rest for a while.”

“For a while? You’re not going back out, are you?” She hugged him protectively.

Cruz said nothing, just laid there, and Lindsey started to panic. “No,” she said.

He turned to her and pulled her into him. “They wanted to know where you were. They were after you. I can’t let this go on. I have to solve this case.”

She thought of her own welfare and, to her shock, it meant nothing to her. “I don’t care if it takes longer. I want you safe or my safety doesn’t matter.”

He pulled back and looked at her with bewilderment. “It’s actually the opposite. To me anyway.”

She tried to stop the stream of her tears and smile at her beloved. He cared for her in a way that nobody else had. Yet she hardly knew him. On the other hand,

she felt as if she'd known him forever. All her life she'd felt as if she didn't matter to anybody. In a matter of a day, she felt more complete. How was that possible? It wasn't logical at all.

"I'm just trouble," she said, in a whisper, thinking of her father's words. "I don't want you to risk anything for me..."

He pulled back. "Those are your father's words. They're not true."

She smiled through her tears and kissed him again, wondering how she could feel this strongly about him so soon; wondering if this was a fool's game on her part...

The door opened again and Destiny walked in as they both pulled apart.

"I just wanted to say good-bye," Destiny said, trying to hold in a smile. To Lindsey she said, "I drove him home."

Cruz turned to her, his hand still grasping Lindsey's. "Thank you," he said, "for being a fussy old pain in the ass in the hospital." He grinned. "Did you call Hamilton about getting me that security company of ex-military personel to guard the house? After tonight, I don't think Atkins is good enough."

Lindsey felt a shiver as she saw Destiny and Cruz exchange serious expressions.

"I'll tell him. What was that name of the place you heard of again?"

"Jack Peters and Associates," Cruz said. "They were all ex-Marines."

Destiny looked a little confused.

“What?” Cruz asked.

She shook her head. “For a moment, I got a dark feeling when you mentioned their name, but I think it’s just all the drama of the night. Military men sound good. And change your security too. Upgrade. Obviously somebody figured out how to get past your gates before the Atkin’s guys arrived.”

Cruz squeezed Lindsey’s hand and she felt his strength. His face tightened. “Raoul knew how to get in...he knew my security code. I told him because he’s family, just in case he needed to get in...or his mother did...for safety. I never liked him, but never dreamed he’d try to harm me. I just need to change the code.”

“Well, you couldn’t know he’d do this,” Lindsey said, quietly, feeling the stress and anguish in his vibes. He felt he’d let her down; she could tell.

“Destiny, why don’t you leave now?” Cruz said, in a weary voice. “Until I’m called out again, I want to spend time with my lady.”

She nodded, smiling, then left with a wave of her hand.

Lindsey’s nerves were on overdrive as she grabbed both his hands and made him face her. “Cruz...I’m reading you really well. Don’t feel disappointed in yourself.”

Cruz frowned. “Not remembering to turn the cell phone on was not my brightest moment either.”

“It worked out.”

He swept her into his arms and kissed her with all his passion and her body melted into his. God, but he felt good, especially after the scare. She wanted to take out those who had hurt him. She never wanted him hurt again. She wanted to protect him as much as he wanted to protect her...and she knew that he did. When they pulled apart it was with reluctance and slowly and she stared into his imploring eyes. She reached up to stroke his cheek and he moved closer, breathing over her lips, warming her. “Truth is, you have me so distracted I’m not in top form. No lady has ever done this to me before.”

Her heart beat quickly and she smiled at his disgruntled expression. “Let’s go rest,” she said, quietly. “Trust me, Cruz; everything will turn out in the end as long as you keep your ass in one piece.”

He broke into a grin and let her pull him toward the bedroom. He didn’t even complain that he was the one in charge.

He cut her off with a kiss, then pulled back, his eyes soft. “And I don’t think you’re trouble at all.

As she helped him stagger down toward the bedroom, he said, “You must be a believer now, novia.”

Lindsey most definitely did believe now. The chill she’d felt when the two men had been in the driveway and her certainty that Cruz had been in danger

made her realize she had some powers herself. And she had the feeling that Cruz shouldn't step foot outside again tonight. "You'll rest tonight," she said as they entered the bedroom.

"I don't I'll be able to spend the whole night here." Cruz looked at her as they paused before the bed. "You don't have to worry though. The Chief probably already contacted the professional ex-military guards to watch my place and I'll bet they're already on the way. They know who they're guarding this time and are very skilled. You have nothing to fear."

"Yeah, I do. That you'll get killed!."

He took in a deep breath and shook his head.. "It's my job to free you of guilt. And Raoul...it's personal."

Lindsey knew he felt he'd let her down and that he'd make damn sure she was completely safe from now on. Still, she hated for him to put himself out there. Well, she'd discuss it with him more when they were alone. As if that would stop him.

Chapter Nine

The older man, dressed in his conservative gray suit and tie sat in the parish office gaping at the printed letter in his hand. “Daddy, I’ve left you to run off with Raoul Rodriguez, the man I really love. Don’t try to find me. I’m going into hiding because I know I’m still a murder suspect, even though I passed the lie detector test.”

She hadn’t even signed “love.”

Rev. Weatherspoon was frantic. He had killed Colin because he’d dare to put his hands on his little girl without his permission. *He had a flash of the Peter’s boy, Jack, fondling Ivy while he watched. He’d enjoyed sharing his daughter with the boy he’d loved like a son.* But he would have killed all of her other lovers, and had tried quite a few times before finally nailing one. Still...this victory had been perilous. He should have used his head, not his emotions...certainly Ivy would be a looked at, although, as luck had it, Lindsey’s DNA was all over Colin’s room, making her the number one suspect.

Tears rolled down his face. How could he live without his little girls' love? Maybe if he put a gun to Lindsey's head and made her write a confession, as Raoul had suggested, she would come home since she'd be in the clear.

Raoul! He seethed. He'd never dreamed the cowardly cop would be able to woo his beautiful daughter away from him. If he'd seen it coming...

There was a knock on his door. "Get the fuck away!" he yelled, in a soprano voice. He didn't even care if it was a parishioner. All he could care about right then was Ivy.

"It's me." The door opened anyway and a tall, strong Marine stepped in, his light features classically cut and handsome. At once Rev. Weatherspoon flashed back to the twelve year old boy whom he had mentored and whom he had allowed to touch his daughter. The boy was a man now, standing before him, and he had failed to live up to his potential. In fact, he was a bit evil and hadn't been worthy of touching Ivy, but Rev. Weatherspoon hadn't known it at the time and there was no use crying over spilled milk. To make sure he never blew the whistle on him, Rev. Weatherspoon still feigned affection for him.

"Oh...Jack." He tried to keep his voice steady. "Something has come up..."

"I know where Lindsey is."

Rev. Weatherspoon's jaw fell open. "How did you find out?" He gulped. "And...isn't it a little late? Did you hear that Ivy ran off with Raoul?" He balled his fists, waving the letter. "Read this."

Jack took the letter looking surprised and mildly abused. Rev. Weatherspoon wanted to slap him. "Well, this isn't good, but first things first." Jack put the letter on his desk, taking his time as if he was drawing out the suspense. Rev. Weatherspoon knew better than to tick him off too or he would walk away, holding his information to himself. He waited him out.

"You know how a few of us ex-military folks guard places for extra money," Jack said, stating the obvious. Weatherspoon nodded, his stomach clenching. "Well, Diego Cruz hired us to guard his palace. And he, of course, confided in us, because we all know how to keep secrets." He flashed a wicked smile. "Lindsey is with him in his protective custody."

Rev. Weatherspoon felt the breath leave his lungs. When he could speak he said, "If only I'd known this earlier. I suspected as much as did many people. Raoul had an outstanding plan..."

"I was in the other room, painting, like you asked me to, when Raoul stormed into your office," he explained, with maddening slowness and detail. "I don't think he even saw me, he was so focused. I listened by the door and overheard his plan to find Lindsey, put a gun to her head and make her write a

confession note about Colin's death...then kill her. The ole confession/suicide thing..."

"It was a good idea!" Weatherspoon hugged his shaking body. "Ivy is innocent, but she's fucked up because she thinks she's still a suspect, even though she passed the lie detector test. That confession would have cleared her and she wouldn't have run off with that slimeball!"

"Yeah, too bad Ivy got desperate and probably begged him to hide her."

It took every ounce of Rev. Weatherspoon's strength not to bawl to Jack like a baby, but he still had his pride. "I want to kill Lindsey for causing Ivy's heartache...and I also think Cruz would suffer. At the very least it would be professional embarrassment. At the most...maybe he cares for her..." he was almost spitting.

"That can all be arranged," Jack said. "My main motive is I hate Lindsey's old man. This is a white country and no black man should have as much as he does. If his daughter dies, maybe he'll become so demoralized he'll give up and sell his empire to a rightful owner, a white man."

Rev. Weatherspoon was used to Jack's White Supremist babbling. "Whatever the reason, if Ivy

"Look," Jack Peters said, suddenly squinting. "I can get you into Cruz's place and you can do with you want with Lindsey. I'll even help you. But you'll pay me."

“Yes, yes.” He was addled and distracted. “I don’t see how I’ll get inside...the other men guarding the retreat...”

“Leave that to me. Let’s get on over there and I’ll tell you my plan.”

“Okay...sure. But I need to call...” he felt his body filling with anger, “...the police first and tell them to find my girl.”

Jack said nothing while Rev. Weatherspoon reached for his desk phone and pressed the digits. And Rev. Weatherspoon forgot, for the moment, that Jack was even there.

Chapter Ten

Lindsey had retreated to the bedroom to lie down, nursing a headache from all the stress. Cruz and Hamilton spoke for a long time after. Finally she heard the Chief saying good-bye and the door opening then shutting. . A moment later, Cruz walked into the bedroom, tall, forceful and full of swagger. He was putting on one hell of an act, since she knew he had to still hurt.

“Hey,” he said, “Sorry I scared you.”

She sat up and glared at him, but at the same time admired the way his dark hair fell over his eyes and the unusual vulnerability on his face...and she loved him. “Too bad the knock on your head didn’t hammer any sense into you. You should stay off the case. I don’t care if it takes a little bit longer.”

“But I care.” He strode to the bed and slid beside her and she rolled to her side to face him, finally able to hug her love. Tears clung to her eyelashes as she kissed his face. “Are you all right? I was frantic with worry and you look pale.”

“This is part of the job.” He buried his face into her neck and let out a sigh that tickled her flesh. After kissing her neck, making her hot and cold, he pulled back, smiling. This close, her insides trembled and she brushed a soft hand across his cheek.

“How’s your head?” she asked, in a serious voice.

“Takes more than an iron pipe to do much damage to *my* hard head.” He chuckled.

Her eyes dampened again and she blinked hard. “I wanted so badly to be with you at the hospital...”

“I know, love. Destiny told me how worried you were, and I felt you too.”

Her breath caught.

“I’m glad to be here with you now,” he said, in a low, seductive voice that made her toes curl. “In fact...even with all that has happened I’m feeling...” his lips twitched up...”amorous.”

Her heart thudded both out of fear for his condition and pleasure that he had felt her love vibes and desired her sexually, even now. Confused, she said, “I guess that’s a good thing, but I don’t want you to make one damn move that will harm you.”

“This time I’ll lay back and let you do all the work. Is that what you want?”

She feathered his stubbed jaw with her lips. “We don’t have to have any sex. Just being near you is a big turn-on.” She couldn’t stop the nervous babbling. “I’m taking care of you tonight.”

He pulled back again, his dark eyes gleaming. “I hope so.”

She relaxed a little at his teasing demeanor. “I’ll be your nurse. Do you need any aspirin?”

“The pain meds from the hospital are still working.”

Her sex pulsed. “Well...okay then.” She cocked her head, feeling some vibes from him that seemed passionate and...what? Did she dare hope? “If you overdo it, I’m going to stop. This is one night when *I’m* in control, even in bed.”

“You’re such a sweetheart.” He groaned and her heart started to pound. “Peel the covers down.” But his voice gentled her, bathing her senses with warmth. “Let me watch you undress then I’ll have you take my clothes off, love.”

When he’d called her love, this time she sensed a deeper meaning to the word. Standing up, she let his bathrobe slip to the floor, then pulled his long t-shirt over her head, tossing it aside. “I...had to take the nipple clamps off. I wore them on and off all day, as much as I could...but I didn’t want to be sore for you.” She reached to the nightstand and picked them up, fastening them while he watched. Then, teasing him, she danced a little, jiggling them, and her breasts filled with luscious icy hot sensations.

He pushed himself to the edge of the bed and tugged on one nipple clamp, causing intense waves of pain/pleasure. “These breasts belong to me,” he said.

“Oh, yes!” She couldn’t undress him fast enough, yet she restrained herself from any swift movements that would jar his head. He helped her when necessary,

but allowed her to do most of the work herself. Her hands were trembling by the time she pulled off his pants. As she moved toward his arms; the ones she hoped would hold her, he held up his palm and she halted. “Are you hungry, novia?”

“What?” She blinked. “Really, I’m still too nervous from your accident to eat...I can heat the soup later. Why? Are *you* hungry?”

“No. I want you to spray me with whipped cream and lick me off.”

She gulped.

“I have some in the kitchen.”

“I’m so going to get it.” She took a step away from him, but he grabbed her in a surprisingly strong grip, spinning her around. Her heart fluttered as she felt pulled into his intensity. “Before you go,” he said, his compelling dark eyes drawing her in even deeper, “I want to thank you for today.”

She felt her heart hammering against her chest. “I wasn’t even with you...”

“I felt you sending me positive vibes when I’d been tricked, like you sensed I was in danger.” He paused as her mouth went dry. Pulling her closer to him, he said, “You alone helped me make good decisions; have clarity.”

She felt her body prickling as flames roared through her, pleased that she’d really helped him. When he yanked her into him for a tongue-fucking kiss that she could feel from her scalp to her toenails, she clung to him with all her heart.

Finally, he let go, his gaze not leaving hers, a piercing look in his hot stare. She could only stand there as her bones turned to butter.

“Now go,” he said, turning her around and slapping her butt.

She rushed out of the bedroom, her ass flaming, her nipple clamps dragging her nubs down and making them hard. As she ran out of the room, a thrill of anticipation raced through her body straight to her tingling clit.

Cruz knew he should just rest, but he was feeling a lot better. The pain meds were wearing off, but not so much that his head was throbbing in full gear, and he wasn't as dizzy as before. Heat and desire filled his being because Lindsey was irresistible and had tried so hard to help him. And she had. He owed her some serious pleasure. He couldn't fool himself anymore; he was falling in love with her.

Hell, he'd been falling in love with her since he'd seen her bravery on Courtroom Live TV after a contentious trial in which half the people felt she'd gotten off because of her father's influence. He'd connected to her aura then and had psychically known that her boyfriend had set her up, that she'd been wronged.

Yet she'd kept her chin up like the brave little imp that she was. And now that they had been thrown together, perhaps with a push from Fate, he loved her all the more. She wasn't focused on her own problems; she only cared about him. Nobody had ever given a rat's ass about him before except for his mother and he appreciated Lindsey to the core of his soul. He hoped she fell for him so that, as

soul mates, they would spend eternity together. It was one helluva wonderful thought.

When she bounced into the room, in all her naked splendor, her nipple clamps sparkling and jiggling, he felt lightheaded and his cock ached for action. She held a can of whipped cream in one hand and a basket of strawberries in the other. His dick pulsed with need.

Grinning, she finished her walk, then sprayed whip cream from his neck to his toes. Afterward, she arranged a circle of strawberries around his balls. “You look good enough to eat,” she said, with a saucy toss of her head as she licked her lips. “Now I’m hungry.”

Damn! He was trembling. “How did you know I loved strawberries?” he asked.

“Because I do,” she said too quickly and her eyes rounded.

Ah, she finally understands we can sense each other’s need; our cosmic connection, even though she doesn’t quite appreciate it yet. He smiled as he melted inside. “Eat one,” he said, “and give one to me.”

Her nipples, with their sexy clamps, seemed to swell. She stuffed a ripe, juicy strawberry into her mouth, then grabbed another one. With a sexy swivel of her hips, batting her eyes like a she-devil, she went to him, sticking a strawberry into his mouth. Wrapping her arms around him, they shared a long, tongue

swapping strawberry kiss. He ran his hands through her thick, luxurious hair then let one palm drop to her wet pussy, his finger wiggling her engorged clit. He heard her making kitten-like throat noises and wanted to grin, but not break the kiss. He finally pulled away, his head dropping back to the pillow with a slice of pain, which he tried hard to mask from her.

“I saw that,” she said, in a worried voice as she grimaced.

“Do you want me to get better?” He tried to hold in a grin.

She nodded soundly.

His balls jerked. “I’ll die if you don’t finish.” He made himself sound very sober.

She smiled. “Well, we certainly can’t have that. I don’t want to be charged with another murder.”

“Don’t joke about that,” he mumbled, feeling suddenly grouchy about the entire sad situation.

“Keep some levity,” she said, quietly. She rolled beside him then started to devour him. Her little pink tongue lapped his neck while her teeth nibbled on his skin. Going faster, she mingled the laps and nibbles with little kisses as she worked her way down his body. When she got far south, he opened his legs to expose his entire manhood to her, and she quickly climbed between his legs. Cruz held his breath, waiting for her sweet assault.

She set her mouth over his balls and sucked.

Cruz swore to himself as his mind left him. After that, she slid her hot mouth to his inner thigh...licking, kissing, and nibbling, turning his bones to jelly.

“Novia,” he said, sounding hoarse, “What you do to me...” The words were lost.

She giggled, then used her teeth to grab the last strawberry that sat on his balls. Lifting her head, she showed it to him in her teeth. As she chewed, his breath quickened. There was something wildly sexy about her head between his legs with her ruby lips chewing on a ripe red strawberry. The juice glistened on her mouth. She swallowed the strawberry, tossing her hair as he watched her, sticking out her chest to entice him. It worked.

“Take me now,” he ordered in a rough voice.

She smiled and ducked her head, then slid his pulsing cock into her warm mouth and sucked on him hard, like a baby on a bottle. Her tongue ravished his dick and he tightened as he threw back his head. It hurt him, but not enough to interfere with his mounting pleasure. He let out a guttural animal cry as his body convulsed while he spilled his seed. Her hungry lips and tongue coaxed every drop of cum out of him. After he had emptied, she didn't take his shaft out of her mouth until he was soft. Then she kissed his cock's head before sliding up his body to

take him in her arms. They rolled to their sides, holding each other tight. “You’re all sticky now,” she whispered and they locked in a passionate, juice swapping kiss.



After timeless bliss, Cruz slowly pulled back so he could stare into Lindsey’s sparkling eyes. A sizzle crackled in the air between them, shaking him up, showing him just how deeply he felt her. Aroused anew he licked her neck, tasting her hormone-flavored skin that mingled with whipped cream. His head didn’t hurt at all anymore. Had her loving healed him? He knew soulmates could promote health in one another.

“You’re sticky too.” He ducked his head and licked the sweet skin between her breasts. “We should take a shower together...”

“No!” She hugged him and he sniffed in the scent of turned-on woman. “I’m going to wash you while you lay in bed because I don’t want you to lose your balance and fall down...”

He lifted her by her ass cheeks and rolled off the bed with her in his arms, clutching her to him as she cried out in surprise. While she castigated him and ordered him to put her down, he stepped across the room, ignoring her, and entered the bathroom. Then he brought her into the shower stall and turned on the water, the lukewarm spray reviving him as he set her down, facing him.

“If you fall, it’s your own fault,” she said, sounding resigned now, blinking up at him as water splashed in her eyes, on her pretty face.

He temporarily felt great. “I always take responsibility for myself.” As the spraying water washed off their stickiness he pulled her into his arms and kissed her, running his hands up and down her slippery skin, sticking a few fingers up her ass. She squealed and threw her head back, surprised, and he bent over to grab her ass cheeks again, then grinned as he slid her up his body, his cock already hard as steel. Backing her into a wall, he then rode into her, one palm against her head to protect it. Her protests turned into delighted mewling. Her legs were wrapped tightly around his torso while he slammed into her over and over again until both of them shuddered and came.

After toweling her off then himself, he carried her to bed while she protested that she was the one who should be caring for him, not the other way around. He ignored her as he set her naked body on top of the bed covers, sliding next to her and holding her near him, certain that nobody he’d never known was as wonderful as Lindsey Benton. “I never met a woman like you.” He spoke right over her lips.

“Yes, always in trouble.”

“Yes, so much trouble.” He chuckled and reached under his bed pulling out his favorite whip, leather with braided tails. He sat up and showed it to her and she stroked it as if it were precious.

“Get in position please. I have to discipline my bad girl.”

She rolled over to her stomach, ass in the air, wiggling her butt at him, stealing the air from his lungs. She was so naughty. He stood over her, feeling a rush of testosterone, then struck her with a tight smack to one cheek and she gasped. He spanked the other and she let out a little yelp. His blows rained harder, one after another, from her shoulder blades, to the small of her back, to her ever-so-enticing ass and over again. When he was finished, she writhed on the mattress, crying out, “More! *More!* Harder!”

He dropped the whip and gently stroked her red ass with gentle hands.

“No, whip me again.” She turned her head to look at him, pleading on her face.

“No.” He stroked the back of her head and slid beside her, pulling her close until he was nose to nose with her. Her strawberry breath bathed his face. “You’re special. Precioso.”

Her eyes misted. Was that good? “So are you,” she said so it must be good. “Why would you say that about me?” she asked. “Really, I’ve been told all my life that I’m just a problem...”

“Your father.”

She nodded, biting her lip.

He pinched her chin between his fingers and spoke with all his heart. “He’s wrong. You’re worried about *me* while you have so much on your own plate. That’s *precioso*.”

She blinked her wet eyes dry then smiled, her lips trembling. Finally she said, “I’m innocent and, in the end, I know I’ll be exonerated. You, on the other hand, are very precious to *me*. I won’t take any chances tonight. If necessary, I’ll sit up all night looking over you. I.I...” she dropped her gaze, “...you’re so important to me, that you have to be all right. Al-although you do seem to be...recovering nicely.” Her cheeks flushed as he gazed at her loveliness.

“I always do.” Cruz pulled her on top of him and kissed her, getting lost in her sweet essence, wondering if his renewed dizziness was due to his concussion or the hot feel of Lindsey in his arms. “I love you,” he heard himself saying, then he caught his breath. What the fuck had he told her that for? What if she didn’t...

“I love you too.”

He wiped her tears off of her cheeks and gripped her tight. They fused together, wordlessly, for a long time and Cruz basked in her magical aura. He shut his eyes and just relaxed. It was worth it to get konked on the head to hear her say those words...his cell phone rang and he groaned, pushing her off of him as she slid

to the bed. He had to get it, there was no choice. Sitting up, he grabbed the phone off his bedstand. “Detective Cruz,” he said, pulling Lindsey beside him, his arm wrapped around her. He felt a chill as he heard the unexpected voice.

“Diego, this is Rev. Weatherspoon.” He was trying to catch his breath, and Cruz grew instantly alert. “I couldn’t get anyone in charge so I looked up your number from Ivy’s book,” he went on at super-speed. “She wrote me a note saying she loves Raoul and ran off with him! *Find her for me, damn you!*”

“Ivy and Raoul?” Boy, did it ring psychically true. He could feel the tremors of truth to his bones.

“Read me the letter.” Clutching Lindsey closer to him, he felt a spiritual wave of clarity.

“I hold you responsible if anything happens to my dear Ivy.” He sounded dangerous now. “You broke her heart...”

“Read the letter to me, please.”

“I will.” He sounded as if he were choking out each word. “I...I am running off with Raoul Rodriguez. I love him. Don’t try to find me because you can’t and I’m not coming back. I will be in touch later.” His voice broke at the end. “Find her, *damnit!*”

But he already knew where they were headed. *North Dakota*. They were on the way to North Dakota and Ivy was in danger, but he didn’t dare tell that to her

father. In his head, he saw a vision of Raoul racing in a pick up truck and Ivy beside him, drugged or sleeping...drugged made more sense. But he had no idea where in North Dakota they were going...or why. Had one of them killed Colin? Somebody in their circle had, but he didn't know who, even now. Maybe a hit man had been hired...

“Diego!”

“Officially she has gone of her own accord.”

“She must have begged him to take her away from this...this mess and...”

“I know this is against your religion, but my psychic vibes tell me she was forced.”

“Put out an APB. I demand it.”

“I'll do what I can.”

“You'd better.” His words sounded even more threatening, strange for the usually quiet spoken preacher. “I blame *you* for all of my daughter's unhappiness since your break up. Get back to me when you know more!” He slammed the phone down hard and Cruz sat there, certain that his visions were leading him in the right direction.

“Cruz?” Lindsey asked, quietly.

He rubbed her arm. “Got to call Hamilton.” He put his cell on speakerphone then called him as Lindsey rested her head on his shoulder. While he spoke to the

Chief, Lindsey leaned in closer to him. Cruz and Hamilton had a quick conversation. He knew what he had to do and Hamilton agreed. As soon as he got off the phone he turned to Lindsey. “Sorry, babe, but I have to get to my cabin and search for clues.”

“No, Cruz, you shouldn’t go back out.” She hung onto him tightly.

Cruz shook her off, hating to do it, then stood up and bent over to grab his pants off the floor. He started stepping into them while Lindsey looked on. He could feel her gaze and her worry and felt the need to try to comfort her. “I’m not going on a wild goose chase, Lindsey. I’m going to my cabin, where the son-of-a-bitch was staying, and I won’t be alone.”

Lindsey jumped out of bed and grabbed his arms. “No!”

He stopped, his adrenalin racing none-the-less. He felt antsy, but tried to placate her. “Baby, I’m not walking into danger; my cottage is empty. Maybe Raoul left clues as to where he’s taking Ivy. He’s not that bright.”

“Let the other people do it. Please, Cruz, I’ll be frantic until you get back.”. Suddenly her lips formed a straight line and he felt assaulted by her altered aura. “If you go, I go. I don’t care if people see me...I’m innocent and I want to catch these assholes too!”

Oh, great! Cruz could see her lifted chin and knew that she meant it, although, of course, he’d never allow it. The military guards outside his house

weren't even aware that they were guarding her. Secrecy was of the essence. He would have to betray her in order to save her. He felt a knot in his stomach, but he forged ahead, pulling her into him and rocking her. "It means a lot to you that I stay here with you," he said, in a crooning voice.

She hugged him so tight he could barely breathe. "Yes, it does. Either stay with me or take me with. I won't let you out of my sight."

He took in a deep breath, shut his eyes, then pulled back, hands on her cheeks, looking down into the love in her worried gaze. "Well, I don't want to frighten you, and somebody else can go through Raoul's things."

"Really? You'd stay home for me?" The way her smile broadened, he felt like a shit.

"Tonight, yes." He swung her around, dragging her across the floor, pretending to dance as he hummed an off-key song and she laughed with delight.

"I love you so much," she said, resting her head on his shoulder.

He swallowed hard. "You're the only woman I've ever loved." It was true, but...

"I'm feeling some strange vibes from you, Cruz." She sounded lighthearted though.

Obviously her skills at reading him were still in the very early stages. They were hit or miss, common in beginners, and she had missed. Was he deliberately

trying to block her? “Those strange vibes are because I want to make love to you in a new and different way.” He had sounded just right...quiet and sexual.

“Sounds exciting.”

He lifted her into his arms, forcing any guilt to the back of his mind as he set her on the mattress.

“Cruz,” she said, touching his cheek, “this will be a meaningful night since we both admitted our love for one another.”

He couldn't let himself get sentimental. Lives were at stake, in particular, hers. In spite of Raoul's wild chase with Ivy, Lindsey was still the number one suspect in Colin's death. That thought fueled his thoughts back to business, but he remained in sexy mode, at least on the surface. “Shut your eyes,” he said, in a low, husky voice.

She did. “Wonder what you're up to,” she said, sounding contented.

He went to his closet, pulled down a box and looked inside of it. All four leather cuffs with the fir inside them were still there. He set the box back on the closet shelf then walked toward Lindsey's relaxed body, her smiling face, her shut eyes. When he cuffed her wrist to the bedpost, it was so quickly done that she didn't have a chance to react until it was over. Her cheeks stained red. “Hey,” she said, “how did you know I was thinking about bondage?”

His cock twitched as he walked to the other side of the bed, taking her other wrist, kissing her fingers before he cuffed her. "I'm attuned to your desires," he said and clicked the second cuff to the bedpost.

Suddenly her eyes flew open as he grabbed her ankle. "Hey! No tricks, right?"

He felt worse than ever now, but didn't, couldn't back down. "Just close your eyes again. Relax."

"Hey!" She cried out, angrily, shock and betrayal on her face and it killed him, but he couldn't back down. He managed to catch her kicked leg and manacled her ankle to the bed, rendering her powerless. As she cussed at him, shouting every four letter word he'd ever heard plus a few new ones, he quickly finished dressing. "I'm sorry," he said when he was done and he faced her rage. It hurt him to see it, but he remained stoic. "I did what I had to do." He opened the bedstand drawer and stuck the key inside of it, then shut it hard.

"Fucker!"

Cruz was breathing fast. "Sorry, babe. I have to go without you, but I promise that waiting for me while in bondage will make it great when I get back." His levity would maybe soften her heart a little bit.

"You're not leaving me this way!" she cried out, struggling.. "What a dirty trick! I hate you!"

But he could feel how much she loved him and he flashed her a grin. “I can’t let you get killed, brave girl. If I have to be gone too long, I’ll send Destiny to free you.”

“Fuck you, asshole!”

“Oh, that comes later.” He couldn’t resist winking at her. She looked fetching in bondage and he wished he *could* stay home and just make love to her all night.

“I won’t let you touch me, you...you...caveman bastard!”

Cruz didn’t need to hear anymore. His head was filled with the sound of “North Dakota” and he had to check it out. This could lead him to the murder’s conclusion and free the one he loved. As he slammed out of the cabin, he could still hear her cussing him out. So could the crew of ex-military men who were guarding his house. A few of them gave him odd looks.

“You know how ladies are,” Cruz said, with a devil-may-care grin. “This one I’m entertaining is angry at me for having to go out on duty.”

He didn’t know or care if they bought it or not. For the price he was paying each one, they’d shut up and guard the house without asking questions about the cussing woman.

He got into his cruiser, put on the siren, and screeched out of the driveway. As he raced to his northern cabin, all he could think about was betraying Lindsey and how freaken hot she looked in bondage.

Chapter Eleven

In a plush New York office; one with oriental rugs, a liquor cabinet and fine art on the wall, a tall, neatly groomed, husky African-American man sat at his desk, his hands clasped across the breast of his expensive gray suit jacket. He had been stressed out and sleepless since Lindsey's arrest and thought he should try to nap. He didn't like himself for abandoning her to the wolves, even though she'd fucked up again. Still conscious, he felt as close to sleeping as to being awake, yet he suddenly saw, right before him, the beautiful form of his dead wife.

Jolted, he tried to open his eyes, but they wouldn't obey him. Well, he must be more deeply asleep than it seemed, and dreaming in living color and 3-D. Shit, why this? He'd tried hard to banish Natasha from ever being on his mind. It hurt too much when he thought about her premature passing, the drunk man who had rammed his truck into her car. It hurt now, seeing her in all her loveliness. She looked so much like Lindsey, definitely African-American but with the high cheekbones and exotic eyes of her gypsy blood.

"What the fuck is going on?" he thought he mumbled, although again he knew it had to be in his dream.

Natasha looked stern. “You can’t desert Lindsey, you old fool. You must know she didn’t kill Colin.”

He found himself back in the past, when the two of them had never seen eye-to-eye and he felt assaulted by her. “You missed a lot of her life, Natty! Her ex-boyfriend stole from my biggest store and it was her idea to hire him. She hates me and I think they were in it together.” In his dream, he turned his chair away from her, but there she was again, right before him staring at him. He felt his heart pounding.

“Damn you, go away!”

“Since this is the first time I’ve ever gotten your attention, I will not!” she said, crossing her arms and he noticed she was wearing a white dress that fluttered around her in his windless office. Was she an angel? No, that was plain kooky. “I know what you’re thinking,” she went on, harshly. “I can’t be here because I’m dead. Dead doesn’t happen the way you think and I’ve been watching how badly you’ve treated our daughter, and I can’t say I’ve been happy. You left her in the care of nannies.”

“I was just a little bit busy, Natty!” He couldn’t help treating her as if she were real and felt compelled to defend himself. “I was busy building an empire...what black man achieves all I have? It’s all for Lindsey when I...” He cleared his throat. Under the circumstances of his dream, saying “die” seemed

inappropriate. “She thinks I’m going to disinherit her, but I’m just...upset. And if she killed this Colin...and, yes, I know it had to be self-defense or something...but it’s still her fault she’s in trouble. She always picks these rotten white boys who only want her money!” He sat back, sweating, feeling strange, wanting to kiss his dream wife.

“You were wrong to believe that she helped Matthew steal from you. The stooge who did the lie detector test fudged the results, moron. He has a brother who worked for you, was fired, and ended up in a psychiatric hospital, so he had it in for you and Lindsey. You need to look into that. Lindsey would never do anything to harm you. She wants your love and you keep kicking her around. If I was earthly, I’d kick *you* in the balls.”

He felt a sudden, sharp pain in his groin and grabbed it as he screamed. Could you feel so much pain in a dream? He guessed so because he had. After he caught his breath, he swallowed a few times then said, “I didn’t know! You sure your information is right?”

Natasha smiled. “I can see everything. I just can’t share it all with you, humanoid. In fact, I’m in contempt by telling you as much as I have, but I’ll take my punishment. You needed to know the truth. Matthew planned that drug heist on his own and tried to pin it on Lindsey. Why don’t you trust her?”

Will felt his gut clench. “Maybe because I couldn’t trust *you*. And she reminds me of you.”

“I’m sorry I cheated on you, Will, but Lindsey is your blood daughter. Taking me out on her is wrong. I’m paying the price for my sins. You don’t want to have to go through what I have when your time on earth is over.”

He snorted. “You’re a dream, and there is nothing after you die.”

She stared at him and he felt odd, suddenly knowing he’d been wrong. He also felt her love for him. In spite of her affair, because he’d been spending all his time at work, he realized she had always loved him and nobody else and that Lindsey was truly his daughter, not the result of her fling. “I feel different.” He looked at Natasha, narrowing his eyes. “Why is this dream so real?”

“Let’s focus on Lindsey. She needs you.”

He grunted and tried to look away from her, but her image followed his gaze, which freaked him out. “It’s the damn men she keeps picking out!” he blurted to hide his fear. “That’s why she keeps getting into these messes!”

“She’s with her soulmate now, Will. The Fates sanction her relationship with him.”

“Is he black?”

She rolled her eyes. “Why does that matter?”

Will gritted his teeth then asked, “Why is her own kind not good enough for her?”

“Will,” Natasha said, and now she almost sounded kind, “you learn when you move on to the next life that race doesn’t matter. Our body is only a shell that holds our soul. We are all the same here. Perhaps in the past Lindsey was running away from you, the man who let her down...”

“Stop it!” He felt eerily like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.

“Well, at any rate, Diego Cruz is a wonderful man and she is his soulmate.”

“I suppose he looks white.” But Will was losing his bluster, starting to feel his usually hidden guilt toward his daughter.

“You need to get over this issue in order to walk Lindsey down the aisle when she marries him.”

Will snorted then laughed. “Lindsey is the prime suspect in Colin’s murder.”

“I have spoken to Colin in my world and he doesn’t blame her. Billy, you need to help her.”

Billy. Just as she’d called him in their college years. “You’re not really here,” he said, more to convince himself.

Will had no idea why he sat and listened to his dream wife chatter to him about Cruz and Lindsey’s safety and protective custody, but he did...and it scared him to his soul. He realized what a jerk he was being not to intervene on her behalf

and help her. Sure, Benton Enterprises may get some bad publicity, and some jerk was always quick to laugh at the successful African-American entrepreneur when he faltered...but Lindsey was his flesh and blood.

“I was thinking of sending her a lawyer,” he muttered, angrily at her. “But I don’t even know where she’s at. I’d like to talk to her. Where is she being held?”

“There are things I can’t tell you from where I am. You’ll have to find her yourself. It’s not like you lack the resources.”

Will still believed he had fallen into a deep sleep, in spite of it not seeming that way. Still, he loved the woman standing before him. And he loved the daughter she’d given him. And he’d been too hard on her too because, with Natasha gone, he’d had no idea how to raise a daughter. He knew he’d have been a better father to a son.

“I’ll do what I can,” he heard himself promising the fading mirage of Natasha. Would he ever see her again, even in his dreams?

“I come to you all the time. Until tonight, you just refused to see me. I think your guilt about not helping Lindsey is getting to you. Do what you know is right, and I’ll be back to give you comfort.” With that she faded away and Will’s eyes shot wide open. He was sweating and breathing hard.. For the first time since Lindsey’s birth, he believed she was his. *And what if she hadn’t been, fool? You raised her!*

Will felt as if his wife were alive and standing behind him, depending on him. He hadn't been there for her or for Lindsey before and wanted to be there now. It was almost as if his icy wall had melted; as if he'd been touched by a damn angel, something he didn't believe in, but he couldn't stop himself from feeling the love he'd always hidden from himself. His own father had worked so hard during segregation and beyond to give him a good life, but he still had never given his son the time of day. And his mother had run off with another man, leaving him behind...to build a brick wall around himself...

He didn't want the wall there anymore.

He called the phone number that he'd dialed fifty times before, but he had always hung up before it had started ringing. It was the phone number to the Barrington Police Department. This time he let it ring through, and, for just a second, thought he saw a flash of his dead wife before him, smiling.

What a hell of a time to go insane.



Raoul drove the stolen truck carefully, not exceeding the speed limit, although he wanted to put his foot to the floor. Next to him lay Ivy, looking as if she'd just nodded off, her head resting against the window. She was floating in and out of consciousness and he was afraid that if he injected her with more barbiturates, he'd kill her. Then she couldn't live with him in his trailer and be his

secret sex slave, just the two of them together on his remote stretch of land. He heard her stirring and trying to speak and smiled over at her with indulgence. He loved her so and she needed him even if she'd fought coming with him. He knew she'd killed Colin and her only chance at freedom was in his trailer, hidden away forever. No problem. He'd protect her.

"Raoul..." her voice was thick and he glanced over at her again, noticing that her eyes were two slits. "Where are we?" Her words were slurred as if she were drunk.

"Far from Illinois," he said, cheerfully. "We'll get to our hideaway and then you won't have to worry ever again that you'll go to jail...honey." He felt a little sexual tingle in his loins when he called her honey. "Look, I don't care that you killed the bastard. He was cheating on you. I get it. As long as you submit to me, the rest of your years will be pleasant in my care."

He heard her whimpering and thought he understood: fear of the unknown.

"Hey." He took her cold hand and she tried to pull it away, but he held fast. "It could be worse than being my slave. True, I'll have to keep you sedated and tie you up when I leave so you can't get out, but it's for your own good. Even your old man never took this good care of you, did he?"

"You...you..."

He stopped at a stop sign and faced her for a moment. “What are you trying to say...honey?” His cock twitched.

Her face twisted in revulsion and a wave of anger rushed through him, killing his good mood. “Listen, here,” he said, roughly, stomping on the gas pedal and driving on, “I’m doing a lot for you. I destroyed my career for you. Not that I liked being a cop, but still...I didn’t kill the guy. You did. I’m just sorry the plot to frame Lindsey failed.”

He heard her crying again, but tried to block out the sound. If he talked out loud he wouldn’t hear her sobs.

“Stupid little shits I hired couldn’t get my idiot cousin to spill the beans about where Lindsey was so I couldn’t find her. I was going to put a gun to her head and make her write a letter confessing to Colin’s murder then I was gonna blow her brains out, make it look like a suicide confession. You’d have been cleared. But...this is better. I’ve always loved you and now you can learn to love me. I’m a much better lover than Cruz and have a bigger dick.” He was just babbling and had no idea if it was true. It probably wasn’t, but, hell, he didn’t care. Ivy was his and his dick belonged to her and she’d like it whatever the size. He sort of sensed he was lacking, but...well, it was technique more than size.

“Y-y-you killed Colin,” she blurted, in a slurred and frightened voice.

Raoul shot her an angry look and she flinched. “What the fuck would I kill him for? You did it, slut. Don’t try to lay this on me. The only person I’ve ever wanted to kill is Cruz. I’d love to sneak back to Chicago just to kill him, but...well...I can’t leave you alone chained to the bed for days. You would starve. I would never do that to you...dear. I love you.”

Ivy whimpered and he slid her a glance, his hot temper flying to the surface as he slapped her across the face, quieting her. “Not another sound, wench!” He had her hands tied behind her back and her ankles tightly bound together as well. “Don’t make me gag you because I will.”

The next thing he knew, he heard her snoring. Good. He needed to concentrate on getting to North Dakota. Then his fantasy life would become a reality. Ivy would make love to him night and day. And if she didn’t want to, he’d force the issue gently. She would never say “no” to him again.

“Daddy! Oh, daddy,” he heard her wail and something snapped inside of him.

“You know,” he growled, although he doubted she’d believe him, “the idea to whack off Lindsey and have her write a confession was your father’s idea. He asked me to do it. He’s not this great man you seem to think he is.”

She just whimpered.

He had known she wouldn’t buy it. Well, he’d have plenty of time to talk her out of her incestuous love for her father. He had the rest of his life.

Chapter Twelve

Cruz was the first cop to arrive at the cabin. When he stepped inside, he didn't see much of anything out of place. Then, as he gazed around the room a second time, he saw a piece of paper on his computer desk and ran to it, picking it up. The printed words said, "You'll never find me or Ivy, asshole. We're out of the country by now."

Cruz read it a second time then stuck it in his pocket. He knew it was bullshit; his psychic vibes told him so. Muttering to himself, he searched the small living room and kitchen carefully, but didn't find anything else. There was a dark pallor in the cabin though. He knew bad stuff had gone down here.

In the bedroom, he froze, then hurried to the unmade bed. There was woman's lingerie on the mattress and, when he picked them up, he smelled Ivy's distinctive perfume. His heart pounding, he pulled all the covers off the bed and saw a few spots of blood. Shit. As he yanked out his cell phone the name of a city popped into his head. When he got Hamilton on the phone, he said, "Beach, North Dakota. Put out an APB, but, if they don't catch Raoul on the way, that's where he's headed. And he does have Ivy, against her will."

"How do you know, Cruz?"

“I know.”

A pause then, “Did the other guys get there yet?”

He could see a squad car pulling into the driveway. “They’re here and I’ll let them in, but I’m going home. There’s nothing more I can do and I want to protect Lindsey.” As he said the words, he felt a chill to his bones. “Somebody wants her dead. Somebody other than Raoul.”

“Who?”

“I’m not sure, but I’m leaving, Chief.” He let the cops in his cabin then took off, running to his squad car, suddenly sure he had to be with his love. Thank goodness he had the military people surrounding his retreat...that made him feel a little bit better.



Rev. Weatherspoon parked in front of Cruz’s retreat, noting all the armed guards barring his entrance to the property. Well, he’d talk his way inside using his credentials. Before he could even get out of the car, two tall security guards opened the locked gate and lopped up to his car and he got out, his wallet open. “Hi there,” he said, in a genial voice. “Diego Cruz asked me to come here to comfort the prisoner. I’m his preacher.”

The two guards looked at one another then back at him. “Identification?” one said.

He handed them his wallet. “The young woman he’s guarding asked if she could talk to me.”

Again the two men looked at one another then back at him. “What young woman?” one finally asked him.

“Oh!” Rev. Weatherspoon cursed to himself. So they didn’t know. Well, he wasn’t sure either, but he certainly suspected. “You must realize why you’re here. Lindsey Benton is in the house. Detective Cruz felt it was a good time for me to visit her since she’s by herself right now. She is, isn’t she?” He hoped to hell that the parishioner he’d paid off with church’s funds to watch Cruz’s house and let him know when Cruz left had given him correct information.

The two guards looked at one another again then at him. “We weren’t told whose here,” one said, shifting from one leg to the other, sober. “But...sure, we figured it was Lindsey. Still, I don’t mean any disrespect, but I think I should check before letting you inside.”

“Hey, George, you don’t have to check. This is my preacher. He’s a great man.” A third young man, shorter, was walking up to them and Rev. Weatherspoon knew that this was his lucky day.

“Daniel!” he said, with as much cheer as he could muster. “Why, fancy seeing you here.”

“Rev. Weatherspoon!” The young man grinned back. “Wow, it’s great to see you. I’m sure you can make...*her*...feel at peace and if she wants to confess...”

“I don’t know what she wants,” he cut in, aware that all eyes were on him. He was glad that it was such a hot day and that he’d kept that in mind when readying to come. If his plan didn’t work, he’d have to try something else, but he didn’t really have a Plan B. “It is hot out here,” he said, squinting at the sun. “You boys must be steaming in those uniforms.”

“Yeah,” one of the guards said, pushing his damp hair off his forehead. “I’m getting dizzy standing out here.”

“I thought about that.” Rev. Weatherspoon grinned, hoping his smile didn’t split his face or turn into a grotesque mask of horror. “Before I go in and visit...the prisoner...are you guys thirsty? I filled water bottles just in case you wanted some.”

That statement disarmed the two hardened security guards. They smiled at him and one said, “Actually, our own water bottles are getting warm.”

“Mine are on ice.” He walked to the car’s hatchback and opened the back door, revealing many water bottles packed inside an ice crate. “Help yourselves,” he said.

The young man named George cheered and called out for all the others to come over. Soon all the security guards had taken one of the water bottles that Rev. Weatherspoon had painstakingly prepared. As they stood around drinking

and talking, Rev. Weatherspoon won their confidence and Daniel handed him the key to Cruz's retreat, his hand trembling.. "I sh-should probably call C-Cruz first," he slurred. But he was half gone by then and didn't do it.

Rev. Weatherspoon stood around talking to the guards. By the time any of them realized they'd been drugged, they didn't seem to care. They just sank to the ground, one by one, shutting their eyes. Daniel was the last one to fall to his knees. "You...twicked us," he said in a thick tongued voice.

Rev. Weatherspoon didn't answer as his parishioner sank to the ground and fell under the drug's spell. He knew he'd go to jail, but, at this point, he didn't care. He'd risk his life for Ivy. He was an old man and she was young. He would set her free. He looked with satisfaction at the sleeping guards, then turned and unlocked the door, stepping inside and shutting the door behind him. He heard some whimpering and swearing as Lindsey called out, "Cruz, you fucker! Get over here!"

Smiling, he followed the voice to another shut door. Opening it, he whisked himself inside, drawing his gun, almost dropping it when he saw the scene before him, but he kept his composure. This was actually a lucky break, no matter what the hell was going on. Lindsey was nude and in chains. When she saw him she screamed at the top of her lungs and tried to break free.

He couldn't help but feel sadistic pleasure at finding her helpless. In a calm voice he said, "I'm Reverant Weatherspoon, Lindsey. Scream all you like, my dear.

Nobody can hear you. He added a smile as he cocked the trigger. "I'm not here to kill you. I just need a confession. I see that Detective Cruz has mistreated you."

"He hasn't! He did this to protect me...oh, why the shit should I tell you anything?"

"Because I have a gun," he said, still speaking in a pleasant voice and he laughed as she cussed him out.

Lindsey yanked against her bonds with all of her might and could feel them loosening, but she didn't let on. Clearly, she was facing a maniac and her only defense was to keep him talking and stall until Cruz got home. Her heart was racing. "Where are the guards?" she asked, her voice shaking, but no longer hysterical.

"Oh, they'll be sleeping for a long time." He pulled a small recorder out of his pocket with his left hand. "So Cruz abused you, did he?"

"No!"

"Looks like it to me."

She didn't bother trying to make him understand. "Look, can I at least get dressed before I give you a full confession?"

She saw a tic in his cheek.

“Please, sir,” she said, sniffing, hoping to hell that Cruz would intercept him. She could feel her lover was on his way home to her. “The key is in the bedstand drawer.”

She saw his lips tighten.

“Look, if I can’t even put my clothes on, I won’t confess,” she said, meeting his squinted, cold blue eyes. The looked like two ice cubes and she shuddered.

“I’ll kill you if you don’t.”

“Then you’ll never get a confession and Ivy could be charged.”

“You’re the main suspect.”

“But she’s one too.”

She watched the gun in the Reverand’s hand and it started shaking. To her relief he slid toward the bedstand and stuck his gun in his waistband. After he got the key, he cautiously unlocked her and, when she was free, she threw herself at him, but he managed to get his gun and point it at her head and she had to get off and back down. *Where is Cruz? I also feel somebody else who is close to me. Who could it be?*

“Easy,” he said and they faced one another, Lindsey panting. He he kept his gun aimed at her, his hand steady now.

“Can I still get dressed?” she asked in a sassy voice. “I still won’t confess unless I’m dressed.”

“Hurry up,” he snapped, letting out an exasperated breath. “Hurry, bitch! I don’t have all day!”

While she found her clothes and hurriedly put them on, his gun followed her every move. She saw no chance to rush him again without getting shot.

“Now,” he said, pulling out his mini-tape recorder again, “Talk about how you killed Colin.”

“It won’t hold up in court. You’re forcing me to talk.” *Where is Cruz?*

“Nobody will believe a Man of God pulled a gun on you.”

“You think you’ll get away with this?” First she laughed, then she stopped, realizing his mind had snapped. Obviously he had hurt the guards and they would testify in her behalf. Still, the idea of confessing to something she hadn’t done, made her sick. And he’d probably try to kill her anyway. She could feel Cruz coming closer...plus the other force; the one she couldn’t place. She decided she had no choice but to play along and do it slowly. “All right,” she snapped. “Turn on the damn tape recorder and I’ll confess, even though I didn’t do it.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“I know.”

He pulled out his tape recorder again, keeping his gun on her. He nodded his head.

Lindsey took a deep breath. She'd have to tell a long story because if Cruz didn't come home before she finished, she'd be dead. "Start," he said and he turned it on.

"It all started when I found out that Colin was cheating on me," she began, her words measured and slow, even as her body raced inside. She decided it was best not mention that Ivy was the other woman.. Taking another deep breath to waste time she said, "I'd been used before, and I just got out-of-control angry when I learned that I had been made a fool of again..."



Cruz felt a dark cloud of despair to his soul and knew that Lindsey was in deep trouble. He radioed Hamilton while he sped toward his retreat, but knew that nobody would get there sooner than him. His gun was ready. He was starting to realize why his vibes had confused him...still his psychic powers had pointed him in the right direction...indeed the killer had a lot to do with Ivy, although it clearly wasn't her. He drove ninety plus miles an hour, concentration on not to losing control of his squad car.

When he screeched into his driveway, he almost ran over a security guard sleeping on the concrete. "Shit!" he blurted, then threw the car into park and ran like the dickens into his retreat, feeling pure evil, his gun drawn. Rev. Weatherspoon had heard him and emerged from the bedroom, his own gun drawn.

“I have your bitch’s confession on tape!” he chortled, but kept his hand steady. Then he shot at him and Cruz hit the floor, shooting back, missing.

The next thing he knew, Lindsey had darted out of the bedroom with her own gun pointed. She aimed at Rev. Weatherspoon and shot him in the hand that held the gun. Then she shot him again in his shoulder while Cruz dove for his gun and took him down. He was miraculously still moving and Cruz shouted, “Lindsey, get back in the bedroom! Lock the door!”

“No way!” she shouted back, tears running down her face. She ran up to Weatherspoon and stomped on his face and he roared.

At that moment, a team of men stormed into the e retreat, lead by, of all people, her father. He also held a gun as did his minions. “Whoever the fuck you are,” Will Benton’s voice thundered at Weatherspoon, “you’re not leaving here except in handcuffs and if you try to hurt my baby, you’ll get my personal firing squad!”

Lindsey covered her mouth, tears spilling over her hand. “Dad!” she finally called out as both Cruz and her father and company grabbed Weatherspoon, yanked him to his feet and disarmed him, blocking him from getting away. A breath later, the police arrived, storming inside with their guns drawn.

Rev. Weatherspoon was cussing and talking out of his head. “You ruined it!” he screamed at all of them. “It was so perfect and you ruined it! God will strike

lightening upon all of you and kill you for doubting a Man of God!” He went on and on, talking about how *he* had killed Colin because nobody ever touched his little girl but him. It made no sense to anyone, but the main thing was that he was caught.

Whether or not he’d killed Colin, Cruz knew they’d check out later on. Right now, all he cared about was that his Lindsey was safe. As soon as Rev. Weatherspoon was handcuffed by the police and taken away, he found Lindsey and hugged her so tight that she couldn’t breathe. Another hand rested on Lindsey’s shoulder and he asked, “May I hug my daughter, sir?”

“Daddy!” Lindsey let go of Cruz and hugged her father, tears running down both of their faces, Cruz and the others who were still there, trying to hold in their tears.

Cruz blinked fast and looked on. So Will Benton had come to his daughter’s aid. Damn! And the case was pretty much no longer focused on Lindsey. She was home free.

Even now, though, in the back of his mind, he hoped he could have a life with Lindsey, his soulmate, now that all the high drama was over. Would she still love him?

“Yes,” Carlotta told him and Cruz sent her a silent thanks for her support.

Chapter Thirteen

Cruz could hardly believe how small and lonely Lindsey's apartment had been. As the two of them packed in her bedroom, moving her clothes to his house before she moved everything else, he picked up her fat; gray cat and it meowed in his arms, nuzzling under his neck. "At least you had Eddie," he said as she pulled some clothes off their hangers and folded them into an open piece of luggage on the rug.

She turned and smiled at him, hugging him and Eddie at the same time. "Glad you're not allergic. Eddie has been with me for twelve years. We've had some tough times together, but he's always been by my side."

"Cats have magical psychic powers," Cruz said, stroking Eddie as he stepped back. "So do dogs. Animals are very psychic. They know how their humans feel and are just wonderful at trying to give us comfort."

"But you don't own animals."

"I'll have Eddie now and maybe we'll get some more animals. I have lots of room in the country retreat. Maybe we should live there since that's where our love blossomed." He set the cat down and it curled at his feet, and he could feel its warm aura. As the two of them kept on packing, they spoke more.

“Glad they caught Raoul,” she said, her voice filled with distaste. “Kind of sad about Ivy, in a mental institution after her father lost his mind too and told about their...relationship...”

He turned and pulled her into his arms. “I don’t want to talk about that, Lindsey.” He kissed her forehead, her nose, her lips, then rested his cheek upon her head, pressing her close to him. “Let’s think about our good fortune and how great it is that your father is back in your life...and not being an asshole.”

She laughed and he felt her shoulders shaking. “There is certainly that,” she said. “I’m really happy about it. And...somehow I feel my mother smiling down at me.”

“I feel my mother too,” he said, and he did. “We were meant to be and everyone in this world and the next are happy for us. But nobody is happier than me.”

“Or me.”

He had to blink his eyes to keep them dry. “I have something to give you,” he said, knowing the time was right. “And, if you like, you can give me the same thing...I bought two.”

She pulled back, her eyes sparkling. “Tell me.”

“No.” He let go of her and walked over to the bed, where he’d dumped a bag that she had asked about, but he’d told her there was nothing interesting inside of it. “Come here,” he ordered.

“You said it was nothing,” she said as he pulled out a square, red velvet box. Her eyes rounded as she walked toward the bed. He sat on the edge of it and she did too, right beside him. “I could feel that it wasn’t *nothing*, but I didn’t want to push it.”

Feeling excited, possessive, lustful and full of love, he handed it to her. “Open it,” he said.

Lindsey opened the box and gasped. It looked like a solid gold choker and she knew, from reading, exactly what it was and what it meant. Lifting it up, she saw words carved in the back: Diego and Lindsey forever. The date was carved into it. As she brought it down, she ran her thumb over the back of it. “You need to lock it with a key,” she murmured and looked at him. He nodded.

She picked up the choker still in the box, identical to hers. “And...and this need a key to lock it too.” She grinned.

He reached under the bed’s mattress and pulled out two keys, giving her one. “They key to my heart,” he teased. “Forever.”

Her pussy spasmed when he said that. There was so much emotional swelling inside of her.

Cruz took the smaller choker and said, “Stand up and turn around, back facing me.”

She did and he stood behind her, fastening the collar. It seemed to convey a sense of Cruz throughout her, as if more of him now resided inside her.

“Yes, it has some magic,” he said, and they were facing one another now, his eyes twinkling.

“My turn,” she said, feeling all tingly inside.

He turned around and she stood on her tiptoes to collar him, locking the key. When she finished, he turned to face her, grabbing her hands, rubbing her with his thumbs. “In a very psychic way, we are now one,” he said, quietly. “The wedding and rings are earth rituals, but this is something more. Can you feel it?”

She stared into his mesmerizing gaze. “Oh, yes!”

The End

Raven Knight has always loved to read books, especially IR books and decided one day to try her hand at it. While she also busy raising kids and normal life, Raven thinks it is important to always take time to read a good book. Her mother reports that she drew pictures and printed words in an attempt to tell stories, even at the tender age of two. As a born storyteller, she kept writing and won awards for creative writing, becoming known as "The Writer" by peers. Having married at 20, she put writing on the backburner and worked in many interesting fields, including a position at The Chicago Tribune.

When all her children were finally in grade school, Nicole started writing again. She had always been a voracious reader of the genre and decided to focus on writing romance. Ms. Knight is a member of [Romance Writers of America](#) and [WisRWA](#).

Raven's special interests include adoption, Bipolar Disorder, Domestic Abuse, Animals, and Autism as they have all touched her life. She currently resides in central Wisconsin with her loving husband and their children.

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