

MARIE HARTE



STORMING HIS HEART

SAMHAIN

Chapter One

The Locklen Estate, Savannah, Georgia

Storm Buchanan stood well away from her arranged date, the man of the hour, and did her best to circulate through the crowded ballroom. Pretending to be a fictional heiress wasn't the worst way she'd ever spent a Thursday night. The estate she'd infiltrated was incredible. Built in the early 1800s, the place had withstood the Civil War, the Great Depression and the current owner's penchant for all things gold. Priceless antiques littered the space, making the marble-floored mansion more a mausoleum than a home.

But hey, the hors d'oeuvres were killer. Trays laden with tiny quiches, croustades filled with salmon mousse—her personal favorite—lobster frittata and a host of other dishes she could barely pronounce filtered through the crowd on the hands of neatly tailored wait staff. Not a cocktail weenie, beer or pair of jeans in sight.

The food and drink more than made up for the getup she'd been forced to wear. Earlier this morning, a large box had been delivered to her hotel room, courtesy of Mr. Miles Locklen. Her date apparently wanted a high-class call girl, or at least a woman who dressed like one. The clingy black silk she wore showed off her cleavage, her entire back and a flash of thigh from two leg-baring slits when she so much as twitched. The price tag couldn't be worth the amount of material missing from this excuse of a dress. Not to mention her feet friggin' hurt in heels that made her feel like part of the stratosphere.

Storm took a step back from a rotund man drinking a bit too much and strove to keep her balance. She only hoped she wouldn't be running from the security guards anytime soon. Between the heels and the dress, she'd end up flashing half the party if she had to do much more than stroll anywhere.

But negative thinking didn't help matters. Storm was a professional. She'd complete her job with no one the wiser until it was too late to stop her.

A glance over her shoulder showed Locklen still occupied. Perfect. In the short two hours they'd been acquainted, he'd accidentally brushed his arm against her breast at least four times. When he'd whispered something about his best friend and the slut he'd brought with him, the tip of his tongue had grazed her ear. But none of that had distracted her from his clammy hand skimming her ass.

At that point, she'd convinced him to give her space and mingle with his many admirers. She'd never been so thankful for her ability to manipulate minds as she was tonight. Her psychic mojo allowed

her to take risks others might not. And in this case, to benefit herself. But whatever worked. Buchanan Investigations had a reputation to uphold.

"Focus, you hussy." Tonight, her telepathic brother didn't seem to have an off switch. "I have twenty that says your date gets a fist in his face before the night's over. Luc is betting on a kick to the nuts. Break his nose and I'll cut you in on my take."

"Shut up. I'm working here!" She promised herself she'd kick Thorne's ass the minute she finished the job. He had a knack for setting her up in miserable situations. He called himself a psychic investigator. More like psychic troublemaker. And her other brother was no better. Some backup.

"Luc said to hurry the hell up. We don't have all night, you know," Thorne said. Too bad she hadn't been gifted with telepathy. As it was, she could only talk to him using the mental pathway he'd created.

She kept her smile in place as she replied, *"Then maybe you should be here getting groped by an obnoxious millionaire while I sit back and make wisecracks."*

"Okay, I'm shutting up. But when midnight strikes, if we don't have those jewels in the client's hands, she's out her shares in the company. Then the boss won't be happy. And when Uncle Max ain't happy, we ain't happy. I'm just sayin'..."

Like she needed the pressure. *"Thorne..."*

"Fine. I'm out. Think my name hard if you need me. I'll be listening for it."

"Okay."

The band began to play, and a man across the ballroom nodded subtly in her direction. As agreed, he'd keep Locklen occupied while she ran the grab-and-go. Time to get started. She made a beeline for the stairs.

As she reached the top, she noted the huge men stationed discreetly at the entrances to several hallways. She had just reached the left wing when her brother interrupted her.

"Be careful. I just got wind that Westlake might be involved."

Westlake Enterprises, a rival investigative firm, was a real pain in the ass. More problems she could do without. Distracted, she stumbled in her uncomfortable shoes. One of the guards reached out to steady her.

"I'm so sorry." She blushed, feeling gauche. *"These heels are killing me. I was just going to take a short break in our room. I'm with Miles."*

"I know, Miss Davenport." He smiled and stepped aside. *"Have a nice night."*

Tight security. Locklen wasn't leaving much to chance. He had electronic and human guards everywhere. But Storm's firm had their own experts in the field. And those same experts had told her where to find the client's stolen jewels.

She walked down the hallway, her heels clicking along the solid floor veined with gold. At the doorway to her room for the night, she keyed in the digital code she'd been given earlier. She entered the grand room and closed the door behind her. The sight of such splendor astounded and annoyed her. As anticipated, Locklen had planned for her to spend the night with him, in his room.

Normally, she'd take offense to that kind of highhandedness. But she needed access to his room to do what she'd been hired to.

The room had been made with pleasure in mind—soft blue walls, masculine touches with a taste of class, so unlike the downstairs. The plush bed had a white duvet that looked like a cloud. Storm gave in to the urge and sat down on the bed, only to sink into luxurious comfort.

She closed her eyes as she removed her heinous shoes and pictured herself lying here, her dream lover looming over her. He'd be sensitive yet strong, and unable to bend to her will. Mr. Perfect all wrapped up in a bow and nothing else.

Storm sank her toes into plush carpet and opened her eyes. Locklen would be all too happy to be her dream lover. If she didn't stop fantasizing about the impossible, she'd end up having to deal with him.

Right now, her reality included finding the client's heirloom jewels. She had to find the statue because the jewels would be nearby, or so Thorne had said after picking through Locklen's mind for clues. But she didn't see anything resembling a statue anywhere.

As she got to work searching the room, she considered the waste of such a terrific bed on her host. But who was more pathetic? Locklen with his groping and leering, or Storm with her nonexistent love life? Because the rich jerk happened to be the best date Storm had had in months.

She sighed. She had no hope of finding a decent guy. Between her overprotective big brothers and her talent—which was great for getting a free beer but absolute hell on relationships—she feared she'd die an old maid.

She needed a man she couldn't push around, who wouldn't fall prey to her often unintended manipulations. Storm wanted so badly to find Mr. Right that she grew overeager whenever she had a date and unconsciously used her talent. She'd tried holding it back, but the stronger she felt, the more she'd broadcast. A Catch-22 with no resolution in sight.

The room proved as big a disaster as her current social calendar. No statue and no jewelry. Then again, would Locklen really leave it out in plain sight? Though their intelligence indicated the jewelry was somewhere in his bedroom, Thorne had been known to make mistakes. Mind reading didn't guarantee he found the right answers every time.

Storm spotted the study door and hurried. A glance at the bedside clock showed she was running out of time. She dragged her shoes with her, careful to leave no evidence of her presence behind.

Using the codes Thorne had also appropriated from Locklen's mind, she unlocked the door and entered. The light from the bedroom illuminated the moderate space. She noted the shelves of old books, nautical charts and antiques encased in glass. And there, atop his large mahogany desk, a wrought iron statue of Captain Michael G. Locklen, founder of the family's dynasty. That statue meant the jewels were close.

A sudden bang made her jump. Outside, the wind shrieked and blew a tree limb against the study window overlooking the back gardens. With her luck, the power would go out. Not needing more of a headache than she already had, Storm closed the heavy drapes and the study door before turning on the desk lamp. Shadows darkened the corners of an already dim room, but she didn't dare expose herself with more lighting.

In this room, Locklen relied on simple locks to secure his valuables. His antiquated security matched the aged valuables he held dear. She made short work of his desk using a lock pick she'd hidden in the heel of her shoe. A search through his things turned up nothing. She tapped her foot in frustration.

"Where are you?" The statue was here; therefore, the jewels had to be here. She looked again around the room and noticed an antique lamp standing over a plush leather reading chair. It was hard to see since the desk light didn't illuminate much more than the top of the desk.

Storm approached the lamp for better study. She still didn't want to turn on the main light on the off chance one of the guards patrolling outside the house might notice. And then she saw it. A sparkling, emerald necklace atop the lampshade, right in plain sight. From a distance it had looked like part of the lampshade's decoration. Relieved she'd finally found it, she reached for the necklace.

"Move and you'll be very sorry," a voice whispered in the darkness a split second before someone yanked her back against a hard frame and covered her mouth with his hand.

Storm froze. She didn't necessarily need to see this intruder to get him to bend to her will, but eye contact always strengthened her bond. She struggled to get free.

"Don't scream or I'll gag you," he threatened and released her mouth, keeping his hand close should she try to yell.

"I don't know who you are, but I'm sure you don't want me," she whispered, her voice smooth, like the deceptive calm before a hurricane. She concentrated on an image of herself walking out of the study. "Why don't you just let me go and I'll forget you were ever here?"

The arm around her tightened—not what she'd expected. He secured her hands behind her back with a speed that betrayed expertise then turned her around. Unfortunately, she could see nothing of his face through his ski mask but brown eyes and a firm mouth.

Those eyes... Damn it. She knew those eyes. Her own widened. "You were at that bar trying to steal my witness three weeks ago," she said, wishing she didn't sound so breathless.

"Whose witness?" he drawled, humor in his deep voice.

"Who are you?" But she knew. Just her luck that of all the agents she might have run into, she had to encounter the one she had nightly fantasies about. Rafe Savage—sexy asshole extraordinaire.

Thorne's rumor had turned out to be true. Westlake was definitely involved.

Buchanan Investigations was one of two firms of its like—a top-notch investigative service whose investigators possessed psychic abilities. Though their paranormal talents remained fairly secret, the success of the firm did not. The only fly in the ointment was the equal success of their competitor, Westlake Enterprises. It just figured the only man Storm found even remotely interesting worked for the enemy.

"Maybe I should be asking you that question," he rumbled in a low voice. "You stole my witness, started a bar fight I had to clean up and left before we could be properly introduced. Now you're here in the middle of my business once again."

Oh man, Savage was even bigger and faster than she remembered. And just as sexy, something she had no business thinking about with the job on the line.

Now how to distract him until she could collect the jewels?

"I can almost hear you plotting." He pushed her into the leather chair, forcing her to sit with her hands behind her back, and turned on the antique light. Removing his mask, he studied her as she squinted under the light's glare. Dark brown hair cropped a face filled with hard planes and a granite jaw, to say nothing of his lethal stare. No two ways about it, Savage was not only tough but incredibly handsome. *And he works for Westlake.*

It was disgusting how often she had to remind herself of that fact.

"Storm Buchanan. In the flesh. So many times we've run into each other, but this takes the cake. You look different tonight." He ran a gloved finger over her collarbone, eliciting an involuntary shiver.

Storm tried to shrug off the arousing intensity of his touch, both thrilled and unnerved he knew exactly who she was. He'd never before called her by name. "Don't you want to let me go?" She tried again to command him and had no luck. Strong-willed bastard. She couldn't see well under the dim light. Was he looking at her face or her figure in the slim-fitting dress? At his appreciative whistle, she bet on the dress.

"Oh no you don't, sweetheart." He grabbed something out of his back pocket and bent down in front of her. His lips quirked into a surprising grin. "Much as I'd like to gag you with this, I think it'd do better as a blindfold."

Blindfold? Shit. He knew about her ability, or at least, he thought he did. Storm didn't need to see her opponents to manipulate them, but the eye contact helped. To give her an edge, her uncle had insisted they plant evidence to the contrary. She'd always wondered how deep Westlake's information ran. Now she knew. How to play this off...? "Come on, you don't need to blindfold me. I already know what you look like. It's not like I'm going to tell anyone you were in here. If I'm found in here, I'm in big trouble."

"I know." He finished tying her blindfold and stood. "The earrings, bracelet and ring are fixed to the underside of the lamp, in case you were wondering."

"Gee, thanks." *Smug bastard.*

"You know, I really didn't come here for this. But then, I wasn't expecting to run into you again anytime soon, and what do you know? Fate's smiling on me tonight."

She could hear a large smile in his voice, mocking them both.

He continued, "The last time we met, you stole my witness."

"And the time before that, you left with the files I'd been sent to collect. We're even."

Warm breath fanned her cheek and she clenched her thighs, alarmed to feel herself respond.

"Even? I don't think so. You have a bad habit of turning up in the wrong places, sweetheart."

Controlling a shiver, she shot back, "Well, *sweetheart*, maybe you're the one with the bad habits. Be a good boy and go home. Locklen is mine."

He chuckled. "You sure you want him? Hell, you can have him. But I'm not leaving until I get what I came for."

With her eyesight blocked, her other senses were magnified. Storm could smell the sexy maleness of him standing so close, could feel his gaze moving over her body like a lover's hands. She did her best to deny her attraction, but she couldn't. For some reason, Savage got to her the way no one ever had. She wanted to strangle him at the same time she wanted to kiss him blind. "Well, why are you here? What do you want?" she snapped.

"What do I want? Hmm, let's see. I have a beautiful woman all tied up and helpless before me. I also have a bag full of jewels easily worth a cool million. What to do, what to do?"

She gritted her teeth and tried to manage a bit of room between her wrists, made all the more uncomfortable because she couldn't stop flaunting herself. Every time she shifted, she inadvertently

thrust her breasts toward him. Damn it. What had he used to bind her? Would it have been too much to ask for simple rope?

“Good luck getting free. Plastic cable ties are a real bitch to get off,” he answered her unvoiced question with way too much cheer.

“It hurts.” She shifted and cursed inwardly when the dress slid between her thighs, exposing a length of leg from two dangerously high slits.

“Suck it up, princess.” When she squirmed again, he groaned and warned, “You don’t want to do that.”

“Screw you.” Storm was disgusted with herself tonight. Where the hell had her discipline gone? Bound, helpless and incredibly aroused by some arrogant jerk who worked for Westlake, she felt more like an amateur Nancy Drew than a professional investigator. She continued to struggle but stilled when she felt his lips against her neck.

Her stomach clenched, her nipples hardened and the sensitive flesh between her thighs throbbed. Instinctively, she drew back into the seat, away from the danger in front of her. Or was that behind her? Over her?

He whispered into her ear, “Don’t move, my little rabbit. Not just yet.”

Rafe had the best of intentions. For involving herself in a Westlake matter *again*, he planned to put a scare into the dark-haired beauty. Storm Buchanan was a headache he sure as hell didn’t need. Every damn time he neared the woman, bone-deep desire flooded his entire body. Bad enough he grew hard from just a look at her. A face that could grace any magazine and sell it through the roof teased with full, pouting lips, high cheekbones and exotically slanted eyes that made him think of a cat about to pounce. And that was to say nothing of the ripe body just begging to be fucked in a dress more off than on.

She licked her lips, the dart of her small, pink tongue making him think of other things she could be licking. He wondered if she did it on purpose. The files he’d put together on her didn’t paint her as a seductress. Far from it. So why the hell did he have trouble keeping his distance? Could she know how often he thought of her, that he’d had more than his share of dreams involving him, her and a severe lack of clothing?

This probably wasn’t smart, he told himself as he circled to stand in front of her. But a man could only deal with so much temptation. Helpless to stop, he removed a glove and ran his hand over the flushed skin of her exposed chest, marveling at the silky feel of her.

She started. “What are you doing?”

He leaned closer and inhaled her soft breath, which smelled sweetly of alcohol. Just one sip couldn't hurt.

"Playing," he murmured, waiting for her to reject him.

But she didn't, as caught in this strange chemistry as he was. Satisfied his prey had snared herself in her own net, he spread her thighs and knelt between them.

She shivered and he removed his other glove, needing to feel her, skin-to-skin. He ran his hands over her sleek thighs, learning her power in the muscle bunching tight. Rafe continued to trail his hands over her belly and up, skirting her breasts to linger over her toned arms.

Once he'd felt every exposed part of her, he leaned in to capture the soft moan on her lips. Having her all tied up and helpless aroused him to no end, despite his plan to merely tease her. But one taste of her mouth and he lost all sense.

So sweet, was all he could think as he deepened the kiss. He thrust his tongue between her lips and stroked her mouth, her tongue, her teeth. Pushing and retreating, he mimicked the motion of what he'd much rather be doing with another, more insistent part of his body.

Reaching under her excuse of a dress, he pushed her thighs wider, pleased when she offered no resistance. He slid his hand under the thin triangle guarding her mound and groaned into her mouth as he speared her slick folds.

The woman was hot and wet, as excited by their play as he was.

She arched under his seeking fingers, but he didn't end the kiss until he needed to breathe.

"Oh my God," she moaned and writhed under him. "What are you doing to me?"

Rafe lowered his head to her breasts. He nuzzled the fabric aside and clamped down on one tight red nipple as he pressed on the sensitive flesh between her legs.

The woman was a dream come true. Nothing outside of this room mattered. Nothing but feeling her shatter around him. He increased the suction on her breast, ceasing when she moaned her surrender. So damned hard, he had trouble doing more than acting on instinct. He added a second finger to the one thrusting inside her and bore down with the palm of his hand.

He switched his attention to her other breast, enthralled with the textures and taste of her. He wanted to be inside her so badly he feared he'd come in his pants. But he couldn't stop, not until she'd cried his name in release.

Out loud.

Shit. He froze, and the sound of their mingled breaths filled the otherwise silent room. How the hell had he lost control of the situation? Rafe released her breast and withdrew his fingers from her with

an unsteady hand. This wasn't the time or place, no matter how much he wanted her. Good Christ, the woman worked for Buchanan Investigations. What had he been thinking?

He straightened her panties, satisfied by the trembling she couldn't conceal. Whatever else she was, the woman hadn't faked her responses. He didn't think she'd forced his attraction. If she'd truly been controlling him, she wouldn't be tied up while he held the upper hand.

Unable to stand a minute more of not being able to see her beautiful gray eyes, he removed her blindfold.

She blinked but said nothing. Her swollen lips and heavy-lidded eyes spoke for her, especially when she glanced at his crotch.

He heard her soft sigh and bent closer. Closing his eyes, he memorized the light but sexy scent just under her ear. He kissed her there, tasting the sensitive spot on her neck, slightly salty and sweetly feminine.

Adversary or not, he had to have her.

"When I have more time, we're going to finish this," he promised and stood. "But right now I'd better go. Wouldn't want to be caught like this in Locklen's private study. But you enjoy your night, sweetheart. Well, more than you already have, anyway."

He stepped back and donned his gloves and mask.

"You bastard," she rasped, looking sultry with her breasts exposed and her face flushed with sexual frustration.

With careful hands, he tucked her back inside her dress and set her to rights. "Yessiree. That date of yours is one lucky guy." He grinned, knowing she had no intention of doing anything with the jackass.

She cursed him, her vocabulary able to rival a sailor's. Trust Buchanan to hire a woman with beauty, brains and a temper, when riled, that matched the passion he'd felt in her.

And wanted to feel again.

So not healthy for a man who had no plans for romantic entanglements and who wanted to go far within Westlake.

He grabbed the files he'd come for before placing a pair of snips on the table beside the lamp hiding the jewelry she'd obviously come to retrieve.

"I've got to go now, Storm." Rafe ran a gloved finger over her soft cheek, amused when she whipped her head away. "Let me know when you want to play again." He moved to leave and she lifted her leg to stop him.

He glanced down at the slender calf braced against his knee.

"You can't just leave me here like this. What's a little honor among *psychics*?" she growled.

"Temper, temper. The snips will cut through the ties on your wrists. Better hurry, though. By now they've found the bound guards in the camera room." He left without looking back, but the woman remained in his thoughts the whole way to the office.

Chapter Two

"Jurek, you want to tell me why I ran into that woman *again* tonight?" Rafe sat in front of Jurek's large desk, holding on to his patience by a thread. Satisfied when he saw his boss's temper rise, he added, "I thought you were keeping a close eye on the Buchanans." Not that Rafe necessarily minded his time spent with Storm. God, what he wouldn't give to touch her again.

Still, things could have gone very wrong tonight. Buchanan Investigations had a reputation for mucking up the works. Despite the fact their agencies had worked together on an important, successful case a year ago, Rafe didn't trust the so-called investigators.

Before Jurek could respond, the door burst open.

"You're not going to believe this," J.D. Morgan began excitedly, oblivious to the tension in the room. He flew past Rafe and held a stack of papers under Jurek's nose. "See? It's like I thought. They've been passing along insider information."

Jurek and J.D. huddled over the papers for a minute that turned into five.

Rafe cleared his throat, finally getting J.D.'s attention.

"Oh, hey Rafe," J.D. greeted absently and looked back down at the documents he'd placed on Jurek's desk. "So, Jurek, what do you think?"

Jurek's lips curled. "Great work. MetaOil Industries is going to owe us big for this one." A glance at Rafe dimmed his smile, and he turned his displeasure in J.D.'s direction.

Still enraptured with his latest find, J.D. remained unaware of the sudden shift in mood.

"J.D.?" Jurek asked in a calm voice. "Rafe seems to be running over Buchanan's folks left and right. I thought I told you to research the Locklen investigation prior to his insertion."

J.D. glanced up in surprise. "What's that? I thought everything went smoothly. You got the files you needed confirming Miles Locklen's guilt, so we can put that to bed. What happened?"

Rafe answered with a scowl, "What happened? Buchanan Investigations happened. I ran into Storm Buchanan for the second time in a month." He shared what he could without disclosing the exact details of his latest encounter.

J.D. shook his head. "But I put a tap on their network. I don't get it. Since the Guest investigation last fall when I accessed their files to accumulate resources, I've had a small window into the doings of Buchanan Investigations." He paused, scowled, and then turned to the door.

"J.D.?"

“Jurek, I need to check something out. I’ve got a funny feeling we haven’t been the only ones watching the other side.” J.D. stormed out of the room, muttering under his breath.

“Give him time and he’ll find your answers,” Jurek reassured.

Not happy but pleased that at least the boss hadn’t been holding out on him, Rafe nodded and stood to leave. “I have the new case file on my desk. With any luck I’ll be able to work on it without the hindrance of a Buchanan.” He shot Jurek a wry glance and left.

But once in his office, Rafe had a hard time concentrating on his new assignment. He couldn’t stop remembering the feel of Storm Buchanan’s soft lips and full breasts. Her thighs had been firm yet supple. Her scent was one he couldn’t forget. Sweet, sultry and sexy. Just like the woman. Her biggest problem that he could see, aside from working for her uncle, was that she wore too many clothes.

He shook his head and tried to shake free of the woman’s allure. A smart man would focus on his career. Sex was fleeting, like the women in his life. There and gone, and no big deal. Just the way he liked it, or so he kept telling himself as he tried to focus on work, and not a stubborn seductress with fire in her eyes.

Storm watched her uncle escort a very pleased Cecilia Locklen to the elevator.

When Max Buchanan returned to his office, he caught Thorne in a compromising position. Engrossed in a sensitive file on his uncle’s computer—one that was password protected—Thorne didn’t look up until Max tapped him on the shoulder. Her brother quickly joined her and Luc on the couch.

“Thanks for the warning,” Thorne muttered.

“You’re welcome.”

“I was being sarcastic.”

She smiled through her teeth. “I know.” All morning long her brothers had nagged her about just what had happened in Miles’s study. For some reason, they wouldn’t take her description of a brief altercation with Westlake’s agent at face value. Thank God Thorne hadn’t read her while Savage had taken horrible advantage of her. Horrible, incredible, sexual advantage.

Damn, just thinking about the incident had her aching all over again. Rafael Savage. Even his name sounded dangerous.

Her uncle suddenly turned to her and frowned, and Storm barricaded her mind with layers and layers of mental steel.

“Nothing like making the client happy, eh?” she said with a forced grin.

Uncle Max wasn't buying it. "Tell me again about Savage. What exactly happened between you two in Locklen's study?"

The suspicion on her family's faces didn't bode well.

"Nothing more to tell than what's in the report. He got there first. Sporting of him to give me the jewelry, though."

Max glared. "I hate when my own flesh and blood lies to me."

"I knew you were lying," Luc muttered.

"I'd hate to have to stoop to a personal invasion," Thorne added, "but I will."

She didn't welcome a mind-sweep *at all*. So much for her poker face keeping her family at bay.

"It's not that big a deal." She tried to repress the memories of Savage's caresses, which remained uppermost in her mind. "I didn't lie, exactly. I just didn't mention the whole truth."

"A lie of omission is still a lie." Thorne crossed his arms over his chest.

Max stroked his chin. "Interesting that this is the same man you ran into a few weeks ago on the mayor's case."

"It is?" Thorne glowered. "You might have mentioned that. You just said you ran into a Westlake prick at Locklen's."

"I didn't say that, exactly."

Luc pounced. "What did he do to you? Did he threaten you?"

"He blindfolded me, okay? Blindfolded me and tied me up."

"Then let you go." Max's deceptively light tone didn't fool her in the slightest. Crap. He knew something. But how much of that something did he know? "He blindfolded you but didn't gag you; he has an idea of what you can do. And something else from your report bothered me—if he was wearing a mask, how did you recognize him?"

"Well, ah, he has really deep brown eyes. I just recognized him. He knew me right off too."

Max remained silent.

Unfortunately, Thorne didn't. "Did he touch you?"

"Of course he touched me. How else do you think he tied me up?"

"That's not what I meant," Thorne replied through clenched teeth.

"Well, what did you mean?"

Thorne flushed.

"Damn it. You know what he means. Did the bastard touch you where he shouldn't have?" Luc clarified.

Her older brothers took great delight in squashing anything that might resemble her sex life. Was it mean of her to make them squirm?

A telepath like Thorne, Max answered without making a sound. *"Not at all. They need to butt out of business that doesn't concern them."*

She checked her internal shields again, fixed the crack that had let him inside, and fired back at her brothers, "Oh, give me a break. I'm twenty-six, not ten. So what if he kissed me? I'm old enough to know when a man's interested and when he just wants to rile me." *Or excite me, or make me so wet I had to throw out my panties.*

Max calmed her brothers. "Rafe Savage is no rapist. He's one of Jurek Westlake's top agents and one hell of an investigator. Has a nose like a bloodhound and doesn't stop until he finishes a job."

She and her brothers turned as one to stare at him. What *didn't* her uncle know?

Max continued. "Remy's been doing some surveillance work for me." Their resident computer expert had joined Buchanan Investigations over a year ago. Worth every penny, according to her uncle. "She's had a very close eye on Westlake Enterprises ever since our joint venture on the Mitchell/Guest case."

"Were you planning on sharing this with us at any time during the investigation?"

"No. You have no need to know what Westlake is doing unless I say so. Problem?"

Thorne scowled. "Of course not, boss."

"Wonderful. Look, Savage isn't one to break the rules. He had a sterling reputation with the Atlanta P.D. before he joined Westlake. Bribes, threats and intimidation won't work on him."

"Well then, what will?" Thorne flexed his hands and curled them into fists.

Storm wanted to shout at them to let her deal with the man. It was her he'd kissed. Her he'd touched. She'd handle Savage herself. She didn't need her older brothers to beat up the big bad bully again. Hell, she'd make Savage apologize on bended knee. She could do it if she focused hard enough.

Max answered before she could. "Let me deal with Westlake matters. It's Friday. You've all been working hard. Take the weekend off. We're testing the Raeford Hotel's security next week, so I need you refreshed and ready."

Storm didn't wait. She grabbed her opportunity and darted out of the office with a wave goodbye. Her brothers caught her at the elevator.

Thorne reached for his keys. "So, what are your big weekend plans? Hell, it's been a good month since we've had some time off. What are you two going to do?"

"I've got a date with Belinda." Luc smirked. Thorne snorted. Obviously, communication passed between the pair because Luc laughed as the elevator doors opened and they stepped inside.

Storm hated being left out. She poked the ground floor button and crossed her arms over her chest. "What's so funny?"

"Never mind," Luc said. "Guy talk."

Probably talking about Belinda the Bimbo's bra size. Like Storm couldn't figure out why her brother was dating the queen of easy.

"How about you, Storm?" Thorne asked.

She'd gotten a message from a persistent admirer who'd been trying to date her for months. Hank Cavidge wanted a dinner date in the worst way. He was cute, nice and funny. A terrific neighbor. But she hadn't been wanting to go. She knew what would happen if she went. Still, resigned, but willing to do anything to prove herself wrong and have *something* to do on a Friday night, she finally intended to call him back.

"I might have plans," she hedged.

Thorne raised a brow. "Oh? With a guy?"

"No. I'm a lesbian."

Luc choked. "Are you serious?"

"No, dummy. I'm just tired of the third degree."

Thorne chuckled. "So long as you keep your distance from the Westlake prick, I hope you have fun." He kissed her on the forehead.

"Thanks for your permission," she said, all sweetness and light. "At least I'm not going out with Hank because of the size of his—"

"Storm," her brothers interrupted at the same time.

"Come on, Luc. Tell me it's Belinda's intellect that has you so infatuated."

He had the grace to flush.

Thorne sighed. "God, I hate when you talk about stuff like that."

"Sex?"

“Shut. Up.” He glared at her.

Luc made a face. “Ech. I don’t even want to think about my baby sister and some guy doing God knows what.” He ignored the finger she shot him. “So Thorne, how about you? What are you up to this weekend?”

The elevator reached the ground level, and they exited into the parking garage and sought their vehicles. They reached Thorne’s first.

“I’m taking the Deuce for a ride.” Thorne patted his motorcycle. “I might head to Atlanta. There’s a rally up there Saturday.” He mounted the flame-patterned, metallic blue bike and revved the loud pipes. “If you need me, I’ll have my cell. Storm, you have any problems at all, let Luc know. I mean it.”

Luc and Storm watched him ride off.

“If he ever finds a woman who can pry him from that bike for more than two seconds, he’ll be in love,” she predicted.

She moved to her own car, a sporty red number she’d had her eye on for months.

“Storm?”

She turned around to see Luc standing by his truck. “Yeah?”

“If that jackass you’re going out with this weekend gives you any problems, you call me. I mean it.”

She nodded dutifully to make him leave, then started her car and headed home.

Did they think she was totally helpless? Angered, she recounted each and every instance of their interference in her social life over the years. Twenty minutes later, she still pondered the overprotective males in her life. At least Uncle Max ignored the matter of her dating. He was all business, which she appreciated. Her mother kept her father *mostly* too occupied to delve into her social life. Weekly dinners with her parents normally ended with questions about who she was or wasn’t dating, but what could she do?

Family was family.

Storm arrived home and let herself into the quaint, bungalow style cottage she’d purchased a year ago. After dropping her keys on the oak table in the foyer, she adjourned to the kitchen, poured herself a glass of iced tea and plunked her tired body onto the down cushions of her comfy sofa.

“Jackass? Why are my dates jackasses and Luc’s *hot babes*?”

In the peaceful silence of her house, she sipped tea and stared unseeingly at the cordless phone on her coffee table. A pad of paper with a phone number written on it sat next to the phone. Why put off the inevitable? Morosely, she reached for the phone and dialed Hank's number.

Hank picked her up at eight and they went to dinner at a popular restaurant known for its choice selection of Southern cuisine. He reinforced what she already knew about him. Hank had a great sense of humor, good looks and was a self-made man. She found herself really liking him. So far, so good.

When the waiter came to take their orders, Hank asked her what she wanted.

"Order for me." A small test.

"She'll have the country steak and collards."

A good choice, and total chance that he selected what she would have ordered for herself. *I am not manipulating him. No power, no psychic crap. Not tonight.* She smiled before he continued.

He chose the entree, vegetables, salad dressing and beverage she wanted. Still, she tried to convince herself it was all a coincidence. The house vinaigrette was a popular choice. She couldn't possibly have influenced him so quickly and with so little contact, could she?

The pleasant meal and conversation continued. Hank ordered them dessert. Her favorite. Peach cobbler. Her hopes for the evening took a steady downturn.

When they left the restaurant, she noted the slight chill in the evening air. Before she could finalize the thought, he wrapped an arm around her shoulders, sheltering her with his body heat. Once at the movie, he led her to the middle seats in the front of the theater.

Storm always sat in the middle toward the front.

She couldn't concentrate on the picture as she strove to shut down the power she hadn't realized she'd been projecting. Why had it taken so little effort to get Miles Locklen to obey her, yet Savage hadn't been affected at all? Hank, a man she might have had some fun with, was obeying her unspoken needs like a puppet on strings. No challenge, no will of his own, or so it felt to her. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

After the film ended, they followed the crowd out onto a side street.

"That was a great movie, wasn't it?" Hank asked with a grin as they continued down the street, each step a fruitless journey toward another failed date.

Storm tried, really tried, to put some effort into her smile.

“Sure thing, Hank—great movie.”

The streets had emptied. Hank had parked between the restaurant and movie theater so they could walk after dinner. He’d mentioned he thought Storm might like that. Unfortunately, she did.

As they crossed the empty street, a car came out of nowhere.

Hank froze in shock as the car’s headlights enveloped them. Only Storm’s quick reflexes prevented the two of them from becoming hood ornaments. She shoved him to the sidewalk and leaped to join him, except she wasn’t fast enough.

The car clipped her and she fell next to Hank. As they both lay panting on the hard concrete, Storm watched the car speed down the road and out of sight.

“Stupid drunk driver.” Hank blinked at her. “Are you all right?” Still shaken by the near miss, he didn’t seem to notice her odd calm.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Stupid drunk driver.” A drunk that steadied the car right after he’d hit her. Interesting, and very, very painful.

Rafe bolted upright in bed. Black sedan, midnight, gray eyes, a blond man. Images flashed through his mind like shards of glass, shooting daggers of pain into his brain. He groaned and reached for his head with unsteady hands. *I control my visions. I don’t dream them, not since... Christ, what now?*

He stumbled out of bed and tried to clear his thoughts, with little success. Rafe moved to his bathroom sink and splashed his face with water. Staring into the mirror, he noticed dilated pupils in his bloodshot brown eyes.

He rinsed his face again and held onto the sink until the shaking stopped. Then he scowled as he realized what part of the vision meant. He knew the owner of those gray eyes.

But he wasn’t sure what to do about it.

Chapter Three

Friday night blurred into Saturday as Storm lay on her bed, careful not to put any pressure on her left side. She could barely tolerate her short sleep shirt. While sleeping, she'd rolled onto her left side and the pain had woken her immediately. The front left panel of that black sedan had slammed her high on her leg. The red welt she'd seen last night had transitioned nicely into a monstrous, purple bruise.

She thanked her blessings she hadn't broken any bones.

Talk about a bad ending to a bad date. She'd forced Hank to leave her outside her door with a reminder to say nothing of their hit and run. She'd also convinced him to ask Sofia, the owner of their favorite coffee shop, out on a date. Sofia was more his type, anyway. He'd gazed at her blankly before leaving with a smile.

Storm asked herself for the hundredth time why she couldn't settle. She awkwardly left the bed, awash in pain, self-pity, and dangerously close to tears. As she hobbled into the bathroom, took care of her needs and left for the kitchen, she tried to convince herself that Hank might have been okay if she'd given him a chance.

"He's got a good job. He's a decent man, nice, handsome enough."

And he does whatever I want him to do.

Why couldn't she simply control herself on a date? She huffed as she limped to the coffee pot and prepared it.

In her professional life, having nothing whatsoever to do to with matters of the heart, Storm controlled her abilities. Yet when it came to dating, to trying to find someone with whom to share her heart, her yearnings got the best of her. Every time.

At first it had been exciting. Boys wanted to date her. Men would treat her exactly the way she wanted to be treated. Then she'd notice the lack of excitement in furthering those relationships. They held no zip, no challenge. The few men she hadn't been able to control had been utter slimeballs.

Once the coffeepot beeped, she poured herself a cup. Hell, the only somewhat normal person who hadn't fallen under her spell was that arrogant Westlake *prick*.

He'd made her blood boil, both with anger and with a sensual heat she found hard to believe. She tried to convince herself she'd made more of their association than there was. Hell, Storm couldn't remember the last time she'd had sex. No wonder she'd responded so readily to him. Then too, being sexually dominated by a stronger man had always been a fantasy of hers. Was it any wonder he'd made her go off like a rocket?

"He's Westlake. They're not to be trusted," she repeated aloud the words she'd heard since she'd started working for her uncle. Her brothers and fellow investigators had an aversion to Westlake types. Business was business, and the more Westlake took away from them, the harder they had to work to keep their jobs. What none of them realized was that her distrust was personal.

The doorbell rang, scaring the crap out of her. Hell, that was all she needed—one of her overprotective brothers to see her bruised after a date. She ran her fingers through her tangled hair in an attempt to look less rumpled.

"Hold on," she shouted and limped to her bedroom.

Her sleepwear exposed her bruised leg, so she put on a blue silk robe that hit her mid-calf and made her way to the door. It was only nine o'clock—a little early for Luc if he had indeed gone out with Belinda.

She started to grow angry. Couldn't she at least *try* to have a love life without one of her brothers checking up on her? What if she'd invited Hank to stay the night? She yanked the door open expecting one of her siblings.

The sight of her visitor stopped her tirade before it had begun.

"May I come in?"

A chocolate brown gaze swept over her thin robe and rose to stop at her mouth. When Storm made no move to allow him entrance, Rafe closed the distance between them. He lifted her out of the way and moved past her.

Before she knew it, he stood in her house, the door shut firmly behind him.

"What's for breakfast?" Rafe asked, all the while skimming her features. She didn't look any the worse for wear, so perhaps last night's odd happenstance had just been a dream. But dreams didn't leave him feeling sick and dizzy. He normally controlled his visions though, and last night had hit him squarely between the eyes.

"Wh—what...why...?" Storm continued to stare, obviously thrown by his untimely appearance. "What are *you* doing here?" She crossed her arms over her chest and glared.

"Storm Buchanan, I'm Rafe Savage. It's a pleasure to *officially* meet you." He turned on the charm and she blinked in bewilderment. Without asking, he reached for her limp hand and brought it to his lips.

Touching her made him hard as a rock. Thankfully, she continued to stare into his eyes, as if searching for answers there. He smiled, and her eyes widened. Her ripe lips parted on a breathy gasp.

He wondered if he'd gone overboard on the charm when she continued to say nothing. Then he noticed the rough abrasion on her palm. He turned her hand over, his heart racing.

"Where'd you get this?"

She pulled her hand away and moved to her sofa. Her movements were slow and clumsy, and he watched with suspicion as she carefully lowered herself to sit.

"I don't know. Must have happened when I tripped the other day." She settled into the cushions and gave him a wary look.

Not believing her in the slightest, Rafe followed her. He scooped her up into his arms, ignoring her protests, and moved as gently and quickly as he could.

"What the hell are you doing?" She didn't try to leave his hold, conscious of her injury, no doubt.

"Where's the bedroom?"

"The bedroom?" Her eyes flickered to the left. "Are you on drugs?"

He walked with her down the bright corridor to a bedroom that had to be hers. Done in soft blues, the room had feminine touches but wasn't overly frilly. Her queen-size bed, to his disappointment, sported rumpled cotton, not silk sheets. He lowered her to the mattress and waited for her to try to escape.

She didn't disappoint him.

He stopped her awkward attempt, pulled her to the edge of the bed and opened her robe.

Ignoring her stunned silence and his own heated reaction to her short nightshirt, he examined her first with his eyes, then his hands, conscious of her sudden stillness. Rafe felt the same curves he'd touched just Thursday night and shifted to relieve the building ache in his groin.

She flinched and he froze. A glance at the flesh under his hand told him the unfortunate truth. A large, purplish bruise covered her upper left thigh.

"We should get you to a hospital," he murmured, still looking at the bruise. A surprising anger filled him. Storm had been hurt, and he was taking it personally, which made little sense. Conscious of what had to be extreme pain, he wanted to take it away, maybe kiss it better. His cock throbbed and he swore to himself, trying to get a handle on his suddenly whacked-out libido. This was no time to be lusting after the woman.

He wondered if she'd broken anything.

Storm wondered if she'd been hit on the head, or worse, maybe suffered from some strange delusion. She hadn't moved a muscle while a near stranger—albeit a darkly handsome one—groped her. She wanted to attribute most of her response to shock, to deny the fact she actually liked the sensual pleasure of his touch.

She swallowed as his large, callused hands left trails of heat in their wake. She prayed he hadn't noticed she wasn't wearing any underwear. But if he inched her shirt up any more, he'd see an eyeful.

"What are you doing?" she asked, wishing she didn't sound so breathless. He crouched beside the bed, on the floor between her thighs, and studied her bruised leg. "And who gave you my address?"

Rafe ignored her. He grasped her leg at the knee and slowly pushed her thighs apart. Her hip protested, but the pain wasn't so bad if nothing directly touched her skin. He ran a hand over her leg to the bruise. The sensation gave her goose bumps until he reached the injury. When she sucked in a breath, he stopped and trailed his hand back to her knee.

His gaze met hers. "I don't think it's broken, but I'm no doctor. You should see someone."

Storm took a calming breath, trying to sound relaxed and not horny as hell for a Westlake agent. "First of all, my leg is fine. It's a little bruised. Okay, a lot bruised," she amended at his raised brow. "But who the heck do you think you are, busting into my house, issuing orders, touching me..." Her world centered on the large hand still covering her leg. His fingers stroked her knee and she had trouble breathing.

God, he is making me so hot.

He forestalled her next comment with a finger across her lips. It was all she could do not to taste him.

"I'm glad you're all right." He looked away from her face and examined her nearly naked body with burning interest.

Storm knew she was pretty but didn't consider her looks anything out of the ordinary. Thanks to good genes and a steady exercise regimen, she had a slender build and long, toned legs. The thought of them wrapped around his waist made her wet, and she prayed Rafe wasn't a mind reader. Talk about embarrassing.

His eyes darkened and he traced her lips with his thumb. "I'd love to know what you're thinking right now."

Thank God. Not a mind reader. But— She gasped when he slid his other hand to her uninjured leg.

"Hmm. Does it hurt here?"

"N-no." Move, Storm. Tell this guy to take his grabby self and leave.

“How about here?” Rafe’s hand slid between her thighs. He teased closer and closer to her clit while subtly pushing her legs farther apart, careful not to hurt her. By now her lack of undergarments had to be apparent.

“I’m okay,” she rasped. Her nipples beaded under her shirt, needing to be touched.

Rafe glanced up at her face with a concentrated hunger. “Like I said, I’m no doctor. But I really think you need to be looked at.” He shoved her shirt up, exposing her from the waist down. She’d completely shaved for her date with Hank, on the off chance she got lucky. She couldn’t have imagined Rafe Savage’s indrawn breath would be her reward.

He eased his fingers along her folds, spreading her arousal over her responsive flesh.

“Does it ache?” he rumbled in a low voice.

Hell yes. She closed her eyes, unable to answer.

Then his finger found the heat of her. He pushed inside, knuckle-deep.

“Oh my God.”

“Damn, that’s hot,” he breathed and pulled his finger out, only to push it back in again. “You have to be really hurting here, hmm, Storm?”

She needed to tell him to stop, to demand this man that she didn’t know leave the house and never look back. But everything inside her told her that *this* was the man she’d been waiting for. Never before had she lost control from a man’s touch or been so ready to have sex.

He rubbed her clit with more and more pressure, manipulating her body as if he owned it. The ease with which he mastered her responses bothered her on a distant level. But she couldn’t think past the need to come hard all over him.

“This is insane,” he said, his voice thick. She opened her eyes to see him gazing between her legs. “Fuck me,” he swore, then removed his hand and covered her clit with his mouth.

She cried out and clenched his thick hair, holding on as desire burst through her in a torrential wave.

Rafe sucked and nipped, licking her like a starving man. He shoved one finger inside her pussy, then added another, thrusting them in a rhythmic pace that had her battling her climax all too soon.

“That’s it, baby. Come all over me. Let me eat it up,” he growled and resumed his course.

He drew harder on her clit and pushed deeper into her, sliding against a sweet spot that sparked stars behind her lids. She arched closer to his mouth and pumped her hips, needing what only Rafe could give her.

“Yes, yes,” she gasped as she came hard.

He devoured her response, licking and stroking with a tongue that wouldn’t quit. When the sensations became too much for her to bear, he eased off and planted kisses along her thighs.

Storm opened her eyes, sated, confused and helplessly caught in the rich brown gaze staring back at her with what looked like possession. “I, that, I—” She had no words to express the bewildered joy infusing her tired mind and body.

Rafe wiped his mouth and sucked the fingers that had been inside her, a gesture that had her licking her lips, wanting to know how he tasted. He stood and she unconsciously sought the erection straining his jeans.

In a thick voice, he said, “I’m going to make us some coffee. We need to talk.” He turned and walked stiffly from the room. She heard the hall bathroom door shut, then silence.

Storm didn’t know what to think and lay back on the bed in a daze. She wasn’t sure how much time had passed before she heard Rafe exit the bathroom. The sounds of the kitchen cabinets opening and closing penetrated while she stared blindly at the doorway, her legs wide open, her sex wetter than wet.

Embarrassed she could barely remember her own name, she rose from the bed, grabbed a change of clothes and limped to her adjoined bathroom to clean up. She emerged fresh but no less embarrassed in loose-fitting sweatpants and a T-shirt.

Rafe stood in her kitchen sipping a cup of coffee. He said nothing, but his eyes darkened as he watched her near. When she reached him, he pushed a cup her way.

Baffled by what to say, and more, what to think, she went through the mundane process of fixing her coffee. She poured a cup and stepped toward the refrigerator when he shook his head.

“I’ll get it. Cream? Sugar?”

“Yeah. Sugar’s in the—”

“Top cabinet. Go sit down. I’ll join you.”

Both annoyed at his arrogance yet glad of it, she huffed and left the kitchen for her dining table in the open living area. At least now she felt the same aggravation she normally felt for anything or anyone connected with Westlake Enterprises. For a minute there, she’d confused incredible sex with affection.

He joined her at the table with a tray carrying their drinks, cream and sugar.

She frowned. “Where’d you find that?” She nodded at the tray, which had been missing for weeks.

"Next to the fridge. Drink up." He downed his coffee like a thirsting man, and she had the distinct notion he wished it was something a lot stronger.

She fixed her coffee the way she liked it and took a sip, then ran a hand through her hair. It didn't escape her notice that he followed the movement with intensity. She wondered if he imagined running his own hands through it.

Storm stopped that train of thought and cleared her throat. "What are you doing here?" *And why don't I want you to leave?*

Rafe downed more coffee and forced himself to stop looking at her mouth. When he'd jerked off in the bathroom, he hadn't been able to think of anything sexier than Storm Buchanan on her knees, sucking him off. He had the respite his body demanded, but a glance at those lips took him right back to his fantasies. Not good. Ignoring the return of his hard-on, he focused on the matter at hand—his insane urge to make sure she was okay.

"As to what I'm doing here," he said matter-of-factly, projecting an air of cool professionalism that had otherwise been absent. *Yeah, going down on the woman is real professional. Way to make Westlake look like a topnotch organization.* Christ, he was turning into J.D.

The wariness that had been in her eyes before returned, and he knew his time was growing short. "I came across some information that hinted you might be in trouble. I just wanted to make sure you were okay."

She didn't blink, and the steely determination in her light gray eyes reminded him, surprisingly, of himself. "How the hell can you know I was in trouble? It just happened and I didn't report it to anyone."

"I didn't try to run you down, if that's what you're thinking."

"Believe it or not, I didn't think you had. So how did you find out about it?" When he didn't answer, she sighed. "Can you at least tell me who tried to hit me?"

"I'm not sure. Might have been a drunk driver, but I don't think so." He frowned, remembering the rest of what he'd envisioned. "Who was the blond guy?"

"Oh, Hank? He was my date," she said absently, her thoughts seemingly elsewhere.

"Some date. He left you all alone with that leg?"

Storm scowled. "He doesn't know anything about it."

"Oh?"

She blushed but her scowl remained. "Look, Savage, Hank isn't a part of this. He's just a regular guy. I didn't want him involved, so he's not. He knows nothing."

"How is that?"

"Quit playing. You're the one who thought a blindfold would be more useful on me than a gag. You know I can work with weak minds." She paused, then amended, "Not weak, just, not strongly fortified. Shielded, you know what I mean."

"So Hank has a weak mind, eh? Not a great date?"

"Well...no," she grumbled. "The truth is the hit and run was the most exciting part of my night."

"Sorry to hear that." He forced himself not to smile in satisfaction. Again, his gaze fell to her sweet mouth and lingered.

"Er, well then."

He didn't speak, wondering what she'd do if he kissed her.

"I, um, I'm sure one of my brothers will show up this morning, uninvited. So unless you want to hang around and explain to them why you're here, I'd suggest you go."

Rafe tore his gaze from her mouth. He knew she was okay, mostly. So why the hell was he so reluctant to leave? "Your brothers. Luc and Thorne. Tell 'em I said hi."

"Yeah, right. That's like waving a cat under a pair of Pit Bulls."

He grinned and stood. Instead of walking to the door and leaving, as he'd intended, he rounded to her side.

"What—"

He bent and kissed her before he could stop himself. So sweet. So sexy. Her lips felt soft yet firm under his mouth. He broke off the kiss before he forgot himself and hauled her back into her bedroom for round two.

"Time for me to go, Storm. I'll be seeing you soon." He left before he did anything else stupid, like make love to her until she couldn't walk.

Storm hobbled to her feet to watch him walk to his car and leave. She closed the front door, still not sure what the hell had happened to her this morning. An orgasm before nine from a man she kept running into on Buchanan business. And that wasn't counting their play the other night, which had devolved from competitive to sexual in the blink of an eye. From not dating to mind-blowing pleasure.

Her life couldn't possibly be this bizarre. She glanced at the cup of coffee sitting next to hers on the table. The cup confirmed it. Rafe Savage was not a figment of her imagination.

Storm spent the remainder of the weekend wondering about him. She couldn't get Rafe out of her mind. What he'd done to her still made little sense. When had she ever been so bowled over by passion that she'd partaken in casual sex? Hell, the man had touched her intimately, made her climax and left before he experienced the same. What did that mean? And why should she care that he'd left unfulfilled?

She could kick herself for wasting a golden opportunity. The entire time he'd been at her house she'd been too shocked by his presence to test her psychic skills against him. She'd have to try to control him at their next meeting, and she knew without a shadow of a doubt there'd be one.

By Monday morning, her leg felt much better. She'd babied it by taking several deep, soaking baths to relieve the pain. She didn't yet feel ready for a run, but she planned to work out later in the week. Not wanting her brothers getting wind of anything that had happened and turning overprotective, she'd practiced walking with a slow, even gait until she felt sure she could pretend all was well.

Though the pair believed in her ability to hold her own at work, at heart they still treated her like their little sister and were ready to beat up any man they didn't deem worthy of her affections.

She didn't want to worry them with the hit and run. Still, as she drove to work, she wondered who could have been behind the wheel of that car. No one she knew of had a problem with her. Miles Locklen had no idea she'd been involved in stealing back his aunt's jewelry, and she hadn't been directly involved in her other cases. So none of the criminals they'd put away should have a beef with her. She chalked up her hit and run to a freak accident, but she decided to meet with Rafe again just to make sure he hadn't learned anything else of interest. *Yeah, that's the only reason I need to see him again—business.*

Trying to concentrate on her job, Storm parked and left her car. She nodded to the watchman in the lobby. They chatted for a moment before she stepped into the elevator and headed to her uncle's floor. Normal, everyday activities that didn't involve Rafe Savage in the slightest.

When she entered Max's office, he glanced up and smiled. "What did you do this weekend?" His smile faded into a frown. "You don't look all that relaxed to me."

The first to arrive, she found herself on the hot seat. Max absorbed details like a sponge. She had no doubt he'd seen the shadows under her eyes that makeup failed to hide. She shored up her mental shields and told him the story she'd practiced all weekend.

"Why Uncle Max, I'm surprised at you. You told us to have a good time this weekend. That doesn't mean we should sleep the weekend away." She described her date with Hank, intentionally avoiding discussion of her leg and Rafe Savage.

"Poor Hank. Another one bites the dust, eh, Storm?"

She shrugged. "I tried. I guess Hank and I just aren't in the cards."

"Too bad." He paused. "So, what do you think of Savage?"

She blinked. "Rafe? Why do you ask?"

Her uncle's gaze burned. "Rafe, hmm?"

Shit. Obviously, Max knew more than he was saying. But she couldn't see Rafe telling her uncle all they'd shared. Before Max could answer, her brothers entered the office. She didn't think she'd ever been so happy to see the pair.

"We'll talk about this again later," Max promised. He launched into details concerning the Raeford Hotel job. Storm listened with half an ear, because every time her uncle said *Raeford* she heard Rafe and saw dark brown eyes staring up at her like he wanted to devour her.

She needed to talk to Rafe again. About the mishap, she reminded herself. No more kissing or touching or climaxing.

Just the thought made her blush.

"Pay attention." Thorne elbowed her. "What's on your mind? Hank?"

"Sorry. Long weekend." She managed a half-hearted grin.

Luc and her uncle ignored her and discussed the hotel job. Thorne wore a thoughtful expression as he nodded at something their uncle said while keeping his eyes on her.

She'd give Rafe until this afternoon. Then they would talk about what exactly had happened this weekend. If the man could distract her enough to make her think about him at work, Storm had a problem. In the meantime, she'd do a little digging of her own into her hit and run, just to be safe.

Chapter Four

By six o'clock Monday morning, Rafe turned the last corner of his run. He typically set out in the dark of early morning but varied his course, not wanting to be so predictable. Predictability made one vulnerable, and Rafe had learned his lesson the hard way. Today he'd driven to Emmet Park for a three-mile river run, a scenic route through the historic district and along the Savannah River.

He'd passed a few other early risers around town, but this early in the morning, not much stirred in Old Savannah except the Spanish moss swaying on the southern live oaks that dotted the park. He picked up his pace and had just reached his end point when he felt a prickle of unease.

A tree branch right in front of him snapped and fell to the ground. Instinctively, Rafe dropped and rolled behind a mammoth oak as the muted sound of bullets struck the trunk of the tree. He scanned the area but saw nothing out of the ordinary. He liked to run through the park because of its scenic view. Now that scenic view hid a shooter.

He reached for the gun tucked against the small of his back. He never went anywhere without it, and he was especially grateful for that fact now. He tossed a rock away from him and darted in the opposite direction. The shooter fired at his distraction, and Rafe returned fire into a copse of large bushes before finding cover once more.

Nothing moved. Silence filled the air before the sound of birds could be heard overhead once more.

After some time, Rafe crept out from behind the tree and used the surrounding oaks and cedars for cover. Nothing stirred except for a few squirrels. The bastard had vanished.

Swearing, Rafe swept the area and found several casings but nothing more. He studied the area the gunman had been occupying, noting the impact and shoe marks on the ground.

"Helluva way to start the week." He rubbed the back of his head in frustration and jogged to his car, where he'd left his cell phone. He called in the incident and returned to the scene. Things were certainly getting interesting.

A few hours later at Westlake Enterprises, Rafe checked with the logistics coordinator on a recent case. He was just leaving when he ran into J.D.

J.D. gave him an odd look. "Come with me and I'll buy you a cup of coffee."

"The coffee in the break room is free, dumbass."

"Why do you think I'm offering to buy?" J.D. smirked.

As they walked together to the break room, J.D. nodded back the way they'd come. "So, what's with you and Jennifer? Woman eyes you like a hungry bone."

"Not my problem. I don't date coworkers."

"She's not exactly a coworker." J.D.'s amusement glowed in his bright blue eyes. "Woman like that could keep you happy all night long."

Rafe considered the pretty brunette, but his tastes ran more to feisty, black-haired schemers with mesmerizing gray eyes. "Not my type."

J.D. chuckled. "You know, if I was to make a guess, I'd say your type runs to a hot, leggy goddess who resides on Maple. You still owe me for getting you that address."

Rafe grimaced. "Enjoy your coffee and consider us even." He paused. "You didn't mention my request to anyone, did you? I mean, I was a little groggy that night and I wouldn't want Jurek getting the wrong impression."

"He won't, not if you tell me what's going on."

"That's blackmail." Rafe sat, irritated and amused, while his large blond friend left to find them two coffees.

J.D. returned and handed him a cup. "Well? I'm waiting to hear all about it."

"You tell this to anyone and I'll gut you."

"Yeah, yeah. Now tell me what the hell this is all about. Curiosity has been killing me. Hey, it wasn't Storm who shot at you this morning, was it?"

"Don't be an ass." Rafe frowned. Two near brushes with death, two different incidents, two different people. But he could feel the dots connecting. "Friday night I had a vision. It woke me out of a sound sleep."

J.D. puzzled over that. "I thought you controlled them. Didn't know they took over."

"They normally don't. That's why the whole thing was unusual. I saw Storm Buchanan and some guy nearly being hit by a car. That's why I needed her address. I wanted to make sure she was okay. That and I wanted to see if I'd just had a weird dream or if it actually had to do with something real."

"Was she okay?" J.D. asked, concerned. Since J.D. had worked on the case with Buchanan Investigations the year prior, he'd developed a friendly relationship with some of Buchanan's people.

Rafe wondered how well his friend knew Storm, and why the thought of J.D. anywhere near the woman bothered him. "Storm is fine."

"Yeah, she is."

Rafe scowled at J.D.'s leer. "She's pushy, sarcastic and bossy. I doubt anything closes that smart mouth of hers." Another image of his cock and her lips hit him. He gritted his teeth and ignored it. "Unfortunately, Storm had a huge bruise, courtesy of an out of control black sedan. The blond guy was apparently a lame date."

"Surprised she had one. I've met her brothers, and the pair are real protective of their little sister."

"I've never met her brothers." Not face-to-face, but he wanted to. Anything that concerned Storm Buchanan interested him. In a purely business sense, he told himself. Good idea to know everyone who worked for Buchanan Investigations. Nothing wrong with that.

J.D. chuckled. "Be thankful. They're a pain in the ass, but fun to watch. Luc's not bad. He has a wild sense of humor. Thorne can be pretty demanding. They're Buchanan through and through, but I wouldn't mind going into a tough situation with them as backup. They were a big help on the Guest case."

Rafe didn't have specifics on the investigation, though it had gotten big press for Jurek. Another agent, Hunter Greye, had worked the op. Rafe had been busy at the time looking into a Westlake agent gone rogue. "What did the Buchanans do to help?"

J.D. finished his coffee and set it aside. "Luc's like you. He has visions of the future. Thorne and Max are telepaths. They worked their magic—Hunter too, since he got the girl."

Hunter Greye, Rafe's friend and now an independent investigator, had met and married his wife as a result of the joint case. Alexandra, Storm's cousin, fell in love with the gruff man and now ran a business with him, consulting for Max or Jurek as they saw fit.

J.D. added, "Storm didn't help on that case, but she has some kind of manipulative power. Then again, you'd know that because I had my ass handed to me by Jurek after you ran into her at Locklen's place. Thanks, by the way."

Rafe stood. "Not my fault. You were in charge of security. She shouldn't have been there without us knowing. Did you figure out how that happened, by the way?"

"Not yet." J.D. grimaced. "But I have a bad feeling about it."

"I don't think I want to know." Rafe glanced at his watch. "I need to see Jurek. Gotta go."

"Later." J.D. waved him away and started flirting with a woman from payroll who sat down next to his table.

Rafe walked to Jurek's office and checked with his secretary.

"He wants to see you."

Surprised, Rafe knocked and opened the door to find Jurek sitting at his desk, a mess of papers and folders surrounding him.

"Come in, Rafe. I was just calling down for you." Jurek hung up the phone.

"I think we may have a problem," Rafe said, needing his boss's advice. He filled Jurek in on his suspicions about his vision the other day and the incident that morning. "I can't see as the two are tied together, but I can't shake my instinct that they are."

"Why do they feel connected?"

"I don't know."

"Have you tried to look into it?" Jurek referred to Rafe's foresight.

"Yes, but I can't see anything. I get glimpses of faces but they're all skewed." He'd seen Storm and that car clearly. But after visiting her, his subsequent attempts to get answers turned up nothing but vague impressions of danger.

"We'll put out some feelers. You've made a lot of enemies over the years, Rafe. Hell, it could be any number of folks. I want you to sit tight while we figure this out."

Rafe shook his head. "I can't do that. I have some loose ends to tie up on the Higgins matter. It's nothing dangerous. I need to verify some contact information in person."

Jurek didn't look happy. "Fine, but you'll take J.D. with you. I'm also assigning a watch to patrol your place at night."

"But Jurek—"

"No buts. Buck me on this and I'll assign a protective detail. Don't think I won't. That was no accidental shooting this morning. And if you think Storm Buchanan's in danger as well, we have a situation we need to deal with before it deals with us."

"Fine. I'll be in my office. I'll take J.D. with me when I meet with Floyd."

"You do that." Jurek dismissed him with a nod and Rafe returned to his office, disgruntled, tired and hungry for another taste of a woman he couldn't clear from his mind.

After taking J.D. with him to finish up with Floyd, who not surprisingly failed to show, Rafe spent the remainder of his day managing paperwork and trying to identify the mysterious black sedan. He'd seen the first two digits of the license plate but couldn't remember the state or exact make of the car. He had narrowed it down to a few models and sat impatiently waiting for some answers. When the phone rang he picked it up, thankful for the small distraction.

"Savage here."

“Mr. Savage? It’s Security Officer Michaels. I’ve got a Storm Buchanan in the lobby for you.”

Rafe hadn’t expected to see her again so soon, and he damned his hormones for firing up at the mention of her name. “I’ll be right down.” He tucked away several files he didn’t want a Buchanan to see, cleared his computer and righted his already neat office. Then he hurried downstairs.

He saw her standing by a large sculpture in the lobby. She wore her hair swept up in a ponytail to complement her business casual outfit—loose-fitting khakis and a dark blue sweater that gave mystery to the gray depths of her eyes.

“Storm, what a pleasant surprise.” He grasped the hand she offered, amazed at the energy that seemed to flow through their connection. She must have felt it as well because she quickly pulled her hand away.

He liked the fact that he bothered her. She’d preyed on his mind since he’d first seen her. Around her he lost control, and he didn’t like it. He’d show this woman who was in charge. If he could only convince his body of the same. He inwardly cursed his growing erection and escorted her to the elevator. Allowing himself to feel anything deeper for a Buchanan was less than smart and more than dangerous.

“Rafe.” Storm tried not to stare, but she couldn’t help it. Damn, he looked just as sexy today as he had Saturday. She tried not to flinch at the jolt to her system when he placed his large hand on the small of her back and steered her toward the elevator. They stepped inside and he deliberately stared down at her from his formidable height.

Trying to intimidate her, maybe? “Something the matter?” she asked in a haughty tone, sure to set his teeth on edge.

Instead, he smiled. “You look beautiful, as always.” His gaze traveled down her body with thorough scrutiny. “I wouldn’t know you had a bruise on your leg the size of my hand if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes.”

Or touched with your own hands. She counted to five before she spoke, scared she’d sound as breathless as she felt. “That bruise is why I’m here. I wanted to know—”

“Here we are,” he interrupted when they reached his floor.

He guided her into the hallway and down the corridor, past the curious gazes of several Westlake employees. Storm gathered they didn’t often entertain clients on this level. They entered an office at the end of the hall. He shut the door behind them and stood with his back against it.

A glance around the room showed her he kept his office very neat, as opposed to her own happy mess. The guy even had a tidy trashcan. She had a hoop fashioned on the wall above hers. A random assortment of balled up paper often littered her floor.

She moved around his office, looking hopefully on his desk for a word or two that might clue her into anything Westlake currently worked.

"Sorry to disappoint you, but I cleaned up when I heard you were in the area." Rafe crossed his arms over his chest and watched her through hooded eyes.

"Gee, so thoughtful." Knowing she wouldn't learn anything he didn't want her to know, she sat down on a leather sofa that looked as if it had been used often. She could envision Rafe sleeping on it while working a tough case. Dedication ran strong in all of Westlake's agents. *Even the crazy ones*, she thought with a frown.

She propped her feet on his table, amused when he scowled.

"By all means, make yourself at home," he muttered.

"Let's get right down to it, Rafe. Or would you prefer I call you Savage?" She didn't think his last name suited him very well. Rafe had a controlled presence at odds with the name Savage. Even when he'd had her tied up in Miles's study, when he'd seduced her in her own bedroom, he'd been the epitome of control.

His lips twitched. "I imagine Rafe is one of the nicer names you've called me. Let's stick with that." He sat down next to her, his sexuality almost palpable. A couch, blinds over the windows, Rafe so close...

She cleared her throat and sat up. "I did some digging of my own today. I couldn't find anything on the car that hit me and have nowhere else to go with the incident. There was no mention of it in any newspaper, and unless you were behind the wheel, you couldn't possibly know what happened to me."

"Your point?"

She smiled sweetly at him. "Like all the freaky agents in your bumbling, bureaucratic firm, you're psychic. So if you weren't there and you didn't read about this, you either have someone watching me—which I don't believe because my brothers and I would have seen an agent by now—or you had a premonition."

"Clever." His eyes blazed. With anger or arousal? "I had a vision of the accident. Speaking of which, you never did tell me what you know about Hank. Have you checked him out? Maybe he set you up?"

"Hank? No way. We were out on a date. Plowing into a woman with a car is no way to get into her bedroom. Besides, Hank's my neighbor. And I checked into his background before we went out. He's as bland on paper as he is in real life." At his smug smile, she frowned. "He's a nice man. Very normal."

"Right."

Storm continued, not sure why she needed Rafe to know Hank wasn't a total loser. "Yeah. Hank's a real keeper. He wined and dined me. Trust me, the *last* thing on his mind was having me run down with a car."

His smugness faded. "So sorry you had your evening ruined."

Remembering how disappointed and bored she'd been, as opposed to how exciting her Saturday morning had been, she changed the subject. "Did you come up with anything today?"

"Why would I be checking into anything? I only showed at your place to make sure you were okay. You are. End of story."

What she knew of the man told her otherwise. Even the files she'd borrowed from Remy, their IT guru, described him as determined, dangerous and dogged. "Right. So what did you find?"

He sighed. "I'm still waiting for a rundown on the car. What do your uncle and brothers think of the incident?"

"I didn't want them to worry until I knew more. If it's a drunk driver, what can they do but fuss over a bruised leg? I have work to do, and two brothers hovering over me isn't conducive to getting anything done."

"I'm surprised you can't tell them, then persuade them with your mind control to leave you alone."

"I wish. And it's not mind control, exactly. Just an ability to suggest things. Besides, my mojo doesn't work on family." *Or on you, not the way it should. Now why is that?* "So how do you know what I can do, anyway? It's not exactly common knowledge."

"We have a file on everyone in your organization. Just as you have one on all of us. I'm surprised you didn't know about my visions."

"We speculated, but you confirmed it. I mean, we know who you Westlake agents are, but sometimes we're not quite sure what you can do." This was the perfect opportunity to put her ability to the test. "And I know you want to tell me everything you know about me and my family. Everything." She directed a burst of energy at him and stared directly into his eyes.

He maintained eye contact but said nothing.

"Rafe?"

"Hmm?" He seemed distracted.

Relieved he was like all the others, she waited.

"Storm..."

“Yes?” Having some control over this man would definitely place him in the forgettable category, right next to Hank.

“You have beautiful eyes. So gray, stormy, like your name. Nice try.” He winked at her and glanced at his watch. “You know, it’s getting late. Want to go to dinner? I told J.D. to call me if he gets anything on the car.”

She scowled, annoyed the handsome jerk didn’t respond the way he should. “Sure, not like I have anything better to do.”

He looked like he was biting back a grin as he escorted her out the door. J.D. bumped into them on the way out. He glanced from her to Rafe and waggled his eyebrows at her.

Rafe glared. “Tell Jurek I’m leaving for the night, would you? I’d let him know but I don’t want a security escort home.”

“Sure thing, buddy.” J.D. smiled. “Have a terrific evening, kids. And remember to name your firstborn after me.”

Storm huffed. “Jackass. By the way, you still owe me twenty bucks for that Braves bet.”

J.D. quickly turned away, suddenly busy again.

“What’s that about?”

Storm grinned. “He bet me twenty on a baseball game. I won. He lost and refuses to pay.”

“Maybe because you cheated?”

“Now why would you say that?” Luc had given her details on the game accidentally. Her brother hated his gift, especially when it ruined the anticipation of big league play.

Rafe shrugged. “Instinct. Something I’ve learned to rely on.” They entered the elevator and didn’t talk as they descended to the lobby.

“Just let me clear something at the front desk,” Rafe said and walked to the guards sitting in the lobby. Dressed in his work clothes, he seemed more formidable than the casual guy who’d shown up on her doorstep Saturday morning. That guy had seduced her with little effort. This man looked like he could ease a yes out of her without even a *thank you, ma’am*.

The notion bothered the crap out of Storm.

She resolved to remain strong. Lust was a physical response, after all. So what if he was hot, psychic and didn’t respond to her abilities? So what that Rafe Savage could have been her dream man all wrapped up in a neat, Westlake bow?

He returned to her with a disturbed look on his face.

“What’s wrong?”

He cleared his expression. “Ah, could we do dinner at your place? Mine seems to be out of sorts at the moment, and I’m not in the mood to go out.”

The opportunity to grill him over dinner presented itself, and she refused to pass it up. Storm told herself she did this for Buchanan Investigations. The more she knew about the enemy, the better her chances to protect her family. *Yeah, right.* “Sure. But you’re buying. I’m suddenly in the mood for steak.”

“So long as you’re cooking it, I’m game.”

She paused at her car, not looking forward to scooting into the low-slung sports car with her bum leg.

“I’ll drive, you sit.”

“But how will you get home after dinner?” she asked stupidly, not able to think of anything past the loud thundering of her heart.

“I’ll figure it out. Now let’s get out of here.”

Once they were both seated inside her car, he leaned close and kissed her until she couldn’t think of anything but Rafe inside her.

He pulled away, breathing hard. “I’m suddenly very, very hungry.”

Chapter Five

The woman's vehicle pulled into the driveway. She wasn't alone. Savage got out of the driver's seat, grabbed a paper bag from the back seat, and then helped Storm Buchanan from the car. The woman looked like someone Lewis would willingly fuck for hours, and he could feel the pull of something more within her. No wonder the boss wanted to get his hands on her. That weird energy that sparked in the boss swirled in the woman as well. Lewis could see the vague outline of power around her. And over Savage as well. The other day at Emmet Park hadn't been a trick of the light after all. Damn. The guy wore danger like a second skin.

Savage walked her to the door, waited while she unlocked it and then went inside with her.

After ten minutes, when neither Savage nor the woman emerged, Lewis made a call.

"I didn't mention it before, but you've got a nice place here." Rafe stood in the living room while Storm prepared their dinner in the kitchen. He'd offered to help, but since he'd admitted he could barely boil water, she'd shooed him away.

"Thanks. Since you already had an uninvited view of the place, make yourself comfortable."

"I will." He studied her friendly, if disorganized, living space. The kitchen was small but looked larger due to the open breakfast bar. Penciled sketches of a variety of places, from Venice, Italy to New Orleans, Louisiana decorated the cream-colored walls. Most of the pictures looked as though they'd been done by local artists. He wondered if she had acquired them from the places she'd been.

A dark blue sofa and two chairs flanked the gas log fireplace. She didn't have many knickknacks, but books and magazines overflowed her bookcases and stacks sat everywhere. He shook his head. How could she live like this?

"Problem?" Storm had returned.

"Ever think of hiring a maid?"

She surprised him by grinning. "Really gets under your skin, doesn't it? I wouldn't have pegged you for a neat freak until I saw your office."

He plopped down onto one of her chairs, opened up an entertainment magazine and began to read.

"You're really not going to help with dinner?"

"You ordered me out of your kitchen." He turned a page. "Do you actually like this stuff?" He lifted the magazine to show her the picture of an alien zombie ripping apart a corpse.

"That's one of my favorites, but it's a back issue." Her voice turned defensive. "I like *Horror Monthly*. Someone like you probably reads nonfiction."

"Wow. I must be making progress. I was sure you didn't think I knew how to read," he said to her back as she walked into the kitchen.

She turned on some classic rock music while she worked and he read. The domesticity of the arrangement comforted Rafe, which surprised him because he'd never considered himself a wife and two point five kids kind of guy. The one time he'd made a play for permanence had backfired in his face. And he hadn't felt a tenth of the attraction for Lydia that he felt for Storm.

"Okay, Rafe, dinner's up."

He joined her at the dining table and inhaled the pleasant aroma of a home-cooked meal. "You really can cook." He took a bite of food and hummed with pleasure. "You're close to being the perfect woman."

She didn't respond, seemingly engrossed in her meal. She'd cooked a tender porterhouse, complete with baked potato and salad. Rafe didn't think he'd ever eaten anything tastier.

Minutes later, Storm laid down her fork. "Okay, I'll bite. I'm close to perfect, but...?"

"If you could just learn to keep your mouth shut, I'm sure you'd have guys all over you. Of course, that didn't seem to bother Hank." He'd told himself to forget about her meaningless date, but he couldn't put a lid on his jealousy.

Storm scowled. "Mouth shut? Jerk. And just what have you got against Hank?"

"Other than the fact the guy let you take the hit from that car, and that Hank is a name you give to your dog, not a thing." He felt his cheeks turn red when she just stared at him. "Look, this is a terrific meal. Let's not spoil it with a fight."

Her lips twitched, and he had the uneasy feeling she was laughing at him. "Fine."

They finished the meal with banal conversation. The weather, Southern living, her car versus his. Nothing about work or family. Not that he'd tried hard for the information. She really had outdone herself with dinner.

"Storm, I have to say, I didn't think you had it in you."

She bristled. "I can cook."

"You sure the hell can." He patted his stuffed belly. "You cooked, I clean up."

“Now that I can agree to.” She stood and walked to the couch, where she sat back and put her hands behind her head. “Someone to clean my mess.”

“Someone needs to,” he muttered. He collected their plates, washed the dishes, and had just finished drying the last plate when his cell phone rang.

J.D. didn’t have much to share, though he laughed his ass off when he heard where Rafe had eaten dinner.

Rafe joined Storm in the living room. “That was J.D. Seems your black sedan was stolen three nights ago. There’s a valid police report to back that up. We’re at a dead end on this one.”

Storm shrugged, and from his position behind the couch, he had a perfect view down her shirt. “For what it’s worth, I appreciate the effort.”

Rafe licked his lips, suddenly hungry for dessert. “Just how far does that appreciation extend?”

“What do you mean?” she asked in a breathless voice and turned to face him.

It took all his concentration to refrain from joining her on that couch, stripping her, then surging inside her with one smooth, hard thrust.

He forced a smile, determined to be smart about involving himself with a Buchanan. He refused to be ruled by his dick. Once in a lifetime was enough. “How about dessert?”

“Dessert?”

He took a step closer. What if distance wasn’t the answer? Maybe if he slept with her, he’d purge her from his system. That, or make him more addicted to the aggravating woman.

Storm scrambled to her feet faster than he thought she’d be able. “You know, dessert’s a good idea. I’ll be right back with it.”

She winced, and he felt bad about prodding her. “You need rest. I’ll go. Tell me where—”

“No, no. Let me.” She had her keys and purse in hand before he could say no again. “To be honest, I need to work my leg or I get stiff. Can I trust you here?”

“What do you mean?”

She sighed. “Never mind. Just don’t upend the place looking for my dirty secrets.” She left him staring after her.

Rafe watched her go with some concern. If he didn’t know better, he’d think the damn woman could read his mind. And that scared the hell out of him.

Knowing he’d seen as much of her cluttered living room as he could stand, he peeked through her bathroom and her bedroom and freely looked through her closet and bureau.

"Oh, this is not a good idea," he murmured as he held a peach-colored teddy up for inspection. He quickly closed that dresser drawer and sat on her bed. Another mistake, because her rumpled sheets smelled like flowers, like Storm. He could too easily imagine her naked body in the sheets, writhing as she opened herself to him.

Rafe shook his head and stood, aroused, frustrated and baffled at this pull from a woman he didn't trust and didn't really know. Rafe had made love to many women. Hell, he enjoyed sex. But with Storm, nothing mattered but pleasuring her.

He left her bedroom before he lost his perspective. *I should bed her and forget her, use our attraction to get Storm out of my blood.* Perhaps he found her so attractive because she was a Buchanan and therefore forbidden fruit. Then again, he'd met her cousin Alex before and hadn't felt anything for the woman besides an appreciation for her natural beauty. Storm engaged all his senses. And apparently his sixth sense as well.

"What the hell am I going to do about you?" he asked no one in particular. Rafe needed to stop this weird fascination, but he didn't know how. He had a bad feeling sleeping with her would only make his growing attraction worse.

Confused by feelings he hadn't thought to feel ever again, he looked for the television remote, needing a diversion. As he searched, he straightened the room, all the while wondering what the future had in store for him. He bent down to collect a stack of papers behind the couch and heard the door open. But the heavy footsteps weren't Storm's.

Rafe didn't think. He acted. He remained crouched, and when an unfamiliar male crept past the couch, he attacked.

Storm returned to find Thorne and Rafe engaged in a rough-and-tumble fight that had broken a table lamp and scattered books and magazines all over her floor.

"What the hell is going on?" she yelled, but neither man stopped.

It was a wrestling match between two equally cagey opponents. Whereas Thorne was taller, Rafe had more muscle and one heck of a technique as he pinned her brother. She wondered if he'd be that forceful in bed.

Thorne slumped under Rafe's hold and groaned. "*Mercy.* Just stop thinking, both of you. Please."

Rafe frowned down at her brother. He slowly let him go and rose to his feet.

"Friend of yours?" Rafe asked her, panting.

“Not really.”

Rafe scowled and leaned down again, his fist cocked to fly.

“Oh, get off it. You know he’s my brother. Rafe, meet Thorne. Thorne, Rafe.”

Rafe blinked with obviously feigned surprise. “Well, what do you know. I thought you looked familiar.” His eyes gleamed with satisfaction. “Another Buchanan—my lucky night.”

Thorne groaned, rubbed his stomach and slowly eased to his feet when Rafe backed away. “Bastard.”

“Dick.”

“Nice.” Storm sighed and ambled to the counter, where she placed the cheesecake she’d purchased for the sexy idiot she had no right thinking about. She turned and found him right behind her. Rafe steadied her by grabbing her elbows and pulling her into his body.

Unfortunately, this close she could only think about kissing him.

Thorne cleared his throat.

She blushed and shoved Rafe away. “This place is a mess. Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t throw that right in your face.” She nodded at the boxed dessert.

Rafe aimed a thumb at Thorne. “He started it. And if you take a good look, the place is cleaner than when you left, with the exception of the floor by your fireplace.”

“True,” Thorne agreed. “Hey, is that Tony’s Cheesecake?”

“I love Tony’s.” Rafe nudged her out of the way as he made a bead for the dessert. “Truce. I’ll finish cleaning up if you’ll dish me some of that cheesecake. I’ll even take out the garbage,” he said with a glance in Thorne’s direction.

It took her brother a minute to comprehend the insult. When he did, he swore. “Motherfucker. You touch me and I’ll—”

Storm held up a hand. “Wait right there. Thorne Matthew Buchanan, watch your mouth or I’ll tell Mom.”

Out of the corner of her eye she saw Rafe’s slow grin.

“Come on. I’m not ten anymore.”

“Right. Now make nice or I won’t let you have any.”

Thorne opened his mouth then closed it with a snap. He snarled at Rafe, “Any *dessert*. You keep thinking those thoughts and I’ll put your face through the fu—freaking floor.”

Rafe's disdainful snort didn't win him any favors. "Oh, right. You're the mind reader. I'm impressed."

The silence that passed between them couldn't be good. Thorne's gray eyes brightened into a diamond-light fury.

"You too," Storm warned Rafe. "Be nice or no *cheesecake*." She emphasized the word and prayed she wasn't as red as she felt. Obviously Rafe had been thinking dirty thoughts about her, and she liked it. God, what was wrong with her? He was one of those uptight government wannabes. A Westlake agent. The enemy, or so she'd been lectured since she'd begun working for her uncle. "Rafe?"

"Fine." He addressed Thorne. "Sorry I beat you up."

"Yeah, I'm sorry too. Sorry I almost kicked your candy ass out of the house."

Rafe chuckled. "You wish."

Her brother's eyes narrowed. Storm sighed.

"And why the hell are you limping?" Thorne barked at her.

Rafe, the turncoat, added, "Great question. Why don't you tell him why you're limping?"

Storm didn't think now was the right time to mention the hit and run, not with Thorne in such a big brother kind of mood. She definitely didn't want him to know she'd gone to *Rafe* for help on the matter. She blurted out the first thing that came to mind. "Rafe and I were just finishing our first date."

Thorne's eyes widened. "You can't be serious? He works for Westlake!"

Rafe leaned against the counter, doing nothing to help Storm out of the mess she'd made. At least he didn't contradict her. To reward him, she cut a big piece of cheesecake and handed it to him.

Thorne looked like a man verging on apoplexy, but at least he no longer cared about her current state of health.

"Thorne, in case it's escaped your notice, I'm a grown woman."

Rafe pulled a fork out of a drawer and just had to say, "Oh, I noticed."

She ignored him. "I don't need to explain myself to you, big brother or not. I'd appreciate it if you'd leave now."

Thorne gaped, incredulous. "Are you kidding me?"

"Not at all. I don't question you about your bimbos. Don't question me about my date."

Rafe choked on his dessert.

Thorne growled, "This isn't over. We'll talk later. All of us." With a mental tweak to get her undivided attention, he added, "*Including Luc and Max. You're just lucky Mom and Dad are on vacation.*" He slammed out of the house.

Storm and Rafe stood in silence in the kitchen.

Rafe scraped his plate clean and licked his fork. "So if he has bimbos, what am I?"

"What?"

He started laughing. Not a small chuckle, but a huge well of mirth that brought tears to his eyes.

The laughter made him even more attractive, but Storm was annoyed. Her life was not one big joke. "You want a label? How about asshole?"

"Maybe I'm your himbo. A manbo?" he sputtered and tried to catch his breath.

She fought the smile curling her lips and looked at her trashed living room. "I think it's time you left."

Rafe wiped the tears from his eyes. "Man, I needed that. Yeah, I should probably go. Otherwise I might be tempted to stay and fuck you until neither of us can move."

She whipped her head around and stared at him. "Wh-what did you say?"

"Yep. We wouldn't stop until we couldn't move. Afterward, we'd have regrets. You'd think I'm after you for Buchanan secrets, and I'd suspect you of pumping me for information about Westlake. We'd be so caught up in each other I'd be inside you before you could blink. And man, I'd come inside you so hard, filling you so much."

"I— I—"

"Exactly." Rafe took two steps closer, kissed the breath out of her, then headed for the door.

"But how will you get home?" she asked, remembering he'd driven them in her car. *Filling you so much?* Heaven help her, but she wanted to start on that right now, which made no sense. Half the time, she wasn't sure she *liked* Rafe.

He stared at her stiff nipples. "Hell. I really need to go before I do something stupid. I have my cell. I'll call a cab. But don't worry, I'll call you tomorrow. I have no intention of telling your brother the truth. For some reason, I really like the idea of us dating, and that scares the crap out of me." He shook his head and surprised her with a sly smile. "Bye, Storm. I'm afraid if I stay much longer, your uncle might show up. You might fabricate a marriage or something, then where would we be?"

She flushed. "It was the best I could come up with."

"Right." Rafe looked like he wanted to walk back and kiss her, but he didn't.

She didn't know whether to feel relieved or disappointed.

"Tomorrow." He left without looking back.

A week later, Rafe checked his watch and decided to give Floyd ten more minutes. This was his last appointment for the day, and he intended to get it done as soon as possible. Wrapping up the Higgins case had taken more time and energy than he'd expected. He really needed to focus on more important matters. Like his first real date with Storm Buchanan.

He still wasn't sure he'd done the right thing by perpetuating this nowhere relationship, but he couldn't get the damned woman out of his mind. Just thinking about her turned him inside out.

"Hell." He glared at his dick, which had a bad habit of rising whenever he thought about her.
Focus, Rafe. Focus.

Since the shooting last Monday, things had been quiet. J.D. and Jurek had done their best but could find nothing about the attempt made on Rafe's life. Nor would there be anything anytime soon. Rafe had tried to see who had tried to kill him but had been unable to call forth a vision. He'd made enough enemies that he knew finding the culprit would be extremely difficult without the aid of his gift.

But at least Jurek had called off security. And now Rafe sat in his car waiting on an informant to finally tie up all the loose ends on Higgins. Floyd should have shown ten minutes ago. The longer Rafe waited, the more uneasy he felt.

As if thinking about him had conjured him, Floyd arrived. It was nearing seven, but the cloudy, dark sky made it feel much later. Minimal light shone on the deserted lot adjacent to the shipyard Floyd had chosen as their meet point. A nervous little man, Floyd didn't want Higgins to know that he'd assisted in his downfall.

The nearest cover, an empty freight car, sat a hundred yards away. Rafe had already scouted the car and found it empty, so he focused his attention on the only logical attack point, the open drive leading into the fenced lot.

Floyd parked his car, exited and hurried into Rafe's. "Sorry I'm late. Grabbed a quick bite to eat and got caught in a traffic accident. Forgot my cell or I'd have called you."

A short, stocky man in his late forties, Floyd had a healthy appetite for life and food. He handed Rafe a bulky brown envelope.

"This everything?" Rafe asked.

"Yeah. That should put the bastard away for a long while."

Rafe glanced at the sheaf of trader's notes and fingered a memory stick before sliding everything back into the envelope. "If this info pans out, your deal is good. You'll still have to testify, but we'll stash you somewhere safe in the meantime."

"Right. I've got to get out of here," Floyd said nervously. He looked around before he left the car. Floyd reentered his vehicle just as another approached the lot.

Rafe opened the door and yelled, "Get the hell out of here and don't stop for anything." Floyd took off like a shot. He drove right through the chain link fence and sped away.

Rafe had two options—floor it and escape, or find out who the hell would be out this way on this particular night. He didn't believe in coincidence. Rafe quickly got out of the car and kept it between him and the oncoming threat. He readied his gun, prepared to fire if need be. This new threat might be aimed at Floyd, and they couldn't afford to blow the Higgins case. But the car didn't even try to pursue Floyd. Rafe waited, his senses attuned to the danger. He kept low as shots rang out and swore when the car sagged. They'd shot out his tires.

He reached out with his mind, and in that space of an instant—*five men got out of the car, no weapons in sight. Their intent was to capture him. No one wanted to disappoint the boss. Succeed or be killed, and no question what they'd pick.*

Rafe broke from the vision as the car finally stopped. He peeked above the hood and watched as five large men emerged from the nondescript vehicle. They seemed organized, had no distinguishing marks, wore dark clothing and little jewelry that he could see. They'd come for him, not Floyd. This had to be tied to his shooting and Storm's hit and run. Maybe he'd finally get some answers.

One of the men spoke. "Rafe Savage, we need you to come with us. Our employer wants very much to see you again." He was blond, tall and possibly the most dangerous of the bunch. He stood with a predatory stillness, his brown eyes alert in his expressionless face.

Rafe stood and raised his weapon, gauging the reactions of the group. None of the men with the blond flinched. Interesting. "Who the fuck are you?"

"I'm also to let you know that the minute you fire that weapon, Storm Buchanan will pay the price."

Rafe didn't react. But fear blossomed inside him. "Who?"

"The woman you intend to meet tonight at the Olde Pink House. We have men in place to take her the minute you don't cooperate. Drop the gun."

How the hell did they know about his date? He'd arranged it from work on a secure phone. Had they tapped Storm's line, maybe? Shit. This didn't look good.

Rafe laid the gun down on the hood of his car and stepped around it. From what he could tell, none of his opponents held a weapon. Between that and their orders to take him in unhurt, he might just be able to mow through these assholes and contact Storm right away.

He stopped a few feet from the blond. "Who's your employer? Why didn't he simply ask me to meet him?"

The man shook his head while the other four moved slowly to fan around them. "Our employer is a busy man. He'd rather we bring you to him." The blond moved closer, almost within striking distance. "Let's not make this any harder than it has to be." He tried to grab Rafe. To the bastard's surprise, Rafe threw him over his shoulder and caught the next closest man, taking him down as well.

The others rushed Rafe as one. He struck one's neck and punched another in the solar plexus, eliminating two of his opponents. The fifth man kicked his ribs and punched him in the face in lightning quick moves. Pain burst in Rafe's jaw as he defended himself from a series of well-placed blows. The blond rejoined the assault with the two remaining men and knocked him to the ground. One grabbed for Rafe's ankles while another tried to shove a syringe in his arm. The blond yanked his head back by the hair.

"Hit him in the neck, Dickens."

Rafe bucked and kicked the man holding his legs in the face hard enough to put him out of commission. He grabbed the syringe and managed to stab the blond with it. Then he tackled his last standing opponent. After suffering a few more blows to his ribs, he choked the man unconscious. When Rafe was able, he stood on shaky legs and hurried to his cell phone after retrieving his gun.

He called Storm, who answered on the second ring. "Hello?"

"Where are you?"

"Rafe? You don't sound so good. What's wrong?"

"Where are you?" he repeated.

"Don't get huffy. I'm just getting ready to leave the house."

"Don't. Call your brothers and sit tight." He rubbed his side, annoyed to feel the bruises starting to throb.

"Rafe? What's wrong?" The worry in her voice soothed some weird part of him, because he liked that she was concerned.

"I'll explain it to you when I can. But I think you might be in danger. Don't leave the house, and lock your doors. I'll come as soon as I can."

He hung up and called Westlake. Assured a team was on the way, he then contacted Jurek specifically. Before he hung up, dull thuds impacted, shaking the bodies of the groaning men lying in the dirt.

Rafe dropped to the ground in seconds. He scooted under the car, but by then the shots had ceased.

Rafe called on his prognostication and watched as he, Jurek and a dozen agents in the yard surrounded five dead men. Frustrated, he slowly stood, favoring his right side, and looked around. Nothing but more questions with no answers. And worse, his date with Storm was shot all to hell.

Chapter Six

Storm shifted on her belly in bed, restless. She glared at her alarm clock. One in the morning, and still no further word from Rafe. Luc had taken her spare bedroom while Max and Thorne took care of some project they couldn't get away from. After speaking with her, Rafe had called his boss, who in turn had called Max. She knew from her uncle that Rafe was alive and well. It would have been nice if Rafe had called *her* to explain things. She wanted to know what the hell had happened.

So much for her big date and the little black dress she'd purchased.

She sighed and decided to make a cup of tea. Maybe that would help calm her nerves. She rolled onto her back then froze. Two shadows leaned over her bed. One stuck the muzzle of a pistol in her belly.

"Don't move, and don't make a sound."

Both intruders appeared male, and both were covered in black from head to toe. She tried to see their features but couldn't due to the darkness of her room. The taller one on the right reached with a gloved hand and yanked the covers off her. Because Luc had spent the night, she wore her more prim pajamas, a cotton shirt and pant set.

She tensed even more at the thought of her brother. What had they done to him? Did they know he was in the house?

"Watch her," the taller one ordered as he tucked his gun behind him. His companion nodded and stepped to the side, his gun still poking her stomach.

"Your boyfriend is out cold. He'll wake with a headache. Unless you want a bullet in his brain, no sudden moves."

"No moves. Okay."

The shorter man stepped back and the taller one pulled her off the bed to her feet.

Storm's mind raced. She needed to do something before they took away her hands. At least now she was in a much less vulnerable position.

"Wait!" she whispered and put her hands up to wave the large man back. "What are you doing here? Who are you? What's going on?"

"All in good time, sweetheart," the shorter man holding the pistol promised. "We're not here to chit-chat. You come with us and you'll get your answers soon enough."

"Whatever you say. Just don't hurt me or my brother." She wished she could look into their eyes, but she'd make do. Relying on the persuasive tone of her voice, she spoke softly, "I really think you should step back a little." She imagined the taller guy blocking the gun's line of sight.

The taller male stopped reaching for her and moved to his left, effectively blocking the gun.

Storm pushed him into his partner and ran for the door. A shot rang out behind her, effectively halting her attempt at escape.

"Nice try, angel. Now I'm starting to get pissed." The smaller of the two shoved his partner out of the way.

"Don't, you idiot! He wants her alive. If you kill her, we're as good as dead."

They argued while she hurried into the living room. She kept a gun in a hidden panel by the fireplace. She just had to reach it.

The intruders followed. They could easily overpower her. She needed a distraction. Just then, the phone rang. They automatically glanced at it, giving her the time she needed to swing around the couch.

"We have to grab her and get the hell out of here," the tall one insisted, his voice growing louder as he neared.

Just as she reached the fireplace, he grabbed her by the waist and tackled her to the ground. As they struggled, the phone stopped ringing. The overhead light came on. She quickly found herself blindfolded while the large man held her down. She resisted, but he wouldn't be budged.

"What a hellcat. No wonder he wants her unharmed. Look at that bod."

In the struggle, her shirt had ridden up under her breasts. She tensed when she felt a bare hand over her midriff. The bastard had taken off his glove to touch her? Panic made a muck of her resolve to remain in control.

"Yeah, this one's a keeper. No wonder he's paying top dollar for her unharmed." His hand crept higher and squeezed her breast.

"Storm!"

Everyone froze.

Luc's voice grew louder as he shouted for her through the spare bedroom door.

The threat of rape didn't match the fear of what they'd do to her brother. She was a Buchanan. She'd be damned if she'd let some thugs harm her or her family.

"Come on, baby. Let me up and we'll play." She exerted a tremendous amount of effort to get through to the man on top of her. The skin-to-skin contact helped.

When he removed his hand and started to stand, she kicked him between his legs. She heard the shorter man swear and ripped the blindfold from her eyes as he reached her.

"Give me the gun, handsome." She magnified her rage and fear into a command he couldn't deny, despite his struggles. His nose bled while he mentally fought, and tears appeared in his eyes.

"S-s-sure th-th-thing." He released the gun just as her front door flew open.

Thorne raced inside with her uncle on his heels. At that moment, the bedroom door crashed open and Luc fell into the hallway.

But with her attention diverted, the men who'd tried to kidnap her raced past Luc down the hallway to the laundry room and back door. That they even knew where to go scared her, since her back door wasn't off the kitchen, the way so many houses in the neighborhood had been designed.

"Go after them. I've got her," Max barked.

Thorne tore after the criminals while Max hovered and Luc hurried to kneel by her.

"You okay?" With wild eyes, her brother checked over every inch of her, hugging her to him with relief.

"Am I okay? That's some bruise you're sporting, big brother." She studied his temple with worry.

Her uncle wasn't as sympathetic. "You were supposed to watch over her."

Luc hung his head. "I was, but I... Hell, I have no excuse. I haven't been sleeping well, and tonight of all nights it caught up to me. I wasn't as aware as I should have been, and they knocked me out before I could defend myself."

Storm gripped his arm. "Luc, sit down before you fall down."

Uncle Max swore and called their medical team. Luc sat on the couch while Storm grabbed some ice and wrapped it in a towel. She quickly rejoined him and put the icy towel to his head.

"Shit."

"You big baby. Be still." She turned to her uncle. "Not that I'm not happy to see you, but I have to admit I'm curious. If Luc didn't see this one coming, how did you?"

"We have Savage to thank for that."

"Rafe?" Her pulse quickened. "Is he okay?"

"All I know is that Thorne and I were on the verge of learning who the hell Henry's been working for when the phone rang, and Henry once again disappeared."

"Bummer," Luc croaked.

They'd been after Henry Carva for two years.

Max sighed and sat beside Luc. "Well, I have to admit I'd hoped to nail the bastard. But learning you two were in danger took precedence. Your boyfriend has a handy talent, Storm."

Luc flinched when she pressed a bit hard. "Boyfriend?"

Storm groaned. "Not now. I want to know what's going on. First Rafe is almost shot, then this?"

Max nodded. "Something is definitely off about all of this. Both of you need to get dressed. Pack a bag, Storm. You're coming with us."

Storm would leave tonight, but she had no intention of hiding away while her family tried to protect her. She'd seen the Buchanans in action too many times to discount the male protective streak. Hell, she'd watched her uncle and her cousin Cole smother Alex for years.

As she dressed and packed, she processed the information she'd overheard from her would-be kidnappers. She rejoined her family in the living room, and minutes later, Thorne returned empty-handed.

"They got away," he spat with disgust. "They had a van waiting down the street that snagged them just as I'd neared. Obviously we have a third man, if not more. What the hell is happening?"

"We'll find the answers at Westlake's. Together, not apart, will lead the way to the reflections of truth." Luc's empty voice and blank expression preceded the rush of energy into the room. His face cleared and he scowled. "Man, my head is aching. Why can't I ever see lottery numbers instead of nightmares?"

Poor Luc had a rough time with his abilities. He never saw direct visions of the future. Instead he had odd dreams and visions that portended trouble. And most of those needed to be deciphered, riddled with imagery and mysterious symbols. Unlike Thorne and Storm, he couldn't call on his gift at will. It hit or it didn't, with no in-between.

"I don't think Westlake is necessarily a nightmare," Storm offered.

Her brothers turned twin frowns her way. Thorne snorted. "You wouldn't."

Max sighed. "Great. A party with our competitor. At the very least, I hope we can get some answers."

A half hour later, Storm arrived at the Westlake building with her family. They met Jurek, J.D. and Rafe in a large conference room.

"You okay?" Rafe asked.

She nodded. He had a bruise on his cheek but otherwise looked okay. Her overwhelming relief at finding him alive and well brought tears to her eyes. Stupid. She blinked hard. If her family saw her this upset, they'd attribute her weakness to the stress of the night. She didn't see her brothers or uncle tearing up, and she'd be damned if she'd play the part of the vulnerable little woman around so much testosterone.

Jurek cleared his throat to attract everyone's attention. "Let's have a seat. I think it's time to share what we know."

Storm sat across from Rafe at the table, flanked on either side by her brothers and uncle.

"What the hell's going on?" Thorne focused his displeasure on Rafe.

Rafe glanced at Jurek, who nodded. "It all started about a week ago, when Storm was almost run down by a stolen car. Friday night, right?"

"*What?*" Max wasn't pleased.

Her brothers echoed his anger.

"You never said anything."

"Are you okay? Damn it, Storm!"

"Everyone, if we could have some calm?" Jurek added, and the sound of his voice lulled everyone into a kind of haze.

Storm glared at Rafe. "I was going to tell them," she said in defense of her silence.

"When?"

"Yeah, when?" Thorne asked.

Her uncle's eyes were a deep black, and she could feel him seething with anger. "Storm, I want an explanation. Now."

She should have told them sooner. She knew it. "It was on a date with Hank. We'd just left the movie theater when a car nearly ran us down. I managed to push Hank away but the car clipped me. End of story. I didn't tell you about it because there was nothing you could do. I figured some drunk driver got careless and I didn't want you worried."

Thorne scowled at her. "You still should have told us. You might have been seriously hurt."

"She was," Luc pointed out. "That limp you were trying to hide is more than a stubbed toe, little sister. Gimme a break."

"It's a huge purple bruise on her upper left thigh," Rafe offered.

All gazes swung to him.

"Hey, she's my girlfriend, of course I'd know." His sly grin made her want to slap him.

Everyone looked at her and she blushed. "Oh, hell. He stopped by my apartment when I was in my robe. He saw a hint of skin. That's all." She worked really hard to shut down all thought about what had happened after that. "I admit the car may have bumped me a little."

"Bumped you a little? Are you out of your mind?" Thorne's voice grew louder.

Jurek shook his head. "Yell at her later. We need to get to the root of this. Rafe, fill them in."

Rafe nodded. "This seems to have begun with the attempt to hurt Storm. I had my own run-in with someone strange last Monday." Rafe described the occurrence. "We did manage to get some prints off the casings but haven't been able to locate our man. His name is Lewis Greene. He's got a reputation as an efficient hit man, which makes the prints on the casings suspect. His name's been linked with several shooting deaths but none of the evidence has ever linked him to the crimes. That he left any evidence behind on Monday doesn't fit."

J.D. added, "We're still looking for Greene. And tonight, in the course of another investigation, five men tried to bring Rafe to meet their employer, whoever that is. They threatened to hurt Storm if he didn't cooperate."

"Bastards. What have you gotten out of them?" Thorne asked.

"They're all dead," J.D. answered.

Rafe had killed them?

"Don't look at me." Rafe held up his hands. "I took them down intending to get answers. Before I could, a sniper picked off each one." He glanced at Storm. "It was right after that I called you."

Storm wondered how the heck she was tied to this. Maybe one of Rafe's enemies thought he could get to Rafe through her? But she'd been on a date with Hank when she'd first been struck. None of this made sense.

"The men knew about our date tonight, Storm," Rafe said. "But I called your office from mine. So either we have a leak or you do."

Max swore. "I need to talk to Remy right away."

J.D. looked steamed. "I've already run a security check on our end, but so far I've found nothing."

Rafe rubbed the back of his neck, and Storm noticed the scrapes on his knuckles. "All of this is connected," he said. "I can feel it. These aren't random events. Someone wants Storm and me alive. The first attacks were amateur. She wasn't hurt—overly—and I wasn't shot. Trust me, Greene had plenty of opportunity to kill me if he'd wanted to."

"Tonight men were sent to kidnap both of us." Storm thought quickly. "You said it yourself, they tried to grab you, not kill you. My kidnappers said *he'd* kill them if I was brought back harmed in any way. And they wanted you to meet their employer. It sounds as if there's one man at the center of it all, but I can't think who you and I might have in common."

"Neither can I." Rafe shrugged. He looked tired and frustrated. A glance around the table showed her they all did.

Jurek intervened. "Max? We'll make this a top priority, cross-checking names with your files and ours. In the meantime, I think we all need to get some shuteye." He stood. "Why don't you and I talk while the rest of them bunk down together? We'll save manpower if we consolidate."

"But someone wants both of them. You think we should put Rafe and Storm anywhere near each other?"

Thorne nodded. "Good point. We'll take Storm. Best of luck, Savage."

Max glanced at Luc and shook his head. "No," he said slowly. "I think Jurek is right. We'll keep a close eye on everyone."

Jurek glanced at J.D. "Can you handle the details on this? I want to keep our involvement quiet."

"I'm on it, boss. I know of a great place to rest up." He left the room.

Max and Jurek exited together while the rest of them stared in confusion at one another and stood. With the rush of adrenaline fading, Storm felt ready to drop.

"You okay?" Rafe asked, blatantly ignoring her brothers' matching frowns as he rounded the table to stand next to her.

"I've been better. How about you?" She noticed the puffiness around his mouth, the scrapes on his hands and the way he seemed to favor his left. "What's wrong with your side?"

He shrugged. "Bruises."

"Let me see." But before she could lift his shirt, her brothers interrupted. "Are you kidding me?"

Thorne glared at Rafe. "No. Trust me, there's nothing he'd like more than your hands on him."

She blushed and Rafe growled, "Keep out of my head, Buchanan, or I won't tell you when and where that precious motorcycle of yours blows to pieces."

"What?" Thorne gaped. He looked to Luc, who shrugged.

"Hey, don't look at me. I'm not as accurate or willing when it comes to the future. Trust me when I tell you if I'd seen the Deuce blown apart, I'd have told you."

Storm didn't know if Rafe was telling the truth or not, but he had her brother seriously freaked.

"Well?" Rafe asked.

"Fine. Just try to shield it a little around my sister. And don't think you're not going to tell me about my bike."

"Relax. Won't happen for a while yet. I'll let you know."

Thorne looked like wanted to argue, but he didn't. Instead he stepped away and tugged Luc with him. "We're right here, Savage. Don't try anything funny."

Storm snickered, feeling punchy. "Okay, Nostradamus. Let's see those ribs."

He lifted his shirt and she sucked in a breath. He'd taken a hard beating. "Oh, Rafe. Does it hurt?" She stroked his flesh and he jumped.

"Not exactly."

"This is making me ill," Thorne murmured, staring at them with disgust.

Luc groaned and leaned his head back against the wall. "I need Motrin. Stat."

Rafe covered her hand with his and slowly lowered his shirt. "I'll be fine. I'm just glad you're okay. Jurek kind of glazed over the details. What exactly happened at your place?"

She could only imagine Rafe and her brothers going apeshit when she told them the bad guys had knocked her around and groped her. It was bad enough they knew she'd almost been kidnapped. She didn't have the energy to soothe her would-be protectors.

"I'm so tired."

Rafe's eyes narrowed. "Storm—"

J.D. returned holding up a set of keys. She could have kissed him for his timing. "These go to a safe place with room enough for all of us. That's right, buddy. I'm your new babysitter," he said to Rafe.

"The fuck you are."

"Watch your language," Thorne snapped.

Storm wanted to smile but didn't.

J.D. jingled the keys. "Rafe, no arguing. You're stuck with me. Boss's orders."

“Shit.” Rafe rubbed a hand over his face then glanced at her. “I mean shoot. I don’t suppose Storm and I can share a room?”

His hopeful wink made her laugh. Her brothers scowled.

“Didn’t think so,” he said with a sigh. “Well, come on. Let’s go.”

They took two separate cars and drove to a large brick house in the rural outskirts of town. By the time they arrived, it had nearly reached four in the morning. They all immediately bedded down, the Buchanans taking the upper rooms while Rafe and J.D. took the downstairs. Her brothers made sure to put their rooms between her and the stairs.

Not that she much cared. The minute her head hit the pillow, she fell asleep.

She woke later to the smell of bacon and coffee. A glance at a bedside clock showed her she’d slept the day away. Apparently, she wasn’t the only one. It was early afternoon and the house remained quiet.

Taking advantage of the solitude, she used the upstairs bathroom to shower and dress, then strode barefoot downstairs to the kitchen in jeans and a T-shirt. She came to a stop at the kitchen island, where several clean mugs, plates and utensils cluttered the space.

To her surprise, Rafe was cooking breakfast. His hair still damp from a shower, he wore only a pair of jeans as he worked with a pan over the stove. He’d missed drying a few spots, and she watched as a few rivulets of water made their way down his broad back. Then he turned and her mouth went dry.

Storm tried not to stare at his chest, corded arms and flat stomach but failed miserably. Her eyes seemed to have a will of their own. Trying to appear unfazed, she forced her gaze to the coffee pot and said in as normal a voice as she could muster, “I thought you couldn’t cook.”

“I lied. Scrambled eggs and bacon if you’re hungry. Coffee’s fresh too. I just ground the beans.”

“You don’t even feel bad for lying, do you?” she asked and grabbed a cup off the island counter. She pushed it toward him.

“Nope. That was a helluva meal.” He grinned, poured her some coffee and added the right amount of creamer and sugar for her. Talk about attention to detail.

He handed it to her and their fingers brushed. Though the island separated them, she could smell his soap when he shifted. A hint of citrus and man made her salivate. Damn the coffee. She wanted Rafe.

He turned back to the stove and grabbed a spatula.

“Can you hand me that plate?” He motioned to the plate right next to him. His position at the stove was near the corner of the kitchen, and his hands seemed to be full with a heavy pan and spatula.

She set down her coffee and skirted the island. Just as she reached for the plate he let go of everything and caged her against the counter.

His lips quirked into a satisfied grin. "You're a real help in the kitchen, aren't you?"

She wanted to berate him but couldn't manage more than a sigh. Her gaze slipped from his eyes to his mouth and lower, to his mouth-watering chest. Unable to help herself, she caressed the tense muscle under her palms.

Rafe groaned. "Oh, yeah." Taking advantage of her hesitation, he lowered his mouth to hers. He tasted sweet, like sugar, and then his lips pressed harder over hers. Under her fingers, his nipples hardened. He moved closer and shifted his steel-hard cock against her belly, grinding against her.

"Damn, I want inside you so bad. Just a couple thrusts and I'm a goner."

She wanted the same thing. Except her brothers were upstairs and could come down at any moment.

Rafe broke the kiss and ran his lips down her neck, sucking lightly at her throat. "So soft. So tasty." He nipped her neck and whispered, "So mine."

Rafe could be gentle yet firm. The man consumed her every waking thought. When he touched her and talked to her like that, he made her feel as if she was the center of his universe. How could she not start to fall for him, Westlake or no?

A secret fear prodded her to nudge him with her mind. What if underneath all the sex, he buckled under her will? Maybe he wanted her so much because *she* wanted him to. Storm concentrated really hard.

Release me, Rafe. My brothers are coming. Let me go and I'll give you anything you want. An image of her on her knees, sucking his cock, came out of nowhere.

Rafe cupped her breast and squeezed her nipple. "Fuck, you're potent," he rasped. "On your knees, huh? Uh-uh. Bad girl, trying to control me like that. Soon as the others are gone, I think you're in for some punishment."

She shivered, lost in the fantasy of Rafe disciplining her.

"Well, well." His genuine smile shook her. "I know how we can make up for lost time. Our first night is going to be one hell of a party, Storm."

"You wish," she said on moan as he toyed with her other breast. She might not have been wearing a bra for all the sensation she felt.

"Baby, you have no idea what I wish." He grabbed her hand and closed it over the erection straining his jeans. "Feel what you do to me. If you only knew how many ways I've dreamed of fucking you," he ended in a low growl.

"Cut it out. My brothers are upstairs." Which made it in really bad taste that she was considering jumping him in the kitchen.

He closed his eyes when she gripped him tight. She couldn't stop thinking about how he'd given her that orgasm without getting his. The naughty part of her wanted to please him, and to get even.

When she unbuttoned his jeans his eyes flew open and he clutched her wrist to stop her.

"What are you doing?" he choked.

"Just my way of saying good morning." Storm leaned close to kiss him and wiggled her fingers free. She glanced down to see his cockhead visible between his parted jeans. She unbuttoned his fly to give her better access.

"You are so sexy," she whispered and kissed him again, the thrill of touching him almost worth getting caught.

The kiss turned from hot to embarrassingly carnal as she pumped him. So thick and long, he felt like an iron bar in her grip. The moisture at his tip acted like a natural lube that only made her hand slide faster over him. Storm held him tight, possession clear in her mind as she brought him to climax. He was hers right here, right now.

"I'm gonna blow. Fuck, Storm. Baby," he groaned as tilted his head back, his face a study of tortured ecstasy.

She was so worked up her panties felt damp. He gripped her waist tight and she watched him come all over her hand and his belly.

They stayed like that for a moment before she grabbed a nearby paper towel and cleaned him up. He buttoned up his pants but said nothing, watching in silence as she threw out the towel and washed her hands in the sink.

His eyes were overly bright with humor. "Just your way of saying good morning, hmm?" He sniffed at the smell of something burning, swore and turned back to the stove.

"Don't burn the eggs," she teased.

He chuckled. "I'd love to give you a *good morning*, but if I do you'll end up naked and embarrassed when I'm going down on you with an audience."

They both heard the tromp of footsteps on the stairs.

"I'll just drink my coffee over here." She rounded the island, putting some much-needed distance between her and temptation. Watching him get off had been one of the most arousing things she'd ever seen. And she wanted to do it again, as soon as possible.

A heavy shuffle sounded behind her.

J.D. joined her at the counter and stretched. "You two are up early. Or should I say, late?"

She decided to have a little fun. "*Good morning*, J.D."

"*Shit*." Rafe stuck a finger in his mouth. He glared at her over his shoulder.

"Problem?" she asked.

"Just burned my hand a little. No worries." The gleam in his eye told her he'd get her back.

She couldn't wait.

Chapter Seven

Three days later

Rafe moaned in his sleep, not wanting to see this particular nightmare again. But lately it continued to come with more frequency...

Richard Glass grabbed for his gun, shot twice—one shot grazing Rafe’s ribcage—and ran. Swearing at the burn and the blood dripping down his side, Rafe chased after the rogue agent. Glass turned a corner and sprinted down a narrow alley. Rafe followed. He halted when he found Glass staring at a dead end.

Suddenly, Glass spun around to face him. “You can’t prove anything, you bastard.” He sneered and raised his weapon for the last time.

“I can and already have.” Rafe aimed his Beretta dead center on Glass’s chest. “I have copies of your phone records, Richard. You were the one who gave up Hunter’s cover, and you nearly got one of Buchanan’s people killed too. I have witnesses who can clearly ID you, as well as a dozen or more other instances of corporate espionage. It’s over now. Give it up.” Rafe didn’t want to shoot the man he’d worked with for over three years.

Once again, Rafe had put his trust in the wrong man. He should have learned by now.

Glass laughed, a hearty chuckle at odds with the maniacal gleam in his eyes. “You’re a fucking idiot. Did you really think I’d come unprepared? Men, come on out.” But the man’s energy had weakened a while ago, giving Rafe and his agents a much-needed break. Glass couldn’t shield himself twenty-four/seven. And thank God for that.

“Richard, did you really think I’d follow you blindly all this way without a little reassurance?” Rafe whistled, and his agents tossed two men, bound and gagged, out of the shadows.

Rafe saw a brief vision of the impending future and acted on instinct. He fired at Glass a split second before Glass’s killing spree would have commenced. A minute later, Richard Glass, one of Westlake’s finest, sprawled on the cracked cement, his blood flowing down the alley into the nearby sewage drain, a crimson river joining a sea of filth.

Rafe crouched over Glass and yanked the pistol out of his hand.

“It’s not over. It’ll never be over...” Glass mumbled as blood trickled down his chin. Then the life slowly leached from his body and he died.

Movement to the left alerted Rafe, but he was too late. Gunshots, another dead body, and—

Rafe shot up in his bed, gasping and sweating. He'd had the dream just last week, and a few days before that. It had taken him months to let go of the nightmares plaguing him since the shooting. For half a year he'd been okay. And now they'd returned.

He tossed back the covers and swung his feet to the floor. Running shaky hands over his face, he cursed. He needed a good shot of whiskey. Better yet, he needed to get laid.

A glare at the door reminded him that he'd made a promise to himself to ignore *that* train of thought. His dreams of the Storm Buchanan rivaled the nightmare he'd just had—scary as hell. For the past two nights, he'd dreamt about a wedding and kids. And her family welcoming him into the Buchanan fold. That's all he needed, to walk away from the very future he'd built his life around in Westlake Enterprises.

Yeah, he needed a stiff drink. A scotch straight up sounded like just the thing. He stumbled out of his room in search of alcohol.

He found it in the kitchen. Through the window over the sink, he stared out at the cloudless sky looking for Orion, the eternal hunter. The constellation never failed to comfort him, forever poised to take on prey.

Through the death of his parents, the loss of his fiancée, and the betrayals of his friends, Rafe had counted on Orion's steady presence. After four years, he'd thought he could rely on Jurek as well. Too bad his boss had gone off the deep end.

Jurek insisted Rafe and Storm stick together like glue. While Rafe didn't mind keeping her safe, having her constantly near put him in a bind. He couldn't go after his assailants without endangering her, and Jurek knew it.

The combustible chemistry between them didn't help matters. It had been bad before, but after her hand job the other day, he walked around with a perpetual hard-on. If it had been merely lust he felt, Rafe would have screwed her and been done with it. But as he and Storm spent more time together, he found he really liked her. Dreams of a possible future together felt real, not like a fantasy. Their compatibility extended past the physical into likes and dislikes.

They both preferred action to sitting around with their thumbs up their asses.

"Damn Jurek," he seethed. In addition to Rafe's own home security, which was top of the line thanks to J.D., Jurek had stationed men outside in pairs on a twenty-four/seven rotating shift.

The ringing of his cell phone jarred him from the hell his life had become. Despite the late hour, Rafe welcomed the intrusion. "Yeah?"

J.D. answered. "Sorry Rafe, but I thought you'd want a heads up on the latest. You weren't sleeping, were you?" The sly innuendo didn't go unnoticed. J.D. had taken every opportunity to rag him about Storm since she'd been here.

"Dickhead. Storm is in her own room, probably stewing about her annoying family."

"Want me to come over and cheer her up?"

"Why did you call?"

J.D. chuckled. "Right. We finally tracked down Lewis Greene, your shooter from the park. Problem is, before we could bag him, he disappeared. He must have just barely gotten wind of our arrival before ditching because his clothes and his guns were still there. We rushed ballistics on the .38 at the scene. It matched the one he used to shoot at you. He's definitely our man." J.D. gave a frustrated sigh. "We've spread his picture around to several of our contacts on the streets, in addition to the police. If he shows his face anywhere, we'll find him."

Rafe had been hoping for better news than this. "Still no word on how they found out about my date with Storm?"

"No, but I did manage to learn how the Buchanans knew about the Locklen case. It was ingenious, really."

Rafe heard J.D.'s grim admiration and had to wonder about Buchanan Investigations. J.D. was the best of the best in the computer world. Not only was he a top-rate hacker, but his unique ability with electronics made him a definite force to be reckoned with.

"Somebody siphoned information through my secure server," J.D. continued. "I don't know how he decrypted my codes, but the whole thing was brilliantly executed. He didn't access it from within the building, and the loops he wove to cover his tracks are damn good."

"What's weird is that I plugged the hole as soon as I discovered it, right after your mishap at the Locklen Estate. Your interrupted meet with Floyd by the shipyard had nothing to do with Buchanan's hacker. Word from Buchanan's techno-genius is that his side is totally clean. Someone else had to have passed that information."

"Shit," Rafe cursed. "So Glass wasn't the only leak in our organization. We might have another rogue agent."

Last year, Rafe had worked hard to uncover a traitor in their midst. Unfortunately, Rafe had caught him *after* he'd sold valuable information to Raymond Guest, a suspected white slaver and drug runner. In the course of his investigation, Rafe had been forced to kill Richard Glass. A loss, and another betrayal. It was like a repeat of what had happened in the Atlanta PD all over again.

"We checked into Richard Glass, Rafe. He's a dead end. Literally. He can't be your rogue unless you're being haunted. Far as I know, none of our agents see dead people." J.D. paused. "Not to change the subject, but on a serious note, how are things really going with Storm? You guys okay?"

Rafe quelled his urge to hang up the phone. J.D. couldn't possibly know how tightly strung Rafe had been since he'd been sequestered in his own house with temptation made flesh. Storm Buchanan was torture on his control, no two ways about it.

"Things are fine. Storm's been busy working out, and I've been trying to manage what we know about this case, which unfortunately isn't much."

"Hmm."

Knowing he shouldn't, he couldn't help but ask, "What?"

"Nothing. Just that you're isolated with Storm Buchanan, a virtual sex kitten, and you have nothing better to do than work?"

Rafe went into ignore mode. "I need one more favor before you hang up. Send me everything we've got on Glass. Maybe something will turn up that sparks this investigation."

"I told you, Glass is dead," J.D. repeated the obvious again. "But if you want his info, you got it."

"I know it doesn't make any sense, but the more I think about it, the more my gut tells me he's connected to this. Maybe he had a lover who worked for us or a friend who we missed. There's something more I'm not seeing." Rafe didn't mention the odd recurring dream he'd been having of the night he'd shot the bastard—when he wasn't dreaming about Storm having his babies. He didn't want to understand why seeing her with his child just felt right.

"Fine," J.D. said. "I'll e-mail you everything I've got on your secure LAN. Just do me one favor before you go."

"Sure thing." Rafe powered up an encryption device sitting next to the computer.

"Tell me what Storm's wearing, in detail."

Rafe let out a disgusted oath and hung up on J.D.'s laughter. He worked for another hour, downloading and transferring information to paper. The rest he studied on the screen. His shoulders felt tight and his neck ached, so he stood and stretched, feeling hungry since he'd missed dinner in an effort to avoid Storm earlier.

It wasn't her fault he couldn't control himself. The pragmatic part of Rafe knew it was only a matter of time. But he genuinely liked Storm. He didn't want to hurt her. She'd end up pining for a relationship with Rafe he didn't have in him to share.

Rafe was already married—to his job. Jurek had as much as told him he'd inherit the Chief of Operations position if he played his cards right. Rafe loved being what he considered a private cop, even

if he no longer carried a badge. He still occasionally worked for the government to right wrongs and prevent innocents from being hurt. Only now he worked through Jurek, minus all the red tape, and he could openly use his clairvoyance.

Years ago, while on the force, being a psychic had been a pain in the ass. He'd had to hide how he knew things all the time. At least here, he could trust his fellow agents.

Richard Glass's face popped into his mind's eye and he amended, *for the most part*.

He reached his living room and turned on the light, surprised to see Storm stretched out on her stomach, sleeping on the couch. She'd turned her face away so it was mostly hidden by the glorious black silk of her hair. He inched closer until he could see a faint smile on her lips. *Must be one hell of a dream*.

So close, all he could think about was touching her. The more time he spent away from her, the more he missed her. Her wit and laughter warmed him. Her heated temper excited him like nothing else.

He should just sleep with her and get it over with. Maybe it was a case of wanting what he thought he couldn't have. She couldn't possibly be that great between the sheets. Maybe the mystery, the build-up between them was all in his mind.

She moaned and turned over, looking decidedly uncomfortable on the couch. He'd often woken from a nap on the thing with a knot in his neck.

The thought of Storm in pain when he could prevent it really bothered him. "I'm a fucking idiot," he whispered to himself as he scooped her into his arms and hauled her upstairs to the spare room she'd been using.

She snuggled closer to him, but he knew for certain she slept. When awake, she looked at him with wounded eyes, not realizing that by keeping his distance, he was trying to shield her from inadvertent, emotional harm.

He tried to ignore the way his heart rate increased when her breasts rubbed against his chest. Tried to forget how perfect she tasted, how soft and warm her hand had been around his cock...

Rafe carried her into her bedroom and set her down on the bed. He frowned at the sweatpants and sweatshirt she wore. She'd overheat wearing all those clothes under the thick comforter. But his fingers hovered over the hem of her sweatshirt, knowing the folly of removing anything she wore.

He instead sat beside her and watched as she settled into a deep sleep. Her rosy lips parted and her full breasts rose and fell with steady succession. Long lashes lay like shadows over the closed lids that hid her eyes from him, but he could very well imagine the confusion that would be there should she find him watching her.

But now, like this, he could look his fill. The emptiness in his arms didn't need to be there, not if he held her for just a few moments. He told himself he'd leave her alone after a small hug. She'd never know.

"Fuck it." Tired of wanting what he couldn't—shouldn't—have, he said to hell with denial and crawled into bed with her. When she turned to him in her sleep, he hugged her tight. The nightmares plaguing him might never have been, and a drowsy satisfaction filled him. Before Rafe knew it, he fell into a peaceful sleep with the woman of his dreams.

"No!" Luc woke from another vision of a future he didn't want to see, soaked in a heavy sweat.

His brother stared grimly down at him.

Shit.

Luc recalled the images swirling through his mind and tried to make sense of them.

"Calm down," Thorne said, and Luc realized he'd been repeating the litany over and over. "It's okay now."

"I'm sorry." Luc sounded hoarse. The vision faded but left a dark impression in its wake. "I need...I need some space."

He stood and shakily made his way to the bathroom. There, he splashed cold water over his face and tried not to freak out about what he'd seen.

Storm was dining at a restaurant. Though crowded, her table sat apart from the rest of the patrons. On either side of her, two large mirrors faced each other. She gazed into the mirrors, then behind her at the bloodied body of a man. She turned back and stared at Luc with gray eyes so light they appeared white, the pupils miniscule black dots absorbing light.

"It's come for me, Luc," she whispered. A black cloud had poured out of the mirrors, enveloping her. Her mouth opened and filled with a fatal mist.

Watching her leave him had felt like ripping his heart from his chest. One fucked up dream with a bad end in sight.

Thorne knocked on the bathroom door. "Luc, you need to talk."

Sometimes having a roommate was more trouble than it was worth.

Luc scowled. He didn't relish having to face his freakish psychic ability in front of his brother again. But what choice did he have? If Storm's life really hung in the balance, shying from the truth would only hurt someone he loved. With a grim sigh, he exited the bathroom.

A firing squad awaited him in the form of his domineering older brother. "That's the third time this week. What's going on?"

"I wish I knew. I have a feeling it's bad, and it's coming for us. I saw Storm tonight." His previous dreams had been of mirrors and dark places, jungles and caves and endless night. He saw red-black blood run in a river down into a hellish abyss. But none of his dreams had involved real faces until tonight. He fucking hated the stupid visions. Just once he'd like a clear idea of what tomorrow might bring.

Thorne frowned. "What's this about red-black blood and an abyss?"

Luc forcibly shoved his brother from his mind. "Don't trespass," he gritted through his teeth. "It's bad enough I have to deal with this shit. Don't push."

"I'm sorry, man. I just want to help." Thorne paced the room.

"God, you look just like Dad. You're freaking me out."

"Join the club. Looking at you is like looking into a mirror, except I see a guy not quite as good-looking, not to mention shorter." Thorne tried to grin, but he couldn't mask his worry. "I hate to say it, but I wish Mom and Dad were here right now. They're a lot better at all this psychic crap than I am."

Luc couldn't stop dwelling on Thorne's mention of mirrors. More than anything, Luc needed to find answers. Maybe sharing what he'd seen would make sense of it. He had nothing to lose but his sanity, he thought with a snort.

"What's so funny?" Thorne watched him with wary, concerned eyes.

Luc sighed. When Thorne turned all paternal on his ass, it was hard not to love the big guy. "You're an overbearing jerk, you know that?"

Thorne grinned. "Your point, oh short, ugly one?"

With a chuckle, Luc sank to the bed. "Sit down so I don't have to look up at your freakish face. Tell me what you think." As he described what he'd seen, he watched his brother's reaction. Thorne didn't mock or speak—he sat quietly and listened.

The heavy burden that always filled Luc when he saw such things lifted. Sharing his fears eased his worries. The hope that together he and Thorne might avert what he'd seen buoyed his spirits. It was a small gift he treasured...until the next time he'd see the grim specter of death waiting with its jaws wide open.

"How long has it been since you've lost contact?"

"Three days now," Lewis Greene said into his cell phone. He stood outside a rundown gas station. The place had an air of desperation about it. The scarred pavement was broken in several places, and the only cars that arrived to fuel up wore more rust and dirt than paint.

"They're looking for you, did you know that?" the dark voice on the end of the line spoke softly. Lewis felt chills run up and down his spine. He hated talking to the boss. He'd much rather have called the go-between, but now that the heat was on, he'd been forbidden the contact.

"Yeah, I know they're looking for me. Shit, I did what she told me to do. For what you're paying me, I'll leave behind a signed confession if that's what you want." He referred to the .38 casings covered with his fingerprints that he'd been ordered to leave behind. "You want me to find Savage and the woman or keep leading the others in circles?"

The voice remained silent a moment. "I know where Savage and that bitch are. I like the fact they're together now. Things are getting much more interesting. They're at Savage's house in the historic district. But I don't want you to do anything until I give you the go ahead. Understood?"

"Understood. I won't move a muscle in their direction 'til I hear from you."

"Very good, Lewis. Now in the meantime, copy this down and follow my directions. Go there and you'll find the files I left for you on the table."

Lewis wrote the information down on his hand and disconnected the call. He looked around, and seeing that everything looked clear, moved to the car he'd stolen yesterday.

He drove to an auto parts store near a deserted strip mall and parked in the back. At this hour, no one neared the closed shopping venue. He quickly gained entrance through the unlocked employees' door. Once inside, he entered a four digit code to unlock the door to the stockroom and moved through the back to another door, this one painted black and locked as well. Per the instructions he'd been given, Lewis unlocked it and relocked it behind him.

Turning, he studied the multitude of computers and boxes of paper scattered around. It looked like a mini war room. He could just envision his boss standing with a pointer on an overhead map, dictating their course of action. A lot like Lewis's own time in the service.

Suddenly, the lock behind him rattled. He stepped back into the shadows and fingered his gun, waiting. The door jerked open and a sleek brunette entered the room. She started when she saw him but made no overt move to leave.

"I hadn't realized you'd be here."

But the boss had told him to arrive. Apparently, the go-between didn't share the boss's confidence like he did.

The smile she gave him didn't reach her cold, green eyes. "Hurry up and get out. I have a few things to do that don't need an audience."

He'd just bet she did. Lewis didn't say anything as he gathered the folder he'd been sent to find. His cell phone dropped out of his pocket when he shifted, and as he picked it up, he noticed the length of leg exposed by the go-between's short skirt. He whistled, and anger darkened her flawless face.

"Dream on," she snarled and all but shoved him from the room.

Once outside, Lewis paused. He wondered if the bitchy woman had any idea what lay in store for her when the job ended. She was Lewis's last part of the job and his final payment.

Seeing no one about, he opened the folder and found a picture of Rafe Savage in front of a house. The address was listed, as well as a few pertinent facts about Savage's security. Another photograph slipped out from the folder—a close-up of the man.

Lewis studied the broad shoulders and lethal stare of his target. Truth be told, he envied Savage. The man's brutal and effective style of fighting had become legendary both in his work and outside on the streets. Lewis secretly thought his boss envied the bastard too.

He turned his attention to another photograph tucked in the file, this one of Storm Buchanan, taken during the summer. She must have just come out of a pool because she wore a red, one-piece swimsuit that had S-E-X stamped all over it. Her gray eyes flashed up at someone, presumably one of her Neanderthal brothers, and she grinned, her full lips quirking up at the corners.

He didn't know why the boss wanted Savage. He chalked it up to a bust gone sour, revenge for a friend, or something like that. Savage had enemies everywhere, so what was one more? But the Buchanan woman... Lewis couldn't imagine beating her to death, the way the boss had been talking. He could imagine a lot of other things, but torturing her? Why mar such beauty when he could own it?

Shaking his head at the whims of the mercurial man he served, Lewis put the photographs away and opened a map. He made a few phone calls to his contacts and settled in to wait. Patience was his particular virtue, and the green-eyed bitch and a ton of cash would be his reward.

Chapter Eight

Storm sighed as a soft hand caressed her cheek. She turned in to the warmth and comfort provided by the large palm. She blinked but saw nothing but darkness, so she closed her eyes again, caught in a desire making it hard to think about anything but his touch. For days she'd been going stir crazy, trying to keep her distance from the man at turns aloof and utterly charming, yet always sexy.

"I need you," he murmured and kissed her neck, sounding more asleep than awake.

A dream or reality? At this point, she didn't much care. She'd been dying for him for days. He could turn cold later, *after* she satisfied this irresistible craving.

He trailed his lips lower but her clothing got in the way.

She hurriedly removed all of it, pleased when his breathing increased. Finally naked, she reveled in being so close to the one man she desired above all others. And it seemed he'd finally come to his senses, because he touched her everywhere.

Over her neck, her collarbone and her arms. Down her breasts, where he sucked hard on each nipple. Past her navel to her wet sex. He kissed her clit but left her to run his tongue down each thigh. Over her shins to the tops of her feet.

The covers rustled and the coolness of night washed over them both. She heard more rustling before Rafe joined her again.

She moaned when his bare skin met hers.

The feel of his cock, so hard and hot, drove her insane. She'd never been this hungry before; she *had* to have him.

"I want you to come inside me," she whispered into his ear, finally glad of the birth control she'd forced herself to take in case she ever got lucky.

He shuddered and ground into her, thrusting against her belly before he positioned himself between her legs. The head of his cock brushed her clit as he rocked against her, the friction creating a steady throb that heated her until she felt she'd explode.

"So wet for me, aren't you baby?" Rafe growled and latched onto her breast. He sucked hard, teasing and toying. He licked and bit, then pinched her other nipple until she cried out at the pain and pleasure of it.

"That's it, give it to me."

He wouldn't relent. Pushing her to the edge of climax before backing off. And she knew he wasn't immune. He rocked against her, mimicking the act of sex. She felt him against her leg, his tip moist, his cock heavy with need. She shifted again to graze his erection.

He swore and panted, his breath hot against her neck. "Damn, Storm. I'm trying to last, but you keep moving against me like that and I'll come before I'm ready."

"I can't help it. I want you *so much*."

He kissed her hard and angled his hips for penetration. "You think *you* want? I jerk off all the time. I'm constantly hard for you, baby. I want to come deep in that pussy and make it mine," he growled, his masculine possession lighting her on fire.

"What are you waiting for?" She pulled him closer and he slipped inside her.

"Fuck," he muttered and sucked hard at her neck. She felt his teeth and trembled at the raw heat burning her from the inside out.

His hesitancy was torture as he slowly filled her inch by inch.

A shaft of moonlight lit the room, illuminating the harsh set of his face as he finally seated the whole of him inside her. Fused, they lay together, man to woman, heart to heart. His eyes glittered with desire and something else, something that scared her with its intensity. He flexed within her and pulled out, then shoved himself back in.

"Oh my God."

"Yeah, that's right. Clench tight, baby." He closed his eyes when she held him inside her, clamping down like a vise.

He felt huge inside her, and she craved every bit of him.

"Need a condom," he moaned and began filling her, surging in and out with faster strokes. "Need to put it on before I come inside you."

"No, I'm on the Pill. It's okay." A good thing she was protected, because Storm didn't care about anything but fulfillment. She hugged him tight and met him thrust for thrust. But the damned man wouldn't give her what she needed.

He withdrew and slid down her body.

"No," she protested and tried to follow him, but he wouldn't allow it.

He scooted down her body and nipped her belly. "*I'm* in charge. You do what I tell you to."

She barely understood, caught in a vortex of need. She wanted him so much, but he wouldn't do anything she asked. For the first time in her life, she'd met someone truly resistant to her charms. Storm

gave a half-hearted tug at his hair, but he slapped her thigh—hard enough to sting, but not hard enough to leave a mark. Still, the action stunned her and she froze.

Rafe chuckled. “I knew you needed a little discipline. You’re bad, aren’t you? Let me taste how bad.”

He nuzzled past her folds and took her clit in his mouth. He bit down with tender pressure, and the sensation made her shake. She was so close...

“Please. Fuck me, Rafe. Take me. *Please.*”

Another swipe of his tongue and she was lost. She cried out as she came hard, but he didn’t stop. He licked her in earnest, past the point of discomfort until she rode another crest toward fulfillment. With teeth, tongue and lips, he brought her to the edge of climax. And suddenly, it wasn’t enough.

“I want you now. Fuck me,” she demanded, no longer begging, and tugged on his hair.

Rafe petted her stomach, ribs and breasts. As he devoured her, he pinched and teased until she couldn’t stand it.

“I’m going to come again.”

“Mmm, all over my mouth,” he moaned and sucked hard.

She didn’t want to, but she couldn’t help it. She screamed and blew apart.

From one second to the next, Rafe blanketed her body and thrust home.

“Christ,” he breathed and began fucking her. “So tight. That’s it, baby, hold me.”

He pushed a few times more while she continued to spasm around him, lost in the joy of feeling him within her. Her climax raged, and then he shouted and shuddered.

While she came down, he moaned and jerked inside her, filling her with *him*.

Totally spent, she gradually understood that she had no idea where she was or how she’d gotten there. All she knew was that she’d finally had a taste of Rafe’s passion, and she wanted more.

Rafe couldn’t believe he’d weathered the Storm, bad pun and all. “*Holy shit.*” He groaned and slowly withdrew, leaving a mess inside her. But even that wasn’t enough to pull him from the incredible ecstasy reeling through his body.

Making love to Storm had been like sticking his dick into electric heat. He’d been so jazzed, his heart had nearly seized. Had he ever felt so much before? Even his one stint at a three-way in college hadn’t been this good.

He leaned closer to Storm and wanted to purr when she rolled them over and draped herself over his chest. She ran kisses over his pecs and throat to his lips.

“No more ignoring me.”

As if he could. Remembrances of this night were indelibly etched into his very being. “No more ignoring you.” *No more ignoring us*, the honest part of him insisted. He slid out from under her and hurried from the bed to the bathroom. He returned with a towel and after cleaning them both, joined her in bed once more and hugged her close.

“And quit treating me like crap or I’m going to make you pay,” she warned, apparently not finished issuing ultimatums.

He groaned. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have avoided you.”

“Why did you?” Her lips returned to his cheeks, his nose, then his lips.

Before he could answer, the languorous kiss melted his ability to think. Sudden exhaustion filled him, and before he knew it, he’d fallen asleep again, this time right where he wanted to be.

Under Storm.

Rafe woke from the best dream he’d ever had in his life, only to find he hadn’t imagined any of it. The sun streamed through the window, highlighting the fact that he wore Storm Buchanan like a blanket. She lay in his bed, in his arms, and her lips wandered everywhere. When he groaned she lingered, and when he tensed or shivered she pulled away.

He ran his hands through her hair. “You feel so soft.”

“Mm. And you’re so hard.” She petted him all over, her fingers stroking and telling him without words she liked what she felt. “You could bench press me, I think.”

Male pride refused to let him take the compliment in stride. “Want to try it out? Except instead of lifting you over my head, I’ll lift that sweet pussy over my mouth. I’ll press you up and down over my tongue, and I’ll fuck you with it.”

A smarter man would have gauged his lover first, but Rafe couldn’t help pushing her, to see what she could and couldn’t take. Now that the floodgates had been opened, he wanted her in *every* way.

She paused for a moment before continuing her lingering kisses. “You can fuck me any way you like,” she whispered.

He hardened as if he hadn’t just come like a rainfall a few hours ago.

“Don’t say it if you don’t mean it,” he warned.

“Why? Will you punish me?” She kissed just above his belly button and raised her sweet ass in the air.

He growled, incredibly turned on all over again. “Yeah, I will. Except I won’t spank your ass, I’ll fuck it.”

She licked her way down toward his groin. “Promises, promises.”

She had to feel what she did to him. Part of him wanted to spank her for teasing, but the other part wanted to take her ass and own it.

“Storm, watch it, baby. Or I might just take you up on that.”

“Later. Right now there’s something I’ve been wanting to do.”

When her breath stirred over his cock, he froze. Images of her mouth haunted him.

“Wait,” he rasped and shoved a pillow under his head for a better angle. “I have to watch this.”

“Lazy. Stand up over there.” She pointed to the floor.

“You reading my mind?”

She knelt in the bed and waited for him to obey. Giving her the lead, he took his place. He’d humor her this morning, right before he took her surrender once more. Last night had really happened, and it had been as good, and as scary, as he’d expected.

Shit, he couldn’t think about anything but Storm right now. The woman went to his head faster than any Scotch.

“I’ve waited a long time for you.” She cupped her breast and tweaked her nipple. The soft moan caused him to throb.

“Oh?” If she fingered her clit, playtime was over. He’d toss her down under him and fuck her until neither one of them could move.

She ran her hands over her body, enthralling him as she confessed, “Every man I’ve ever dated did whatever I wanted him to. He responded even when I tried to stop him. But you won’t. You don’t do anything but what you want. Even when you loved me last night, you were too slow. Making me hurt, making it so good,” she whispered and licked her lips.

He stroked himself, not sure when he’d taken himself in hand.

“And now I want to show you what you do to me. If you can stand it.” She smiled and licked her lips again.

“Get over here, you little tease. On your knees.” He lost his breath when she crawled from the bed and settled between his feet on the floor. “Please tell me I’m not dreaming.” *And if I am, don’t let me wake up until this is over.*

Storm took him in hand and kissed his sac, nuzzling his balls.

He swore, determined to hold on.

She flicked out her tongue and licked him from the base to the tip of his cock. Then she ran that soft pink tongue over him and swept the drops of come from his slit.

He grabbed her hair and held her, so out of his mind it was a wonder he didn’t gag her when he pushed deeper.

But Storm didn’t protest. She worked his shaft with her tongue and lips, sucking him like a treat she intended to savor. She took him in her mouth and applied gentle pressure where he needed it most, with the slow drag of her teeth, grazing the spot under his crown that set him off.

When she reached a hand under his sac and cupped him, he surged deeper into her mouth.

She pulled away and watched him watching her.

“This is the best fucking night—hell, day—of my life,” he said in a hoarse voice, unable to hold the truth a secret. “This is right. So right.”

She smiled, a sly grin that distracted him enough he didn’t notice her fingers along the seam of his ass until she pushed against his anus.

“Shit, woman, what are you—*ah*,” he moaned when she sucked his cock once more.

Storm pushed and retreated. She rubbed a finger over his wet slit, using his own arousal as lube. Excitement swelled inside him, especially when Storm slid her finger around his rim and pushed it inside. The intrusion stung, but he didn’t stop her.

To his astonishment, he hardened like stone. His orgasm loomed perilously close.

He could barely speak. “Baby, I’m going to come down your throat. So if you don’t want to swallow, you’d better pull away now.”

Angel that she was, she sucked harder and shoved that finger deeper.

“Oh fuck, oh fuck, yes,” he hissed as he exploded in her mouth.

He cried out her name as he released, nearly on his toes when she pressed that spot inside his ass that felt like heaven ten times over. She stopped searching and teased that spot again as he continued to come, until finally, she withdrew her finger.

Drained and on the verge of passing out, he pulled away from her mouth and steadied himself on her shoulder.

He wanted to thank her, to tell her that no matter what, his time with her had been worth his career, his future and anything life had to offer. But he had no words.

Fortunately, he didn't need any.

"Yeah, that's what you did to me earlier." She smiled. "Lay down and I'll be right back."

She left for the bathroom to clean up, and he tried to hold out as he struggled to keep the rest of the world at bay.

But he couldn't think past the need to hold her in arms once more, where she belonged. In his arms, by his heart. Nothing else seemed to matter. He should have felt more scared. He knew he would be, eventually. But not now.

Storm lay against a firm chest. A steady heartbeat and the familiar, sexy scent of Rafe relaxed her.

Good Lord, he'd put a spell on her. There was no other explanation for the way she'd acted. Talk about mind control. She'd come hard, without a care that Rafe had been naked inside her. She didn't worry about pregnancy, but the possibility of disease remained. Still, she trusted him. She knew Rafe would never put another in harm's way, not if he could prevent it.

No, what really concerned her was the way she'd lost her inhibitions with the man. She'd touched herself in front of him, gone down on him, and she'd fingered *his ass*. Rafe had loved it, but would he think less of her now for being so open? She'd sensed nothing but pleasure from him.

She flushed and scooted out from under him. To her amusement, he sighed her name and closed his eyes.

That had to be a good sign.

Bemused at how much she wanted a possible future with the man, she reminded herself to be cautious and headed to the shower.

As she cleaned herself, she wondered about him. After their encounter in the safe house, she'd expected a few days of fun and hot sex. They had to be together, so why not make the most of it? Instead, he'd made excuses to stay away, and it hurt. For some odd reason, she'd thought he'd actually started to like her.

Then to wake up last night with his hands on her... She felt as if she'd finally come home. Sexually, they fit. And from what she'd seen of his house and his life, they shared so much more. A shared love of books, adventure movies, Southern-styled cooking, fitness, psychic abilities...the list went on.

They had their differences, of course. He was a neat freak and she a disorganized—according to him—slob. They worked for rival agencies. But the joy of being near a man she liked who didn't obey her every command? Sheer magic. She kept telling herself to keep it cool. They didn't have to marry, simply get to know one another better. Time enough for his heart to catch up to hers.

Because damn it all, she had a bad feeling she was falling in love. If any other man had avoided her for days then pounced on her for sex, she'd have shown him the door. With Rafe, she'd opened her arms. Now how to make sure she had a chance to see where this new relationship between them might go without scaring him off?

Despite Rafe's obvious strengths, she had a feeling that pushing him too hard would scare him away. Playing it cool would not only confuse him, it'd keep him on his toes.

She lathered herself with soap, catching the citrus scent she associated with her lover. Just thinking the words warmed her, and she chuckled. Rafe wouldn't find her so easy to ignore anymore. This time the hunter would become the hunted, and the poor guy had no idea.

An hour later, when Rafe came looking for her, he found her watching a talk show as she sipped her coffee. It took everything Storm had not to rush into his arms and give him a big, wet good morning kiss. But knowing that, one, it made little sense to feel so deeply for a man she hadn't known for long, and two, he would push her away if she became too clingy, she remained seated.

"Hey, handsome. Coffee's on the counter. I didn't want to wake you. Hope the TV wasn't too loud."

"No." He cleared his throat and came to stand by her. "You okay?"

She smiled up at him, pleased when his eyes darkened and fixed on her mouth. "Just fine. I feel boneless, if you want the truth."

He smiled, and her heart shattered at his feet. Oh man, it was way too soon to be feeling the L-word.

"Good thing I didn't know what you could do with that mouth when I had you tied up in Locklen's study. We might never have left."

She frowned. "You just had to bring that up, didn't you?"

His smile widened. "I can't wait to tie you up again."

"Who said there'll be an again? Maybe I've had my fill of Rafe Savage. You're a little bossy, anybody ever tell you that?"

Rafe stared down at her with a look that seared her to her toes.

"Don't even think about messing me up, Savage. I just took a shower. Stop. Right now." She called on her power and gave it everything she had.

One hot, sweaty lovemaking session later, she straddled him on the couch and tried to get her breath back. Their clothes were scattered all over the floor.

"Beast."

"But I'm a happy beast."

"A bossy beast," she muttered, wishing she could feel even a little mad for his domineering manner.

"Time for another shower, hmm?" Rafe laughed and carried her into the bathroom.

Later, they sat in his kitchen munching on toast and eggs and drinking coffee.

Storm considered him. "Something I just realized. You're easy. Mr. Big, Bad and Sexy is a pushover when it comes to sex. Who knew?"

He flushed and shot her a frown. "Smartass. It's you. Not my fault I lose it any time I'm within five feet of you. My dick's been hard for days, and I've been pent up since you first started making trouble for me."

Nice to know she hadn't been the only one affected by their first meeting.

"Something else we need to discuss."

"Yeah?"

"I've come in you without protection."

The words hung in the air. Embarrassed but knowing they needed to talk about it, Storm concentrated on her coffee. "I'm on the Pill, and I haven't had sex in so long before you I was practically a born-again virgin."

He coughed but didn't manage to stifle his laughter. "You sure aren't virginal anymore."

"Not since meeting you," she agreed.

Chapter Nine

"You should know it's been the same for me. I don't date much, and when I do, I use protection. I've never been with a woman without it, actually." As he said it, Rafe looked surprised.

They watched each other until the quiet grated on Storm's nerves. "Aside from what I learned having sex and snooping through your house, I don't know much about you."

"What do you want to know?"

"I don't know." Everything. "Why do you work for Westlake, of all places?" She frowned and he grinned. "What exactly can you do with your mind besides annoy me? Because I still don't know."

"A tall order."

"Rafe..."

"Relax. I have nothing to hide. I was a cop in Atlanta for a few years before I found Jurek Westlake, or rather, he found me. I wanted to work in a place where I wouldn't have to hide my abilities, so I took the job he offered and haven't looked back since."

She thought there was more to it than that, but she didn't want to stop him from sharing. "What all can you do?"

"I see glimpses of the future. I call the visions with concentration, but sometimes they hit me without warning. Like when I saw your hit and run."

"That must have shaken you up."

"You have no idea." He finished his coffee and poured himself some more. "What about you? Do you do more than that mind control thing? I know all you Buchanans have psychic abilities. It's a family thing, right?"

"Yeah. My mom and dad both have it. I can manipulate minds—well, most of them." She wondered what made him so different. "My parents seem to be immune, but my brothers had to learn it. Mom and Dad taught them to shield themselves at an early age. From what I've been told, I was a terror as a toddler."

He smiled. "But a cute terror, I'll bet." His eyes grew intense, and he gave her a look she couldn't read. "So you work for your uncle as an investigator? Seems like a real family business."

She shrugged. "Uncle Max started it on a smaller scale years ago. He likes helping people. I think if it wasn't for the politics and hiding what he can really do, he'd have joined the police force like you did."

He nodded. "I loved it, but it was hard. I could never explain why I knew certain things."

"Yeah. So Max started his firm. My brothers and I worked independently for a while doing the same thing, then we thought we might as well join the team. I love working there."

Rafe snorted. "I'll bet. No rules, excitement, and hefty fees. Hell, half the things you people do are illegal."

"Really? So finding you in Locklen's office, breaking and entering, that was a fluke?"

He grinned. "Good point. Now, let's not ruin our fragile peace with a discussion about whose firm is better."

"Why? Because you'd lose?"

He chuckled but refused to answer her. "What do your parents think about what you do for a living?"

"They support me. They like all their kids working together. We manage to keep one another out of trouble most of the time. What about you? Do you have family? What do your parents think about you working for Westlake?"

The glow in his eyes faded. "My parents are dead."

"I'm sorry."

He blew out a breath. "They died fifteen years ago. They say time heals, but I still miss them, you know?"

"Yeah." As close as Storm was to her family, she understood his pain.

"I don't have brothers or sisters. No aunts or uncles. It's just me." He stopped and cleared his throat. "Anyway, I think they'd like me working for Jurek. I get to use my ability to help people. Hell, I became a cop just like my dad. My mom served too. She was a Marine."

"No kidding?" She knew she would have liked his parents.

He smiled, and the warmth in the expression made her belly do flip-flops.

Oh man, I am falling so hard.

Rafe continued, "She liked ordering us guys in the family around. Both Mom and Dad lived to see me enter the Academy. But they didn't see me pin on the badge."

She couldn't stop herself from asking, "What happened?"

"We all lived in Atlanta at the time. Made a family weekend of it and drove down to the stadium for a Braves game. I remember it was a really nice day," he said softly, his eyes distant. "The Braves won

seven to six in overtime. Everyone was crazy happy. And so were we. Then on the way home we ran out of gas." He toyed with his fork. "Dad pulled into a rundown station to fill up and ran into a cliché. When he went inside to pay, he interrupted a robbery and got shot. My mom happened to go into the store with him when it happened. She didn't make it out either. I caught the guy on his way out. Sheer dumb luck. He bumped into me in his haste to get away. I laid him out flat. But it was too late."

"I'm so sorry, Rafe."

He shrugged. "It happened a long time ago. And it's not something I like to talk about." He took the hand she'd unconsciously reached toward him.

"I'm sorry for bringing it up."

He tightened his hand on hers. "Thanks for listening."

"Thanks for sharing." She wanted to tell him something personal but didn't know what to say.

They watched each other in an awkward silence, and Storm wondered if he knew what he'd just admitted. Rafe was lonely, with only his work for company. The man needed her, no two ways about it. Just as much as she needed him. Worried he might see the caring in her eyes, she glanced down at their hands and tried to ignore her racing pulse.

"What about you?" he asked.

"Me?"

"What's your family like?"

Storm thought about it. "Thorne's a telepath, and he's always trying to tell me what to do, verbally and otherwise," she said dryly. "Luc's like you. He has visions, but they're rarely clear and he hates them. He's the only one in the family who doesn't like being psychic. I love it."

"I can see that, control freak."

She grinned. "Takes one to know one. Except for ruining my social life, being able to manage people makes me feel safer. I don't worry that I'm going to get mugged if I walk down the wrong street late at night—not that I'd go into the seedy side of town in the dark. But I can pretty much take care of myself, and my family knows it."

"Have them wrapped around your little finger, hmm?"

"I wish." She liked holding hands with him, especially since he didn't seem to want to let go anytime soon. "When I was little, for a few short months, I made my brothers do everything for me. Then my parents figured out what I was up to and put a stop to it. There are very few people immune to my ability."

"Lucky me," he said in a thick voice. His thumb grazed her hand, a soft caress she felt to her bones. There was nothing sensual about it, just a comforting trust that he was there.

"What about you? When did you have your first vision?"

"You're just full of questions, aren't you?"

"Come on, tell me."

"Fine, but only because you're cute when you beg. I think I was ten. I'd seen myself riding down the street on a red bike I'd been wanting but didn't own, riding next to my friend who I hadn't seen in over a year. The next day I received the bike and a surprise visit from my best friend who'd moved away for my birthday.

"I told my folks about it, but they weren't surprised. Apparently they'd been expecting something like that to happen. My dad said every generation on his side possessed some form of clairvoyance. His wasn't very strong. For him it came in odd phases. But seeing the future isn't as reliable as you might think. After all, I couldn't see what happened to my parents. And I'm never sure if acting on the visions changes my future into what it could be or what it should be."

"I guess your gift really makes you wonder about destiny and fate, huh?"

Rafe studied her intently. "I don't believe in destiny. I believe we're in command of our own lives."

"I have to agree that we're in charge of our own destinies. I mean, you hear about stuff meant to be, soul mates and all that nonsense. But I'm not so sure I believe in that." *I believe in you, Rafe. You're mine, but that's something you're not ready to hear yet.*

He frowned. "Why not? I saw those books you read. You must like the thought of happily ever after."

Damn. Busted. She forced a smile. "But all that's fiction. Heck, if it weren't for my curse when it comes to dating, I might have married already and had kids. Most of the men I've gone out with would have made good husbands."

He didn't seem to like that. "Most of them, eh? What about me?"

"What about you?"

"Am I husband material?"

She pretended to consider him. "Well, you're hell on wheels in the sack, no doubt."

"Thanks."

"How long has it been since your last girlfriend? You said you dated."

"Dated, sure. But someone I'd call a girlfriend? Ah, a year or two."

"Is it one year or two?"

He frowned. "Three."

"*Three*? Wow. I'm thinking commitment issues. You're what, thirty-five?" She knew darned well how old he was.

"Thirty-three," he muttered.

"A girlfriend, but no fiancée in your past? Then you—"

"I was engaged."

She stopped midsentence. "You were?"

"It didn't work out." Sensing she was losing him to a mood again when they'd just started to really connect, she tried to tease him out of it.

"Or did it?" She sniffed his neck, startling him. "Will I find perfume on you? That's your secret, isn't it?"

"Secret?"

"No man is this neat. You have a secret wife hidden around here, right?"

He chuckled and she blew out a breath, relieved he wasn't mad at her for prying.

"It's easy to believe you're married." She walked into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator door. "All your leftovers are labeled and stacked neatly. I know you're not gay, so it's got to be a wife."

"You're a very strange woman. Beautiful and sexy, but strange, you know that?"

She'd been called worse. "How about in there?" She nodded in the direction of his office, the one room she hadn't accessed thanks to it being constantly locked or occupied. "Is the Missus hiding in the office under lock and key? It's either that or you have bodies stashed inside."

He huffed. "You're a friggin' comedian."

"Oh, come on, Rafe. You can't really think I'm here to steal trade secrets? If it were up to me, I'd book it back home in a heartbeat."

He scowled. "Is that right?"

"But my uncle and your boss ordered us here, so here we are. Have a little fun."

"I was having a lot of fun just a few minutes ago. You remember, when you rode me on the couch? When that hot pussy hugged me tight?"

She blushed. "You like making my face red, don't you?"

"I do." He stared at her for a moment and seemed to come to a decision. "Wait for me here. Please."

She sighed but did as asked.

Rafe returned to the kitchen carrying a stack of files. "With all this talk, and the way you interrogated my past out of me—"

"I did no such thing."

"I'm thinking you have a knack for finding information. Let's see what you can make of this." He handed her a folder and sat the rest of the paperwork on the table.

She opened it and rifled through several pages. But when she came to a specific photograph of Rafe and the man who'd once made her life a living hell, she froze.

"What's wrong?" Rafe asked, aware the atmosphere had suddenly changed from teasing to angry. He still wasn't sure how she'd gotten him to talk about his family, but he much preferred her gentle inquisition to the tension now radiating off her frame.

"Is this bastard a friend of yours?"

"No," he said softly and glanced at the picture. "That's Richard Glass, the man I shot and killed a year ago. Nightmares of that shooting bother me to this day."

"Last fall a man approached me looking for information. He said his name was Jonathan Dasher. That's his picture." She tapped the photo of Glass. "He told me he was an employee of Westlake Enterprises and that he needed information. It had something to do with an investigation of my uncle's at the time."

Rafe eyes narrowed. "What did you tell him?"

"Nothing. I wasn't about to cooperate with Westlake Enterprises—no offense. So I told him to take a hike. Unfortunately, he started hassling me. He was a lot less than professional."

Rafe's temper flared. "Did he make a move on you?"

She grimaced, all the answer he needed, and focused on the picture. "I began to wonder if the demand for info was just a ruse. The worst part about Jonathan was that he started dogging me everywhere. Then the local police jumped on my case. A busted tail light, running stop signs I hadn't run. Jonathan started calling me all the time. It got pretty ugly."

"I can imagine. You have to know he wasn't working under Westlake's orders. We don't work that way."

"I know that now."

Rafe had to ask. "Did he ever hurt you?" He hung on her answer, infuriated on her behalf.

"No. Luckily, it didn't get that far. I'd persuaded him to leave me alone several times, but my suggestions seemed to wear off quickly. Honestly, I don't think he was too rational most of the time. My talent has a problem with splintered minds."

Rafe smiled at the pointed look she threw him. "There's nothing wrong with my mind, Storm. I don't take to any kind of persuasion. Even Jurek can't affect me."

"I *knew* Jurek Westlake had more than charisma going for him. Luc owes me money on that one."

"Focus, Storm."

She frowned. "Why is everyone always telling me to focus? Okay, okay. Jonathan, your Richard Glass, pretty much soured me on you Westlake types." She looked down at the photo. "He really scared me. He threatened me, my family, my friends. He used to promise me I'd regret it if I didn't go out with him, and he'd get a crazy look in his eyes. Then he suddenly stopped coming around. He disappeared entirely."

Rafe shared what he knew with her. "Jurek suspected for some time that we had a leak. Information on important cases would get to the wrong people at the worst possible times. Jurek had pulled me aside and set me on the task of uncovering our traitor. It took me a few months to piece together the puzzle. Richard Glass was damned good at covering his tracks."

Storm's eyes brightened with interest. "How did you find out Glass had turned? And why did he?"

"Richard had been selling information on his own people for the money and for the challenge, I think. He saw himself as better than the rest of us. His intuitive nature allowed him to stay one step ahead of trouble. He had an innate ability to detect harm or deceit aimed his way, and he could shield himself from psychic detection, making him impossible to read. Let me tell you, it made it more than difficult to catch him doing anything. I finally nailed him at the end of the Guest investigation. I was almost too late. Raymond Guest used the information Richard sold him to try to kill one of our agents, as well as your cousin."

"Oh man. Glass was the reason my cousin Alex almost died on that joint investigation? What a creep. But you got him. That's what counts."

"Maybe." Talk about Glass stirred his instincts. He felt so close to the answer to their current problems. A step or two away. What had he missed?

"There's no maybe about it. He was a bad guy." Her eyes widened. "And someone we both had in common."

"If I hadn't already investigated him as a possible lead, I'd be with you on that. But nothing has panned out. I know for a fact he's dead." His voice hardened at the memory. "I watched him bleed out from the bullet I shot into his body. We're looking again at any associates of his we may have missed before, but everyone looks clean."

"Good idea. I hate to say it, but I feel nothing but relief he's gone. I had nothing personal against Westlake until Richard Glass started harassing me."

Rafe closed the distance between them. "And now, Storm? How do you feel about Westlake now?"

She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. "I'm withholding judgment. I thought I'd give you a chance to make me see the light first."

"Oh, I'll make you see the light all right."

She laughed. "See? Being forced to spend time with me isn't so bad." She bit her lower lip, and he had a hard time looking away from her mouth.

"Stop distracting me, baby. I think you might be a real help going over this information with me. Let's...what?" he asked, bemused by the strange smile on her face.

She blushed and tried to pull away. "Nothing."

"No, what? Tell me." He tugged her chin to see her expression.

"I like it when you call me baby." She frowned over her embarrassment. "Now let's get back to work."

He hadn't thought about it—it had just slipped out. But he was glad she liked the endearment. Strong, independent Storm Buchanan liked being called *baby*. Every time he learned one thing about her, she bowled him over by teaching him something else, something completely contradictory to what he'd expected.

"Baby, you are one in a million." He grinned, liking her more and more.

"I knew I shouldn't have told you that. Now quit making fun of me and pay attention. It says here..."

Richard gave a final grunt of satisfaction and rolled off her. He gazed at the woman beside him with thinly veiled disgust. The pleasure she afforded ran a far second to the information she gathered from Westlake Enterprises. It was for that reason that he kept her around, pretending affection. She didn't notice, glorying in the afterglow of sexual gratification. He grudgingly admitted that most men would find her dark hair and bright green eyes attractive. Her petite yet lush body was a pleasant surprise.

"Richard, honey, you were magnificent."

He couldn't handle being near her anymore. He'd sated his own desire and at the same time smoothed the connection between them. But his tastes in women were much like his brother's. He preferred his women taller, stronger. Dark-haired yes, but he hungered for light eyes, for *gray* eyes. And he hated himself for it.

"We need to get you back. I wouldn't want you to get in trouble with work because of me," he said in a cool voice.

She sat up with a petulant expression. "They won't miss me for another hour at least. Come on, spend a bit more time with me."

He pasted a smile on his face and moved back next to her. "Only for you, sweet. Fill me in on your assignment. My own undercover work keeps me so busy, I'm out of the loop at the office. With the rumor of me being dead, I can't exactly show myself. But once I catch our traitor, I'll be back at work, and you and I can finally date out in the open. So tell me, what have I missed?"

Jennifer's position as a logistics coordinator for the company guaranteed that she dealt with vital information every day. She knew who was under protection, who needed what supplies, and who took a trip at Westlake's expense.

"Well, I'm sure you know that Rafe Savage has been missing for a week now. He's on a new assignment with that woman from Buchanan Investigations. I can't believe someone with Rafe's expertise can't see that *she's* probably the traitor. I left the information for Lewis, like you asked. I just hope that Buchanan bitch doesn't do anything to hurt one of the company's top agents."

He doubted she realized how jealous she sounded. Jennifer had lusted after Savage since she'd joined Westlake a little over four years ago. But the narrow-minded agent hadn't once returned the sentiment. No matter what Richard Glass did, he'd never take Savage's place in Jennifer's estimation. For that reason, Savage and he had to appear on the same side.

"Don't worry, love. I'm sure Rafe is just stringing her along to get what he needs." *The way I'm handling you.* Thoughts of need and Storm Buchanan tangled in his mind. He could see her rising out of the pool at that club, her wet red bathing suit clinging to her curves like a second skin. He'd taken the photo himself, keeping careful track of all of his enemies. Soon he would have her begging for his forgiveness with the others.

Jennifer's hands reached down and closed around his erection. Thoughts of Storm never failed to both anger and arouse him.

"Oh, Richard," Jennifer gasped, grinning with delight. "I knew once wouldn't be enough for you." She moved down his body and took him in her mouth. He tightened his hands in her hair, blotting out her image and replacing it with that of Storm. Soon he would have the real thing. The bitch owed him a debt of pain and servitude for her earlier rejection.

He came on a silent cry, and it was Storm's name his lips formed while Jennifer swallowed.

Chapter Ten

Two days later, when Jurek, J.D. and Storm's brothers arrived at his house for a meeting, Rafe half hoped they had little news. To his surprise, he discovered he liked having Storm all to himself. She was funny, smart and made him feel good in and out of the bedroom.

But he worried. The woman he'd expected to cling seemed perfectly happy to share his body and some laughs, but nothing more.

Her dismissal annoyed him. How could she not realize how in tune they were with each other? That despite their differences, they operated on the same wavelength? From what he knew of her immediate family, the Buchanans valued loyalty and integrity as highly as he did. They had so much in common, but Storm couldn't wait to get back to her life and family, away from him. He should have been relieved by her casual regard. He wasn't.

"Hey guys, nice to see you again," she said with a smile as her obnoxious brothers looked her over.

"Rafe, how's it going?" Jurek asked, surprisingly casual in jeans and a thin sweater. His attire made him look years younger. Rafe hadn't missed the startled look Storm had given his boss. He didn't like it, or the way she'd responded to J.D.'s overly appreciative greeting. If the ladies' man touched her again, Rafe swore he'd rip his lungs out.

He ignored J.D.'s knowing grin and made small talk with Jurek.

Max soon arrived wearing a suit and tie.

"Whoa! Uncle Max, what's with the suit?" Luc asked.

"He looks very nice," Storm said with a frown at her brother. Then she smiled at her uncle. "Very handsome."

Max flushed. "Thank you. Now if we could all get on with this meeting—"

Jurek grinned. "Hot date tonight?"

"As a matter of fact, yes."

"Hmm. Not with that beautiful woman who works right outside your office?"

Max glared. "What the hell business is it of yours?"

"Just curious. Funny, but I was thinking of calling her myself."

"You do and I'll turn your puling mind into pudding."

"Ooh, nice one." Luc grinned and rocked on his heels.

He looked just like Thorne, and the pair of them bore a strong resemblance to their uncle. Storm looked enough alike to prove that all of the Buchanans had good genes. Not a bad-looking family, but he'd be damned if he'd admit that out loud.

"Thank you, Rafe." Max tugged at his cuff links. "At least one of you Westlake idiots has a hint of manners."

Crap. The man had read his mind.

J.D. blinked. "Hey. I didn't insult you."

"You were thinking it." Max sighed. "Now if you don't mind, I have things to do after this meeting."

"Just one thing, Uncle Max. Did Christine ask you, or did you ask her?" Storm wanted to know.

He hemmed and hawed.

"Right. She asked you. Pay up." She held her hand out to her brothers, who grumbled but paid her the money they apparently owed. "Suckers." She stuck out her tongue and pocketed the money.

Entranced by Storm's playful side, Rafe started when J.D. slapped him on the back.

"Loverboy, time's a-wastin'."

Rafe turned to answer with a smart remark only to find Jurek regarding him with a very odd expression.

Not wanting to even try guessing what his boss was thinking, Rafe led the others into his living room. Storm sat next to him without him having to ask. He ignored the annoyed glances her brothers gave him. "You don't want to hear this, Jurek, but Storm and I think we found a big piece of the puzzle."

Jurek frowned. "Why don't I want to hear this?"

"Because we're talking about Richard Glass."

The room grew silent until Luc asked, "Who the hell is Glass?"

Max's mouth thinned. "Remember last year when your cousin almost died on the Guest case? Glass is the man who sold her out. And he didn't stop with Alex, he turned on Hunter too. One of his own."

"So we kill the asshole," was Thorne's not-surprising answer.

"You can't. Rafe already did that," J.D. said. "But if what Rafe thinks is true, Richard Glass has a few friends left over at Westlake."

"We went over that six months ago. Damn it," Jurek swore. "I can't believe it's one of mine. Not again."

"Maybe it's not, Jurek," Max said. "Perhaps one of your people isn't doing anything to seriously damage Rafe. Maybe it's simple payback, someone out to scare him. That would explain why you didn't sense the threat to your own."

"What I don't understand is why go after Storm in the first place? What connection did she have to Rafe before all this?" Jurek asked, puzzled.

Rafe answered, "Richard Glass. Storm had some problems with Glass at about the same time I was investigating him."

"Glass?" Thorne sounded puzzled. "I know some idiot named Dasher gave her problems, but that was before we were working for Max. We just consulted for him then. Besides, Dasher stopped after I talked to him."

Storm turned to her brother. "You talked to him?"

"I might have used a fist or two. Come on, he was being a dick. But I didn't know he was with Westlake. You never said anything."

She shrugged. "Things were pretty tense between Buchanan Investigations and Westlake then. I didn't want to add to it. Besides, you were helping Alex, remember? Before things got too out of control, Dasher—or Glass—disappeared."

"That's right. What exactly happened to him?" Luc asked.

Jurek described Glass's demise, and to Rafe's discomfort, the Buchanans seemed to look at him with new respect.

He quickly changed the subject. "That's history, but something from that time is affecting things now. For the past few nights I've been having dreams about Glass."

Luc sat straighter. "Glass. His name was Richard Glass, right? Maybe the mirrors aren't really mirrors. Maybe they're reflections on glass instead." He turned to his uncle and brother. "Make sense?"

"What are you talking about?" Storm looked to her brother.

"I've been having dreams, nightmares really, about death and mirrors." He went into detail, looking almost relieved to share it.

She nodded thoughtfully. "Two mirrors, right? We know Glass died, but if you dreamt about *two* mirrors, *two* sheets of glass, then I'm betting Richard Glass has a relative no one knows about."

Jurek shook his head. "That was one of the first things we looked into when we learned he'd been selling secrets. But according to his files, he was an only child. We'll take another look. J.D., check it out. We also need to see who else might have been involved with the tampered missions from a year ago."

"Okay. I'll run the access list again, see if we can find a name that stands out. The problem is that there are quite a few who come up, and they've all checked clean." J.D. sighed. "Show me to a computer."

Max sat forward. "Any computer? I thought all that information remained on your encrypted network."

"Any computer," J.D. answered, not bothering to explain himself.

Rafe nodded to his study. "Use the one in there, but don't touch anything else."

"Yeah, right." J.D. left the room chuckling to himself.

"Crap. He's going to do something to my system." The last time he'd asked for J.D.'s help on his computer, the jackass had left a gay porn pop-up that turned on any time he typed the word *the*.

"That takes care of that," Jurek murmured. "So far we have one person tied to both Storm and Rafe—Richard Glass. We know Glass is dead and at this point are unaware of any survivors or anyone tied to him. Rafe, didn't we determine after his death that he'd had no close associations or friendships with anyone else in the organization?"

"Correct. Glass had totally cut himself off from everyone at work. He did a good job and had a great success rate on our investigations. There was no reason at the time to even suspect him of selling us out."

"No reason but my instincts and your keen insight. Have you seen anything at all about this?" *Seen*—as in, had a vision.

"I've been trying, but I can't see anything." He paused, conscious of all eyes on him. "I guess I can try again."

Jurek nodded. "Maybe having us all here thinking about him will stir some psychic energy you can tap into."

Rafe stood, prepared to try to foresee in the peace and quiet of his bedroom. He'd never been comfortable zoning out around other people. Being outside of himself made him feel vulnerable, and he didn't like being out of control of his own body. "Give me a minute and I'll—" When Rafe met Storm's gaze, her light gray eyes faded to black.

Lewis Greene stood over the bloody corpse of a woman. Someone called his name and he turned around. Then everything blurred. A new scene. Sound merged with light as Lewis's body fell atop an unidentified man's, riddled with bullets. Streaks of blood mingled and pooled together on the ground. As Rafe stared into the dark red liquid, he watched the shape unfold into a dress.

Legs and arms appeared, and a body slowly filled the rest of the dress. Storm's eyes peered out at him for a split second, but he could tell the woman wasn't Storm. She smiled and swung long brown hair, like silk, through the air. A gloved hand shot out and captured her, lashing her to her captor. Rafe looked to the owner of the glove but could see nothing. He could only hear the harsh, grating laughter of madness...

"Rafe? Rafe?" Storm repeated. For the first time since he'd known her, he heard a frisson of real fear in her voice.

Shit. He hadn't wanted that to happen, for her to see him like that. He hadn't been sucked into a vision since he'd seen Storm almost run down. What the hell did it mean? "I'm good. Just give me a minute."

Rafe rose from the couch, where he must have collapsed, and staggered down the hall to the bathroom. Since he'd all but flown into this latest forecast, he knew they didn't have a lot of time. Something bad was coming.

He splashed water on his face and had just finished composing himself when someone handed him a towel. He glanced at Luc in the mirror.

"Thought you might need a hand. I know what you did wasn't easy."

Rafe met Luc's gaze in the mirror. Understanding, discomfort and a bemused anger stared back at him.

Rafe dried his face and admitted, "It really takes a toll. Gives me the shakes every time."

Luc sighed. "Yeah. It takes me a good couple of hours to get my strength back. They don't know what it feels like to be that exposed." He didn't say anything for a moment, then flushed. "Anyway, if you need anything, yell."

Storm's brother left as silently as he'd come.

Luc Buchanan's resentment toward his psychic gift made complete sense to Rafe, though he doubted the other Buchanans clearly understood it. Oddly reassured by Luc's support, he felt another link to Storm snap in place.

Hell, the woman shouldn't need him to tell her they had even that in common. Her brother could foretell events, and so could Rafe. The list just kept growing, but did she see that?

As frazzled by Storm's rejection as he was by his vision, Rafe recognized the irony in his situation. Woman troubles made everything else pale by comparison. He could almost thank her for taking his mind from his worries, if only he hadn't seen her face for that brief moment at the end.

He rejoined the others and described what he'd seen. "I'm not sure about the end though. I swore I saw Storm's face, but I know for a fact it wasn't her."

"Perhaps it's fear for her safety leaking into your foresight, a need to protect?" Max offered.

"Maybe." Rafe needed more time to figure out her part in this mess. He felt a responsibility to keep her safe. She'd been targeted. Obviously someone wanted her, but for what?

"Where do we go from here?" Thorne asked.

J.D. entered the room with a list in hand. "I may have an answer to that." He read off ten names. "These names keep surfacing when I look at the problems in our recent caseload. Four women and six men. I've already crossed five of them off. Due to the operational tempo they were on and Jurek's personal interaction with these folks, we can safely exclude them. But the other five? Now I'm not so sure."

Jurek looked at Max and the two of them shared some silent communication. Thorne nodded.

Before Rafe could complain, Luc growled, "Do you mind? Not all of us speak on your psychic frequency."

Max apologized. "Sorry, it's faster to think than talk. Most of the folks on your list are administrative, according to Jurek. What if we plant our resident mind reader in their midst? They don't know who Thorne is, since most of those at Westlake familiar with us are limited to Jurek and a small circle of his best agents."

"True." Jurek nodded.

"So we pretend Thorne's a new agent needing assistance and have him say some key words to generate thought patterns."

Thorne nodded. "That's how I found out what Locklen was up to, and how I got the codes—ah, I mean, that would work," he ended lamely when Max glared at him.

Max shook his head. "The word discreet completely bypasses you, doesn't it?"

Rafe noted that Thorne didn't deny it.

"What do you think, J.D.?" Max asked. "Could you introduce Thorne to the five names on your list? With the right questions asked, Thorne might just be able to tell you who's guilty."

J.D. glanced at Jurek, who nodded. "We'll start with payroll and work our way up."

Jurek stood. "Thorne, come to my office at ten tomorrow. We'll start then. Meeting adjourned. Good luck on your date, Max." He wagged his brows.

"Jackass." Max turned from Jurek and stood, motioning for Storm and Thorne to join him.

J.D. waved and left, talking to Luc.

Jurek walked to Rafe's side and slapped him on the back. "Everything good? Security hasn't reported anything odd in the week they've been guarding you."

"I feel stupid for having them out there, but at least they're keeping an extra eye on Storm, so that's something."

Jurek considered him for a moment. "That is something."

"What does that mean?"

Jurek didn't answer. Hell. Was the boss upset? Could he see Rafe's burgeoning feelings for the woman from a *rival company*? Rafe's hopes for a long-term future with Westlake weren't looking so promising.

But for the first time in a long time, he didn't care. His focus wasn't on his career, but on a woman.

Jurek shook his hand. "Keep in touch. I'll expect your daily reports. *On time*," he reminded.

"Got it."

"Good luck." Jurek's broad smile nearly blinded him. "With that woman, you're going to need it."

Before Rafe could respond, Jurek departed, allowing Thorne Buchanan to take his place.

"Something you wanted? A fight maybe?" Rafe glanced at Thorne's clenched fists.

Thorne relaxed. "Easy, Savage. I just wanted to remind you to take care of my sister," the large man said gruffly. "And to thank you. Storm said she's just fine here. For now," he added, destroying Rafe's hopes that Storm might have meant something far more permanent.

And how crazy was that?

Then Storm drew next to him. Right in front of her brother, she took Rafe's hand in hers. The warmth that filled him was indescribable.

He glanced down at her and felt something inside him give. He smiled back at her and squeezed her hand.

Storm had really looked forward to seeing her family, so it surprised her how much she wanted to be alone again with Rafe. Once everyone left, she sat on the couch next to him, snug against his side. Best of all, he'd pulled her there.

He cleared his throat. "You have an interesting family."

She laughed. "That's the word. *Interesting*. But I love them."

"It's obvious they love you." Rafe stroked her cheek and tucked her against his chest.

So close, she could feel his heartbeat in tune with hers. They raced together in lust, and, she hoped, toward the love bursting inside of her. Though everything about the situation screamed for caution—she'd just met him, he was a loner, they didn't move in the same circles—her heart wouldn't be denied.

He kissed the top of her head. "Go ahead and ask whatever it is."

"How did you know that I had a question?"

"It's written all over your pretty face. You get that look before you start ripping into me."

"That's a little harsh, don't you think?"

"Beautiful women have a way of making a man do whatever they want. I'm on to you, baby."

He thought she was beautiful? Men had often told her the same, but Rafe sounded like he really meant it, especially because he'd said it in an offhanded way.

She cleared her throat. "I'm curious about you. From what you said before, it sounds like your parents had a great relationship with you and with each other. So why didn't you ever marry?"

Rafe raised a brow. "Who says I haven't?"

"You said you'd been engaged. You were *married*?"

"No, but you shouldn't assume things."

She didn't appreciate his sly grin. "Ass."

"See? Never assume. You made an *ass* out of yourself right there."

She tried not to laugh. "I'll admit you've been a pain in *my* ass since I've known you."

The teasing glint in his eyes turned dark, sensual. "You know, that's something I've been meaning to discuss with you." He pulled her closer and forced her to straddle his hips.

"Rafe?" she breathed, unable to resist when he closed the space between them and kissed her.

Like clockwork, her entire body melted into a puddle. Under her, Rafe's arousal fitted to the dampness growing between her legs. "That's it. Right there." He rocked against her, finding her clit as if the clothing between them didn't exist. "I've been wanting to do that all day."

"You should have." She moaned and ground against him, kissing him again.

Rafe took control, slipping his tongue between her lips and a hand down her pants. He kissed her with a voracious need, his fingers quickening between her thighs.

She broke the kiss, panting. "God, I don't know how you keep doing this to me. I'm going to come."

"Do it. Come hard." Rafe sucked on her throat and groaned. "Then let me use that cream to lube your ass. I want more. I want to fuck your ass, baby. Let me take all of you."

She shivered, caught in the lust and growing connection between them. She'd never had anal sex and hadn't exactly wanted to try it. But Rafe had a way of making her doubts vanish. Their clothes swiftly disappeared. Standing chest to chest, Rafe feasted from one nipple to the other, making her crazed. She was wet, her body sensitized to his every touch.

"Please," he whispered before kissing her with enough passion to scorch the room.

"For you, anything." *And everything. I love you.* She rained kisses down his throat and chest.

"We need a bed for this."

They quickly made their way to his bedroom. He didn't give her a chance to do more than squeal as he tossed her to the bed.

"A real he-man, aren't you?" she said on a gasp when he covered her with his body.

"Oh yeah. Now where were we? Oh, that's right. Time to make you come."

He kissed her, alternately teasing her mouth then breasts as he tugged at her answering need. Desperation grew, the familiar call of primal desire building as he played with her body like he owned it.

His fingers splayed over her belly then delved lower, seeking the heat of her.

"Yes," she hissed as he began fucking her with his finger.

"Christ, I love how wet you get for me." He kissed his way down her body, then sucked hard on her clit.

She saw stars when he introduced another finger, then added a third. The pressure inside her and over that bundle of nerves at her core became too much. She came on a cry, basking in the waves of release.

He continued to stroke her but removed his fingers until only one remained. He got it nice and wet and slid it lower, coating the rim of her anus with moisture. Then he stopped circling the area and pushed a fraction inside. "I'm going to slide it in. Nice and easy, baby. Trust me, you'll like this."

"Mmm." She spread her legs wider and watched him watching her.

The naked fascination on his face captivated her. He seemed so concentrated on her. No man had ever given her so much loving attention, and it *was* loving. She could feel his affection in every soft touch, in the care he gave to satisfy her first.

He moved slowly, at first slightly stretching her, then pushing farther in, while giving her body a chance to accommodate him.

He played with her for a good while, letting her ease around him. But he didn't stop there. While he stretched her with first one finger then two, he tormented her pussy with his mouth.

"God, I want to fuck you so hard," he groaned and looked up, his eyes bright with desire. "This is going to be unforgettable. Hell, everything with you is."

She should have felt scared or at least nervous about her first time. But Rafe didn't let her feel anything but aroused. He brought her close to orgasm again with that talented mouth while he readied her for him.

"I want you inside me," she whispered.

"Slowly. I don't want to hurt you." He rose to his knees and straddled her.

His cock was wet, his slit moist with his own desire. He reached across the bed into his bedside drawer. Quickly ripping open a packet, he rolled a condom over his thick cock. Then he withdrew a tube of lubricant and used it to make himself nice and slick.

When done, he shoved her legs wider, tilted her pelvis and positioned himself for penetration.

"I need to see your face when I fuck you, to watch you take me inside for the first time. You'll feel tight, stuffed with my cock. All mine."

He pushed at her anus slowly, and at first he felt good. But as he slipped past her sphincter, the burn jolted her.

"Easy," he whispered and stilled, letting her feel him. "Just push out and I'll slide inside you a lot easier."

She tried, but it was a slow process, even with his preparation. And then, suddenly, he was in.

He looked to be in pain, his face tight, his eyes closed. "Oh fuck, I want to move. I need to come inside you. Baby, you feel so damned good."

Growing excited that she'd brought him to such a state, she teased him by stroking his thighs.

He trembled and gently withdrew from her until only the tip of him remained inside her. The pain wasn't as bad as she'd expected.

Even when he slowly thrust back inside, she didn't hurt so much. Because he moved with care, and he'd lubed up so much beforehand, she didn't have as much a problem taking him as she'd thought she might.

Rafe stared into her eyes as he took her, and the pressure began to build. She'd never thought to make love to man this way, especially not face to face, but she felt so open, so exposed as she lay under him, accepting him.

He gradually increased his pace. His thrusts grew harder, more forceful. "Touch yourself. Bring yourself off while I come inside you," he rasped.

She didn't need much. The sexuality inherent in her lover must have rubbed off on her, because she'd never been able to find satisfaction so easily with a partner. It didn't take her but a few circles of her finger to come.

She tightened around him, taken with the foreign fullness in her ass, and moaned his name as her climax obliterated all thought.

"Fuck, yes. Yes, *Storm*." He groaned as he surged into her once more and stilled. He shuddered and clenched her hips, his face a picture of carnal bliss.

Minutes or hours later, he withdrew and left for the bathroom. He returned without the condom, carrying a damp towel that he used to clean her. While he took care of her, he kissed her tenderly, a strange emotion clouding his gaze.

"Storm, baby, you are so damn giving. I've never... You felt so good. So damn perfect."

She ran her fingers over his cheek and smiled, lost in his eyes, in the feelings she imagined existed just for her. "Better than my blowjob?" she teased.

He tossed the washcloth to the floor and chuckled before he kissed her again. "I don't know about that. We'll have to experiment some more. I'll definitely need to compare." He lay beside her and pulled her close. "I didn't hurt you too much, did I?"

She sighed. Handsome, intelligent, psychic, an amazing lover...and a considerate one? *Oh man, I am so in love with this guy.* "No, you didn't. Did I hurt you?"

"Yeah. Not coming in you right away nearly killed me. But I love eating your sweet pussy," he whispered and nipped her earlobe. "Almost as much as I like coming inside you. Too bad that condom was in the way. I love filling you up, baby."

She shivered, caught in a web of lust and affection.

He drew the covers over them. “Here. Between the covers and me, you’ll keep warm.”

She nodded and prayed her feelings for Rafe didn’t tear her apart. They’d paired together out of necessity, initially to solve a case. But their forced intimacy had flourished into a deeper connection, a physical—and, she believed—emotional one as well. Part of her wanted badly to tell him how she felt. But the sane part of her held off.

They had a bad guy to put away. Her love could wait long enough for Rafe to catch up. She hoped.

Chapter Eleven

Rafe slept like a baby and woke the next morning still basking in the afterglow of such incredible lovemaking. Much as he wanted to label his time with Storm as an amazing fuck, he couldn't. Every time with her, he'd made love. The softness, the tenderness he felt when he touched her couldn't be ignored. Just being near Storm shot his adrenaline sky high. His instincts clamored for him to keep her.

Forever.

He should have been focused on finding what that bastard Glass had to do with their troubles, but he had a hard time thinking beyond Storm. Not good. Not good at all. She was a distraction he didn't want to resist.

She murmured something in her sleep and turned to him, still in his arms. Had he ever waken up holding a woman? Not even with Lydia had he felt this complete. And suddenly the burden of his past was too heavy to carry alone.

"I was almost married once, but Lydia wasn't right," he whispered.

Storm relaxed, but he didn't think she'd awakened. Still, the words flowed, a release he'd needed for a long time, though he hadn't realized it until now.

"I met Lydia at a time when I needed family. A connection to someone, something more than a job. But you know, now that I think about it, I don't think I wanted to marry her, not really. I thought I was in love, but mostly I wanted someone in my life."

Storm's breathing remained steady and even.

"When I found out she was sleeping with my lieutenant, I was more angry than hurt. I felt like a dupe, and I was pissed at myself for not having seen the truth right there in front of me. Then, to have that same asshole set me up and nearly get me killed made me a victim. I didn't like that."

"I wouldn't either," she said in a soft voice.

He kissed the top of her head, oddly gratified she'd heard him. "It all worked out in the end. My lieutenant got canned. He and Lydia married after I landed a plum job with Westlake. Last I heard, she was cheating on him too. And here I am, in bed with a woman who can't work her mental mumbo jumbo on me, no matter how hard she tries." *If she only knew. She crooks that finger and I'm practically drooling with the need to please her.* "But I still don't get you. You're beautiful, sexy, intelligent. Sexy," he repeated and felt the curve of her smile against his chest. "Why aren't you with Hank or any of the other idiots camped out on your doorstep? I mean, I'd think a guy who does whatever you want him to do would be the perfect man."

“You could handle a woman never disagreeing with you? Would you really want to live with a woman who never surprised you or stimulated you?”

“No, you have a point.” He paused, wondering what the hell Storm wanted out of a man. “So you’re looking for a challenge, is that it?”

She sighed. “Yes and no. I don’t need thrills to keep my attention. Some good sex, a trustworthy friend and a guy who can say no to me.”

He rolled her over onto her back, lost in the light gray eyes that glinted with some deeper emotion he wanted like hell to call love. “I think you’ve got a few things wrong. One, you should hold out for great sex, not good sex. Incredible sex, like the kind we share. Two, you need more than a friend. You need a lover, a protector, a keeper. And three, no.”

He plastered his mouth to hers.

“No.”

He kissed her again.

“No.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck and clung.

They didn’t speak again for hours.

Thorne Buchanan lingered in the doorway of Jennifer Barne’s office. “That’s right. I’ll be staying at the Royale. Look for my name. I look forward to seeing you, beautiful.”

He turned, bumped into J.D., and stuck out his hand. “Oh, excuse me. I’m new here. Sean York.”

J.D. shook his hand. “Nice to meet you. Sorry, I don’t have time to talk. Jennifer, if I could have a moment?”

Thorne left the logistics floor and took the elevator to the lobby. Once there, he walked down the block and took his rental car to their appointed meeting place—the parking lot of a large retail store.

J.D. met him a half hour later. He parked right next to him, got out and entered Thorne’s car looking grim.

“I got it,” Thorne said with a tired nod. “The minute I mentioned Richard Glass, it all came pouring out of her mind. She’s in deep. She thinks she’s helping him on some stupid undercover mission, that his rumored death was just a cover Jurek put out to protect his agent. I also saw an image of the guy. It’s him. Your dead guy is alive.”

J.D. drew a PDA from his jacket pocket. "Shit. I just knew you were going to say that." A blue spark shot from his fingertip into the device.

"What was that?"

"Nothing. Equipment issues, never mind."

J.D. texted a message and waited. After a *ping*, he swore again. "Jurek and Max want us to proceed as planned."

"Hell."

J.D. sighed. "You got that right."

Richard stared at himself in the mirror, watching his dark eyes flare with grief. He hadn't wanted to do this yet, but he only had so much time before Jurek's men closed in on him. Everything had to be perfect or the plan wouldn't succeed. Already he was having second thoughts about Jennifer. She had eased his body but she continued to worry his mind. If only...

A crow outside shattered his attention, cawing at him as if to say *get on with it*. He left his car, the slam of the door overly loud in the empty quiet.

The cemetery was deserted and the night sky dark, the moon obscured by passing clouds. He walked to Richard Glass's gravestone and raised the pickaxe over his shoulder. He brought it down with such force that the ground gave considerably under him. For hours he attacked the earth, striking the hard ground and shoveling the dirt out of the way.

Consumed with rage and pain, he worked like an automaton. As he did, he fanned his hatred to a slow burn. He dug and thought about those who would pay dearly for their transgressions.

Much later, he found what he'd come for. After stowing his tools, he returned to take what belonged to him. When he had everything settled, he drove out of the cemetery toward his home.

"His home, our home. We are one, in life and in death, aren't we, brother?" He glanced up and grinned. His brother's corpse smiled back at him from the rearview mirror.

Once he'd reached his destination high in the mountains of northern Georgia, Richard did what he'd promised. He laid the corpse of his brother upon a great wooden platform. He didn't move when the first spark of flame blazed into an all-consuming fire. As in life, his death was magnificent. No matter that a bullet had long ago stopped his heart. This death, this great burning conqueror that ate at decaying flesh and bone, had been expected and even anticipated.

Richard watched the orange flames pierce the black darkness just before dawn. As children, he and his brother had shared everything. Every waking moment had been a dream of togetherness. Two bodies, one mind. The experiences one twin felt were automatically processed by the other, making their limited entities a combined, infinite one.

“Unto glorious death, brother. But not until what was stolen from us in life has been avenged.” A solemn tear fell down Richard’s dirt-streaked face. Though a year had passed, it seemed like only yesterday when the wrenching emptiness had torn through his soul. One minute he’d been sleeping, and the next he’d been jarred awake by bloody images and the solemn echo of his heart.

Richard’s delirious excitement in finally replacing Rafe Savage as the top agent at Westlake Enterprises had come to a grinding halt. Jurek’s prodigy had always been a thorn in his side, as great a pain as the one delivered by Storm Buchanan, the only woman to ever reject him.

His brother had nearly ended Savage’s life. Except, instead of killing the bastard in that dirty little alley, his brother had bled to death, killed by Savage’s gun. And now Savage had the woman Richard had longed for when alive. The injustice of it all burned like acid in his gut.

He waited and watched as the fire cleansed his brother’s body of its impurities. “Soon, I will finish our task,” he murmured. He continued to stare into the flames, searching for the peace he’d lost with his twin’s passing.

They’d shared everything. Sentences, thoughts, their very lives. Through school and college, the pair had enjoyed one persona. While one of them engaged with life outside their home, the other remained secreted, protected. Their guardian had always been too drunk to realize he had two, and not one, nephew living with him in his rundown house outside of Clayton.

The golden boy at school, Richard had earned accolades and awards, scholarships and notice as the best and brightest. Men wanted to be him, women wanted to fuck him.

And then Jurek had come along and truly appreciated his hidden gift, a psychic tendency to avert trouble. When Jurek had offered him a job at his elite firm, the twins had been overjoyed.

Richard Glass had been the sole agent, but in actuality both twins completed every assignment and shared every tribute. Sometimes they even worked simultaneously to bring down the vilest of criminals. But no matter what they—*he*, Richard reminded himself—did, it was never enough. Rafe Savage continued to outshine them.

Jurek liked Savage best. Jurek Westlake, the father he’d never had, preferred a dumb cop to the genius of twin minds so connected they could act as one person. It didn’t matter that Jurek didn’t know the two existed, his love should have been there regardless.

Instead, Savage had taken most of Jurek’s time and energy. It grew worse when Savage’s stupid friends followed suit, sucking up to Jurek, demanding his attention with first this then that. That miserable J.D. Morgan, with his amateur computer hacking, thought he had what it took to become a

field agent. And Hunter Greye, an animal with little regard for rules and regulations, started watching him a little too closely.

Those problems he might have handled, but Storm Buchanan's rejection had cut to the quick. Richard had experienced an immediate obsession with the woman, despite the fact she worked for that little nothing investigation agency. The fucking bitch had the nerve to say no. To *him*.

As the funeral pyre dimmed, Richard blinked up at the dawning sun. Not far away sat the deserted cabin he'd inherited when his uncle died. Set high up in the mountains on twenty acres of land, away from prying eyes, the cabin afforded the privacy he needed to reconnect with his brother. He felt some small peace that part of him was now at rest.

"Don't worry, brother," he said to the smoldering husk atop the ebbing flames. "Once Savage and the woman are dead, I'll come to you. Then we'll never be apart again."

Storm felt warm every time she thought about making love with Rafe. Even as they sat with the others in the conference room at Buchanan Investigations, she couldn't help dwelling on her lover.

When in private, he continued to make references to places he wanted to take her, things they'd do next week or next month. She didn't know if he realized the impact of what he'd said, but she couldn't ignore that he implied a future for the two of them. What scared her was how much she didn't want them to end.

"Jennifer Barnes, our logistics coordinator, is behind most of our problems," Jurek was saying. "Thorne found our mole. And thanks to J.D., we now know Richard Glass had a twin."

Rafe leaned forward, his eyes wide. "The bastard had a twin? How did we miss that?"

Jurek shook his head. "The Glass brothers' birth records were either entered incorrectly or purposely falsified. I'm still not sure how J.D. found it, but he located documentation that Mary Shannon Glass gave birth to identical twins thirty-seven years ago—to Richard and Jonathan Glass. Oddly enough, there's only ever been record of Richard Glass, no mention of Jonathan throughout their growing years and schooling."

"Creepy and psychotic. Great," Storm murmured, remembering how much Jonathan Dasher had disturbed her.

"How is Jennifer involved, exactly?" Rafe asked.

Thorne answered. "That woman has some major issues. One, you never gave her the time of day. She has a real thing for Agent Savage. Two, she wanted a promotion someone named Katy received."

"She is totally out of her league with Katy," J.D. muttered. "Jennifer's got a screw loose. Promotion? Katy's been with us longer and does a hell of a better job."

"Yeah, and supposedly Katy's a good friend of yours," Thorne added. "She thinks you're biased. Jennifer's also into whatever Richard wants to do to her." He coughed to cover what Storm suspected was discomfort. "She sleeps with him and tells him stuff, thinking he's still a legitimate agent."

"She ought to know better." Jurek looked grim. "The accounts she supervises are extremely sensitive. We'll have to remove her immediately."

Max interrupted, "Just as soon as we nail Glass. Thorne's meeting her tonight at the Royale Hotel."

Thorne nodded. "I'm hoping she'll give me a little more to go on."

Storm was agog at the thought of her brother playing smooth and sophisticated. Luc, she could see pulling it off. But not Thorne. "Okay, James Bond. I'll bite. How exactly are you going to get the information from her?"

Luc laughed. "Yeah, 'cause I don't see you charming it out of her."

Thorne glared. "I can do charming. Trust me, I'll get her to lower her inhibitions—"

"I could do that with a few beers," Luc offered.

"Then I'll mindread what she likes and find us information we can use," Thorne said with a glare at his brother.

"The sooner the better. My visions are getting worse. People are dying." Rafe glanced at Storm with real worry in his eyes. "No way in hell can we let that happen."

He hadn't mentioned any new visions to her.

"Rafe?"

He glanced away from her and described his dreams. Floating bodies, women in red, black water, dark hair—all of it seemed pointed at her. But had Rafe seen her death as a future they couldn't fix, or was it a warning of something they could prevent?

Rafe cleared his throat, his voice gruff when he spoke. "I think maybe it's time Storm stayed with someone else. I'm too close to the investigation, and I have a bad feeling that being near me might be her death sentence."

She wanted to protest, but her family's intense scrutiny kept her mute. She'd talk to Rafe in private, after the meeting.

Unfortunately, Jurek agreed with him. "We should play it safe. Glass has issues with Westlake, with Rafe in particular. Now that I think back on it, Richard used to mention Rafe quite a bit." He turned to Rafe. "I think he saw you as competition. Maybe that accounted for his subtle animosity."

"Why me?" Rafe asked.

"Who knows?" Jurek shrugged. "You're a stellar agent, but so is Hunter. Hell, even J.D.'s been improving."

J.D. snorted. "Thanks for the glowing recommendation."

Max added his own two cents, but Storm had a hard time concentrating on anything but Rafe, who'd conveniently turned to J.D. To avoid looking at her? Storm wondered at the legitimacy of his excuse to part ways. Rationally, his decision made sense. If only she could be sure he wanted her gone to keep her safe. Or was it because they'd grown so much closer and it scared him? The sheer heat they generated wasn't just sexual, it was emotional as well, and he knew it. A small part of her even thought about what it might be like to have a baby with him, to celebrate their ties with new life. Talk about the wrong time for her biological clock to start ticking.

Thorne started coughing. He drew in air in great, heaving gulps, and she had a bad feeling she hadn't shielded that last part well enough. Her brother stared at her, wide-eyed.

"What?" she snapped.

The others continued to discuss the matter of her new accommodations.

In a low voice, Thorne offered, "You can stay with me and Luc. While I'm working Jennifer over, he can keep an eye on you."

"I don't need an eye on me." *Not unless it belongs to Rafe.* She started to rise from her chair when Rafe grabbed her arm, effectively stopping her.

He turned away from J.D. midsentence. "You need as many eyes on you as Buchanan can authorize. Westlake will help. We have men to protect you."

"I'm just a distraction. Glass wants you. I don't need protection."

"Yes, you do," he said quietly.

All talk in the conference room ceased.

Storm wanted to know what Rafe thought as he watched her. Not for the first time, she wished she had Thorne's ability.

"No, you don't," Thorne growled. "We need to go. We have some things to talk about, you and I," he said to her. "Luc, come on. Uncle Max, we'll be at our place."

Thorne pulled her out of her chair and practically dragged her out of the conference room, Luc trailing. At the elevator, he lowered his voice and whispered, "I'm going to be an uncle?" His glance at her belly embarrassed the hell out of her.

"No! Would you please stop eavesdropping on minds you shouldn't be reading?"

"Trust me, I wish I'd never seen half the things that asshole in there was thinking."

"Ah, seen?" She blushed bright red. She knew he sometimes caught both images and thoughts from the minds he read.

"I don't want to talk about this here."

Luc nudged her to follow their brother into the elevator.

The three of them traveled home together in silence. Storm tried to maintain the shield over her thoughts, but her erratic emotions made it hard to hold tight. Already she missed Rafe. He'd talked about a future without saying those exact words. She wanted very much to believe they could be together. But who knew what the future held?

Actually, Luc did. She looked at the back of his head and wondered.

"Don't even think of asking him," Thorne warned.

"Would you stop doing that? You don't like what you see, then keep out." She crossed her arms over her chest and stared unseeingly out the window at the passing scenery. "So what was Rafe thinking about in the conference room?"

"Yeah, what made you almost burst a blood vessel back there?" Luc asked. "Or don't I want to know?"

Thorne sighed. "Aside from what would burn your eyes and ears out, the man is pretty smitten."

Luc turned to her brother and frowned. "Smitten? Who the hell talks like that?"

"I don't. But Jennifer likes the thought of a man *smitten* with her. Apparently, she's not the only one." Thorne exhaled a long, drawn-out breath.

Storm flipped her brother the finger, exhilarated at the thought that Rafe really did want her around.

She still didn't know exactly how it had happened, but the connection she and Rafe shared refused to leave her thoughts. The intimacy between them may have started with the physical, but it had definitely transcended into an emotional bond she didn't want to lose.

Though he had yet to admit anything of his feelings, she knew, deep down, that he was the one for her. They hadn't been together long at all, but she could feel the rightness between them. Rafe

made her happy, and not because she wanted him to, but because *he* wanted to. They had so much in common in addition to killer physical chemistry.

The integrity, force of will and psychic strength the Buchanans prized resonated in Rafe as well.

"Okay, this is bad." Thorne sounded put out. "I'm not even trying, but you're broadcasting something fierce. Storm, please. You're giving me a headache. Rafe this, Rafe that. I think I'm gonna puke."

Luc chuckled. Storm smiled with him, because Thorne sounded less annoyed than resigned.

"I can't help it. I think I love him."

Luc stopped laughing and slapped a hand over his eyes. "Hell. Don't tell me we'll have to welcome another one of Westlake's guys into the family. Alex's husband is bad enough."

"Trust me. Savage is feeling a lot more than brotherly toward our sister. But it's more than physical, and just saying that makes me want to rip out my own tongue," Thorne grumbled. His eyes met hers in the rearview mirror before turning back to the road. "He's really scared for you, Storm. If anything happened to you, I don't think the guy could go on."

Thorne's subtle acceptance of her relationship made up for Rafe's earlier rejection. Pushing her away because he was afraid for her, that she could handle. She leaned forward and patted Thorne on the shoulder. "Don't worry, big brother. I'm sure some woman will be smitten with you one day. And if she's lucky, you'll feel the same. Scary and wonderful all at once."

"Yeah, if I live through tonight, I'll look forward to that."

Luc's grin faded. "I still think I ought to go with you. I've actually tried, but I can't see how tonight ends."

"I'll have J.D. with me. He'll be waiting a few doors down in Sean York's room in the Royale. Apparently Jennifer is so excited to meet me she got her own room at the place and plans to spend a few nights there. We don't want to spook Jennifer or Glass, so we're keeping our undercover op small. Between the two of us, we should be okay. I mean, if the woman has anything planned, I'll read it before she can carry it through. You stay with Storm. Anything happens to her and your ass is grass. I'll tell Dad. I swear I will."

Luc snorted. "Jackass. I'm not a kid anymore. I'm not scared of Dad."

Storm and Thorne answered together. "Liar."

Chapter Twelve

The Royale Hotel

Thorne Buchanan, Storm's obnoxious older brother, sat next to Jennifer in her room, sticking to his weak cover as a new Westlake agent. From the shadows where he watched, Richard focused on his psychic powers to muddy the waters. Not only could he instinctively avoid danger, but when he concentrated, he could shield himself and others from unwanted psychic scrutiny—a skill that had saved his ass time and time again from Jurek's clairvoyant hounds and nosy telepaths.

He studied his surroundings, keen on watching his little show play out. Dark mahogany furnishing, a plump couch and loveseat, and expensive prints lent the main room of the suite a luxurious feel that explained its expensive fees.

Outside the suite, two doors down, J.D. Morgan waited and listened. Richard had sensed danger the minute he'd stepped foot in the hotel. Then again, discreet wasn't a word he would have applied to Morgan. Despite the man's genius with computers, he'd never been a competent field agent. Not on Richard or Savage's level. Disappointed that Jurek wouldn't give him better opponents than Buchanan and Morgan, he nevertheless watched the scene play out.

Buchanan stared at Jennifer. Two flutes of champagne bubbled next to the couple, who considered one another while in a state of near undress. Jennifer certainly had thrown herself into the role, the little slut. Buchanan's unbuttoned shirt exposed his bare chest. Jennifer's silky red dress parted in the center, exposing all but her nipples. She'd draped the flowing ends between her thighs, showing off her legs.

"You're gorgeous," Buchanan murmured and stared at Jennifer over the top of his glass. He took a sip. "I can't believe you work for Westlake."

Pathetic line, but Richard could see Jennifer soaking up the compliments like a sponge. "Oh?" she breathed.

"What's a beautiful and sexy woman like you doing working for an investigation agency?"

A soft flush stole over her features.

Buchanan continued his trite lines. "Don't take this the wrong way, but I'm surprised you're not further up the corporate ladder. You have brains as well as beauty. A lot of people I met at the company speak highly of you."

Jennifer's smile lit the room. She took another sip of champagne before setting down the glass. Then she moved around the table to step between his legs. "Sean?"

He set down his glass and placed his hands on her curvy waist. Whatever else could be said about Jennifer Barnes, she had a sex appeal that called to a man's base fantasies.

"Jennifer?" Buchanan toyed with her hip.

Richard wondered what she saw in him. He was tall, heavily muscled and dangerous. Apparently Jennifer liked her men with a lethal edge and little brains.

"Kiss me," she said as she settled herself on Buchanan's lap. Then she plastered her mouth to his, taking the decision from him.

Good girl.

Buchanan appeared wrapped up in the kiss when a sudden bang and muffled shout from the outer hallway interrupted them. Ah, Lewis was right on time.

Buchanan broke off the kiss, panting heavily. "What was that?" He pushed her off his lap and looked through the peephole. Richard's cue to move into the bedroom closet.

After hiding, he heard the hotel door open but knew Buchanan would see nothing. The hallway was empty.

The door shut and Buchanan said, "Sorry about that, I—"

In the bedroom, Jennifer hurried out of the rest of her clothes and splayed herself out on the bed like the whore she was.

"Jennifer?" Buchanan called from the main room.

"In here, Sean."

He entered in moments and just stared. Richard knew how he felt. Despite the woman's vapid nature, she had an undeniable beauty. She wore nothing but a gold chain on her ankle, framed on the bed by stark white sheets.

Buchanan approached her as if in a trance. "Jennifer?"

She spread her legs and touched herself, whispering to Buchanan of her need. But her eyes darted just over his shoulder toward *him*, and a part of Richard relaxed. The woman hadn't forgotten the reason for this farce. She wouldn't screw it up, especially since Richard kept her thoughts shielded.

Jennifer slowly rose to her knees and stared pointedly at Buchanan's tenting trousers. She crawled to the edge of the bed and knelt to press herself against him. "Fuck me, Sean. Fuck me hard." She pushed the shirt from his shoulders and kissed him with an enthusiasm that had him groaning even as he gripped her tight.

To push her away or pull her closer?

Before Richard could make his move, Jennifer unbuckled Buchanan's belt and unbuttoned his trousers. She had the man unzipped and burrowed her hand between them.

That hadn't been in the script.

Buchanan groaned and tightened his hands on her shoulders before breaking the kiss. "Jennifer, honey, wait—"

"You're so big," she breathed. "So thick."

The whore. Ugly thoughts entered Richard's mind, his rage swelling like a balloon about to explode. He quietly crept from the closet. One step closer, then two, three. He moved with a burst of speed and shoved the syringe hard into Buchanan's fucking neck.

Buchanan stumbled forward but recovered quickly. He yanked the needle from him and spun to face Richard. But the cocktail had done its trick. Buchanan blinked several times and passed out cold on the bed.

To Jennifer, Richard said, "Wonderful performance, my dear. So very realistic."

"Oh good. Did you like it?"

He raised a brow. "Improvisation, Jennifer?"

Jennifer had the grace to blush but she didn't look away.

"I don't recall giving Buchanan a hand job to be part of our deception." When she continued to look at him with a hint of scared defiance sparkling in her eyes, he took a different tack. "Nevertheless, nicely done, sweet. Now put your dress back on. I want to take it off you slowly."

Jennifer rushed to obey him. In seconds, she stood before him, ravishing in red.

"The shoes too."

She didn't question him and put on the high heels he'd chosen especially for tonight, for this special occasion.

He circled her, studying her like a work of art. Then he turned her so that they both faced the dresser's mirror. Richard stopped behind her and placed a kiss on her bare shoulder. "Perfect." He nuzzled her neck and inhaled. She wore the ripe scent of waiting death, more alluring than any perfume. "This is just as I imagined." He drew the steel garrote from his jacket and looped it around her throat before she could protest.

He waited until she thrashed, the scent and sight of her fear captivating. Toying with the pressure around her neck, he took his time choking the life from her, not satisfied until he watched the last spark of light wink from her eyes.

Now to finish. Richard carefully placed her on the bed and posed her. In death she looked like a life-size doll. "You wear the red silk dress and shoes to perfection, Jennifer. Only a hand-crafted blood red necklace could compliment such loveliness."

He had to admit, he did lovely work. He'd never made two necklaces that looked the same. A one-of-a-kind Richard Glass original.

A knock sounded at the door. Three raps, then nothing.

"Come in," he called.

Lewis used his key. Heavy footsteps preceded him. The thug entered the bedroom and looked past Richard to the bed. "What a waste."

"I'm sorry, Lewis, but she never would have taken to you, and we needed to kill her anyway. I tell you what, I'll give you the Buchanan bitch after I'm through with her. But you'll have to be quick. I plan to kill her before long."

Lewis nodded. "That'll do."

"Fine then." He nodded at the half-dressed, unconscious male on the bed. "Grab Buchanan. Use the laundry cart in the hallway, as we'd planned. Make sure to cover him up. Wouldn't do to be found before we get away, would it?" Richard took one last look at Jennifer in perfect repose, then reached down and took her in his arms. He used her hair to hide the bloody line across her neck.

Lewis hefted Buchanan over his shoulder without making a sound and followed Richard out the door.

In the historic district, Rafe shifted on his couch, unable to concentrate on the folder detailing Richard Glass. He tossed the file aside and lay back, rubbing his temples. Dark colors and energies flowed through his mind. A murky lassitude suddenly held him in its thrall. His breathing slowed almost to a stop and the vision came, unwanted, unbidden.

Thorne in danger, Jennifer dead, Glass at large.

The minute Rafe returned to himself, he lunged for the phone and dialed. "Jurek, any word from J.D.?"

"Not yet. It's only been a few hours, and he's consistently checked in. Why?" Jurek paused. "Hold on, I have another call coming in."

Rafe swore as Jurek put him on hold. When Jurek came back, Rafe knew the worst had happened.

"Thorne's gone."

"Shit. I knew you were going to say that. I just saw it too late to do anything about it. Jennifer has to be the dead woman I saw before, floating in the water. A red dress, dark hair. It fits."

"Shit. This isn't good." When Jurek swore, bad news usually turned worse.

"J.D. put a bug on Thorne."

"I know. But it's on Thorne's shirt, and we found it left behind in the room. Get your ass down to headquarters. We need to fix this, pronto." He hung up before Rafe could answer.

Rafe checked the time. Not quite midnight. He grabbed his keys, tucked his gun into his holster and threw on a jacket. As he drove back to work, he wondered why the hell he kept having these visions. First Storm, now her brother and Jennifer Barnes?

He barely knew Jennifer and hated Glass with a seething passion. More questions, more delays. Shit, what would Storm do when she heard her brother had been kidnapped? He put his foot down on the accelerator, needing to be with her. *Wanting* to be with her.

Except at the office, only Max, J.D. and Jurek waited for him.

"Where's Storm?"

Max sighed. "She and Luc are together, don't worry. They're better off away from this mess. They're aware of the situation, but there's nothing either of them can do about it. We don't want more of our people to go missing."

"No," Rafe agreed. "Jurek? What's next?"

"Next we go through our files to see where the hell Glass might have taken Thorne. We know he owned a few properties downtown. One's a warehouse that I already have our people looking into. But Glass is smart."

"*Was* smart," Rafe corrected. "We don't know the first thing about his brother."

"I think you do," Max said. "If you interpret the visions Luc had of this man, they're about reflections. Only Richard Glass ever existed. Two men, one identity."

Jurek nodded. "That makes an odd kind of sense."

Rafe frowned. "What? That they thought they were the same person?"

"Yes." Jurek looked him in the eye. "Rafe, I'm concerned. In all the time I've known you, you've never had an uncontrollable vision unless it concerned someone close to you. Yet you're dreaming about Glass and Thorne. About *Storm*."

Max glanced from him to Jurek. "You're still dreaming about my niece?"

"He's dreaming *because* of your niece. Isn't that right, Rafe?"

Rafe answered, "I don't know. It could be."

"And if that's the case, Storm is still in danger. I know you want to keep her far from this, Max. But I think she needs to be close, where we can all keep an eye on her. Glass wants Rafe, and if he's been keeping an eye on him, like I'd imagine he has, then he knows the way to Rafe is through Storm."

Rafe made a decision. "I'll go get her myself. Max, directions?"

Max quickly wrote down the directions and handed them to him. "Bring her right here. We'll be waiting."

The minute Rafe's hands closed around the paper, another scene hit him. When he could function again, he felt Jurek's hands on him.

"Tell me all of it," Jurek said and helped him into a chair.

"He's got her. That bastard has Storm." The short scene came to him all too clearly, and for once, he felt Glass's thoughts and feelings as if they were his own, the man's excitement overwhelming his shields...

Jennifer's body sank in the dark water. Moonlight glinted off the still blackness, the pearly white reflection of the moon mesmerizing. Richard couldn't look away.

Lewis stood a few feet behind him holding Thorne Buchanan's unconscious body draped over his shoulder. "What about him?"

"I was going to kill him, but I've changed my mind. I think we can use him after all. Put him in there." Richard motioned to a lone SUV stowed under a dilapidated garage port. They moved quietly over the broken glass and rubble beyond the short pier to the abandoned house Richard had appropriated for his needs.

"Fuck. This guy weighs a ton," Lewis muttered and shifted Thorne over his shoulder.

"Dead weight normally does. I gave him enough sedative to keep him under for the better part of our trip. Now we just need to collect his sister and that prick, Savage."

They reached the vehicle, where Lewis tossed Buchanan into the back. "Finally."

Richard cast him a look of mild dislike before settling into the passenger seat.

"Where to, boss?"

"Drop me off at the lot so I can get my car. I'm going home. It's time to bring all the pieces together, Lewis. Make the call."

Rafe clutched his head, feeling more than a pounding ache, but echoes of rage, worry and grim satisfaction.

"The call? Who did he call?" Max's voice was thick with worry.

"Can you see where *home* might be?" Jurek asked. "Focus, Rafe. Richard Glass. Jonathan Glass. Home."

The excruciating pain made Rafe see double. "Jurek, I can't—"

"Come on, Rafe," Max urged. "They're going to take Storm there. They'll try to hurt her, to kill her—"

The vehicle passed signs for Lake Burton outside of Clayton. They turned onto a dirt road deep into the forest. Drifts of moonlight filtered through the overhead pines.

"Mama called this her slice of heaven," Richard said to Lewis. "We're close to Atlanta too, so Uncle Winslow could buy her the pretty things she deserved."

They left the main highway and wound around several dirt roads before disappearing in the woods.

The picture blurred and Rafe sensed time passing.

The small log cabin had an open living space and kitchen. Thorne sat in the middle of the living room, his hands and feet tied to a chair, his face and chest a mass of bloodied bruises.

Richard thrust a woman at him, her long black hair tangled around his fist. "Don't you care what happens to your precious brother?" he asked her.

"Fuck you." She tried to twist out of his grip and cried out when he punched her in the stomach. She gagged but he refused to let her go. "You're going to kill us no matter what we do."

"Quite right." Glass raised a pistol and shot Thorne through the chest.

"What about me?" Lewis asked with a leer, taken with Storm's generous breasts, visible through her ripped shirt.

"What about you?" Glass turned and shot Lewis between the eyes. Oblivious to Storm's tears, he dragged her with him down the hallway to the bedroom.

Once in the bedroom, he threw her down onto the bed. He tossed the gun aside and landed on top of her.

“That’s it, fight me, sweetheart. Savage will go crazy when he sees what we’ve shared. I can almost feel his rage, and it’s so sweet. So right.” Glass slammed his fist against her temple, dazing her long enough to strip her naked.

She roused quickly, but she was no match for his strength, wounded, scared and suffering the shock of her brother’s sudden death.

Glass sneered. “You won’t deny me again, you bitch. This time, you’ll give me what you’ve been giving Jurek’s golden boy. Whatever the hell I want.” Then he settled on top of her...

Rafe struggled to reach her, furious he couldn’t make the connection. As he came to, he saw the compress Jurek held beneath his nose.

Rafe push the bloody rag away. “What happened?” His head felt as if it would split in two.

“You had a seizure,” Max answered. “But you were narrating the whole time.” He paused. “So you really saw that sick bastard kill my nephew? About to rape and kill my niece?”

Rafe knew the fear he saw in Max’s eyes. It burned in his gut like acid. “Need a phone. Call her,” he rasped.

“No one answered.” Max turned to Jurek. “I know we have men on the way, but I need to be there. I’ll call you when I know more.”

Jurek nodded. “Go. I’m here if and when you need me.”

Max left in a rush and Rafe turned to his boss. “Christ. That knocked me one. Thorne’s death, Storm’s pain—it’s a future, Jurek. Not for sure, but a definite possibility if we don’t move to stop it.” He tried to rise, desperately needing to see with his own two eyes that Storm remained safe, unharmed. But his legs wouldn’t support him.

“Easy. We’ll take care of this. What I’m interested in now is Clayton, Georgia. Even if they don’t yet have Storm—and let’s go on the assumption they don’t—they have Thorne. We need to be a step ahead of Glass this time.”

“Hard to do when the bastard’s psychic ability alerts him to danger.” Rafe winced as he blinked into very bright light. “Jurek, get that flashlight out of my face.”

“Your pupils are getting smaller, thank God. You had me really worried there, Rafe.”

“Yeah, well, I’m worried about Storm. And Thorne. And anyone else who crosses that sociopath. We need to find him.”

"We will. J.D. and our insertion team are standing by. Let's go."

Leaving Luc behind hadn't been easy, but Storm knew it was the only way. She only regretted that she'd had to hit him so hard. He only had himself to blame. If he'd agreed to her plan and let her meet Lewis Greene in person, they could have come together. Instead, he lay at home, tied to his bed and groggy from one whopper of a frying pan to his head. At least the EMTs she'd called before she headed out would take care of him.

She loved him and Thorne so much. Just knowing Richard, Jonathan, or whoever the hell he was, had kidnapped her brother worried the hell out of her. She had no doubt Glass would try to kill Thorne.

Waiting in the nearly empty parking lot of the grocery store, she concentrated on not worrying about Thorne. He would be fine. She'd know it if something had happened to him. Greene's call had come three hours ago. An exchange, Storm for Thorne. She knew they had no intention of playing fair, but she couldn't chance Thorne's safety. She had a plan, of sorts. She only hoped she could pull it together. So much of it depended on Lewis Greene.

She rested against the hood of her car and tapped her foot, glancing around her. Greene had picked the perfect meeting place. The nearby diner had one patron sitting inside. The lot adjacent to it lay empty save for litter and a few overhead lights that didn't work. And look at that, the moon chose that very moment to hide behind a few clouds and not return.

Figured.

Greene surprised her by attacking her from behind. She hadn't seen or heard him approach. In seconds he nailed her to the ground. He tied her hands behind her back and looped a cloth over her eyes before turning her over onto her back.

Shit. Glass must have told him about her power.

"You are too fine for words," Greene rumbled. The bruiser's heaving breaths fanned her face, the scent of stale alcohol still there. And that she could use.

"Lewis—"

"Don't talk, sugar. The boss told me you'd try to work me. If not with those pretty eyes, then with that voice. But I'm stronger and smarter than that. Hell, it took the boss a bunch of tries before he busted me. But smart guy that he is, he never turned me in. Made me his partner instead. And you, you're my reward."

A sloppy kiss smashed into her mouth and ground her lips against her teeth.

"Wait," she tried before he mauled her again. She twisted against his bulk and spoke quickly. "Lewis. He's using you. He's going to kill you. Rafe saw it," she lied.

"Yeah, right."

"He's going to kill us all. But you and I could work something out."

His hand settled over her belly in slow strokes.

She contained a shudder.

"I'm listening."

She'd never needed to use her talent more. Storm concentrated. She felt the swell of power and poured it into her carefully constructed words. "Together we can beat him. This isn't a trick. I don't know what Glass told you about me, but without my eyes, I can't persuade you of anything." Major lie. "I'm a smart girl. You want me? I want to live. Let's work together and make both our wishes come true."

He ground against her. "Yeah, I want you. He killed the last one that was supposed to be mine. How do I know this isn't a trick?" He panted, clearly aroused, and his lack of clear thought would be to her advantage.

"Because I'll give you what you want. You could take what you wanted easily. I know that. You're strong and smart enough to do it. But how about a blowjob that will make your head spin? Free of charge to show I mean business. But first you have to untie me. Let me touch you. Come on, Lewis. You know you want to." She pushed harder than she ever had before.

His resistance was formidable, but so was her will to live. To her relief, Lewis slowly eased off her and helped her to stand. Then he cut through her bonds.

She ripped the blindfold from her face and smiled up at him. "You're so sweet. Okay, now close your eyes and feel what I'm doing to you." She gave him a brief image of a rollicking good time and waited.

It didn't take long. In seconds he groaned and shivered. A wet spot darkened the front of his trousers.

Ignoring her disgust, she continued to hold onto his mind and forced him to lead her to his vehicle. They entered together. He sat behind the wheel and she buckled in on the passenger side.

"Start the car. Now, where to?"

"Boss has a cabin on the lake near Clayton. A four and a half hour trip at this hour."

Storm would make sure they made it in four. Now to call for help.

"We have work to do, Lewis. Remember, I held to my part of the deal. I liked it so much, I'm thinking of making us a permanent thing. Would you like that?" She pushed him again.

"Oh yeah. You give good head, honey. And I'm lonely, you know?"

While he rambled about his sad little life and turned west, heading out of the city, Storm dialed her uncle.

"Storm! I've been going crazy not knowing where you are. Luc just called to tell me he's got a goose egg on his head the size of a golf ball. But he's okay."

"Good." She breathed out a sigh of relief. "Uncle Max, I have a plan. I know it's dangerous. But I can't let Glass kill Thorne."

"None of us want that. But Rafe had a vision—"

"Of a *possible* future. I'm on my way to Clayton, Georgia, near a lake." She gave him the directions Lewis had given her. "I won't let it happen."

"Storm, don't do this. You're playing into his hands."

"I know. But I have an ace up my sleeve. I have a new best friend. Lewis Greene."

"Hell."

"That's right. We're partners in crime. And we're going to nail Glass so that he can't hurt anyone ever again." The time had come to save her oldest brother. Luc would have to forgive her. Because God willing, she'd save Thorne, get the bad guy and share the future with Rafe she'd dreamed about.

Chapter Thirteen

As they drove, Storm glanced at her traveling partner. Lewis Greene's watery brown eyes looked back at her, a grin on his slack mouth. Her grasp on his mind continued to hold, mostly because he wanted their little partnership to be true. He hadn't been lying. Lewis really was lonely.

Thankfully, the longer she dwelled in his mind, the less power she needed to control him. With some people she could take complete control. Lewis, it seemed, was easier than most.

"He wants you bad, you know," Lewis rumbled. "And he's not gonna be nice at all when he finds you."

Like she needed the reminder that Glass was a monster. Storm cleared her throat. "So, what do you know about his cabin?"

"Not much. I was never actually inside it. But I did help lay an assload of demolitions outside, to keep away intruders."

"I need you to tell our friends about it. You don't know them, but they're going to have our backs when we face off with Glass. I don't want to lose you, Lewis." She smiled at him and made sure their gazes met and held when he looked over at her.

He let out a deep breath and focused on the road when she let him go. "Um, okay, I guess. If it'll keep us safe."

"Right. Remember, it's you and me against him. For our future, Lewis." She pressed the speed dial on her phone and her uncle immediately picked up. "Uncle Max? I need you to pass on some information for me."

"Girl, you're in so much trouble when you get back. Don't hang up on me again! Do you have any idea how worried we are? How upset Luc is? Wait until I—"

"That has to wait. I have vital information I need to pass to whoever's on the way."

Max swore. "Hold on. I'll patch you through to Jurek's team, who are the fastest en route to your position."

Jurek joined the call. "Storm? I take it things are all right."

"Right as rain. Kind of. My new friend Lewis Greene is partnering with me on this one. Together, he and I are going to take down Richard Glass." She handed the phone to Lewis. "Go head, Lewis. Tell them what to look out for when they get to the cabin."

He nodded. The details he shared would definitely save lives. She couldn't believe Glass had turned the area around his cabin into a minefield. Just one more instance of proof that he'd gone off the deep end.

"What? Oh, sure, hold on," Lewis said and handed her the phone. "Jurek wants to talk to you."

"Yes?"

Instead of Jurek, Rafe yelled at her. "What the hell do you think you're doing? You're going to get yourself *killed*."

She grimaced. "I'm trying to help."

"Don't. Stop where you are. Turn back. Storm." His voice cracked. "Baby, please. You can't. You'll die. I saw it. I can't— Please. You can't do this. We're almost there. Let us handle this." He paused. "I love you."

She blinked in shock. A fine time for him to say the words she'd been dying to hear. "You don't understand. Glass is going to kill Thorne if Lewis is late or I don't show alone. I promise I'll be careful. I have to go." She took a deep breath and turned from Lewis to whisper a fierce, "I love you too." Then she cleared her throat and said in a louder voice, "Just believe in me, okay? I know what I'm doing." She snapped the phone shut.

I hope.

Richard studied the bound man sitting broken and unconscious in the middle of his living room. His dark hair and distinct features so reminded Richard of Storm Buchanan that it was all he could do to hold onto his patience. He wanted to rip out the bastard's heart.

Imagine Buchanan trying to play him. Sean York. Even the name sounded false. Richard Glass was too good to fall for such amateur sleuthing. *Not Richard, Richard is dead*. The unfortunate reminder didn't help. It only refreshed the pain of missing his brother. Of how long he'd spent alone. An entire year spent not knowing how to think or act, consumed by loneliness and grief.

And all because of Rafe Savage. The bastard had killed him. Killed *them*. He would pay, and Richard knew just where to start.

Walking to the kitchen table, he extracted a small vial and syringe. Richard carefully brought the needle to eye-level and made sure he had the correct amount before he shoved it into Thorne's neck and pushed the plunger.

Seconds later, the lying Buchanan groaned. Time to wake up and play.

Richard withdrew the needle and tossed it away. He glanced at his watch, wondering if Lewis would succeed where Richard had once failed. Unable to bear the sight of Buchanan any longer, he took a walk outside to re-familiarize himself with the cabin grounds. He needed the time to think.

The cabin remained in decent shape thanks to his continuous efforts to keep it livable. Since his brother's passing, Richard visited every other week when not working to plan his revenge. The cabin had one bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom that sat off the living room. Sparse of everything but the essentials.

He liked simplicity, just as his brother had loved the complexity of things, two heads on opposite sides of the same coin. Whereas Richard had loved intricate plots and conspiracy theories, he had been satisfied with one shot, one kill. He liked a simple death when killing the enemy. Richard had had ample opportunity to kill both Savage and Storm, but he knew his brother wouldn't have wanted that.

Richard wanted to slit Thorne's throat. Instead, he'd made do with drugs, threats and some physical punishment. Then he thought of how much fun he'd had stringing Jennifer along. He'd had honest enjoyment in her lush body, and the information she'd given him about Jurek's men had been vital to his plans. He'd been smart not to kill her quickly.

He wondered what she saw when she looked through her eyes now. Did the land of the dead hold as many mysteries as the land of the living? Excited at the prospect of finishing his time in this world and rejoining his brother, Richard took another look around him, satisfied he'd done all he could until the enemy arrived.

The cabin sat unobtrusively surrounded by forest. Trees and lush vegetation on every side protected him from prying eyes, and behind the house the still waters of Lake Burton lapped at the shore. The nearest neighbor was at least four miles east. And if an unlucky bastard happened to snoop too close, *boom*.

One of the many landmines he'd buried would take care of any interlopers.

Pleased with his attention to detail, Richard returned to the house. Buchanan remained in the exact same position, his head tilted forward, streaks of blood marring the ropy musculature of his body. Slices of pain the man had more than deserved, trying to hone in on his fun. No, not his fun, *their* fun. He suddenly felt an otherworldly presence.

We are one, brother. Always one.

Richard laughed with delight. "I am Richard. He is me. We are one." He repeated the litany over and over. "I've missed us so much. So much." Tears fell down his cheeks, and he crumpled into a ball on the floor, his emotions in turmoil. Because of his enemies, he'd lost himself. Yet through this act, by taking back what he was owed, he had a chance to be whole again.

Flames of hatred licked at the joy he'd once again found with his brother. And with that rage stirred memories of the past. Their longing for a woman to complete them, for a father to fill that

missing void. Hungers grew, overwhelming, thundering for satisfaction, a need the Glass brothers intended to fill.

Storm and Lewis walked up the steps to the cabin. "Remember what we talked about," she said in a low voice and gave him another mental nudge.

He nodded, and a blank look fell over his features. He caught her arm in a tight grip and pounded on the door with his free hand. "Boss," he yelled. "I have what you wanted."

The door flew open and banged against the wall.

Storm stared at the face of a man she'd never thought to see again. His hair stood up in spikes, his clothes were wrinkled and the pale glow of madness shone in his face like a beacon of warning.

Chaos reigned in the dark depths of his eyes. A twisted power, magnified yet muted, vibrated from Richard Glass like the discordant notes of a bad song.

"Ah, Lewis. You're never a disappointment, my friend. We're so glad you brought her."

"We?" Lewis stepped inside with her when Glass beckoned him forward.

It took all Storm's discipline not to dart to her brother's side. Thorne sat in the middle of the room tied to a chair. He looked terrible, half naked, bruised and bloodied. But to her relief, she could see the faint rise and fall of his chest.

"He's going to kill me. Thinks he and Richard are the same person. Wants Rafe to suffer. Wants Jurek to love him like a father. Work with that," came the weak message.

"Hold on, Thorne. I brought help." She hoped against hope that Rafe and the others were out there somewhere—if not outside, then at least close by. She focused her ability on Richard and pretended shock. "Richard, I'd heard you died."

"Storm Buchanan, in the flesh," he said with relish. His dark brown eyes gleamed in the bright light of the cabin. "I've been so looking forward to this."

Her flesh crawled when he stepped closer. Lewis didn't budge from her side. She worried that he pretended to be Glass's man a little too well.

Glass asked him, "Did she try anything?"

"Yeah. But the blindfold worked. It was on until I jerked her a little too hard up the steps. Like you said, she can't work you if she can't see you." Lewis tugged the blindfold that had supposedly fallen around her neck and pulled it up over her eyes.

"Nicely done."

"Thanks, boss. She asked me a ton of questions about you."

"I can imagine. Did she pretend to be interested in me?"

"Yeah. Tried to get me to believe she wanted to make a deal. To be partners," he said on a snort.

God, please tell me he's acting. Because he's convincing me a little too well.

Lewis let go of her arm and a stronger hand grabbed her.

"I've got her now. Keep an eye on Buchanan while I take Storm into the other room. She and I have a lot to talk about. Oh, and Lewis, if you hear anything from the bedroom that sounds suspicious? Kill her brother."

She could only pray her hold on Lewis's mind was strong enough to see them through.

Yanked into the bedroom, still blinded, Storm couldn't see anything. She stumbled when Glass pushed her and fell onto a large bed. A few seconds later she heard the door close. Footsteps neared.

She tried to rise and fell back when he slugged her in the stomach. Wheezing and trying not to vomit, she lay helpless. Seconds turned to minutes. Nothing moved.

She jumped when the cold edge of steel grazed her cheek.

"Good girl," Glass praised. "Go ahead. Remove the blindfold. Make one wrong move, try to manipulate me with that deceitful mind, and I'll shoot you, but not before you hear your brother die."

She swallowed hard, took off the blindfold and didn't move.

Glass aimed a gun at her chest and shoved it between her breasts, bruising her sternum.

"M-may I say something?" she whispered. *Rafe, where the hell are you?*

"So polite. We like that."

Again with that *we*. "I just want you to know that I only pushed you away because I was hurt."

The gun stilled against her. "Hurt?"

"I was attracted to you. But I'd been taught Westlake was the enemy. And then you asked me all kinds of questions. I thought you were using me."

"Sure you did."

She swallowed hard, wishing love and affection into her words. Any attempt to make Glass back away would fail. He'd clearly perceive distance as a threat. But if she could convince him she had feelings for him, maybe he'd believe.

"I did." Fear for her brother and Rafe easily filled her eyes with tears, and one spilled over her cheek. "I don't have a lot of boyfriends. The only reason Savage was with me was because he thought you might still want me. I tried to tell him you never cared but he—"

"He's a motherfucking liar. Rafael Savage has never cared about anyone but himself," Glass spat. "We wanted you, Storm. We would have had you. Would have kept you. But you never wanted us."

"I guess it doesn't matter how I felt, now. You'll do what you have to. You'll probably kill me." She wiped her eyes. "I just wanted you to know it wasn't all lies." *Believe me. Believe my truth. Every word of it's true.* She concentrated so hard she felt dizzy.

To her astonishment, he lowered the gun and cocked his head. "Storm? You can't mean... We were so lonely. So sad. I—we—never knew you cared." He looked confused.

She didn't move, wanting him to believe. Scared witless, she waited with bated breath, not wanting to spook Glass out of her carefully crafted manipulations.

Thorne's voice filled her mind, and she couldn't help her quiet sob of relief. *"Storm, Lewis Greene freed me. We're gone. Everyone else is out front, ready for your go-ahead. I'm wide open, honey. Talk to me."*

"Give me a minute. I'm working Glass."

Glass narrowed his eyes on her but didn't raise his gun again. Did he know he'd lost Thorne as leverage?

She concentrated on him. *I'm here for you, Richard. I believe in you. It's just us against the rest of them.* If only Jurek were here to help us. "Richard? Are you all right?"

He didn't answer, and then he rubbed his eyes. "We're so tired all the time. No one to help us. No one to guide us. That slut Jennifer meant nothing, you know. She was a means to an end."

"I know."

He sat next to her on the bed and held tight to his weapon, so she made no overt move to interfere.

"Would it be all right if I held your hand?" she asked timidly.

Glass blinked at her in surprise. "We'd like that. But make any sudden moves and you're dead." He lifted the gun to her forehead and tensed his forefinger.

For a moment, she wondered if she'd pushed too hard, if he knew what she'd been doing to him.

Then he removed his finger from the trigger and lowered the gun to his side. A trickle of blood dripped from his nose, and she pushed him again.

He frowned. "Not right. We can't understand. Something we should know..."

She hurried to stop that train of thought. "Did you know Jurek kept asking about you? In our meetings, he was very concerned that you might still be alive. He was excited. Hopeful."

"Oh?" Glass's gaze centered on her lips.

"But every time he mentioned something good about you, Savage distracted him. Bad-mouthed you at every opportunity." She sniffed. "When I mentioned I thought you might not be the bad guy they painted you out to be, Savage reinforced that you had conned me. That you only ever wanted me to further your career at Westlake."

"That's not true. Savage is a fucking liar," Glass sneered. His face relaxed and he paused. "Jurek asked about me?"

The hope and innocence in his voice almost moved her to pity. For all that this man had done to her and her family, he might be a good person underneath his psychoses.

She landed flat on her back under him and rethought her assessment. "If you care so much, Storm, show us. Give us a taste of what we missed." He leaned closer then froze, tense. He tilted his head, as if listening to something only he could hear. "But not here. We need a little privacy for what I have in mind, away from all your friends outside."

Shit. Before she could warn the others, he clamped hard on her neck, and she passed out.

Drops of water hit her forehead. Damp cold made her shiver, and the sound of Richard Glass crooning a lullaby echoed around her. She worked hard to gather her wits, thoroughly creeped out by Richard's high-pitched song.

"Ah, there you are."

She blinked into candlelight. Shadows danced over stone walls, illuminating what looked like a deep, dark cave. Where the hell was she?

Glass helped her sit up with a solicitousness that unnerved her. She was poised, waiting for him to strike again when she least expected it. Except she couldn't stop herself from swaying. Her throat felt bruised, her mind fuzzy.

"That's a good girl." Glass rubbed her throat, and she winced against the pressure. "Don't bother working on me, Storm. You're as helpless as your brother was right before I gutted him."

It wasn't possible. Yet when she tried to call out for her family, she felt nothing but a wall of silence in return. No Thorne, no Uncle Max, if he was even near.

"Where are we?" she managed to whisper. Tears of pain crawled down her cheeks and she coughed, disturbed that her voice was nearly gone.

"Underground. No one knows about our secret place." *Our* again.

Glass smiled, and she noticed the glittering depth of rage he tried unsuccessfully to bank. Madness and violence would be sure to follow. She had to get free. Had to find her brother and get the hell away. But she thought she recalled Thorne telling her he'd gotten free...?

"I can always sense the danger. From childhood, that ability to survive has always been there."

"Why was that, Richard? Was it dangerous when you were growing up?" She had no choice but allow him to prop her against the cold stone wall at her back. *I feel like a damn doll. I'm about as useless as one.* She sent another mental shout out to her brother, wishing like hell he'd answer. Because if Glass had actually killed him, she'd lose it.

A vicious slap stole her breath away.

"I told you I can sense danger. I can feel you projecting energy, like spiders over my skin, prickling and biting. I don't like it. Do it again and I'll kill you."

Good Lord. How powerful was this guy?

"I'm sorry, Richard," she apologize, inserting a note of meekness to placate him. "But you know what it's like to lose a brother. It's so hard for me to believe." Real tears, the sadness mingled with fear that Thorne might actually be dead, proved better than acting.

Apparently she'd said the right thing, because Glass's anger disappeared under a wave of surprising compassion. "Yes. I know how hard it is to lose your other half. Like dying but having no way to go free. Stuck in a rotting corpse that doesn't know it's past due."

Shit. Glass had gone beyond crazy into fucking nuts. She laughed inwardly, more than slightly hysterical. Trapped only God-knew-where with a madman with an ax to grind. Talk about one hell of a social life.

"*Storm? Storm, where are you?*" Thorne and Max seemed to shout before they quieted, buffered by Glass, she assumed.

The relief in hearing Thorne made her lightheaded. That or Glass's roughness had pushed her past her limits.

"Wake up. Stay here." He yanked her wrists together and bound them with coarse rope, then tied her to the post of the bed she lay on. A bed in a dank, dark cave somewhere below the surface of his land. They couldn't have gone too far, not with Thorne and the others waiting nearby the cabin.

She tried to think but had trouble. Glass moved away, and she tracked his movements as he climbed a ladder and disappeared from sight. Yet no matter how hard she tried to once again contact her family, she found nothing but silence for her efforts.

The bastard. The small sense of compassion she'd felt for Glass, seeing his grief and insanity, paled next to her rage at being involved in this in the first place. If the asshole hadn't been so busy trying to be Mr. Popular at Westlake, none of this would have happened.

Determined not to give up and to make use of her short separation from Glass, she tried again. *"Thorne! Uncle Max! Glass has us underground somewhere. A cave. He's got me tied up and he has a gun."*

Her uncle answered. *"We're close, Storm. I think Jurek's team just found the entrance to a tunnel underground. We never saw him leave with you, so he must have another passage from the house."*

The pounding between her eyes increased. *"I think I'm losing you. He's shielding himself and me somehow."*

"I know. It's taking me and your brother to get through." He grew muffled, then returned in a stronger voice. *"We're coming. Sit tight, sweetheart. And don't make him angry. Do whatever he tells you."*

Glass returned, and when he drew closer, the candlelight flickered over his smug expression. "They have no idea where to look."

She cried harder, letting herself use the pain from her throat and temples. "I'm so sorry, Richard. I never meant to hurt you. I swear. I wish I could have met your brother."

He frowned at her and tapped the gun against his leg. "We're the same person, Storm. Don't you understand that by now? You met him. You met me. *We're fucking one,*" he ended in a shriek and she curled into a ball, as far away from Glass as the rope would let her, prepared for a beating.

But he didn't beat her. He dropped his gun and leapt onto the bed, flattening her beneath him. "Enough talk. They're stupid, but even they'll figure out we're no longer in the house soon. Why don't you give me what you've been holding back? What you gave Savage?" he sneered.

Glass mashed his lips against hers, mauling her while he stole her ability to breathe.

Go easy, gently, she forced, but after using so much of her gift and enduring his abuse, she started to tire.

His enthusiasm grew, as did the urgency of his body. The asshole was getting off on hurting her. He pressed harder against her, leaving her in no doubt of his intent. When he encircled her neck with his hands and began to squeeze, she struggled in an instinctive bid for survival.

He was so strong, so undeniably insane was all she could think as she blinked into his eyes closing to slits as he cut off her air. She sent out one last pleas to her family, praying it would go through. *"Uncle Max, Thorne. Not...going...to last..."*

"Jurek's coming. Hold on," Max sent her.

She forced herself to go limp and lost herself in the blackness of unconsciousness.

Richard and his brother had never felt so powerful. They teetered on the verge of orgasm, from not only Storm's soft curves, but from the emotional rollercoaster of want and need and love. *She loves us. Always loved us. It was Savage who screwed us over. That fucker who ruined it all.*

"Richard, my boy, you're alive."

Richard rolled off the limp form beneath him with the intent to fire his gun at the intrusion when he realized he no longer held it. Had he dropped it? But then it didn't matter, because Jurek was there with a look of surprised joy on his face. In his secret hideaway. Jurek had found them, finally.

Their mentor stood in arched doorway leading to the forest exit and held his arms wide open. "I can't believe it's you! When I heard you were alive, I didn't dare believe. Come here, my boy. My favorite agent. The golden boy. It crushed me when I thought I'd lost you." Jurek had tears in his eyes. The man didn't spare a glance for Storm Buchanan, focused only on Richard. *On them.*

Overjoyed, they took two steps toward Jurek when people suddenly poured into the cave behind Jurek. More flew down the ladderway, from where he'd just come. Then Rafe Savage appeared out of nowhere and knocked him down.

"You piece of shit," Savage growled and pummeled him.

They couldn't process it all as lines blurred and pleasure melted into pain. What was real, what wasn't? They had no idea about anything anymore.

"She's okay, just unconscious," Thorne Buchanan said.

"Rafe, enough!" Jurek yelled. *"You're killing him."*

Savage punched them once more and ceased, but they felt the damage all the same. Their stomach hurt, they couldn't move their mouth and their left eye swelled so badly they couldn't see out of it.

Then a giant weight lifted from them as Savage shoved them—him—aside and reached for the woman. He bent over Storm, took her in his arms and murmured endearments that made no sense. When she groaned, Savage hugged her to his chest, swearing to never let her go.

“Richard?”

He blinked up into Jurek’s stern face and felt a sense of separation from himself. He had been Richard for so long, yet he was also himself. Part and apart, yet together.

Jurek nodded to himself. “Not just Richard. Jonathan too, hmm?”

Richard and Jonathan smiled, and their entire body lit with pleasure, ignoring the pain. “You know me,” he tried to say but couldn’t form the words since his jaw wouldn’t obey. *You finally see us as we are. Two entities, one man.*

Jurek motioned to his men, who lifted them to their feet and dragged them out of the cave, because their legs refused to work. The group went the long way and exited into the woods, near the main road.

Once outside, a moment of clarity struck. The psychic edge that fueled their instincts for self-preservation kicked in. Before they could take a step toward the cluster of dark SUVs, where more agents stood with guns, Jonathan—he knew his name—tore free and dashed into the woods, heading for his cabin.

“Brother, I’m coming!” he garbled through an all-consuming pain.

Footsteps neared behind him, but he wouldn’t let his enemies keep him and Richard apart any longer. As if in slow motion, he stepped on a pressurized device, heard a soft click...and died.

Richard waited for him with open arms.

Chapter Fourteen

Three days later, Storm still hadn't heard from Rafe. Her neck still bore bruises, as did the lower section of her abdomen, which had turned a dark purple. And her voice remained scratchy. But she'd fared much better than Thorne, who had a hard time mending in the hospital with broken ribs, a fractured femur and a bruised lung. The swelling in his face had healed much faster than the swelling of his ego. During her visits, no less than a dozen nurses had stopped by to flirt and linger over his heroic exploits.

Apparently, Rafe had visited her brother in the hospital with tall tales to the staff about Thorne's superhero status. But had he come to see her? No.

On the upside, at least Luc had forgiven her. She'd explained her worries and had promised not to tell her parents what had really happened. Uncle Max was a different story. She didn't look forward to her debriefing next week, when he would *consider* okaying her return to work.

Her mother and father were due to return from their vacation. She should have been happier. She truly loved her family.

Instead, she moped, hurt and confused about her relationship with a man who'd said he loved her but refused all contact with her.

A car pulled up in her parents' driveway and she hurried to the front door. She yanked it open only to see Thorne leaning against the reluctant man of her dreams.

She glared at her lover—her *ex-lover*—and then ignored him. "What are you doing here? Well, Frankenstein? Nothing to say for yourself?"

Thorne's lips twitched and turned into a groan. "Still hurts to smile. I couldn't miss Mom and Dad's homecoming, now could I? Besides, I hate hospitals. Too many sick people there."

Storm gently helped him to the couch. "What about Miss April?"

"Who?" Thorne asked in confusion.

Rafe replied with a hint of a grin, "I think she means your nurse. You didn't hear her mention a brief stint as a centerfold? I tried not to overhear, but I was helping her manage your stubborn ass back into bed at the time."

He lifted his gaze to hers, and she couldn't miss the hunger in his eyes.

She didn't know how to act around this man who tied her in knots. So she turned to her brother. "So how did you end up with Rafe?"

Rafe answered her. "You ought to be thanking me. I'd just arrived to visit the walking wounded here when I saw him trying to sneak into the elevator. Don't worry, I checked him out with the staff. He's okay as long as someone can watch over him."

"I don't need a nursemaid. Though maybe Miss April—"

Storm interrupted, "Why are you really here, Rafe?" She crossed her arms over her chest, annoyed with him. "Why have you been ducking my calls?"

Thorne settled back and watched them with a smirk on his face.

"We need to talk. Privately." Rafe glared at her brother. "I'm not putting on a show for you." He walked a few steps away but stopped when Storm didn't follow. "Please, Storm. A few moments of your time *without* an audience?"

She huffed, "Fine. Follow me." She led him out on the back porch for some privacy. "Well?" When he said nothing, just stared at her with those intense brown eyes, she swore. "Your time is ticking away, Savage."

"You are so beautiful. That raspy voice is really sexy. God, I missed you." He kissed her before she could protest, and like every other time they touched, she didn't want it to end.

But she wasn't a doormat, and it still hurt that he'd avoided her. To her way of thinking, Rafe Savage had some groveling to do. When he let her go, she asked on a breath, "Why did you stay away?"

His eyes narrowed. "Because I was afraid I'd beat you. What the fuck were you thinking to offer yourself up to Glass like some damn sacrifice?" He gripped her shoulders tight. "I almost died when he hurt you. To know you were in there with him, to see you lying on that bed..." He choked and clutched her to him.

He hugged her so hard she groaned.

"I feel like a ragdoll."

He eased back and lifted her shirt, looking for injuries.

She tried to slap his hands away, but he persisted. "Rafe, my brother's in there," she hissed.

"I know. *In there*. And your parents will be home in six minutes."

"What?"

"The foresight thing. Hard to ignore. But don't try to change the subject. That bruise on your stomach looks like it hurts. Poor baby." He knelt and kissed it.

Her arousal burned. In seconds she was wet.

"Your nipples are hard." He stood and ran his hand down her belly and under her panties. Callused fingers slid through her folds and he groaned. "And you're wet. God, I love how you respond to me." He removed his hand and hugged her closer, careful to treat her gently. "I've been dreaming about holding you. I missed you so much, baby. It's been killing me to not make love to you." His voice lowered. "To taste you again."

"Well, same here." Storm tried to ignore her racing heart. If they were anywhere else, she'd have dropped her pants and let him put that tongue to work. "You said you loved me."

"I do." His growing smile mirrored her own.

"Well, I love you."

"I know. While I spent the past three days pissed as hell at you, I cleaned up my place and made some room. Of course, the study is mine. But I have no problem turning the spare bedroom into an office for you. I doubt you'll stop working for your uncle after we're married."

"We—*what?*"

He kissed her with a tenderness that shook her, his caresses over her bruised neck full of warmth and caring. She melted into his embrace, more than conscious of the erection prodding her belly through the press of their clothes.

He broke the kiss and looked into her eyes. "Do you have any idea what it's like to have your whole world turned upside down? When the one person you care about more than life says the words you're afraid of, but desperately needing to hear, and all at the wrong time?"

"I had sworn off serious relationships for a lot of reasons. For years I flew solo. And then I met you. From the first, you were special. You threw me into a bar brawl. You stole my witness, and you nearly screwed up my Locklen investigation."

"Hey, you—"

"How is it you managed to tie me in knots when I was the one with the cable ties?" he asked in a husky voice. "Storm, you make me feel things I never thought I could feel." Rafe's eyes had a watery sheen and Storm couldn't look away. "I love you, baby. If anything had happened to you, I don't think I'd have survived it. I want to marry you. I want you to have our children. You and me, together. Not just now or tomorrow, but forever."

"Can you see that far?"

His grin widened. "You wouldn't believe the dream I had last night. But I only see potential futures. The one I want all depends on you."

"Yes," she whispered and kissed him for all she was worth. In his embrace, she forgot the world around them and reveled in the strength of his love.

Until the clapping behind them startled her into pulling back.

Her mother and father eyed Rafe with surprise and happiness. Luc rolled his eyes. Thorne stood there with a scowl on his face.

Her mother wiped a tear from her eye. "Oh, that was lovely."

"I love him," she confessed.

Thorne groaned. "God, I need to wash my eyes out with soap. You two think way too loudly for my peace of mind. I'll be in the living room, trying not to kill myself."

Luc laughed. "Like you could manage that under all those bruises. Come on, gimp, let me help you to the sofa." He winked at Storm. "Congrats you two, and welcome to the family, Rafe." Then he guided Thorne inside.

Rafe held her close and held out a hand to her father. "Rafe Savage, sir. I'd like to marry your daughter."

"I see that." Her father glanced at her mother. "We picked a helluva time to take a vacation, hmm?"

"The perfect time, I'm thinking. Oh, I can't wait to hold my granddaughter. She'll be so cute, but such a handful." Her mother winked and dragged her father back into the house. "Champagne for everyone! Except Thorne. Not with your pain medication, young man."

The door swung shut after them.

Storm grinned. "Welcome to my interesting family. Still sure you want to marry me?"

He took a small box out of his back pocket and opened it. "Storm Buchanan, will you do me the great honor of becoming my wife?"

A large marquis-cut diamond lay in the center of the box. The ring looked old and blazed in the sunlight, daring her to try it on.

"It was my mother's," Rafe said quietly. "She would have loved you."

Storm let him slip the ring on her finger, and deep inside her, everything finally felt right. "I wish I could tell them you're in good hands now. I love you, Rafe."

"Not as much as I love you."

She smiled. "A man who actually argues with me. You're perfect, aren't you?"

He snorted. "I wish. I have a feeling you'll have me wrapped around your little finger before you can say *boo*."

“Boo.”

He kissed her again. “See? Already working.”

She laughed as they walked to the back door, arm in arm. A faint scent blew by them on the wind, but Storm knew her mother had nothing but azaleas and pansies in the garden. “Rafe, that smell. What is it?”

“Gardenias,” he said with wonder. “My mother always wore that scent.” He turned to her, his heart in his eyes. “I told you she’d love you.”

About the Author

Marie Harte is an avid reader who loves all things paranormal and futuristic. Reading romances since she was twelve, she fell in love with happy endings and knew writing was her calling.

Twenty-plus years later, the Marine Corps, a foray through Information Technology, a husband and four kids, and her dream has finally come true. Marie lives in Georgia with her family and loves hearing from readers.

To read more about Marie, visit www.marieharte.com.

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Westlake Enterprises

To Hunt a Sainte

Storming His Heart

A Scorching Seduction

Enjoying the Show

Sins of Summer

He's enough to tempt a Sainte to sin.

To Hunt a Sainte

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Westlake Enterprises, Book 1

Telekinetic Alexandra Sainte is through serving time behind a desk at Buchanan Investigations. She's more than ready to prove she's capable of fieldwork, if only her uncle will give her the chance. Tired of waiting, she turns a sudden opportunity into something more.

Her unauthorized raid of a suspected kidnapper's office goes off without a hitch—mostly—but as she makes her escape, she sees a pair of golden eyes watching her every move. Eyes that spark erotic dreams of a dark stranger taking her in ways that make her blush.

There's a reason Hunter Greye can't take his gaze off the sticky-fingered woman he catches ruining his investigation. She fights like a warrior. She bears a striking resemblance to a string of kidnapping victims. And she stirs a wildness within him he thought he'd learned to control a long time ago. She's a dangerous distraction he can't afford.

Thrown together in an undercover operation to find the mastermind behind the kidnappings, Alex and Hunter fall in lust, in love, and in danger. Only by trusting each other can they save the girl...and each other.

Warning: Beware psychics with attitude, a killer red dress, a ruthless villain with an angel obsession, and rivals who can't figure out who's better on top.

Enjoy the following excerpt for To Hunt a Sainte:

Despite the glass frame around the closed office door, Hunter needed more than perfect vision to see in the dim light. He took a moment to *focus*, and the office space brightened. High-quality leather furniture and expensive art decorated Omaney's space. Photographs of the slick businessman shaking hands with prominent politicians graced the burnt orange walls while a state-of-the-art computer whirled to life on Omaney's solid-oak desk. Where two masked figures waited.

The arrival of security stopped the intruders' hasty search. The door burst open, and the largest guard waved a gun at them. "What the hell do you two think you're doing? Get away from the damned computer, on your knees."

The guards surrounded them, obviously expecting the masked figures to stop whatever they hell they had planned and kneel on the floor. Clad in black from head to toe, only one of the prowlers looked big enough to successfully engage his opponents. The other was smaller in comparison, a slim figure huddled behind the bigger male. So it came as a surprise to watch the smaller man attack first, taking down the largest guard with a kick to his gun hand and a punch to his neck. The intruder's partner moved with an efficient grace. He looked as if he spared little more energy than needed to subdue the guards, working in tandem with his companion.

In minutes, all four of Omaney's sentries sprawled bruised and unconscious on the floor, their guns in a pile on a nearby chair. The intruders had yet to speak. The larger of the two hurried back to the computer desk and plugged in a thumb drive. He typed at the keyboard, then waited, glancing repeatedly at the clock on the wall. The smaller figure remained still, vigilant while he—*or was that she?*—watched the doorway.

Hunter had sensed something odd about the smaller male, and now that he concentrated, he could make out a woman's form under all that black. She had taken on her attackers with ease, dispatching them quickly. Her large partner had been equally skilled at hand-to-hand combat, and Hunter reevaluated his assessment of the pair, wondering exactly why they sought to invade Omaney's space. These weren't ordinary burglars.

Nor was Omaney an ordinary businessman. Due to new evidence Hunter's team had unearthed a mere week ago, he had no doubt Peter Omaney was involved in their current case. But he didn't know where these prowlers fit into the equation. It had taken his agency time and exhausting effort to get even a whiff of Omaney's involvement. The philanthropic businessman was squeaky clean. But obviously someone else knew there was more to Omaney than met the eye.

What the hell had they copied? Hunter needed a bead on the computer, but knew he had little time. Though he'd kept out of the way of the security cameras, these two had activated the motion sensors in Omaney's office. Even now, others rushed to investigate the warehouse's silent alarm. He needed to get his ass out of here. Yet...how had these two known to come *here*, to this particular site? Omaney kept this place off the radar.

Unfortunately, nothing about the masked pair seemed familiar. *Running out of time.* He willed them to reveal some important detail as to their identity before he was forced to flee. Westlake Enterprises couldn't afford to be linked to this break-in, or they'd blow their case.

As if hearing his plea, the man behind the computer did something fairly strange and decidedly stupid. He removed a black glove and placed his hand directly over the keyboard, lightly stroking the keys with his fingertips.

A chill bristled Hunter's spine, even as he scented the faint trace of extrasensory miasma—a cloying aroma Hunter associated with anything remotely psychic in nature. *Holy shit. Jurek needs to know about this, pronto.*

The man placed his hand back in the glove, pulled out and pocketed the memory stick, and turned off the computer. His accomplice tossed him a spray bottle and rag and waited while he wiped the keyboard clean of prints.

Saying nothing, they moved together out the office door. Hunter remained still, watching with great curiosity as they backtracked their way to the exit. They paused while the large man listened at the top of the stairs. He nodded and exited, swallowed by the darkness.

Who the hell were they? More importantly, who were they working for? Hunter needed to get J.D.'s ass out here right away to look at that computer.

He waited for the woman to follow her partner and took a second shock to his system. She turned and looked right at him. Even in the dim light, Hunter could see her gray-green irises. With grudging respect, he studied those eyes that slowly examined his form hidden in the shadows.

When he remained unmoving, the woman disappeared into the darkness. He allowed her a small lead before he followed, his curiosity growing in leaps and bounds while he burned to know the woman's identity. But, when he reached the ground level, he found the exit door stuck in place. Swearing under his breath, he wrestled with it until the frame cracked and the door swung open.

He pushed through and swept the perimeter. To his immense frustration, they had vanished.

He's going to be the love of her life...if they survive the night.

A Cop and a Feel

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Karmic Consultants, Book 5

With a single touch, Ronna Mitchell can catch stolen glimpses of the future and separate truth from lies. But life as a human polygraph machine can be lonely. Craving human contact, she moonlights as a palm reader whenever a carnival comes to town.

Officer Matt Holloway is intent on trailing a hit man when he ducks into a palm reader's booth to avoid being spotted by his quarry. The beguiling Jamaican fortune teller is definitely intriguing, but she'll have to wait. He's close on the assassin's tail.

When Ronna takes his hand, a startling vision of the future flashes in her mind's eye. Matt isn't a typical client, he's The One. Before she has the chance to introduce herself as the mother of his unborn children, he's gone, leaving her with a terrifying vision of her soul mate covered in blood. And dead certain she's the only one who can save her happily ever after.

Warning: This book contains carnies, cops, chases, chance encounters and love at first touch.

Enjoy the following excerpt for A Cop and a Feel:

Ronna's panic level reached a new high when Matt's sandy head disappeared around the back of the Ferris wheel. The image of the gears of the Ferris wheel splattered with blood replayed vividly in her mind's eye. The crowds swarmed around her, and her heart thudded loudly in her ears. He was going to be killed, and *she couldn't get to him.*

Why were there so many people at the damn carnival? And why were they all moving at an excruciating shuffle pace? Didn't they realize while they plodded along forming the impenetrable mass of a human herd, the man she was meant to spend the rest of her life with, who was going to give her adorable green-eyed babies and make her laugh until she was ninety-two and too senile to get his jokes

anymore, was in peril at this very moment behind the Ferris wheel? *So why the hell weren't they moving faster?*

Ronna pushed her way through the wall of bodies, too afraid of what might be happening to Matt to toss off apologies as people around her protested her shoving and stomping on feet.

She had to get to him.

Not that she'd be much help if she did. Touch-reading was hardly a super-power capable of stopping a speeding bullet, but she was *sure* she could save him if she was just there with him. He was the love of her life, or at least he would be, and she wasn't about to let some carnie thug off him behind the Ferris wheel.

A pocket opened up in the crowd between her and the Ferris wheel, and Ronna sprinted forward, running full tilt around the side of the ride and into the heavy shadows behind it, half expecting to stumble over Matt's lifeless form. In the moment it took for her eyes to adjust to the relative darkness after the spinning strobes of the carnival, she tried to remember how to breathe, gulping in oxygen. She squinted into the dark, one hand pressed over her drumming heart as a figure materialized out of the shadows in front of her.

"Matt!"

Thank God. Ronna took two running steps forward.

The man in front of her turned toward her. Something was wrong. Ronna slammed on the brakes, her sandals skidding on the sticky asphalt. The form in front of her was too heavysset to be the tall, lean Officer Holloway.

"I-I'm sorry," she stammered. "I thought I saw someone come back here."

As soon as the words left her lips, Ronna could have kicked herself. He was probably a Ferris wheel operator. If he found Matt skulking back here, the future love of her life would get in trouble with the carnival operators. Which was better than his blood splashing all over the gears, but still...

"You know, I didn't see anyone," Ronna said quickly. A second figure shifted in the shadows to her left. She knew him as soon as he moved. *Matt*. He was okay. Hiding, which, yeah, was kinda weird, but totally okay. She'd been panicking over nothing. "Nobody here!" she sing-songed to the shadow man, bypassing subtle and going straight to obnoxiously Cinderella-cheerful. "Nobody at all."

She tossed the shadowy Ferris wheel operator a loopy smile. He didn't say much for a carnie. She still couldn't make him out, but he didn't seem familiar. She spent most of her time at the carnival in her booth, but she knew most of the regular operators at least on sight.

He reached toward her, waving something metallic, and Ronna's vision from Matt's touch replayed in her mind.

Oh crap, is that a gun?

"Get down!"

The shout came from her left. Matt surged into the open, a gun of his own braced between his hands. Ronna didn't think. And she didn't obey. In that split second in the shadow of the Ferris wheel with two armed-and-dangerous men, she couldn't see anything past the nightmare vision in her mind of Matt's gorgeous eyes, wide with horror and shock, in a face sprayed with blood. She dove toward him, slamming him to the ground in a tackle worthy of an NFL All Star. The spit of a silencer and the answering deafening report of an unsilenced gun split the shadows.

Matt grunted as he hit the ground and her weight hit him. Footsteps pounded the dirt nearby, and he rolled, pinning her protectively beneath his body as he twisted to scan the darkness around them, his gun trained on the spot where the gunman had stood.

The shadows were empty of crazy gun-wielding Ferris wheel operators now, but Matt's body didn't relax. He stayed tense above her.

Tense and whole. *He's alive.*

There wasn't any moisture where her front was pressed against his, no gushing fluids to indicate excessive bleeding from a mortal wound, but she ran her hands over his torso just to be safe, checking for bullet holes. When her hands hampered his range of movement with the gun he was still pointing into the darker shadows, he knocked them out of his way.

"Lie still," he snapped, clearly not appreciating her life-saving tackle or her continued concern for his well-being. He dug into his pocket, shifting his weight so he wasn't pressing her down into the filthy ground, but still shielding her as he lifted his cell phone, punched a number in with his thumb and pressed it to his ear, never taking his eyes off the shadows or lowering his gun.

She was close enough to hear the bleeping tone of a dropped call.

Matt swore and dialed again, snarling another obscenity when the call failed a second time. "Is it too much to ask for a fucking signal?"

Ronna couldn't make herself care about crappy cell providers. "You're *alive*."

"Of course I'm alive. *You* could have gotten yourself killed. What the hell were you thinking?"

"I saved your life," Ronna explained patiently. "I ruined his shot."

"You ruined *my* shot." Matt shoved his phone back into his pocket. "Not to mention my chances of getting a permanent spot on the task force. Damn it." He rose to a crouch, still alertly surveying the area.

Ronna sat up as well, taking stock of her now-filthy Madame Ramona getup. There was no fabric on earth capable of withstanding being ground into popcorn, cotton-candy residue and Ferris wheel

grease and coming out unscathed. Her entire outfit would have to be burned when she got home to avoid contaminating the rest of her closet.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing back here?” Matt straightened and helped her—none too gently—to her feet.

He would probably react badly if she told him she had envisioned his death and followed him out of her booth to protect him from a horrific Ferris wheel-related death. He didn’t seem to be in a very receptive mood.

Before she can build a future, she must dig up the bones of her past...

Uncovered

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A Hearts of the South Story

After nearly twenty years, her career in possible ruins, homicide detective Madeline Holton returns to her hometown for a temporary stint working with the local sheriff's department. The demons of her teen years lie in wait, rising once more in the form of a cold case she must solve. And when it comes to a handsome farmer who's making good on her family's former land, she can't seem to keep her foot out of her mouth—or her hands off him.

Agricultural businessman Ash Hardison won't lie to himself—despite Madeline's obvious issues, he's more drawn to her than any woman he's ever known. He's already laid the ghosts of his past to rest, and he's determined to help Madeline purge hers. Whether she likes it or not.

Because he knows it's the only way they have a chance to forge a future together.

Warning: Contains deadly secrets, a prickly heroine and a determined man who knows what he wants.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Uncovered:

Ash flicked on the small lamp sitting atop his dresser. In the soft light, he gazed down at Madeline, a quiet surge of need pulsing in him. She stepped forward and laid her palms on his bare chest. Sensation spread out from her hot hands and he shivered.

He'd been right the first time. She was dangerous. Doing this, taking her to his bed, probably ranked as one of his less-than-smart decisions, but he was going to do it anyway, consequences be damned and consigned to be dealt with later.

Because he simply couldn't make himself walk away.

He slipped a finger beneath one thin bra strap and slid the knuckle down her chest, her skin smooth and heated under his easy touch. She watched him, hazel eyes slumberous and dark, and she took another step toward him, gliding her hands up his pecs to his shoulders, fingers exploring the dips and rises of his muscles.

Sensual mischief curled her lips and glinted in the depths of her eyes. "Nice."

Chuckling, he lowered his head to kiss her. She didn't hold anything back, but opened her mouth beneath his, stroking her tongue between his teeth with teasing little curls. Oh yeah, she was dangerous, but he couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this overpowering urge to get closer, to strip everything away until there were only the two of them and the building desire. He sure as hell hadn't felt this way with Angie or Layla or any of the safe women he'd dated the last few years.

"Madeline," he mumbled against her lips and stroked his hands over her curves to rest at her hips. He dipped his fingers beneath the waistband of her low-rise jeans. The skin there was soft and hot too. God, she was hot all over. He couldn't wait to have her all over him.

She purred and tilted her hips into his. Wanting spread through him, firing through his groin, his dick growing heavier, harder, with her nearness. She rubbed against him, a slow, naughty movement. "Very nice."

Leaning back, she grasped his belt and went to work on the buckle. His mouth went dry and she held his gaze while she wrestled the buckle free and popped the button loose before lowering his zipper.

She wrapped her fingers around the waistband of his boxer briefs, brushing his stomach. Every muscle in the vicinity jumped. Shit, the woman wasn't dangerous...she was deadly. She'd taken him from half-ready to damn-if-she-touched-him-he'd-lose-it in a few short moments. Was this Madeline, confident and utterly sexual, the real one? The wary, isolated Madeline had disappeared as soon as they walked through his bedroom door.

Head tilted back, she lifted her eyebrows. "Can't wait to find out if you look as nice as you feel."

He had to force air into his lungs, and his laugh came out shakier than he would have liked. "Damn, I like a woman who isn't shy."

The woman actually laughed. She shoved his jeans and briefs down a few scant inches, not quite exposing him. "Then you should love me."

He opened his mouth, intending to parry with some smartass comment. Her hand cupping, squeezing, his pulsing erection through his jeans sent every coherent reply out of reach. Instead, he attempted to catch his breath and stiffened his knees so he wouldn't end up on the floor.

She eased jeans and underwear down, his happy-to-see-her anatomy bobbing free. Slipping his shoes from his feet, she tossed them behind her and nudged him into stepping out of the denim and

cotton garments. Kneeling before him, she slid those hot palms up both thighs. His belly tightened with an unbearable anticipation.

“Very, very nice.” She curved her fingers around him, tracing the vein running from base to tip. Holding him firmly, she swirled her tongue around the head. Sparks shot along his veins, and he groaned. Hell, he was gonna end up on the floor for sure, and God, if she kept that up, he was gonna cry.

Still fisting him, she took him into her mouth. Heat and moisture surrounded him, enveloped him. Head thrown back, he let his eyes slide closed.

Oh, yee-ha.

He tangled his uninjured hand in her hair. “Hell yeah, baby, that’s good.”

With a quick pinch on his thigh, she let him go. “I’m not your baby. Find another endearment.”

Humor spiked in him, tempering the raging need somewhat. “Honey, sweetheart, sugar...whatever you like.”

“I’m not much for love names, period, Hardison.” She twirled her tongue about him once more, like he was a melting ice cream cone on a hot day. “Although I like the way honey drips off your...lips.”

He laughed, and she chose that moment to take him to the back of her throat.

“Madeline,” he gasped, barely controlling the urge to lunge forward. His fingers tightened in her thick tresses, pulling.

She pinched him again. “Careful,” she mumbled around the head of his dick.

“Bossy, aren’t you?” The words came out on a strangled moan. Hell, she was killing him, with that slow spin of her tongue, the playful scrape of teeth, the way she took him deep then sucked the head, making him hurt with need, then slowing him down so he buzzed with a simmer of wanting.

“Mm-hmm.” She slowed on him, nails a light abrasion on his balls. Under her easy teasing, they tightened, desire rippling up into his belly and out to his bloodstream. If she didn’t stop that...

“Damn, honey, you’re dangerous.” He eased away and tugged her up, covering her lips with his. Dipping his tongue into her mouth, he skimmed the straps down her arms and fumbled with the back until the clasp sprang free. The silky little bit of nothing fell to the floor. He cupped her breasts, the rounded flesh filling his palms, and flicked his thumbs over hardened nipples.

“Oh, that’s nice too,” she murmured. She moved, shimmying out of jeans, until she was naked and pressed against him, belly nudging his erection while he toyed and played with the stiff peaks, tugging, kneading, pulling.

One arm wrapped around her waist, he caught a reddened nipple between his lips, nibbling, sucking. She arched, rubbing against him. “Yes, like that. Just like that.”

With a groan of approval, he lifted her against him and took the two long steps to the bed, stretching her across it, never taking his mouth from her breast. She dug her hands into his hair and shifted beneath him, panting.

"You're strong. I like that." She bowed into him, damp curls sliding along his belly. "Fuck me."

Yeah, she was bossy. He liked that too. But she probably needed to know up front that he'd followed all the orders he was going to back during his military days. "Not yet."

"Ash—"

"I said not yet." He pressed open kisses down her belly, holding her hips and ignoring the throbbing at his stitches.

"I mean it." Her thighs fell open and she gripped his hair, trying to pull him back up. "Fuck me now, hard."

"Not..." he nipped the inside of her thigh, spreading her vulva and sliding his thumb along her wet folds, "...yet."

He dropped his head, tasting her, and she moaned, twisting beneath him. He held her hips, keeping her still while he toyed with her clit with his teeth, sank his tongue inside her, savoring her. She pulled his hair, and he winced, tapped her hip.

"Not so hard, honey."

"Very hard." She pulled again, gasping and pushing into him. "Get up here. I want you inside me."

