



SINDRA VAN YSSEL

Secretary *for Two*

Loose Id

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Sindra van Yssel



www.loose-id.com

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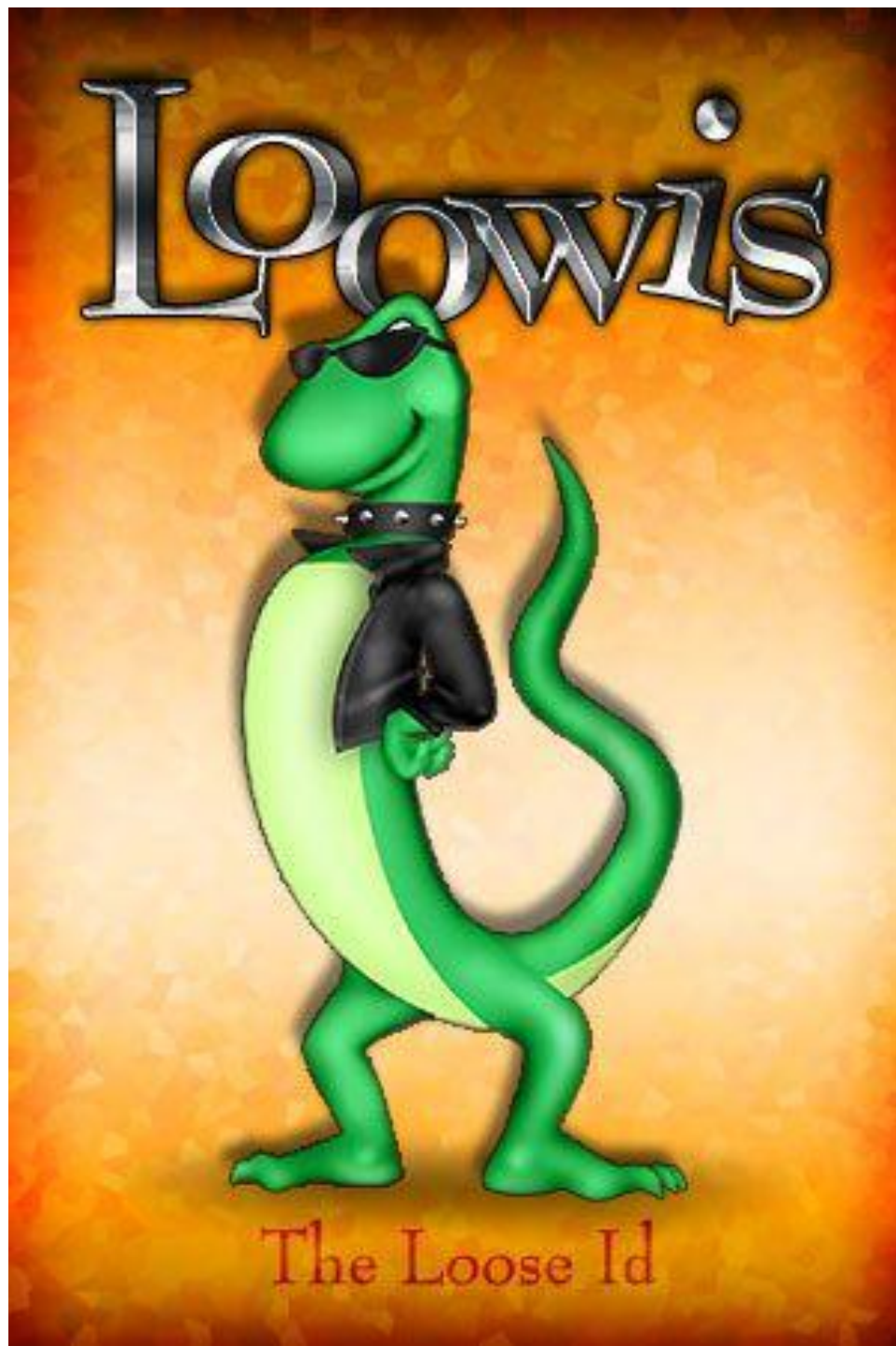
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Chapter One

Tony Summers pushed the elevator button and felt the floor move under his feet. The tie he wore was uncomfortable, and he finally gave in to temptation and loosened it. His twin brother, Austin, had some crazy ideas, but this one took balls. He'd give him that.

He walked down the fifteenth-floor hallway and into the offices of Summers Biotech, nodding to a few faces as he imagined Austin would while his mind swirled with thoughts of genomes and amino acids. He didn't have any goals other than trying to get through the next two days. The real challenge lay ahead: Austin's executive assistant. He'd never met her, but from all Austin had said, she was the model of efficiency. He imagined an older woman, her hair in a bun as tight as her expression. "*Miss Kerrigan*," Austin had called her. Hopefully she'd settle for a nod from him, and he could spend the rest of the time in Austin's office surfing the net or reading the Raymond Chandler book he'd brought, although he had a feeling he wouldn't get as much reading in as he'd like. Austin said she'd have his whole day planned out, and all he had to do was follow the schedule she'd give him.

NICOLE KERRIGAN said the brown and gold nameplate on her desk. The whole office was tidy, all the cabinet drawers closed neatly, chairs symmetrical. Even the phone sitting on the desk had exactly the same margin between it and the side edge as it did with the back. But the chair behind the desk was empty. He must have just missed her. *Hey, it's my lucky day.*

He walked through to the door that said AUSTIN SUMMERS, CEO, and fished in his pocket for the key while he tried the door. He always tried doors before he opened them, even if he was pretty sure they were locked. No sense in rattling a

key in a lock when you didn't need to. To his surprise, the handle turned in his hand.

A brunette with long, flowing hair was leaning over the desk, her pert bottom up in the air. A steaming cup of coffee sat on its saucer at the near corner, and she appeared to be arranging some papers on the desk, stacking them neatly. He watched her from the doorway as she moved the coffee and its saucer to the space she had cleared to the left of the computer keyboard. She straightened, then turned around to face him. He caught a glimpse of agitation that melted away when she saw him.

"Mr. Summers!"

Executive assistants didn't look at their bosses like that.

He'd seen the look before, and every time he'd seen it, the woman in question had been in love with the man she was looking at. Which meant pay dirt in his profession, because usually a private eye was looking for proof the man was cheating on the loving spouse that had hired him. Most of the time the "other woman" looked cynical, but sometimes they'd fallen, and hard. He liked it better when they were cynical. Heck, he liked it better when there didn't turn out to be another woman at all, which was why he'd gotten out of the adultery business a year ago. Being a private eye was a crappy way to make a living, but not everyone was a genius. At least he had some standards. Sometimes he even managed to make someone's life better.

"Miss Kerrigan," he said, nodding and crossing to the desk. *Fewer words is better. Doesn't Austin know she's infatuated, if not in love, with him? For a genius, Oz sure can be stupid at times.*

If she thought the nod or the acknowledgment was cold, her face didn't reveal it. "Shall I get your schedule, sir? You're running a bit late, so I think it's best if we get started."

Good God. The way she said "sir" made a shiver go down his spine. The way she placed the coffee so precisely. The way she looked to him for approval. Her

manner was like one of the submissives at the BDSM club he went to sometimes, careful to do her tasks perfectly. The fact that her bottom presented such an inviting target underneath that skirt had started a chain reaction in his mind. *Austin has no clue. And she's right here, right under his nose. Exactly the kind of girl he likes. Beautiful and curvy, no matter how that prim suit hides it.*

"Yes. Thank you, Miss Kerrigan."

He sipped his coffee. Austin drank his with cream. Tony liked it black. It was going to take an effort to drink it and smile, but he'd manage.

He watched his brother's assistant walk out of the room. *Great ass.* But thinking that way was not going to help him act like Austin. He needed to keep his mind on the role he was playing.

She held the planner in front of her chest as she walked back into the office. He'd wanted another glimpse of her pink skin showing through the white blouse, but he wasn't going to get it. Still, he couldn't resist watching in case. Besides, he told himself, it makes it easier to smile through the cream and sugar.

"Is something wrong, sir?"

How far would you go to make it right, little one? But he didn't say it. Fewer words were better. "No."

She gave him an odd look, then sat down in the black leather chair opposite Austin's desk and crossed her legs. He swiveled to look at her, catching himself before he kicked back and put his feet up on the desk, the way he would in his office. *Damn it, Oz.*

"Sorry, sir, I wasn't expecting you in."

"Why not? Didn't I tell you to schedule me here in Atlanta?" Austin would have been way better off confiding in her, but that wasn't Tony's call.

"Yes, sir. I have your schedule right here. I've laid out two folders on your desk for you to go over this morning. The left-hand folder contains some files you should read to prep for the Armico meeting tomorrow. That should take you from eleven to

twelve while I'm out at lunch. You have a table reserved at Rusterman's at noon. You'll be back here at two, and you have a conference call with Dr. Carr and some other people in the lab. As usual, you'll have an hour to think about their reports afterward. The information on Dr. Carr's research is in the folder on your right in case you need to refer to it. Dr. Carr will be available all afternoon if you need to follow up. At four you go downstairs to the gym, shower at five, back up to give me direction and go over tomorrow's schedule at five thirty."

The woman had Austin coming and going. Like a little *domme*, but Tony still wasn't convinced that was her preference. He knew full well Austin was no sub. But Oz was forgetful, and this woman served as his memory. He had told Austin that it sounded like a pretty intimate relationship; his brother hadn't replied. "*Essential*" was what Austin had called his Miss Kerrigan. That was why he kept himself oblivious, why he didn't make a pass at her. The Wizard of Oz's own happiness had always taken a backseat if there was some good to be done. Tony supposed that was okay in its place; there was nothing wrong with being one of the cowboys with the white hats. Sometimes, though, you had to grab at life with both hands, hang on, and see where the ride took you.

Austin was going to kill him if he did what he was tempted to do. He hesitated, lost in thought. He leaned back in the chair, trying to see what could go wrong. Lots of things, of course. He tended to dive in and solve things on the fly.

"Maybe pacing would help?" Nicole suggested.

That's right, the Wizard paced, didn't he? Tony was a fair mimic, but he was better at voices than gestures. He shook his head. "And after six?"

"Home. Did you want me to schedule a social engagement, sir?"

He noticed she held her breath. "Yes. At eight. A date, I think. At Vincenzo's." As long as he was doing things on his brother's dime, he figured he might as well go to the best Italian place in town. Besides, it was in character. Austin loved the place.

Tony watched her carefully. He could see her chest rise and fall now. She took a breath in, broke eye contact, and focused her eyes on her skirt, smoothing it carefully. "Very well, sir." Her voice was perfectly even. An amateur might have been fooled. Austin might have been fooled. Tony wasn't. "What woman shall I call to arrange it?"

She's done this before. *Oz has her calling his dates?* Oh, his brother probably got a perverse thrill out of that. Maybe he hoped Nicole would say *pick me* instead. No, he had to be oblivious, because Austin wasn't the type to toy with a woman like that. Toy, yes—like that, no.

"Just a moment, I'll find her number." He put his briefcase on the desk and opened it up, letting it shield his face from hers. If they were going to keep her in the dark, this was the worst plan ever. But his instincts liked it. Or maybe it was his libido that liked it. He tried to keep the two separate, but right now they seemed to be pointing in the same direction. He moved his novel aside and looked at the little cheat sheet Austin had left him. He read off a phone number.

Nicole laughed. Her laughter wasn't an amused giggle, more like a tortured mouse. "Um, sir, that's my number. I can look up the woman's number for you, if you have her name. If it's one of the women you've seen before, of course I have it—"

"That's the number." He closed the briefcase. My God, she was loyal. Even if it killed her, it seemed. Or maybe she, too, got a sort of pleasure out of at least being involved in Austin's love life somehow. *You two kids*. Austin may have been born only a few minutes after him, but he was still his little brother. He kept talking because she looked like she was about to object again. "Her name is Nicole something-or-other. Make the reservation, tell her to be ready at seven thirty, and I'll pick her up in front of her apartment building at 323 Kendall Avenue."

"Sir, if this is some kind of a joke, I'm afraid it's not very..."

"Black dress. Low cut. If she doesn't have a low-cut black dress, find out her size, buy it for her, and deliver it. Are we clear?"

He watched her as she blinked once, twice, three times. The little gears were turning around in her head. No one could keep up with Austin and be less than very intelligent. She didn't look for a moment like she believed he was intentionally asking her for a date. But she was smart enough to realize she had a date anyway. Did she have the courage to grab her chance and make the most of it?

"Yes, sir," she said slowly. "Crystal. It will be arranged, exactly as you say. Is there anything else, sir?"

"No, Miss Kerrigan."

She got up in a hurry, Tony thought. Not the graceful way she'd entered. She was far more spooked now than she had been when he'd shown up at the office, despite the fact he was supposed to be on a plane for New York. She closed the door behind her. *Not going to let me realize my "mistake," are you, little one? This is going to work out fine. A night of fun for me, a relationship for the two of them. The hardest part will be getting Oz not to blow everything.*

Chapter Two

Had her boss just asked her for a date? Her mind raced, and it was having trouble keeping up with her heartbeat. *Deep breaths. Stay calm.* Nicole shook her head. No, if he was asking her out, he'd be clear about it. She'd seen the way he looked up her number in some book in his briefcase. Probably just had her first name and the number written on it. *Have I become so invisible to him he doesn't even remember that Nicole is my first name?* But she couldn't remember the last time he'd actually used it.

As far as she could tell, her boss had gone mad. She should probably walk right back in and hand in her resignation, but she knew full well why she hadn't. She'd been dreaming of a date with Mr. Summers for years, and now it was finally going to happen. Although in her fantasies he'd been a bit more direct about asking her out. If she didn't go through with it, she'd always wonder what if. And for all the oddness of the last few days, she didn't seriously think her gentle boss was a threat to anyone, including herself.

She had to stop from running as she headed to the restroom. Once there she looked at herself in the mirror, almost expecting to see a transformation. For today definitely wasn't a normal kind of day. Austin Summers was good-looking and admirable, the kind of man who would never presume upon a relationship with his executive assistant to ask her for a date, as much as she wanted him to. If she didn't get her head straight, she was sure people would be able to read everything that had happened on her face, even though that was crazy. The whole thing was crazy.

She took several deep breaths, checked every button on her blouse, straightened her skirt, and refreshed her lipstick. *I can get through this.*

What if he takes one look at me and says he wanted someone else, some other Nicole? She knew she wouldn't flee in embarrassment, as much as she might want to. One way or the other, it was all going to come to a head tonight. She had been pining for him for far too long. If he didn't want her, she'd have to move on and resign her position. If he did...

It was going to be very hard to not think about all the possibilities for the next few hours.

She went back down the hall, sat down at her desk, and crossed her legs. She wasn't going to get any work done thinking about it. *And I'm not going to be able to stop thinking about it.* Damn him. If he was doing this on purpose, he could have waited until the end of the day. But then, of course, she wouldn't have time to get herself a dress. "*Low cut,*" he'd specified. She felt the color rush to her cheeks. This wasn't about love or companionship or business. It was about lust. He wanted to see her breasts. Or some other Nicole's breasts, but hers were the ones he'd get. He knew full well that when he told her to buy his date a low-cut dress, she would follow his instruction and get as much of what he wanted as she could. That was what she always did as his employee. This time, however, obedience and loyalty were at war with modesty. A little cleavage, she decided. And undecided. And then decided again.

She couldn't keep thinking about that. She got up and walked to one of the file drawers. She'd been meaning to put some of the older files on the computer, and it wasn't the sort of task she'd delegate to anyone else. The information in those files was pretty sensitive. She got out a folder, walked back, and then set permissions on the database so only she and Mr. Summers could access it. It was going to be several days' work, which was perfect. She needed a project to stop her mind from wandering. This one would put more information at his fingertips—or hers, if need be.

* * *

She finished up her half sandwich and tossed the wrapper and her soda into a nearby trash can. Normally she had more to eat, especially when she ate at Sam's Deli, but today she wasn't hungry. Besides, she had shopping to do. The one time it was absolutely certain Mr. Summers wouldn't need her for anything was while he was eating lunch. Well, not absolutely certain, given his propensity to come up with ideas for new research at the oddest times. Still, there was a boutique she'd been to before not too far away, and if she had to run back to the office for something because he paged her, she could. *Besides, if I go back right away, I'll have to watch him breeze past me on his way to lunch, and I don't think I can handle that right now.*

She picked up her purse and started walking toward the store. He hadn't asked for any files or even buzzed her for more coffee the rest of the morning, which was unusual but not entirely without precedent. It all added up to more reasons to believe he wasn't really planning on a date with her that evening. She would have expected more contact, not less. Maybe a casual brush against her. She'd tried that with him a few times, but if he'd noticed, it had never shown on his face.

"May I help you?" asked the salesperson at Southern Belles. Then recognition dawned on her face. "Oh! I haven't seen you for a while. What size are you buying for today?"

"My own actually."

The saleslady grinned. "Good for you. I always thought it was pretty strange for your boss to send you out to buy things for his dates. He's quite the—"

"Don't say it." Nicole didn't want to end up getting angry and walking out. She never did like it when people criticized Mr. Summers. "He likes things exactly right."

"Very well. What are you looking for? Evening wear or business?"

"Evening."

"I have a green dress that would set off your skin perfectly. Let me get it."

Tempting. What was the lady's name? Jacqueline, if she remembered right. She had exquisite taste. But it wasn't what Mr. Summers had asked for, which was odd enough. He'd had her buy dresses before, yes, but had always left it entirely up to her. "No. Black. And low cut."

Jacqueline raised an eyebrow. "How low? Somehow you don't strike me as the type to wear something very daring."

Her inner conflict resolved. *I'm not, am I?* But she shook her head and set her jaw. "I want the most daring thing you have I won't get arrested in."

Jacqueline smiled. "Looking to hook a man, hmm?"

Well, yes. But she felt the need to defend herself. She wouldn't be out to hook just any man. She was a good girl. "Just following directions."

When she realized what she'd said, she felt like her cheeks were on fire. She'd rather have the lady think she was trying to seduce someone than to have her think someone could tell her what to wear. And yet at the same time, she knew she said it because it thrilled her. The idea of being told what to do and how to do it, especially in matters connected with sex, was an incredible turn-on for her. It featured in every fantasy she had late at night, and she sometimes wondered if the fact that Austin gave her orders was part of the reason she was so attracted to him.

Nah. Austin Summers would be yummy no matter what.

Jacqueline took it in stride, though, rummaging among the dresses. "This one will show the most skin," she said. "And if you wear the right bra with it, he'll have trouble looking at your face. This other one is more modest."

Nicole reached for them. "I'll try both and make a decision as to how far I'm willing to go."

She reached out, but Jacqueline pulled the more modest one back, leaving her left hand clutching at empty air. "No you don't. You're following directions, so nothing but the most revealing one will do. Here you go."

Technically Mr. Summers hadn't said the most low-cut one she could find, he'd just said "low cut." But that wasn't how she'd represented it to Jacqueline, who was grinning from ear to ear at her expense. Without a word, she walked toward the dressing rooms. She had to make sure it would fit, after all. The worst thing was that during the whole conversation with Jacqueline, she had felt herself getting wetter and wetter. *This can't be turning me on.*

But it was.

She stripped off her clothes and settled the dress over her head. There wasn't a zipper in back, just a mess of straps she finally arranged by looking over her shoulder in the mirror. Then she turned to look at the front. "*With the right bra,*" Jacqueline had said. Well, the one she had on wasn't the right bra because a swath of white satin and scalloped lacing showed above the neckline. But there was no question of the neckline being low enough. Any lower and it would be indecent, with or without a bra.

A flash of movement caught her eye, and she looked up to see something black and lacy. Jacqueline had brought her a skimpier bra. *How thoughtful.* She wanted to say *this isn't me.* Her heartbeat was racing so fast it hurt. She was nervous and scared and turned on all at the same time.

She fumbled with the straps as she managed to pull the top of the dress down around her waist. Then she exchanged bras. The black one Jacqueline had found provided some support but very little coverage, her nipples just below the line of fabric. But when she put the dress back on, she was covered—barely—and the dress hugged her well enough she didn't need the bra to do much. She tilted toward the mirror, and shadows appeared that were either the edge of her areolae or tricks of the light. She'd never had so much cleavage, but as long as she didn't lean over too far, she was decent. Was she really going to let Austin Summers see her like this?

Well, one thing's for certain. Once he sees this, he's not going to think of me quite the same way ever again. And I think he'll remember my first name.

* * *

Nicole stared at herself in the mirror. Even though it was summer, she'd tried on three jackets. She couldn't sit in her lobby wearing the dress without attracting a lot of unwanted attention. She'd look pretty funny wearing a jacket on a ninety-degree day too, although maybe with a few strategic comments about the air-conditioning in the lobby, she could get away with it. She decided that was the safe choice, but everything she had looked totally wrong with a black dress. Finally she decided on a white denim number, the contrast at least looking deliberate even if it would never make the cover of *Vogue*.

Mr. Summers had hardly said a word to her when he came in from lunch, just a quick nod and a "Miss Kerrigan" as he hurried through to his office and shut the door. He hadn't buzzed her for anything all day; in fact, there had been a note to hold all his calls, so she hadn't had any reason to talk to him for that either. Finally at three fifty-five, he'd told her to go home, and when she'd started to ask why, he'd simply told her it was an order. "You *can* follow orders, can't you?" he'd asked. He'd never been that harsh with her before, and she didn't know what to make of it.

"Well, Mr. Summers, you are in for a surprise." She opened her jacket, made sure for the tenth time she wasn't spilling all the way out of her dress, and snapped it back shut again. She left her room and then rode the elevator down to the lobby. She was normally a fan of using the stairs for exercise, all six flights, but she was sweating enough without heat or activity, and running downstairs in heels was out. SECRETARY FOUND DEAD WITH BROKEN NECK BEFORE DATE WITH BOSS. *Not a good headline.*

Executive assistant, she mentally corrected. Secretaries were a thing of the past. "You *can* follow orders, can't you?" One didn't speak to one's executive assistant like that. And yet Mr. Summers had always been the model of a respectful employer.

She sat in the lobby, watching for his black Porsche Panamera. She had driven it a few times, so she knew what she was looking for. It was a pleasure to drive: fast, sporty, maneuverable. Why he hadn't gone the whole nine yards and gotten a

two-seater, she had no idea. Thinking how he had acted today, he would probably make her wait for him, then roll up and say, “Kerrigan. Get in the car,” in a gruff voice. He had been playing with her head all day long, and it pissed her off. She’d been too loyal for this. She’d done things for him no executive assistant should be expected to do, and it wasn’t just coffee with two sugar cubes and real cream. Scheduling his gym time. Driving him places. Buying him shirts and suits. Buying dresses for his goddamn dates. At least this time it was her.

He better not be playing mind games, and he better not have made a mistake as to who he was dating. She clenched her hands into fists. If he was late, she’d speak her mind for once because between that and the trip to New York she’d scheduled but he obviously hadn’t taken, that was what he needed. It was the best service she could give, really, to tell him exactly what she thought and give him a chance to come to his senses before the Armico meeting.

She glanced at her watch: 7:30. She looked out to the circular drive-up, and there was the black Porsche. *I guess I won’t give him a piece of my mind after all.*

By the time she got out of the lobby, he was at her side, holding an umbrella to protect her from the light drizzle coming down. He escorted her to the car, opened the door for her, and gestured her in, all without saying a word. Surely he wasn’t blind enough not to recognize her. Maybe he was as scared to say the wrong thing as she was. She hoped she wasn’t the only nervous one, although it was pretty hard to imagine Mr. Summers at a loss for words. When had he decided he wanted to date her? Had he been holding it inside his mask of propriety all along for fear of a sexual harassment case?

She settled into the leather seat, tucked her legs in, and let him shut the door. She waited, her heart beating faster. One of them had to talk, had to say something. He’d always had her drive him when they’d gone someplace. Yet another service she provided him that wasn’t quite in the job description. She supposed it gave him more time to think. Why was this different?

He opened the driver's side door and settled in behind the wheel. "It's nice to see you, Nicole. Take off the jacket."

"Oh." She unsnapped it, one snap at a time, trying to buy herself time to think. He'd called her by her first name. That was a good sign. No Miss Kerrigan. No distance. But she'd wanted to hear him say it once, to know it really was her he wanted to go to dinner with, that it was her he wanted to see in the dress, and that he wasn't absentminded enough to have forgotten she was one and the same person as his assistant.

A car honked behind them, wanting to use the pull-up, no doubt. The residents parked in the garage below. "You need to move your car," Nicole said. "It's one of the rules."

"I'm making the rules tonight. The car doesn't move until you throw your jacket in the backseat."

She tugged the last two snaps open, shrugged out of it, and turned to place it neatly on the backseat. "There."

"I said to throw it."

She blinked. The car behind honked again. She twisted, picked the jacket up, and threw it against the backseat.

He chuckled. "You're very good at following orders, Nicole. But you're going to have to listen closely to what I say and make sure you follow my orders exactly this evening." He started the motor and moved the car. "Lovely dress, by the way. And no one would ever look lovelier in it than you do right now."

She blushed. What kind of orders? It made her anxious, but she knew already there was almost nothing he could ask her to do that would stop her from seeing the date through. She'd wanted this for too long.

Finally she couldn't take it anymore. "You do know I'm your secretary, don't you?"

He laughed. "Yes, Miss Kerrigan, I do indeed know you're my secretary. If your point is that our time tonight constitutes sexual harassment, you're quite right, and it's likely to get more sexual if we continue, so all you have to do is say the word, and I'll take you straight back to your apartment, and we can forget this ever happened."

"No. You've never called me Nicole before, and I thought when you told me to call Nicole and make a date with her and buy her a dress, you'd simply forgotten I was Nicole altogether."

"I don't think anyone could forget you, Nicole. But if I'd forgotten your first name, I do see it every single day I walk in, you know."

"Of course. Silly me." It did seem silly, now that he put it that way, and she hoped he didn't think she was being an idiot. But he had acted pretty strange himself, and she didn't know what to make of it. His comment that their date was likely to get more sexual made her feel warm deep in her core.

She was intrigued. What exactly did he have in mind, and why had he chosen now to ask her on a date?

The car stopped, and Summers was moving around to get her door. "Thank you, sir." Should she call him Austin? He hadn't asked her to. Sir came so naturally, even if they were on a date.

He put out his elbow and let her hook her arm in it. Touching him that way helped her feel grounded. His arm was strong, steady, something to depend on. She could tell he was slowing down for her, ever the gentleman, but she also noticed his eyes roving over her body. It was as if he was a totally different person, but in so many ways he was the same. She had always known Mr. Summers was the type to open doors for a lady and offer his arm, but there was a swagger to his stride she'd never seen before.

She was careful not to lean forward too far when the red bow tie-wearing maitre d' seated them at their table. She remembered all too well the way the neckline gaped when she did that, and she was aware of her boss's eyes on her.

After she finished sitting, she almost regretted missing her chance. She had only one night to capture him completely. Mr. Summers never dated a woman twice. She knew it, and she knew he knew she knew it. She wasn't after his money; she just wanted him.

He ordered wine for both of them without consulting her, which surprised her. She was even more surprised when he ordered white, not red. She'd ordered wine sent to Mr. Summers at home a few times and knew he had a fondness for cabernet sauvignon, but he'd ordered a bottle of Barolo instead. When in an Italian restaurant, order an Italian wine, she supposed.

She reached for her menu, and he picked it up first, ignoring his own. "You don't need that."

"I don't?"

"No. I'll choose something for you."

"But what if I don't like it?"

"You will. Food allergies?"

"No."

"Good." He scanned the menu before putting it on top of the other.

"You're sure I don't get to see the menu?"

"Certain."

"Do you treat all your dates this way?"

He grinned at her. "Only the ones I want to possess. Tonight you'll do exactly as I say, and I'll show you what it means to surrender to a man completely." He leaned forward. "In and out of bed."

For a moment, she felt like she couldn't breathe. He was saying every word so carefully, but he also sounded so confident he could have it all. He was right. She felt like she was melting in front of the heat of his gaze. She tried to force her voice to sound steady. "And tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow you will do exactly as I say too. You always have, haven't you?"

"I always have." Her voice had gotten low like his, and she found herself leaning forward to listen to his words. "And tomorrow night?" She kicked herself mentally as soon as she'd said it. She was revealing her desires too easily, and she worried he'd run if he knew she wanted more than the evening.

The waiter's reappearance broke the moment. "Do you need more time, sir, or are you ready to order?"

"The lady will have the grilled steaks balsamico, with the baby bella risotto, and I'd like the beef braciola with spinach orzo, please." She wasn't sure why he sounded more like a Mafia don than an urbane sophisticate when he said the Italian words. It was a whole new side of Mr. Summers. A little more dangerous, and somehow a little more exciting.

"Very good." The waiter's gaze flicked to her cleavage for a brief moment. She felt like covering up somehow. She reached for her napkin, as if that would do any good.

"And if you don't keep your eyes off my woman, I'll ask for a different waiter, is that understood? She's very shy."

The waiter blinked. "Yes, sir." He scampered away like a frightened rabbit.

She could imagine what he thought of the word *shy*. *I'm not dressed shyly*. She looked over at Mr. Summers and met his eyes. *I'm dressed at his command*. She resolved not to look anywhere else and not care who watched her. For the moment, they didn't matter. "Thank you, Mr. Summers."

"In the future, I may choose not to indulge your penchant for modesty."

She blinked and felt the color rise in her cheeks. *Having me wear this dress is indulging my penchant for modesty?* But all she wanted to say was, "Yes, sir."

"Good girl."

"I..."

He raised his eyebrows when she didn't finish. "Did you have something you needed to say?"

“I don’t think I can finish the food you ordered, sir. I usually just have a salad.”

“The point isn’t to finish it or not to finish it, Nicole. The point is to enjoy eating what you eat. Can you enjoy it for me?”

She shivered at hearing her name again. He had said it slowly and precisely, and it took her a moment to decide he wasn’t talking down to her. “Yes, of course I can. It sounds delicious.”

“Good.”

“Should I be calling you by your first name too?” she asked.

He held her eyes for a moment and then very slowly shook his head. “No, Nicole. Sir will do, or Mr. Summers, until—”

“Until what?”

“You’ll find out, I hope.”

How the hell could he be so confident? She stared at him, and he met her gaze. She knew she’d end up blinking first. It was all so perfectly like her dream, yet so totally unlike Mr. Summers. First the double booking and whatever was going on with that. Two very important meetings ought to have been enough without him choosing that time to seduce his executive assistant. The cavalier behavior, even if she liked it, was strange.

A possible answer popped into her mind, a piece of information she’d known since she’d taken a peek at her boss’s personnel file soon after she’d started working with him. He had a twin brother whom Nicole had never met. The double booking made sense if Austin had gotten his twin to handle one meeting while he dealt with the other. Austin could have clued her in and enlisted her help in the whole enterprise, but he’d chosen not to. If his brother was seducing her and Austin didn’t want to admit to his deception, he’d have to own up to his twin’s behavior. It would serve him right for not telling her. She turned away, not wanting him to see how angry she was.

She'd always wanted him to take command, on a date and in a bedroom. The man across the table from her was her fantasy lover; was the man she loved in reality in New York? She would have to watch him for clues. She figured she knew Austin as well as anyone.

She forced her face into a pleasant smile and turned back toward her date. *For one night, I think I deserve the fantasy.*

Chapter Three

It was getting harder and harder for Tony to keep his mind in command. Austin had praised Nicole's efficiency, but he hadn't told him how drop-dead sexy she was. As the meal wore on, she became bolder, leaning over and giving him a glimpse down her dress, eating a morsel with sexy languor when she knew his eyes were on her. The fact that she looked awkward doing it only made it sexier. She wasn't practiced at seduction, clearly, but she was obviously trying.

He had to be careful. The one thing acting in his favor was that she knew Oz only in certain limited circumstances, and he was pushing things way out of that zone. The best defense was a good offense.

"I can't eat any more. I'm stuffed," Nicole announced.

"Then we'll have them put it in a box. How was it?"

"Delicious." She smiled at him. "Thank you, Austin."

"Mr. Summers," he corrected, eyes narrowing at her sudden use of his brother's first name.

"Mr. Summers. Of course. Thank you, sir, for correcting me."

Her words sent a shiver down his spine. She was so right for him. Was he really going to let Oz have her? He wanted to keep her. The only thing better than keeping her to himself would be sharing her. But giving her up completely? That had been the plan, at the beginning. He was supposed to be just setting the Wizard up, breaking the ice between him and Nicole. *Okay, shattering the ice.* He pushed those thoughts aside. "My pleasure."

She made a noise that sounded like choked laughter, although he wasn't sure what was funny. He was tempted to make her explain, but the waiter had noticed

they had stopped eating and swooped in, taking their plates and promising to return with a box. "Dessert?"

He didn't want to spend a moment more in the restaurant, but he didn't want to deprive Nicole either. A few extra pounds wouldn't look bad on her, and if she wanted sweets, he wanted her to have them. But she shook her head slightly, as if she didn't want the waiter to see, and touched her tummy. "No thank you," he said. "Just the check will be fine. Dinner was delish, and we're full."

The waiter nodded and disappeared. The light in Nicole's eyes danced. "What is it?" he asked.

"I never thought you'd call a meal at a fancy restaurant 'delish,' sir. Delicious, perhaps. Fabulous."

He nodded. He'd have to watch that. Did she suspect? If so, it didn't show on her face. "I have my moments." *There. Maybe that was a bit slow, but the intonation was perfect Oz.*

"Wonderful."

He didn't know whether that was another option for describing the meal or a comment on his moments, so he decided to let it slide.

* * *

She didn't ask where they were going when they left the restaurant, and he didn't volunteer the information. But she guessed as soon as they started heading into Buckhead. Mr. Summers's place. Mr. Summers kept his eyes on the road, but clearly he knew the way; he wasn't looking for street signs. Austin wouldn't have to, but it wouldn't be surprising if his brother knew the way. She really ought to tell him she suspected who he was, even if she didn't remember his first name from the file, but she knew she wasn't going to. If he wasn't Austin, he was using her and she was using him. She wouldn't have to close her eyes to pretend he was her boss.

If he didn't want to talk, that was fine with her. The more she thought about it, a dozen small clues tipped her off. He didn't walk quite the same way as Austin;

he had more of a cocky swagger to him. He didn't talk quite the same way, and he was slower, as if imitating Austin took effort. In fact, he used fewer words than Austin would have, and that had been true even in the office earlier.

He drove into Austin's garage in Austin's car and unlocked Austin's door with a key. She recognized the key ring too—definitely Austin's. She'd seen it every time he'd given her the car so she could run an errand. "Enter," he said.

"Yes, sir," she replied. He seemed to like her calling him that. She was getting off on it too. She'd never thought of herself as submissive before meeting Austin Summers. She knew she always treated him more deferentially than he insisted on being treated. She hadn't consciously realized how much that had been a way of putting her fantasy of having her boss dominate her into some kind of reality. Had his brother seen that in her?

She was in a large entryway with solid oak flooring in a parquet pattern. There was a closet for coats, and the living room with its plush white carpeting that had to be a bitch to clean and dark leather and mahogany furniture. There was a stereo system of strikingly modern design, but no television. A studio with a computer terminal and plenty of pacing room lay beyond the open entryway. Large windows overlooked the lit garden, but the place was protected from the neighbors' views by a tall ivy-covered wall. The whole place was so open. She was tempted to go wandering in and explore, but she resisted. She wanted him to show her.

He closed the door behind her. "In this house, I am in control. If you wish to leave at any time, all you have to say is the word 'nightingale.' That is your safe word. Say it, and I will stop what I'm doing, set you free if you are bound, and call a taxi to take you safely home. If you don't say it, I will expect your obedience and do as I like with you. Do you understand?"

She took a breath. If it had really been Austin Summers, she would have known she was safe. But her instincts told her this man wouldn't go to the effort of giving her a safe word if he meant her harm. Tonight, anyway, she was going to go with her instincts rather than her caution. "I understand."

“Take your dress off.”

“Excuse me?”

“Remove your dress and hang it up in the closet. Then remove your underwear, fold it neatly, and put it on the top shelf.”

She opened the closet, which was half-full of coats. She wondered if she quizzed him, would he be able to tell her what sort of coats his brother owned? But exposing him would only wreck the fantasy. She reached behind her and struggled with the straps. She pulled her dress down, until the whole thing slipped off her hips and puddled on the floor. She stepped out of it and leaned over to pick it up, conscious of his gaze on her. She'd rather he rip her clothes off, scatter them on the floor, and fuck her brains out, but he seemed to have a thing for neatness. She found a suitable hanger and hung the black dress on it before unsnapping the bra.

“You have exquisite choice in underwear,” he told her.

She wasn't about to tell him it was Jacqueline's taste. Besides, she could have refused the saleslady's suggestion, and she hadn't. She stripped quickly, leaving her thigh-highs on as well as her shoes. He was directing her; he'd have to tell her if he wanted them off as well. She wasn't sure what the consequences would be for doing other than he directed, and she didn't want to find out.

She glanced over at him as she folded her panties. She hadn't dared look before for fear she'd blush. To her surprise, he hadn't even taken his jacket off. She was looking forward to seeing the muscles hinted at but not revealed by his clothes. “It scarcely seems fair you're fully clothed.”

“We aren't doing fair here, Nicole. We're here for your fantasies and for mine. Neither of which involve fairness exactly, now do they?”

“What do you know about my fantasies?” Nicole retorted.

He took a step closer to her. Even in heels, she had to look up to see him. “I can tell by how you act in the office. If I wasn't sure, there is the matter of how you've acted this evening. Some women would be filing a harassment suit—and quite frankly, they'd be justified. A few would obey orders in the most minimal way,

showing cleavage perhaps, flashing their boss a smile. A very few would find a dress that revealed as much as possible. You're a sexual submissive, Nicole. I can see it in your eyes. You want a partner who is dominant, at least in the bedroom and possibly outside it some as well."

Nicole frowned. She'd had some kinky fantasies, and she liked following directions, fair enough. She enjoyed reading books with really strong alpha males. She'd dreamed of submitting, but only to someone she knew and trusted. But he'd called her a submissive—did that mean he thought she just rolled over for anyone she met? "I don't need that. I'm an independent woman. I—"

He walked forward and put a finger on her lips. "You can take care of yourself, you were going to say? I wouldn't be interested in a woman who couldn't. You're one of the most capable women I've ever met, and you'd be fine without a man at all. And yet there'd be something missing."

"Has something been missing for you, Sir?" For a moment she'd forgotten he wasn't Austin. She wanted to ask Austin that question. So she was surprised as she saw a cloud pass over his face.

He turned away without answering. "Come." He walked briskly across the plush carpet toward the sofa.

After a moment, she followed, then stood behind him as he pulled out an elegant box stored underneath the sofa. It was black, about two and half feet wide with gold hinges and clasp, and engraved on its ebony top was an oriental dragon design. It was locked. Mr. Summers crouched next to it and stuck a key in it, and for a moment she glimpsed chrome and black leather. He turned the box around so the lid blocked her view, picked up something from inside it, and crumpled it up in his big left fist.

It was all Nicole could do to stand her ground, even if she knew his fist was bunched up because he was hiding something. This wasn't Austin she was dealing with, but was that Austin Summers's box? It was in his house, and the key was on his key ring.

“You look frightened, Nicole.”

She pursed her lips. Had she offended him? “N-no.”

“Don’t lie, little one. It’s okay to be scared. What are you scared of?”

“I don’t know.”

“You can trust me. Do you remember your safe word?”

She nodded. “Night—it’s the word nightingale.”

“Good girl. And if you say it, what will I do?”

“Let me go and send me home.”

“Do you need to say it now?”

“No, Sir.” And she didn’t. She took a deep breath. “What do you have in your hand?”

His right hand caressed her shoulder as he half circled behind her. “A blindfold. Close your eyes.”

“Why a blindfold?” Nicole resisted the urge to turn and look at him.

“Because I want to immerse you in your sensations. What we see or hear, we’re in the habit of making judgments about. What we feel and taste and smell, we let ourselves simply react to.” His hand glided past her shoulder, over her right breast. She felt its peak stiffen against his palm as he cupped her. A simple reaction, as he said.

“Yes, Sir.” She closed her eyes.

The blindfold shut out the light she could sense through her eyelids. She felt the band tighten around the back of her head as he secured it in place. Total blackness. His fingers found her taut nipple and played with it. His fingertips were rough, but his touch was gentle. She inhaled, drawing her breast away from his fingers, smelling the muskiness of him. Her pussy tingled at the scent, and she knew if he probed there, he’d find her slick and ready.

“Stay there.” Suddenly the hand withdrew, and she was left waiting, aching for his touch. In a few seconds, a soft, romantic jazz melody filled the air. A second later and she felt his arm go around her waist. “No more words from you. Just feel.”

She opened her mouth to say yes and caught herself. Instead she nodded. His hand settled on her bottom, and he pushed her forward gently but insistently. His chest leaning against her back, combined with the pull of his arm around her waist, made her bend over. Her knee made contact with something giving and leather, and then she was flying, lifted in strong arms.

When he set her down, there was smooth leather under her knees. Her breasts pushed against leather stuffed for softness. Her arms dangled over the edge of what had to be the couch. She tried to reach the wall to assert some kind of control, but the couch was too far away from it. She knew her ass was jutting up toward him, an easy target for buggery or a spanking. She wouldn't put either past this man.

Apparently satisfied with where she was, he unwrapped his hands from her. But a moment later, he had grabbed hold of her legs just above the knee and pulled them apart. She gave momentary resistance, but his hands were strong. If she wanted to have control, she could say the word. She didn't. She let him part her legs, knowing her pussy was on display. Perhaps he could see how wet she was.

Ohhh. His fingers slid right into her pussy. They were thick and came in at an entirely different angle than she could ever manage with her own fingers. She grabbed for the back of the sofa, and when the back proved to be too smooth to provide easy purchase, she reached up and held the padding-filled top of it. Even if it was virtually impossible to fall over in the position she was in, she still needed something to give her the illusion of balance. She nearly jumped out of her skin when a rough fingertip slid over her clit.

He chuckled. “It's been a long time for you, hasn't it?”

She nodded, not sure he could see the muted gesture but too embarrassed to nod vigorously. And he'd told her she couldn't use words. It had been months, and sex had never felt that good before. His fingers found nerves she'd forgotten existed,

and she soon found herself rocking her hips in rhythm as he stroked them in and out of her.

It couldn't be much fun for him to have only his hands touching her, she thought. Now, if it was his cock, that was another thing. Men were simple creatures; all they needed was their cock in something soft and giving and they were happy. "Fuck me; fuck me."

The fingers withdrew quickly. She wasn't ready for the stinging slap landing on her left butt cheek. "What?" She tried to twist out of the way, but an immovable arm gripped her around the waist and held her still while landing another slap on the right.

"I give the orders here. And you were told not to speak."

Her mouth rounded to an O, but she managed not to vocalize. She clamped her lips shut. "Hmm." She wanted his fingers back inside her. She wanted to tell him she hated the spanking. She tried again to twist out of his grasp but got nowhere.

He held her and waited.

Nightingale. That's all I have to say. But his arm holding her seemed incredibly firm and stable. If she said the word, he'd let her go because he would choose to, not because she could ever get out of his grasp on her own. If she didn't, he'd proceed with whatever he had in mind because she chose to submit. Which one involved more surrender of power wasn't clear at all. But she knew she liked his arm around her, holding her in place. She liked the strength of it, the feeling that it would never let her down, and she'd rather depend on that arm than on the strength of a word.

She turned her head away and laid it against the soft top edge of the sofa, relaxing her body. Her ass was still up in the air, and her stinging cheeks reminded her of that fact. Her pussy was still open to him. She purred in relief as she felt his fingers enter her again.

His hand was magic; it seemed he had no trouble finding the right nerves and the right timing. Warm tingles shot all through her core. Her breasts rubbed

against the leather of the couch, and she arched her back to feel the hard points of her nipples make contact. *Just a little more. Just one more touch.* She squirmed back to try to brush her clit across a knuckle, wanting to push herself over.

The grip around her waist tightened, and the weight of his body pressed her up against him, immobile. "Oh no you don't. You come when I choose."

She moaned. *Not fair. Oh please.* She knew more squirming wouldn't do any good, but it was almost impossible to stay still with such an ache between her thighs. She shifted her legs, but the motion brought no relief. After a few seconds, his fingers moved again, making the problem worse.

I can't stand it. Please let me come.

She felt his breath tickling her back before he spoke. "Come now, my little secretary." Three of his fingers curled inside her, his pinky swirled around her clit, and she screamed as her release rocked through her body. It seemed to go on forever. He didn't stop fucking her with his fingers until he had extracted every last tremor her body was capable of.

She felt the weight of his body shake the couch, and then he pulled her into his lap. His arms held her securely as she cuddled against him. *Thank you.* She wished she was allowed to speak. *Can't I do something for you now?* Her thoughts were jumbled, pleasantly hazy as she snuggled against his chest. Her bottom definitely felt something hard. He was turned on. *Good.*

She pointed to her lips and started to raise her eyebrows to indicate she was asking a question, but she doubted he could see her eyebrows well with a blindfold over her eyes. Finally she tried to draw a question mark in the air.

"Speak," he said.

"Can I do something for you, Sir?" she asked. She lifted her bottom so she could put her hand on his cock, hoping to make her meaning clear. "For this?"

Chapter Four

Such a sweet submissive. Tony thought about how it would feel to have his cock jerked off by his brother's beautiful assistant, or better yet to watch her lips around his cock until he exploded down her throat. He wanted it, bad.

He had never been with anyone so magnificent in her pleasure. The way she screamed and the way she shook when she came were beautiful. *Am I falling in love with her?* He dismissed the notion from his mind. He couldn't be, not after so short a time. He didn't get emotional about women, and besides, he was only filling in for a few days. She was Austin's, really, not his, although it certainly wouldn't be the first time he and his brother had fucked the same woman.

The more distracted he got, the harder it was to keep his mind on imitating Austin's mannerisms. He'd already slipped up a few times. As obviously smitten with Austin as Nicole was, there was no telling how she'd react if she figured it out. And yet he kept thinking that he could slip on a condom and be inside her in mere moments, even though he knew he should send her away now, her need to come satisfied. Get her out before he wanted her more than he already did. Get her out before he crossed a line his brother might never forgive him for crossing.

Wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am might work for a man, but he wasn't at all sure it would work for Nicole. She wanted more than an orgasm. But he couldn't give her more, unless—no, that was a crazy thought.

He could make sure this was the best night of sex she'd ever had. And maybe, just maybe, plant some ideas in her head.

She was still waiting for an answer to her question. He didn't trust himself with a lengthy speech. "You will do as I desire." It wasn't a lie, even if it wasn't the

answer to her question. And perhaps not the thing he desired most. But still, he wanted to show her more pleasure.

He nudged the heavy brass-bound box on the floor over to where he could reach inside. He got a blue cuff out of the box and strapped it around Nicole's slim wrist. He'd never thought Velcro and soft fabric could hold against a struggling submissive until it had been proven to him. Cuffs like the ones Austin had in his box were easier on a sub's wrists than ropes—and a lot easier than metal handcuffs—and they could be attached with one hand while he held her close with the other arm. Each came with a ring that dangled out for attachment purposes, and Austin had thoughtfully attached a carabiner to each. Good sturdy steel.

He couldn't tell if she knew what the cuff was when she felt it. He thought of taking the blindfold off so he could see her eyes and better read her reactions. But he hadn't needed her eyes to read her need for his fingers or to interpret the scream of pleasure that would have woken up a dozen people if she had yelled like that in his apartment in Tampa. Thank goodness Oz lived a hundred feet from his neighbors.

He grabbed two more cuffs, thicker and longer, out of the box and wrapped them lovingly around her ankles, tight enough they wouldn't stretch and abrade, but not so tight they would reduce circulation. With the last one, she lifted her foot to make it easier for him. He smiled. There was nothing more delicious than an eager and consenting submissive.

He picked her up and carried her across the room. She snuggled closer. The eyebolts were still in the wall, right where he remembered them being. He suspected they hadn't seen use for a while. When he set her on her feet next to them, she wobbled. He caught her. He heard her sigh of relief as he restored her to balance.

He pressed against her back, holding her with one hand around her waist while he raised her arm. He squeezed the carabiner open and let it snap closed after he'd hooked it through the eyebolt. It wasn't a loud sound, but Nicole jumped. He

held her with both arms. The scream on the couch had shown him she had a taste for submission. The jump reminded him she had little or no experience. Austin's little secretary needed to be treated with care.

When he felt her body relax again, he attached the other wrist cuff to the wall. That would be enough for now, he decided, although he'd intended to secure her ankles as well. "I'll be right back," he whispered. He waited for her nod, hesitantly given, before he moved away to retrieve the brass-bound box of toys.

His eyes flickered over the contents of the chest. There were memories there he couldn't let distract him, memories of Austin and himself with a woman, pleasing her in ways one man couldn't accomplish alone. He lifted a long, red suede flogger and tossed it onto the couch as unsuitable for a beginner like Nicole. Its tails spread over the blackness of the leather. Someday, perhaps, although it wouldn't be him by then. Instead he took out a blue flogger with light tails barely longer than the distance between his wrist and the tips of his fingers. With his other hand, he grabbed a thick acrylic dildo, smooth and glassy, with a curve to it. It felt cool but not cold in his hands, and he started to turn toward Nicole again, thinking the two toys were enough for a sensuous scene that would give her a taste of the pleasures one could have while bound.

He turned back. BDSM was only a part of what he really wanted to introduce Nicole to. Transferring the flogger so he held the two toys in one hand, he picked up a rubber dildo, narrower than the acrylic one and more flexible. He snagged a small bottle of lube as well and smiled.

He set the two toys on top of the CD player. The small flogger in his right hand, he touched Nicole's shoulder with his left. She purred.

"I missed you," she said softly.

"I wasn't gone long." He dangled the tiny tails of the flogger and flicked it lightly so it brushed her back. "Do you know what this is?"

"How can I when I can't see it?"

"Feel."

It took her a few moments to respond. "It's a whip of some kind, isn't it?"

"In some sense. It's a flogger. But this one is to awaken the senses. It's not going to cause you any pain."

"O-okay."

He flicked the broad, short tails where her back met her left shoulder, harder this time. "Does that hurt?"

"No, I guess not. Not really. It..."

He gave her a second, and when it was clear she wasn't going to continue her thought, he snapped his wrist again, sending the tails against her right side. "It what?"

"It's like a strange massage." She giggled. "Like I'm a car in a car wash."

He chuckled. "This isn't about getting clean. It's about getting dirty."

"As long as I don't get waxed afterward."

"Not this time."

She shivered but didn't say anything else.

He pulled her a few inches from the wall and kept the little flogger moving up and down her body, its soft tresses landing on her back and bottom, breasts and thighs. With her arms extended over her head, stretching toward the wall, her body was an open, easy target. And every time he moved toward her erogenous zones, she purred louder.

If he'd been using a longer flogger, it would have been awkward to penetrate her with anything, but with the tiny toy he didn't have to get so much distance. He took the acrylic dildo down from the CD player with his left hand, not breaking the rhythm of Nicole's "car wash." He opened and closed his fist about it, moving up and down its length to warm it up before it touched the lovely girl.

With a flick of his wrist, he curled the tails of the flogger upward between her thighs. In a sensitive zone like her pussy, even a harmless toy could sting. But all he got in return was a low moan. He repeated the pattern that led him there: left

cheek, right cheek, and up the middle. She squirmed, moving her butt toward him. He followed the pattern again, slower, to let her feel the rhythm of it and make her expect each caress of the flogger.

Then, the fifth time, he didn't flick it between her legs. Instead he thrust the acrylic dildo into her pussy. It slid smoothly all the way in. Nicole's body shook.

He dropped the flogger and pushed up against her, his cock feeling as hard against her ass as the acrylic. He wrapped one arm around her so he could squeeze and fondle her breasts. The other slid the dildo slowly, thrusting it deeply in and pulling it almost out. His hand gripped the dildo so his knuckles bumped her clit with every thrust. From the squeaks and moans, the little sub was enjoying herself. Her pleasure only made his cock harder. He was pretty sure she wouldn't object if he pulled a condom over his cock and replaced the dildo with it. Or he could take her ass while he fucked her pussy with the artificial cock.

Reluctantly he pulled his body back, letting go of her luscious tits. Coming inside her wasn't part of his plan. This was about her pleasure, not his. *I'll want her too badly if I let myself have a taste of her tonight, and then I'll never be able to give her up.* He shook his head to clear it. Women just didn't have that effect on him. He'd always felt there was too much variety in the world for him to get enthralled by just one woman.

He grabbed the lube bottle, warming it in his hand. He hardly had to do any work at all with the dildo, just hold it still while she rocked and thrust against it. *What would she be like on top of a man?* He tried to focus. He poured the liquid into her crack and then tickled her anus with his finger, sliding all around, not yet pushing at the opening.

"Are you going to fuck me there, Sir?"

He'd almost forgotten she could talk. "Would you like to be fucked there, Nicole?" He wiggled the tip of his finger against her sphincter.

"Whatever you wish, Mr. Summers."

“Never stop saying that.” He pushed, and she yielded. Slowly at first, then more easily, he slid his finger into her. She jumped again. And then thrust her bottom back toward him.

“Whatever you wish, Mr. Summers.”

“You’re the perfect secretary.”

“Whatever you wish, Mr. Summers.”

He pulled and stretched her from the inside until he could get a second finger in. He didn’t dare say another word. His voice was cracking with emotion, for one thing, and he didn’t sound much like Austin when that happened. And one more “whatever you wish” and he wouldn’t be able to stop himself from fucking her. Taking her. Owning her. There was a passion inside him that wasn’t at all rational. The Monster, he called it sometimes. Kinky games satisfied the Monster best. Safe, sane, and consensual—those were the words that kept the Monster and those he played with safe. His brother’s presence made him know the Monster would be stopped from doing any harm, so he could let go. Nicole needed to be safe. And she was. Monster or no, he knew how not to go beyond what his self-control could handle.

He didn’t know if she thought it was his cock when he took out his fingers and pushed the other dildo against her ass. What he knew was her hips moved to take both phalluses farther inside her. She moaned in ecstasy. After two minutes of pushing and thrusting, he brought her to another screaming orgasm.

This time he wondered if the neighbors woke up.

* * *

Austin’s jaw dropped. He clenched his fist, but he couldn’t slug Tony over the telephone. “You didn’t.”

“I did,” said his brother.

“I told you she was off limits.”

“I like a challenge.”

If he flew back right then, he could what? Miss both meetings? The consortium would get together in an hour, and he thought he had the right number of votes lined up. And wouldn't the Armico rep be surprised to see him there, knowing he was supposed to be meeting with them back in Atlanta an hour later? He'd told Tony to show up late and act breathless, but there was no way he could be at both; Armico's management wouldn't know how he did it, and by the time they did, they'd have a hell of a time figuring out which meeting his twin was at and which meeting the real Austin attended. If Tony didn't blow it.

Austin's heart had beat faster the moment Nicole Kerrigan had walked into his office two years ago. At first he'd kept up with the three-way dates Tony arranged. Then he dropped them; now he hardly ever saw Tony anymore. He was sure Nicole would never approve of his kinky love life, and he'd found it more and more convenient to let her manage his entire schedule. Her approval had meant a great deal to him. They might not be having sex, but they were nonetheless engaged in an intimate dance. He'd fallen in love with her. He could never take it to the next level, not with an employee, no matter how much he wanted to. It wasn't right. It was harassment, and Austin didn't tolerate that from anyone in his company, including himself.

"She's fantastic, Oz. A great fuck. You should try her yourself."

Did Tony think he didn't want to, hadn't dreamed of doing that? *I should have known better than to let him near her.* "Out of the question."

"She thinks I was you, Austin. So you're in it whether you like it or not. I knew from the way you talked you were jonesing for her, bad. She's why we stopped getting together, isn't she? And any fool could look at her and know she was in love with you. And you're crazy about her, I can tell. I completed the chain, and now I'll back off."

"Will you now?"

"If I have to."

"And what's that supposed to mean?" asked Austin.

“Well, you have choices.”

“Seems to me you’ve boxed me in.”

“It’s a big box. You can come clean with her. Honesty is always the best policy. Let her know she’s fucked your brother because you didn’t tell her the truth in the first place. She and I will live happily ever after. I’m thinking we’ll move to Hawaii and have five kids.”

“Fuck.”

“Such language,” Tony chided, as if he hadn’t just used the word. “You can keep her in the dark and take over. I know you can top as well as I can, Austin, even if you are a switch. And she’s all submissive. The way she says ‘sir’—you’ve heard it, I imagine. Or ‘Mr. Summers.’ In any case, I don’t think you need to worry about sexual harassment anymore because she’s my—or your—slave. You’ll have her pretty little mouth around your cock anytime you want it. Imagine calling her in for R&R during the middle of the day, her leaning over your desk, or kneeling under it...”

Austin’s cock was getting hard. *Dammit*. He’d been imagining that scenario for two years. Sometimes he felt like he was on the verge of asking her to fulfill his fantasies, but he had better control than that. He should have known Tony didn’t. He had thought he could trust Tony for two days. *What an idiot I am*.

“Or we could share her,” Tony said, “just like the old days. I have a feeling this one could keep two masters busy for a very long time. Imagine—”

“Stop, Tony. Just stop.” Austin could imagine fine without the description. Sharing a lover with his brother had always been good, until Nicole had shown up. “Don’t lay a finger on her until I get back, or I’m serious, I will never forgive you. I may not forgive you anyway.”

“You know what? I won’t.”

“Good.”

Austin slammed the phone down. He wanted to figure it all out. These last two years, there was no one more important to him than Nicole. But lives were at stake in the meeting, even if he didn't know any of their names. If he could convince the consortium to band together to produce his grain and sell it to developing countries for cost, or below cost, the number of people fed could be in the thousands, even the millions.

He straightened his tie, grabbed his briefcase, and tried to focus. He thought he had the votes. Hopefully all he had to do was show up. The IAC meeting was across the street from his hotel and would probably only last an hour or two. He might not even have to stay for the whole thing, depending on where his proposal was placed on the agenda. He could focus for long enough. He pushed the image of Tony and Nicole out of his mind.

He arrived at the elevator as it was hitting the twenty-second floor. Perfect timing. He rode it down, hurried through the lobby, out into the shadowed streets between high-rises.

He barely heard the sound over the white noise made by the hundreds of pedestrians and honking taxis. Agony ripped through his shoulder. His briefcase dropped from his hand. He took a step forward, not knowing where to seek cover. The sound came from his left. *Just a shoulder wound. All I have to do is get across the street.* The pain was blinding, but he was too stubborn to let it stop him. *I've planned this out for too long.*

He heard another shot but felt nothing. *Just a shoulder wound.* Nauseous, he gripped his hand to his shoulder. It was warm and wet. Then there were people crowding around him. "Are you all right, sir?"

"Fine." His own voice came from a distance, as if it was someone else talking.

"Austin!" yelled Robert Blount from Northampshire Wheat and Rye. A friendly voice. He was staying at the same hotel; Austin had checked in with him the night before, and Blount had assured him of his vote.

“I have to get across the street. I have a meeting.” Robert was too far away to hear, but the man and woman next to him could make him out, surely. Why weren’t they helping him cross the street? He couldn’t talk any louder. Blount was coming closer. He would understand.

He took another step forward and then collapsed as the darkness overcame him.

Chapter Five

Nicole frowned. It was now ten o'clock, and the Armico meeting was at twelve. Austin's brother hadn't come in yet, and she found that disturbing. She'd wanted to make sure he had all the information at his fingertips, especially since he didn't have the advantage of Austin's background knowledge.

She'd poked her nose into the personnel files. Austin's brother's name was Anthony. Two A's, identical twins. Apparently he was some sort of ex-cop/private detective. She wondered if he'd nosed around her personnel file as well. There wasn't much she could do about it if he had, and she could hardly say it was unfair.

He'd given her the best orgasms of her life and then sent her away. She hadn't said her safe word—what was it again? Nightingale. But he'd called the cab, buttoned her jacket up, kissed her on the cheek instead of the lips, and had her driven home. "*What have I done wrong?*" she'd asked.

"*Nothing,*" was all Anthony had said.

And now he was avoiding her, not even coming into the office. She'd tried calling the house but with no success. She didn't know what to make of it. No, he wasn't really Austin. But she'd felt something for him. She wasn't just using him to fulfill her fantasy. She found both men attractive, even while she noticed how they were different. She took a deep breath. If she let herself sort through her emotions, she thought she'd go crazy.

Better to stick to work.

Business with Armico had been profitable, even if Austin did regard their contract as something of a deal with the devil. There was no doubt Armico was in it for the bucks, but what business wasn't? The deal with Armico was part of what

kept Summers Biotech in the black, and that in turn was what made Austin's idealistic gestures possible. But her gut instinct agreed with Austin. There was something oily about Armico. And now this adamant insistence on the smallest detail in the contract, even though they were making plenty of money from two of Summers's patents. It was like they were trying to find an excuse to break the contract. Why?

Maybe the answer lay not in the two Summers products Armico produced but somewhere else. What else did they make? All sorts of seed. Pesticides. Pharmaceuticals.

She clicked on another file in the Armico folder. *File in use. Would you like to open this file in read-only mode? <accept> <cancel>*

She raised her eyebrows. Now why was someone else interested in the same file she was? She clicked Accept.

The page was full of information about some kind of herbicide-proof millet Armico had bought from a small biotech firm on the West Coast. They were going to sell it for three hundred dollars per five-pound bag, but still, if you bought the millet and Armico's herbicide—which was the only one the grain was immune to—you'd have yourself a pretty good crop and wouldn't have to worry about weeding. Millet was a grain mostly grown and consumed in poorer parts of the world, and because of the patent, you'd have to buy Armico's seed and herbicide every year. Most farmers in sub-Saharan Africa couldn't afford that. The richer ones could.

She wondered who else was using the file, but the message didn't say. She was being paranoid. Just because someone else was using that file didn't mean there was some kind of mole in the company.

Something seemed familiar. *Wait a minute. Where's that reference? Bingo.* The product Austin was talking about in New York involved millet and herbicides. She searched and found the file on that.

Austin's product did everything Armico's did without giving Armico the herbicide monopoly. And Austin was trying to convince a consortium of seed

companies to provide the millet seed *at cost*, which would undercut Armico's product entirely. It wouldn't cut into what the other companies were doing too severely—millet of any kind wasn't likely to show up on the average American or European dinner table—but it would render Armico's millet seed worthless.

She went back to the first file. Armico had bought their "miracle millet" for nine hundred million dollars. That was significantly more than the amount they'd made off the Summers patents; she knew that without looking because it was part of the briefing she'd prepared. *Armico wasn't looking to break the contract by forcing Summers to attend their meeting. They were trying to keep Summers away from the consortium.* Her hand balled up into a fist, and then she relaxed and smiled. *My Mr. Summers is too smart for you. He's going to be both places at the same time.* The smile disappeared from her face. *But it sure would have been nice if he'd trusted me enough to let me in on it.*

The phone rang. New York number. She picked it up. "Summers Biotech, Austin Summers's office. How may I help you?"

"This is Robert Blount, Miss Kerrigan. I don't suppose you remember me?"

Some British company. North... Her fingers typed quickly and almost noiselessly until it popped up on the screen. *Northampshire Wheat and Rye. That was it.* "Yes, of course. How are things at Northampshire, sir?" There was a *click* on the line. *Probably just some kind of call waiting or something.*

"Not important right now, Miss Kerrigan. The important thing is Mr. Summers has been shot."

"He what?" *It explains why Anthony was missing, but shot? Dead? What a horrible—*

"He's going to be okay. Took a bullet in the shoulder; it nicked an artery, but a medic arrived in time. He's at Bellevue Hospital, and he should be conscious in a few hours; he's only out now because he's under sedation. I'm calling from the hotel—"

“Oh my God!” *The hotel. New York number.* That meant it wasn’t Anthony. It was Austin. She felt sick. *Who the hell would shoot Austin?* She slumped back in her chair. “He—he—”

“He’ll be okay. He came to me with a plan for selling a type of millet he’d produced. At cost. Is there someone in charge who I can talk to?”

In charge. Not the scientists and not the CFO, who didn’t know anything about the business except the dollars and cents. Damn it, she’d told him it was a bad idea to set it up the way he had, trying to do it all himself, without vice presidents and all that. But it was a private company, and he got to run it the way he wanted. He’d overruled her and hadn’t replaced the one other executive when he’d left a year ago. “That would be me.”

“I need to know one thing, because I have his proposal in my hand. Did he really mean to go through with this, Miss Kerrigan? Because it’s a crazy scheme, to practically give away a product that could make a lot of money. Hundreds of millions of dollars. As the person in charge right now, do you support this plan?”

Nicole swallowed. All she had to do was say no, and Summers Biotech would be flush for years to come, able to survive any number of plans to save the world. But she’d have to override Austin’s wishes to do it, and she couldn’t do that. “Yes, he did. And yes, I do.”

“Then I’ll do my damndest to make it happen. Thank you, Miss Kerrigan.”

The line went dead. She sat at her desk and stared blankly for a few long seconds. *Blount said he’d be okay. I want to be at his side.*

“They’ll call it random street violence, I suspect,” Anthony said from behind her, startling her. She whirled. Had he been in Austin’s office all the time? *He must have listened in. That was the click that I heard. He was probably the one looking at the file too.* “If they didn’t get the shooter. Which I’m betting they didn’t.”

“It’s got to be random. No one would try to kill him.”

“Bullshit. And get me Bellevue Hospital in New York.”

She turned and obeyed without really thinking, from long habit, searching for the phone number on the Web.

She glanced up at him. "Wait a minute. I'm in charge here. And I know you're not Austin Summers."

"Oh, I have no intention of running this company, Nicole. And you're a very clever woman. I see why Austin thinks so highly of you. But in this case, I need to talk to them because I'm the next of kin, and I can get doctors and nurses to do things they won't do for a lovesick secretary."

"Executive assistant." *And I'm not lovesick. Well, maybe I have been.*

"Whatever. Give me the phone and the number or place the call. Time matters."

She punched in the numbers and then handed the phone into his outstretched hand. He seized it. If he took it in the office, she could listen in to both sides, the way he had her conversation with Blount. As it was, she'd have to listen to one.

"Yeah. Do you have an Austin Summers there?"

"Good. Actually this is Austin Summers, from Summers Biotech Inc. The man you have is actually my twin brother, Tony."

"You can check my phone number if you think I'm lying. I'm calling from my office."

"Yes, I was told he's unconscious. That's not the point. If anyone else calls, except the police, myself, or my sec—executive assistant, Nicole Kerrigan, it's very important you not tell anyone he's there. His life may be in danger."

"Good, thanks." Anthony reached over her and put the phone on the hook. He walked toward the door without saying a word.

Nicole stood up while he was reaching for the doorknob. "I know you're not Austin."

He stopped and turned around. "Yeah, you said that before. I know you know. But don't tell Oz you know."

“Why? Does it matter anymore?”

“Yes.”

“To who?”

“To you, actually. He knows something of what we did—but not that you know it wasn’t him. Trust me, and don’t tell him you know.”

He was hard not to trust when he looked her in the eyes like that, even though the idea of deceiving Austin didn’t sit well with her. “Where are you going? To New York, to find out what happened?”

“No. I wish. To the Armico meeting here in Atlanta, of course. I don’t want to be late.” He opened the door, then stopped after one step through it to look at her again. “Nicole?”

“Yes?”

“Book a plane as soon as you can get one and go to him. You can prep me on the way, and then go straight to the airport in a taxi. You know you want to be there. The Wizard needs someone at his side he can trust, and I don’t think you can get the Armico people to believe that you’re him.”

She was torn. She wanted to be at Austin’s side, and at the same time, there wasn’t a lot she could do there for him. Whereas letting Tony go to the meeting alone...she wasn’t so sure about. His Austin imitation was pretty good, and he’d fool them if he didn’t slip up. She just worried he might need more briefing.

“I’m going to be fine, Nicole. Austin trusted me to attend this meeting for him. And he’s the genius, so we’re going to have to go through with his plan. Now he needs you.”

She wanted him to need her. “Yes, sir.”

He chuckled. “Good. Wear the dress.” He left, closing the door behind him, not giving her a chance to refuse him.

* * *

“Hello, Mr. Summers.” Nicole rounded the door frame into his “private” room at the hospital. The door had been wide open, but at least it had one. She’d worn the dress, as directed. She’d also worn a light jacket over it, fully zipped, which negated the cleavage-baring effect.

“Miss Kerrigan? What the hell are you doing here?” Austin Summers, his well-muscled body incongruously draped in a sea green hospital gown, sat back down on the bed, but not before Nicole had caught a glimpse of his taut ass. There was nothing like the back-tie gown for lack of modesty. She chided herself for letting it distract her; he’d been shot, after all.

He must have been pacing, like a caged lion. That was a good sign. Poor man, all cooped up. Still, she smiled. She hadn’t seen as much of his brother’s body, and they’d been intimate. Oh God. A flutter went through her belly at the memory.

“Miss Kerrigan?” asked Austin again.

She shut the door and moved closer to him. She spoke quickly, lest he wonder what she was thinking about. “I heard you were shot. If I’d known you were planning to let someone shoot at you so you’d have an excuse to miss the Armico meeting, I’d have never let you go.”

Austin blinked. “I didn’t make the meeting?”

“No, of course not.” Nicole felt bad for playing with his mind, but he’d created this whole mess. Part of her wanted to assure him Tony was covering for him, and the other part was still pissed off he hadn’t let her in on the whole masquerade. *I can scarcely have heard he was shot in New York and have seen him off to the meeting in Atlanta both without figuring it all out, now could I?* “You were already in the hospital. But what if he had missed and hit your head, Mr. Summers?”

Austin relaxed. She could see the wheels in his head turning. She smirked. If he got up to pace, his hospital gown was going to start flapping again. She could see him twitch. He couldn’t stand to do his thinking sitting down, and he wasn’t going to move. “I didn’t hire anyone to shoot me. It just happened. I missed the meeting here too.”

“Even you can’t be in two places at once.” Nicole sat down on the bed beside him, closer than she would have a few days ago. Actually, a few days ago, she’d have pulled up the chair. She patted his knee.

“When’s the last time you saw me, Miss Kerrigan?”

She’d had a plane flight to puzzle over Tony’s meaning, telling her to pretend she hadn’t caught on yet, and telling her to wear the dress. “Last night, of course, Mr. Summers. Are you sure you should be moving around? Did you hit your head after you got shot?”

“No. There’s nothing wrong with my head. They checked, trust me. I’d be good to leave here if the doctor would sign the paperwork.” He eyed her, his tone changing. “So. Did you enjoy last night?”

“You know I did, Mr. Summers. You do remember, don’t you?”

“Of course.”

“Mmm. Me too. I don’t think you’ll be doing anything like that for a while though, with your shoulder.”

“Um, I suppose not.”

“I’ll see about that paperwork. Don’t move.”

Nicole stood up and walked toward the door. Tony had given her the opportunity, and she was going to make the best of it. The question was, how would Austin react? She continued on toward the nurse’s station. “I need to talk to Mr. Summers confidentially about a business matter. Do you need to do anything to him in the next twenty minutes or so?”

The nurse shook her head.

“I’ll buzz if he looks unwell,” Nicole assured the nurse and walked back.

She closed the door behind her this time and unzipped her jacket, then hung it on the hook. She saw his gaze move down from her face to her chest, which was right where she wanted it. At least he wasn’t totally uninterested. She was taking advantage of him, she knew. But she knew what she wanted, and there wasn’t

likely to be another chance quite as good as this one. She could only pretend to be ignorant for so long.

“I’m going to repay you for last night.”

His eyes widened. He moved his arm over his crotch, but not before she saw an erection tenting his hospital gown.

She knelt on the floor, giving him an even better angle to look down her dress. Then she reached under the hospital gown. It was designed for access, after all. Her slender fingers wrapped around Austin’s hard, thick cock.

“Nicole, you don’t need to—”

She registered her first name. He never called her that, but apparently he thought it, given how easily it slipped out. “Yes I do, Mr. Summers. I want to.” She grabbed his left wrist and pulled it away. He didn’t resist very much. Then she lifted the gown.

He was huge, circumcised. The head of his cock was purple, and she could see his pulse in the throbbing vein on the underside. She stared for a moment. *Are both of the Summers boys built like that? And what would it be like to have all that inside my pussy?* She was going to find out how it tasted first. She leaned forward, tongue extended.

He grabbed a big bunch of her hair and stopped her. “I shouldn’t be taking advantage of you like this.” But he didn’t move away.

She grinned and strained against his grasp, even though it hurt when it tugged on her scalp. “You aren’t, Mr. Summers. I’m taking advantage of you.”

“I’m your employer, Miss Kerrigan. You’re very attractive—God, you’re sexy. But I have power over you, and I can’t take advantage of that to have sex with you.”

“No, Mr. Summers. You don’t have power; I do.”

He blinked.

“Because if you don’t let me, I quit.”

“Let you what?”

“Do anything, do everything—”

“Everything you want?”

So tempting. But everything I want isn't everything I want. “No, Mr. Summers. I'm your secretary. Do everything *you* want.”

His grip on her hair faltered for a moment, and she used the opportunity to wrap her lips around his cock and slide down as far as she could. Which wasn't very far. The tip of his cock tickled the back of her throat, and she had to back up. With two hands and her mouth, though, she could cover all of it. She slid her hands up and down his shaft while she tortured the slit on the head with her tongue, and his body gave a convulsive jerk like she'd stuck his cock in a light socket.

His hands weaved their way into her hair again, and she thought he was going to pull her off. She didn't want him to, but anticipating the sensation of being pulled by her hair set off an unexpected flutter in her core. She wanted him to be in control. She wanted his cock in her mouth, in her pussy, anywhere, so she could get the one thing she hadn't gotten the night before. *Even in the ass.* She remembered the way the dildo felt there last night. Austin Summers would probably tear her apart if he tried it. They'd need a gasoline truck full of lube. She giggled.

Then she felt his hand, not pulling but pushing gently. There wasn't any give to his hand, even if it wasn't pushing very hard. The head of his cock pressed against the back of her throat. He pulled her back even as she fought back the instinct to resist. He was in control, like she wanted. And he seemed to know just how far to push her.

She bobbed up and down over his cock, feeling it swell between her lips. He set the pace, gently pushing and pulling her, never forcing her to gag or letting his cock slip totally from her mouth. She licked and found a salty sweet drop of precum at his tip.

His hand relaxed. “Almost there,” he warned her. But when she leaned forward to swallow him again, feeling her breasts swaying in the dress, her nipples tight and hard, he held her head again, still with one hand. Three fast slides of her

hands and he came, filling her mouth with his taste. She licked and swallowed. He was like good whiskey—he burned on the way down her throat but still somehow tasted smooth.

She smiled up at him when she let him drop out of her mouth and pulled the hospital gown to cover him, because it seemed like the most natural thing to do. He grinned at her. “Wow,” he said.

“Nurse!” There came a knock, and the door opened. There was no way it had been twenty minutes, but nonetheless, there she was. At least she hadn’t come a moment earlier—and thank goodness *he had*.

“So that’s the upshot of the Gallagher deal,” Nicole said. “Cash flow is rising, and I think we’re in good shape over all.”

Very good shape, he mouthed to her voicelessly.

“We’ve got some drugs for the pain, Mr. Summers,” said the big nurse. She didn’t say a thing about Nicole being on the floor, but Nicole was aware of the woman’s eyes on her. She had a little transparent cup with two pills in it, and another one with water.

“Don’t need ’em,” said Austin.

“Now, Mr. Summers, you’re going to have a hard time getting to sleep if you don’t—”

“I’ll sleep on the plane.”

“The doctor hasn’t discharged you yet.”

“That’s all right. Nurse, Miss Kerrigan, I’m going to get dressed. I’d appreciate it if you’d give me a few minutes privacy.”

For a moment, Nicole thought the nurse would argue, but she didn’t. “Nothing she hasn’t seen, I’m sure,” said the nurse, clearly annoyed. She turned around and stalked out.

Austin looked at Nicole, and Nicole looked at Austin. For a few moments, they stared at each other. Then he grabbed her shoulders, wincing, and pulled her up to

kiss her. She accepted his tongue willingly, then hungrily, their lips slipping against each other's while their tongues intertwined. That he was willing to kiss her, passionate even, after coming in her mouth shocked her, but she wasn't complaining. Whatever thoughts she had left of manipulating him faded. *I'm yours, Sir.*

At last he broke off the kiss, although not before she felt him harden again against her stomach. She wanted him inside her, and the thought made her pussy weep. "You need to let me get dressed, Nicole, and to stop the nurse from gossiping, it's best you go outside."

She nodded, standing. "Yes, Mr. Summers."

"You can—" he started, and then smiled. "I'll be out shortly."

For a moment, she thought he was going to tell her to call him Austin. She could, of course, if he ordered it. But she was so used to calling him Mr. Summers. She didn't want what they had had to go away, although she certainly liked the spice they'd added to it. She walked out, closing the door behind her.

Or perhaps I'm confused about which Mr. Summers I want. No, not confused. I want to have my cake and eat it too. But one way or the other, I'll have to choose, and my heart has belonged to Austin for a very long time.

Chapter Six

Tony Summers walked into the well-appointed Armico boardroom at one fifty after seeing Nicole safely into a taxi. With someone shooting at Austin, he didn't want her driving Austin's car without him, nor standing out in front of the Armico offices alone.

It wasn't in his character to be too exact about time or to be concerned about it when others were a few minutes late, but he was conscious of Austin's tendency to be punctual. And in this particular case, he had a reason to try to get there before too many people showed up. He wanted to see the expressions on people's faces when they saw him.

There were two people at the table when he walked in. He recognized the woman from photographs: Darla O'Malley, vice president in charge of public relations. The man was in his twenties and hadn't been in the folder Austin had given him; the cardboard triangle in front of him said Carter Valentine, who apparently was an up-and-comer. The briefing Nicole had given him in the car was incredibly thorough and well organized. Austin should have confided in her at the start. Wasn't that the whole point of having an executive assistant anyway?

He shook Darla's hand. "Darla." He smiled over at the other man. "Austin Summers. You look familiar, but I'm not sure—"

"Carter Valentine, Mr. Summers. I don't think we've met."

"My memory for faces isn't very good," Tony lied. "I'm afraid my talents lie in other directions. Nice to meet you."

"A pleasure."

If Darla or Carter were expecting him to be in a hospital in New York, their faces didn't show it. Either that meant they were well-informed all around or they didn't know about New York either, because no one was that good an actor unprepared. Good enough.

He spotted the triangle with Austin's name on it at one end of the table. But sitting there would put his back to the door. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. He picked it up, moved down the side of the table, and plopped himself near the rear of the room, right next to Carter Valentine, flicking the nameplate of Armico's COO, Art Harrison, over to the seat of honor. *I'd better watch it. If Austin did that at all, he'd walk the cardboard over and put it down neatly.*

He got an eyebrow raise from Darla, but she didn't say anything. She reached over and straightened the nameplate. He set his briefcase on the table and took out the folder containing both the facts he was supposed to report on as part of the contract with Armico and Austin's take on the people he was meeting with.

Armico's CEO, Ken Bruster, came in promptly at two. He was an older man, pushing sixty, overweight. He'd probably die of a heart attack in ten years. He smiled in what might have been surprise on seeing Tony, shook his hand, and took his place at the far end of the table. Alice Gormley, his assistant, followed and sat at his right hand. Vincent McConnagle, CFO, followed the other two and nodded at him.

Bruster made small talk with him while they waited for the room to fill. Bruster may have been surprised to see him, but he recovered quickly. The man oozed the kind of professional warmth Tony couldn't be sure was completely fake, but he knew a lot better than to assume it was genuine. Bruster struck him as the sort of man who could get the best out of someone—even someone he had every intention of firing a week later.

Bruster's wife and two kids were fine, just fine.

Bruster glanced at his watch. “Five minutes,” he said, loud enough for everyone at the table. He didn’t have to say five minutes late. Apparently *late* was understood.

More minutes passed. “Where the hell is Art?”

The detective in him ached to volunteer to go find him. But he had no business being the one to do that here, not as Austin Summers. Everyone else worked in the Armico office. Everyone made more sense than him. Just because a person was late in a workplace where being late obviously didn’t fly didn’t mean something bad had happened.

Nobody else volunteered to go looking either. But the tension level was definitely going up in the room. It was possible, barely, that the only reason he’d been required to show up was because Bruster was an anal-retentive ass. What was the saying—never ascribe to malice what can be explained by stupidity? But as a private eye, he found malice a lot more interesting.

He flipped through the photos again, keeping his eye on the door. Something had bothered him the first time he looked at them, and he hadn’t been able to put a finger on it. Tony found the page on Art Harrison and looked at the photograph. The guy looked familiar, but he couldn’t place him. Tony would feel a lot better about it if he could remember where he’d seen the guy before. Maybe he looked like somebody he knew. Maybe. He was usually good with faces.

“We’ll start the meeting without him, I guess,” said Bruster at nine past. “Sorry, Austin, for making you wait. We’re all busy people; I *thought* everyone understood that. So first, let me present you with some sales figures. As you can see, we’re doing very good business together.” His assistant handed out a couple of sheets of paper, stapled, to everyone at the table.

Tony looked at the top sheet. Looked good to him—more money than he’d make in a few lifetimes. Austin would want his CFO to go over all this, but the fewer people he had to interact with who knew Austin well, the better, so he’d come alone.

“I’m concerned about some rumors I hear from New York,” Bruster went on. “Robert Blount presented something he said had your company approval, or so I’ve been told. You’d go directly into competition with the product being marketed and manufactured by us here at Armico. Not even competition either; something on which you’d be making no profit would be killing *our* profits. It doesn’t look like good business to me, Austin. And frankly it’s no way to maintain trust for our other endeavors.” Bruster fixed him with a steady gaze. Tony shifted his eyes briefly toward the door when he heard the soft swish of it opening. Bruster turned too.

“Harrison,” said Bruster, turning to the man. “Do you have any idea of what time it is?”

Harrison stared at Tony but didn’t answer.

Bruster went on. “I don’t have to remind you, I trust, that I hold you responsible for how this venture goes? And yet you are eleven minutes late to the meeting. My time is valuable. Mr. Summers’s time is valuable. Probably more valuable than mine, and certainly more valuable than yours. He could be coming up with the next big thing in biotech right now, and instead he’s been waiting for you. What do you have to say for yourself?”

Bruster was trying to impress him and set up a bad cop/good cop routine all in one. He was the good cop being nice, recognizing the value of his time. Of course, if they’d really valued Austin’s time, they wouldn’t have made him come to stupid meetings in the first place. Harrison, on the other hand, was barely even registering what Bruster said, from the blank look on his face. “Sorry, sir. I didn’t expect—I’m sorry, sir. My apologies, Mr. Summers.”

Those last words tasted like ash in his mouth, Tony suspected. Time to add some burning coals. “Apology accepted,” he said sweetly. “Don’t worry about it.”

He was pretty sure he knew why Harrison was late to the meeting, however, even though his boss was touchy about time. He hadn’t thought there was even going to be a meeting to attend. Harrison knew something. And Bruster held him responsible for the Armico-Summers venture. Was that a motive for murder? Men

killed over less—much less, sometimes. Harrison lowered himself into his chair. His suit was immaculately tailored, and his expression had smoothed out like it was ironed.

“So let’s get down to business, Austin. We need that new seed of yours, if it exists, off the market. Blount claims he’s got approval from you, but the whole agreement is still missing your actual signature. It’s got your secretary’s signature on it, faxed, but that’s not going to cut it. We want to buy your seed.”

“Actually.” Tony talked slowly, trying to buy as much time to think about what he said as possible. Bruster calling Nicole his secretary rankled him, even though he’d made a point of using the word himself. He remembered her wearing the dress. The sight of Nicole’s cleavage would be ever etched in his brain. And the way she screamed. Bruster was staring at him, waiting for him to finish, and he struggled to focus. “My executive assistant has full authority in the event something were to happen to me.”

“I’m afraid I miss your point, Austin. Nothing has happened to you.”

“Yeah, I hope nothing changes that.”

Bruster tilted his head to one side. Tony could see the gears inside the man’s head turning, trying to decide if he was being blackmailed and what exactly it was he’d do about it. Hopefully, though, he’d bought safety for his brother. Until Austin signed, it was in Armico’s interest to keep him alive and sound. After he signed, there was no profit either way. He ignored Harrison and met Bruster’s gaze with a steady eye.

“Yes, me too, of course,” said Bruster. “Put off signing, at least, until you hear the business case. I know you want to do some good in the world. And we’re prepared to consider directing five percent of the profits of our joint venture to charities supporting food growth in underdeveloped countries.”

Tony doubted 5 percent would impress Austin. Harrison stood up. “Mr. Bruster, I don’t know—”

“Obviously. It’s good business sense, Harrison, worthwhile public relations. And I think we can appeal to Austin’s sense of values here. No need to use the stick when the carrot will do. Well, Austin?”

“It’s worth considering.” Tony leaned back. “I’ll have to have my people go over it. Fax me the specifics if you have something your lawyers have gone over, and I’ll consider whether it’s in the best interest of my company.” *Best interests of the company, my ass. But if Bruster takes my words as code for doing whatever makes the most money, so much the better.*

Bruster nodded. “Good. Harrison. The presentation, please.”

The next half hour was far from the most exciting Tony had spent. Harrison was nervous, but who wouldn’t be after the dressing down he’d gotten? There was a mass of figures and statistics. Harrison had done at least some homework, so either he’d done it in advance, before the shooting was planned, or he’d been working on it right up to the last minute, which was why he’d been late. Austin would probably know which it was, but to Tony he could have talked about a completely different account and he probably wouldn’t know the difference. So he quit watching Harrison while keeping his body facing him to make it look like he was interested. Instead he watched Bruster and Darla. Bruster’s face was an unreadable blank, but Darla’s wasn’t. Either she disliked Harrison or she didn’t think much of the presentation. Her look was frankly contemptuous. She wasn’t even trying to hide it, and usually public relations people knew when to keep a straight face. Harrison outranked her, which made it even more strange. For some reason, Darla didn’t care if Harrison knew what she thought.

Bruster didn’t interrupt. But when Harrison was done, he said quietly, “I’ll see you in my office after this meeting, Harrison. We have things to discuss.” Without waiting for a response, he turned back to Tony. “Sorry about that. We’ll fax you some more complete data.”

Tony resisted a smile Austin wouldn’t be feeling. Harrison apparently hadn’t bothered to prepare, and Tony could think of only one theory that fit. He had some

strong reason to think he wasn't ever going to have to give that presentation. The amusing thing was that he'd never have known Harrison had done a bad job if the people at Armico hadn't had a bad reaction. "Thank you, Ken. I hope if you're going to insist on me attending these meetings, they'll be more substantive in the future."

Bruster's right eye twitched. "Did you have anything you wanted to share with us, Mr. Summers?"

"Not at this point. I'll have to read over the faxes, and I'll get back to you."

"Understandable. All right, people, back to work. Harrison, in my office. Carter, I'll be speaking to you later; keep a place free. Thank you for coming, Mr. Summers."

Bruster stood and offered his hand. Tony stood and shook it. "You're welcome." The rest of the staff gathered their papers and scurried out like mice who'd seen a cat.

Curious and curiouiser. I thought Austin's scheme was kind of out of my line, but I couldn't resist a challenge. But this is right up my alley.

Maybe it will even keep my mind off Nicole. But the image of her bound to the wall as she approached her climax came back into his brain to stay. He'd been able to keep his mind on the job this time. Mostly.

Fuck, she's going to be hard to let go.

Maybe I won't.

* * *

"Good to have you back safe and sound," Tony told him. He was sitting on Austin's couch, drinking Austin's wine. If Tony hadn't texted to let him know he was there, Austin would have invited Nicole to come in and stay the night. As it was, he nearly invited himself over to Nicole's place. He knew he could use a good night's rest more than anything, but Nicole was hard to resist.

"How's the shoulder?"

“Fine,” Austin said. It still hurt, but he supposed it was better, and he was glad to be away from the hospital and the happy pills they’d been pushing at him. He could deal with the pain.

“So did you and Nicole have a good time?” Tony was grinning at him, and Austin wanted to smack that grin right off his face.

“Yes, we had a good time. Not that it’s any of your business. God only knows how I’m going to explain it all to her.”

Tony nodded. “That’s the difficult part, isn’t it? She’s a smart cookie. She’ll probably figure it out on her own. I’m guessing she’d rather hear it from you.”

“I figured that much out.” *And thanks ever so much for sticking me in this situation.* He frowned. Maybe he did owe Tony, at that. For all the problems, he was a lot closer to having Nicole now than he was before Tony had intervened. Being grateful to Tony was worse than being angry with him. *Especially when he’s looking smug, sitting on my couch, drinking my sherry.*

“About the shooting, bro. I’m working on the angle that you weren’t just a chance victim of random violence. I’ve got a theory, but I’m waiting for a move. For some kind of corroboration.”

“What’s your theory?” Austin knew Tony wanted him to ask.

“Nah. Still working on it. Don’t worry. I’ll be looking after you.”

“Like you did with Nicole?”

“Yeah. Like I did with Nicole. You know, I wanted her so bad, but my cock never entered her body, Oz, because I didn’t want to do that to you. I certainly wanted to do it to her.”

“You what? You told me you fucked her, you ass!” Austin clenched his fists.

“Well, it depends on your definitions. With one of your plastic toys, yes, I did. Actually with two of them. At the same time. But that was it.”

So that was what Nicole had meant when she’d said it was her turn to show him some pleasure.

“Anyway, bro, that was all I had to say.” Tony put the glass of wine down. “I sailed through the Armico meeting with flying colors. They never suspected a thing. Say thank you sometime.” He got up and walked past Austin.

“Tony.” Austin called out to Tony just in time for him to stop at the door.

Tony looked over his shoulder. “Yeah?”

“Thanks.”

Tony grinned. “Sure thing, bro,” he said, and then he left.

Chapter Seven

Nicole's phone buzzed the way it always did when her boss used the built-in intercom. Two short buzzes meant she was to come into his office, but he didn't need her to pick up first. She clicked Save on the file she was working on, detached the laptop from its docking station, tucked it beneath her arm, and headed for the door to his office. The buzz may have been the same, but she didn't know what was going to happen. Her heart beat in anticipation. Was he going to ask her to crawl under his desk and suck him off? Bend over and raise her skirt? Or did he have a letter to dictate or perhaps questions about his schedule?

Probably the latter, she decided, although it didn't stop her womb from clenching at the other, less realistic thoughts. Tony would give those orders, sure. Austin? All the directions he'd given her as an executive assistant showed a potential dom side, and the way he'd held her head when she'd gone down on him convinced her that it extended into the bedroom. But Austin would go slower, she suspected. She was prepared to be wrong.

He wasn't behind his desk, but standing in front of it. That was unusual. Even when he was going to pace, he started out behind his desk. She hesitated for a moment in case he planned to stop her, and then crossed to the red leather chair she always sat in. "How may I be of assistance, Mr. Summers?" Her heart beat so hard her ribs hurt.

"I have something I have to tell you, Miss Kerrigan."

Uh-oh. That tone of voice didn't make it sound good. She forced herself to keep her tone professional. "Should I take notes, sir?"

“No, Miss—no, Nicole. I’m afraid this is going to sound pretty unbelievable, but bear with me.”

She tilted her head up to look at him. “Yes, sir,” she said. She longed to make it easier for him, but she couldn’t.

Austin didn’t move. “It wasn’t me you made love to in my house. It was my twin brother. You can check my personnel file, if you like. Or I can arrange to have you see both of us at one time.”

Nicole wanted to stick the words back in his mouth. She admired him for telling her, she supposed. But it would have been so simple if he hadn’t. She could pretend, and it would be easier for both of them. And if he’d kept it a secret, she would have had to play along. She knew honesty was better. But it made things so complicated.

Both of them at one time. Now that was a fantasy! But he didn’t mean what she was thinking, she was certain.

“Yes, sir.” She tried to straddle the line between admitting she knew and lying and saying she didn’t.

“Yes? It’s not an order, something I’m telling you is the official line or something, Nicole. It’s really true, and I wish it wasn’t.”

He shifted his shoulder, but it looked to her like his pain went beyond the gunshot wound. The anguished look on his face made it clear to her he wasn’t telling her for his own convenience. His honesty came at a high price, and she realized she couldn’t do any less. She’d protect Tony, if she could, because she owed him, but other than that, she’d give him the straight truth. “Yes, sir, I know. I looked at the personnel files already. Mr. Blount said he was with you at the same time I was in your house.”

Austin nodded and sighed. “I didn’t intend anything to happen when I left him here. Tony was just supposed to lay low and go to the Armico meeting. I should have told you what I was doing. And I should have said something when you started to pleasure me in the hospital room.”

Nicole smiled. “I enjoyed giving you pleasure as much as you enjoyed getting it. I knew already, Mr. Summers. I knew when I got on the plane to New York.” She looked down at the floor as she couldn’t keep the smile going any longer. “It’s really my fault. I knew you didn’t know I knew, and I hoped you’d feel like carrying on as if it had been you all along. I tried to trick you.” She bit her lip. The trickery had seemed so innocent at the time, but it didn’t anymore. She’d hurt him. In the end, she’d been disloyal. She should have told Tony no the moment she’d realized he wasn’t Austin, and instead she’d been so horny, she’d let Tony fuck her lights out. Well, fuck after a fashion. She’d never even gotten to see or feel his cock. She wondered how much detail Tony had given Austin about what had happened that night.

“Tony—my brother has always been wild.”

Nicole looked up sharply. They’d all been hiding something, she realized. Austin pretending he’d been with her the night before; she pretending she didn’t know better; Tony trying to pretend to be Austin. She hoped Austin wasn’t going to act like Tony was the only one really to blame, because she didn’t think she could stand that.

My God, it’s like I’m in love with both of them. How can that be? I’ve known Austin for years, and Tony only really for one night.

Austin continued after a pause, leaning back against the desk but not quite sitting on it. “But I’m more wild than you probably think. Tony and I—we—anyway, I should have known better than to not tell you what I was doing or to let Tony get to you. Even though, in a way, I’m thankful he did. At least, if you can ever find a way to forgive me. Because Nicole, I love you. I’ve always loved you, since the moment you interviewed, I think. I just wasn’t sure, and once you had a job working for me, it was too late. I couldn’t let you go and not be near you anymore. And I couldn’t take things further, because it wouldn’t have been—probably still isn’t—right. But I don’t want to pull back now. And I don’t want to have any secrets from you either.”

I can't believe this is actually happening, after all this time. He loves me. Wow.

"I've been in love with you since that day too." *There. I've said it. But I have to say more.* "And I can forgive you. Can you forgive me?"

"What's to forgive? You flew to me and did what you thought you needed to do to be my lover. I'm incredibly honored."

"No. Not that. I'm not apologizing for deceiving you. You see, your brother didn't deceive me either."

"He didn't? He told you?"

"Not exactly. But I've known you awhile. I've studied you. Whether you like to admit it or not, we were always more than executive and assistant, boss and secretary. You let me into your life, had me schedule things that had nothing to do with work. Tony may be your identical twin, but he's not the same person. He tried his best to act like you, but I knew. I knew before I let him seduce me, and I didn't turn back."

"Why?" He frowned.

"Why did you have me pick out dresses for your dates?"

Austin sighed. "That was pathetic, wasn't it? I couldn't date you. I wanted something of yours somehow."

Nicole laughed. "I guess that's sweet, kinda sorta, in a don't-you-dare-ever-do-that-again way. You could have had the real thing anytime you wanted."

"I didn't know. But it still wouldn't have been—"

"Right? Yes, I know what held you back. And I didn't know either, or I'd have shown up in your office naked one day."

Austin blinked, then smiled. "I think that might have gotten my attention."

"Good, 'cause what I tried didn't do a thing. Shorter skirts, chemise tops instead of shirts—"

"I wouldn't say they didn't do a thing, Nicole. They had me horribly frustrated."

She smiled with satisfaction. “Serves you right! Anyway, what I wanted to say was it was the same thing with Tony. He was so like you, I thought I’d go ahead and enjoy the ride. He was doing the things I always wished you’d do—moving the same kind of relationship we have here into the bedroom. Taking my clothes off and taking charge. Telling me exactly what to do.” Nicole felt the heat in her cheeks and knew she was blushing. “Filling me. Making me come so hard I screamed. It was like every fantasy I’ve had of you for the last few years, and for one night, I got to have it.”

“You liked Tony’s wild side.” The strange thing was Austin didn’t look hurt. She hadn’t meant to hurt him, but she’d expected more of a reaction.

“Yes.”

“Then there’s a decent chance you’ll like mine. Take off your clothes, Miss Kerrigan.”

Nicole blinked. Austin’s don’t-fuck-with-me expression wasn’t the same as Tony’s, but it didn’t look like it had any give to it either. She stood up. Her fingers were shaking as she undid the button on her jacket.

He took two steps toward her. He was so close she could feel him breathing. She managed to get her jacket off and started work on her blouse. It buttoned all the way to the collar, but it was thin and translucent. She’d bought it a year ago in one of her attempts to get Austin’s attention.

He kissed the side of her neck under her ear. “I love this blouse. It made me hard the first time you wore it, and I could see the pink of your breasts under it. I wished you hadn’t worn a bra. I jerked off the moment you left my office.”

Oh my God. The image of him pulling on his magnificent cock made her skip a breath. She knew he noticed too. “Would you like to watch sometime?” he asked.

“Yes.” Her voice was barely more than a whisper.

“That could be arranged. If you’re brave enough to let me watch you first.”

Oh no. “I don’t know if I could.”

“I’ll make it an order.”

Her heart beat faster. “Yes, Sir.”

“Good girl.”

She managed to get the top three buttons. She wished she hadn’t worn a bra, but she always did. At least it was a pretty white satin with little swirly patterns on the cups and lace scalloping. Her shirt was open enough she knew he could see the edge of it, and the demiglobes of flesh pushed up by it.

Without warning, he lifted her skirt and grabbed on to her panties. “From now on,” he said, “you don’t wear panties to the office. Or on any of our dates. I’ll check. Frequently.”

She felt a blush coming, but the idea of him checking turned her on. *Yes, Sir.*

She thought he’d push them down and she’d be able to step out of them. Instead she heard a ripping sound, and then another. His knuckles brushed against her mound, making it harder to breathe. He tossed two bits of white cloth into the steel wastebasket by the side of his desk.

Oh well, I guess I don’t need those anymore anyway. She got the last button undone when he pressed into her. His erection was hard against her stomach. His hands captured hers, moved them behind her back, and gathered them together so he could hold her in just one hand.

“Mine,” he growled.

“Yours.” She didn’t make a move to get free. She had exactly what she wanted. “No more other women though. No more dates.”

“I quit a while ago, in case you didn’t notice.”

“I noticed, I thought—”

“No one but you.” He pulled her forward, keeping his hand around her wrists. She couldn’t fall; he was too solid. He wouldn’t let her. Being pulled like that, unable to use her hands, should have been awkward, but with him it was like an

exotic, kinky dance. Her breasts felt heavy; her core ached with desire for him. She was wet, ready. He was so smart, so graceful, so strong.

He guided her until he bumped against the desk, then sidestepped, switching the hands on her wrists and moving behind her. Her skirt fell back into place. "I couldn't wait for everything to come off," he told her. "I want you now."

He bent her over and pulled her hands forward, positioning them on the far end of the desk, stretched out in front of her. "Don't move those."

"Yes, Sir." She didn't know which felt better, his hands physically restraining her or simply obeying his command. But if it meant he had more hands to use, so much the better. Her breasts squished against the desk.

She felt the cool air of the office move along her thighs as he pulled her skirt up. Her nipples ached in response, because they couldn't get any tighter. Or maybe it wasn't the cold. She heard a zipper, then felt his cock nestled against her ass. His erection was so hot against her, it startled her after the rush of air. *Oh yeah. Gimme.*

He undid the clasp of her bra, pulling it forward so the underwire dragged across her tender peaks. Her hands twitched as she thought of sliding it off entirely, but she remembered his words and let him move it up and out of the way. His smooth hands feathered across her sides, brushing the sides of her breasts, across her cheeks, down the outsides of her thighs. His touch was like silk.

She heard the tearing sound of a foil wrapper, and a moment later he entered her. He moved slowly, as if afraid he would hurt her. Her pussy had never felt so full, not even when Tony had pushed the dildo inside her. She clenched around his shaft, feeling the hardness of him, but that didn't stop him from moving forward. She didn't want it to. She wanted to feel every last inch of him.

She did. At last his hot cock was all the way in, his balls jiggling against her clit, his bare, warm stomach against her ass. He held there for a long moment, his hands wandering around her body, the touches on her breasts and sides and back

and ass and thighs seeming random. Apparently he wanted to feel every inch of her too.

“This is what I want,” he told her, breaking the silence.

“Yes, Sir. Anytime.” *In the office or at his house. Or at my apartment. Or anywhere he wants it.*

His thrust took her by surprise. She felt him move backward, slipping away, but she didn’t realize what it was going to be like to have him suddenly fill her again. He had moved so slowly the first time. This time her pussy contracted around him of its own accord. A shiver ran up her spine. Her hands tightened on the edge of the desk.

He moved again. Out, in. His balls slapping around her clit, teasing her with their touch and then moving back again. She felt the fire in her belly build, sending her body tingling, sparks of pleasure in her breasts and in her core. A firm hand grabbed her bottom and spread one cheek from the other. Then she felt something warm and wet touch her ass. It was such a soft touch, barely pushing its way in, then out, not challenging the ring of resisting muscle. The light touch was such a contrast to the violent way he was filling her pussy each time he moved forward, it was hard to focus on.

More wetness and then his finger tricked its way inside, taking advantage of her inability to pay attention to it and the consequent relaxation of her muscles. Suddenly her whole body convulsed, squeezing finger and cock in place. Her breasts rubbed against the old-fashioned paper blotter on his desk; what had felt smooth before now felt rough. But rough felt heavenly, adding more, colorful stars to the wonderful fireworks going on in her body. She moaned, low and loud.

She shuddered as the aftershocks racked her. Tears ran down her cheeks. How many times had she looked at Austin’s desk and imagined him making love to her on it? She’d lost count. She shuddered as his hip bone bumped into her rear and realized he was slowing down but still as hard as ever. *He didn’t come?* She was

complete, satisfied. But her heart wouldn't be right unless she gave him what he needed too.

"Use me for your pleasure, sir."

"I will," Austin promised. "But I don't think you've given me everything you can, yet."

Given? What does he mean?

His finger was still in her ass, she realized. And it was moving again, thrusting slow in time with his cock. The thought came unbidden: what would it be like to have two men in her at the same time? A face filled in the fantasy. Tony. Both Summers men.

Then his other hand reached around, slid across her hip bones, glided over her mound, and found her clit with one outstretched finger. She knew what he meant then, as a jolt of electricity moved through her from the tip of his finger to coalesce at her core. She wasn't finished.

He sped up again, both cock and finger going into overdrive. So many sensations all at once. She could feel where his finger and cock were only separated by the thinnest of membranes, each channel pushing against the other. There was no way she could take a Summers cock in her ass, and if she did, there'd be no room for her other channel to expand to take another. She was full almost to bursting even with one. And if he tickled her clit anymore, she was going to—

She screamed. And let go of the desk. Her back arched as another orgasm exploded through her body, making every part of her tingle as if it were somehow extra alive. She felt his body tense behind her. He let out a low, inarticulate groan. She felt like her body had to be glowing. She wished he hadn't bothered with the condom, wished she could feel his juices spurting into her, but she couldn't imagine him being that reckless. He looked after people, Austin did. He'd certainly look after his lover.

Even if he pushes me against the desk and rips my underwear. Remembering her directions, she hastily grabbed for the edge of the desk, but she couldn't reach

because his arms were around her waist, tugging and straightening her against him. "Mine," he told her.

"Yours," she agreed. Her breasts rested on his forearm. He still had his shirt on, but it was soft silk. She guessed it was okay to not have her hands in place if he wasn't letting her. It felt perfect, him holding her like this. She wondered if it would feel as good if she turned around. Maybe. Feeling any better, any more right, seemed like it might be a painful experience, so she melted against his good shoulder, the one that hadn't taken a bullet, letting her head loll backward, nuzzling against his chest. Who cared if she loved two men? At least she was with one of them now.

"Sorry, bro," said a familiar voice. "I should have warned you she was a screamer."

She turned around, her reluctance to do so faded. She pulled her skirt down too, and then realized her breasts were uncovered. It didn't matter, as it turned out. Austin moved in front of her and faced his brother, seemingly unconcerned his pants were down around his ankles.

"You've got to get better soundproofing, Oz. Anyone entering your reception room would know exactly what happened. Like, say, me."

"All right. Why are you here?"

"Doing you a favor. Jeez." But Tony grinned. "Don't anyone get dressed on my account. Although I have to say, Nicole, your bra would look better all the way off."

Chapter Eight

“So why are you here?” Austin asked. He didn’t care what his brother saw; it was nothing he hadn’t seen before. But out of consideration for Nicole, he felt obliged to shield her. He felt stupid talking with his pants down, so he pulled them up. Stark naked would have been fine.

“I’ve got some information. It’s not great, but it’s good enough.”

“Good enough for what?”

“To eliminate two of the three best suspects and narrow in on the third.”

“Who are the three best suspects?”

Tony smiled. “Well, me, for starters. I’ve got plenty of motive. I know I didn’t hire a man to kill Austin, but it’s a hard thing to prove you didn’t do anything. Still, for my purposes, I’m out.”

Austin had to suppress a grin.

“What’s your motive?” asked Nicole.

“I might think I was going to inherit, and his relationship with his secretary might be a threat. Or I might be horribly jealous, because the secretary is drop-dead gorgeous.”

“Are you horribly jealous?” asked Nicole. Austin looked back at her. She looked stricken after she said it, but her gaze didn’t waver. She’d managed to get her clothes straight, although she hadn’t retrieved the jacket yet. He preferred her without it.

“Absolutely. So like I said, I have motive.”

Nicole probably thinks he's joking. But I know him better. I remember him saying the best way to deceive someone is to tell the truth and let them think it's a lie. One of his private eye tricks.

The funny thing was, even as he'd had sex with Nicole, a part of him had wondered what it would be like if Tony had been there. Force of habit, he supposed. He and Tony had double-teamed so many women, including some of the dates Nicole had helped arrange when Tony could make the long drive up to Atlanta. And he hadn't been able to resist sticking his finger inside her as if he was warming her up to take on his brother.

"You wouldn't hire a hit man anyway. If you were going to kill me, you'd do it live and in person and with your fists. Or at least you'd try."

"I'd win too."

"I doubt it."

"Um, gentlemen?" Nicole murmured. "Quit acting like boys."

Tony laughed, and Austin joined in. "Yes, ma'am," said Tony mockingly. The words sent a shudder through Austin. Tony was a dom through and through, but Austin liked it on either side. He wondered if Nicole would ever want to switch around for an evening. He'd ask her sometime, but not real soon.

"So suspect number two is our lovely Nicole Kerrigan. She has good business sense, and she knows you, Austin, make deals that cost the company. Admittedly you're the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg too. Kill you, though, and she can stop you from making the craziest deal of your life, and she's very loyal. Some might think her allegiance is to the company and not you. It's a pretty powerful motive. She's been recently sexually harassed too." Tony winked.

There was no way. The idea of Nicole betraying him was unthinkable, and Tony making the accusation made his blood boil. "If you're bringing an accusation like that, you'd better be able to prove it," Austin growled.

"Or we'll, what, step outside and ignore the referee? I don't think so. In any case, when she had the chance to overrule you on the decision to give away your

patent, she backed you up instead. That pretty much seals it, even if it weren't perfectly obvious she's in love with you. She's either guiltless or way too clever for me." Tony chuckled. "And I refuse the second choice on general principles."

Same old Tony.

"So Armico. Unless you believe in a gunman taking random potshots, which I don't. I've eliminated the first two out of a sense of self-preservation and, um, whatever you want to call it. I eliminated some of the people who work there. The lower rungs don't have enough motive. Most of the upper people I'm pretty sure weren't involved, from the reactions I got from them when I showed up for the meeting. But the boss, Ken Bruster, and his second, Art Harrison, were possibilities."

"This guy is still out there," said Nicole.

Tony nodded. "That's right, but I've taken away his motive, at least for the time being. He not only doesn't profit from Austin's death, he needs Austin alive to repudiate Nicole's signature."

It was all nice and neat, except for one thing. "The problem is you're assuming a professional hit man, hired by someone. What professional hit man is going to miss?"

Tony shook his head. "You're thinking if the guy is a professional, he's going to be God's gift to marksmanship. He'll compensate perfectly for the wind—and the wind is strange in between all those tall buildings—and pick a distance where he can hit your head. One shot and you're dead. But that's not what makes someone a professional hit man. It's the willingness to put your life on the line, risking life in prison or a trip to the electric chair in exchange for a bit of cash. In this case, part of the cash Harrison or Bruster could make without your grain being given away for free. Bruster would make a lot more than Harrison, because he has a large stock holding in the company. He might stand to make millions of dollars. Harrison, on the other hand, would only make a few hundred thousand or so, plus whatever bonus he'd make for handling your account so well. We're not talking a man who

can afford to hire the best. We're talking about a guy who has to work for a living, hiring anyone who will do the job. And what he gets is a desperate criminal who doesn't have the discipline to learn to make one bullet count from a long distance or enough at stake to get close enough to do the job correctly."

"You think it's Harrison and not Bruster?"

"Harrison used to work in New York, so he would be more likely to know a hit man in New York than some. But mostly because for about an hour last night a man in a gray Toyota Avalon parked outside your house and watched. Bruster drives a Mercedes. The Avalon was registered to Arthur Harrison, although I can't exactly quote my source on that."

"But you've already said he doesn't want to kill me."

"Not at this point. He probably wants to talk to you and get you to repudiate Nicole's signature."

"Not happening."

Tony shrugged. "He doesn't know that."

"So why not tell me over the phone?"

"Don't worry. I came in a back entrance so I wouldn't be spotted. I came because I wanted to see Nicole and ask her if she was free for dinner. I'd be offering more, but it looks like you've worn her out."

Even though he'd been thinking fondly of the idea of a threesome a few minutes before, Austin didn't like the idea of Tony taking Nicole alone at all. "No. Fucking. Way. She's mine."

Tony smiled.

"I can make up my own mind, thank you." Nicole retrieved her jacket and shrugged it on, hiding her body in the way her shirt didn't. She did not look happy.

"Uh-oh," said Tony.

Austin took a deep breath. Where did that strong feeling of jealousy come from? On the one hand, the idea of Tony joining them was hot as hell. On the other,

he felt possessive about Nicole in a way he never had about any woman. He probably ought to apologize, but hadn't she made a point of saying he wasn't to have another woman?

Tony grinned. "You could come along, Oz. Dinner. Movie. A three-way?"

Nicole turned crimson. "Excuse me," she said, shouldering past Tony and out the door.

"Nicole!" Tony cried.

Austin felt like calling after her too, but he didn't. He took a few steps forward and laid a hand on Tony's shoulder. "Let her have her peace. She needs to think about it. That might not have been the best time to broach the subject either."

He watched as she flipped the nameplate on her desk to the IS OUT side and punched the "away" on the phone. He smiled, proud. Even rattled, she was the model of efficiency.

"So," said Tony after she'd disappeared down the hall to the elevator. "You would, huh?"

"I would. Yeah. But Nicole isn't like the others, Tony."

"Yeah. She's not." Tony's voice held admiration, but Austin didn't think it was directed at him. "But how do you mean it?"

"She's for keeps. For me, at least." Those weren't words Austin had ever intended to utter. But then he hadn't really intended to make love to his executive assistant. It was just one of those things that had happened.

For a few minutes, Tony stared at Austin. Austin wasn't sure Tony really understood what he was saying. Tony wasn't a long-term commitment kind of guy. They'd always made sure any woman they were with was more than satisfied, but they were always upfront about what they offered. A wonderful evening, not a relationship.

"You're in love with her, aren't you?"

“Yeah.” *Nothing wrong with that. Happens to everyone eventually. Wait until it happens to you.*

Tony nodded slowly. “I guess I knew. Just wanted to hear you say it. I think she loves you too.”

Austin knew Tony could read people better than he could, so the words meant a lot. “I hope so.”

“I know it. Well then. I’ll sneak out the back way, and no one will be the wiser. Don’t leave for a few minutes though. I want to be in place to watch in case Harrison shows up. I don’t think he wants to kill you, but he might threaten you.”

“Why don’t we go to the police with what you have? It seems like it would be enough for them to at least start their investigation.”

Tony made a face and then relaxed. “You’re probably right actually. I get so used to playing these things alone I don’t think about the cops until it’s all wrapped up with a tidy bow. But they can do a better job keeping Harrison under surveillance, and they’d definitely be better trying to find a link between him and the triggerman. It’s too sketchy for them—the car parked outside your house is the most damning piece of evidence, and he could easily say he just wanted to talk. The rest is feelings from having met him, friction from him meeting me before—I—”

The phone rang before Tony could argue himself back into doing things his way. Austin picked it up. “Summers.”

A muffled voice spoke. “I have your secretary, Summers. And if—”

As his blood turned cold, Austin pushed the speakerphone button. “—you ever want to see her again, I suggest you follow instructions very carefully.”

Tony slapped a hand over Austin’s mouth. “This is my specialty, let me handle this,” he whispered before letting Austin go.

“What do you want?” Tony pointed at the LED display where the initiating number was showing. It was Nicole’s cell phone number. Austin grabbed a slip of paper and wrote *Nicole’s phone* while Harrison talked.

"I want to talk to you, Summers, with some leverage this time. Do what I tell you and nobody needs to get hurt."

Tony saw the paper and nodded. "Tell me where to meet you."

"Come to Stone Mountain Park; hike up the path going clockwise. Be there by three. I'll see you and catch up. If there's any sign of cops, the girl's getting hurt."

"There's police on that path all the time."

"Yeah, and I know the difference. Don't call the cops. I'll know. I've got a man on the inside. The girl claims she loves you. Do you love her back? It's all good to me either way. Say the word, and she dies. She fucked this thing up too. She was supposed to be the rational one."

Well, you're sure as hell not. Austin bit his tongue though. The woman he loved was in the hands of a madman, and he was letting his brother handle it. He knew it was the right thing to do, but it still wasn't easy.

"Fine. I'll come," Tony said. "I don't love the girl, but she's one of my people nonetheless."

There was a sound like a scuffle, and then Nicole's voice rang out. "Don't come, Mr. Summers! He'll kill you!" Then there was a sound like a slap, and Austin winced. His fists clenched with anger.

"I'm going to want to be able to verify she's still alive before I get out of my car at Stone Mountain."

"Fine. I'm ditching this phone, but give me a cell number and I'll call you."

Tony gave him Austin's cell number. The line went dead. Tony glanced at his watch and then turned to Austin. "I think that was Harrison's voice, but I couldn't swear to it. He was trying to disguise it, but he lost control at the end when he started getting excited."

"He said not to call the cops." Austin didn't know if they should or not. Normally he'd be inclined to call. He couldn't think straight with Nicole in danger.

To have finally connected with her and then have this happen was unbearable. But he'd have to bear it, for her sake. Rescue her, or die trying.

"Right, he did. If we're going to be sure to make it by three, one of us will have to head out soon. There's a few things he doesn't know; one is we know who he is, and the other is he thinks there's only one of us."

Austin remembered the way Harrison's voice had broken in anger before Nicole had gotten free and yelled, "He's going to kill you."

"Why would he want to kill me? It would completely wreck the contract if he did."

"I don't know."

"We need to rescue her, Tony."

"No joke. Hold your horses." Tony's fingers steepled, and his eyes closed. Austin paced.

Finally Austin spoke. "I'll go."

"He can just shoot you, you know."

"It's a risk I'm willing to take."

"How fast can you run?"

"Huh? What distance?"

"Might be a while. Might be short. It'll certainly be uphill."

Austin nodded. "I'm in good shape. As good as you, even. What's your plan?"

Tony told him.

Chapter Nine

“Why are you doing this?” Nicole asked. Her wrists chafed from the ropes wrapped around them. She wore the jacket her captor had provided with the pockets cut out so she could stick her hands through them and have them tied up under the jacket. It threw off her balance to walk that way, but the pistol in the hand of the man behind her was a powerful incentive to keep moving. His hand and the pistol were concealed by a coat. People passed by them on the wide path up the mountain. Some of them nodded and smiled a greeting, not noticing anything amiss. She knew he’d shoot if she tried to signal them.

“You don’t know what it is like to have your life ripped from you, Kerrigan. To lose everything you have because of one person. You’re about to find out. Ah, here we are. My little hiding spot. We’ll stand here for a moment.”

Nicole stopped walking. She couldn’t see anything special about the place, and an elderly couple was coming downhill toward them. But she was thankful for the breather. The steep slope was hell in heels. “You still have your life. Life is what you make of it, you know. But if you do this, you’re throwing the rest of it away. You could get pretty far in your car before anyone knew you were gone, and make a new life somewhere.”

“You don’t understand.” He gave the couple walking by a cheerful “good afternoon.” The moment they were out of earshot, he murmured, “Move it, granny,” under his breath.

“You’re right, I don’t,” Nicole murmured.

“This way, while no one is looking.” Harrison nudged her off the path, through some bushes, and behind a large rock outcropping.

She moved reluctantly, hoping someone would spot them, afraid of the consequences of obvious resistance. The bushes scratched her bare legs a dozen times. If she'd worn nylons, she'd probably have been caught by them, but she'd dressed in the morning hoping something would happen between her and Austin for which pantyhose would be in the way. At least she had that memory.

"Sit down." Harrison pushed her to the ground.

Without her hands to break her fall, she hit her head. For a moment, things went blurry, and then they focused again. *Just a bump. It hurts, but it's just a bump.* She did her best to ignore it and to ignore the blood on her legs.

Harrison knelt down, peering around the rock. He pulled his pistol into view and sighted down its barrel. Nicole didn't know much about guns; it looked like an automatic of some kind, about six inches long. "I met your boss a long time ago. He got in between me and a woman in a bar once, when I was in Tampa. And then he shows up here, right when I finally have a cushy job, and he doesn't even remember me! I tried to make sure he had to attend that meeting and skip the consortium, but somehow he managed to do both. Handling the account with Summers was make or break for me with Armico. I've got a spotty record, and I'm not that young anymore. Bruster as much as told me that if Summers screwed us over with the millet seed, I was out on the street, but if I handled it right, I'd get a promotion. But how am I supposed to control what your idiot boss does? He thinks he's better than everyone else."

It didn't seem like a good idea to tell Harrison that Austin *was* better. She couldn't panic. She pulled at the ropes around her wrists. There was a world of difference between being tied up by Tony or Austin and being tied up by Harrison. She remembered screaming for Tony. Yes, a world of difference. Harrison clearly didn't know there were two separate people he was angry at. He'd take his revenge on one, and she'd be left with the other—if he didn't blame her for what happened to his brother.

She had been on her way back to the office to tell them she wanted them both. She wasn't sure how Austin would take that. She wasn't sure that Tony wanted more than one night of kink either, and she wasn't going to settle for that. There was always a chance both of them would be upset with her decision, but she wasn't going to sit and wait for her life to happen to her anymore. And she couldn't decide between the two men.

Now it seemed like she had no choice. She tried to move her legs so she'd be in position to get up and throw her body at Harrison when the right moment came, but without her hands, she wasn't sure she was going to be able to get up. And she couldn't practice.

"There's more to life than one job," she said at last.

"Yeah, but it won't be so easy to get another job if I get fired from this one. And never anything good. I thought I finally had something good. I just had to work with Summers, be nice to him, persuade him to do business. Kiss up. All that work, and then he throws it all away by designing another product to compete with his own profits. He just had to be better than everyone else. And I'm the one who suffers. I wasn't going to put up with it."

"What did you do about it?"

"I hired a guy I met in New York to shoot him in the head. He said he got off a clean shot, but Summers wasn't even in New York. He was right here the whole time, acting smug, laughing at me for being late to a meeting that shouldn't have ever happened. After I deal with this, I'm going to get the double-crossing asshole hit man. Poetic justice, huh? A hit on a hit man?"

Nicole could imagine a few better instances of poetic justice, but she didn't say so.

"And you!" Harrison swung his gun toward her. "You had to sign the stupid contract. Don't any of you have any sense at all? I'll be doing the world a favor, getting rid of a couple of people who can't do basic math. Improving the gene pool by stopping you before you breed."

His gun hand shook. For a moment, Nicole thought she was going to die. She hoped someone heard the shot and her death saved Austin and Tony. But then Harrison snarled, "Too bad Summers wants to talk to you later, huh?"

She decided the question was rhetorical.

"Anyway, the fucker got me fired. And now I'm going to take his life. That's why I'm doing this. That's why I'm going to kill him. I can't decide whether to kill you too or leave you alive with the memory that I've taken your man and your job all with one easy shot. Don't think they'll catch me. There's another way to cut from here down to the path, and I'm a good runner. I'll be in my car before the police get here, and I'll be gone before Summers's blood starts to congeal on the ground."

Nicole fought down nausea. The image and the ache in her head weren't helping. Harrison glanced down at her legs every once in a while and smiled. The scratches weren't oozing blood anymore, at least.

She waited. He waited.

He glanced at his watch. "When I let you talk, you're going to say you're all right. Nothing else. Understood?"

Nicole nodded.

He punched in a few numbers. Nicole could hear the ringing, but no one answered.

"Damn it, that's his office number, of course he's not answering. What's his cell?"

Nicole gave him a number, substituting a three for seven. He dialed. She couldn't hear what the person on the other end said, but she was pretty sure it was in Spanish.

He pointed his gun at her. "Try again, bitch. I should shoot you, but it would make too much fucking noise."

She didn't think it was wise to set him off again. She gave him the right number. Austin and Tony were both smart; they'd figure out how to do something,

she hoped. She closed her eyes and started to pray. She thought of telling God she'd go to church every Sunday if she just got out of this alive, but she knew she loved her Sunday morning sleep-in too much to keep such a promise. So she settled for something simple. *Please. Please.*

"Yeah, Summers. Your phone call. Here's Nicole. She's all right, but you better be up this hill fast or there will be a few holes in her." He shoved the phone at Nicole. "Talk, like I told you."

"Don't worry about me," she said. "I'm okay. He's got—"

He hit her with the fist that held the phone and sent her sprawling. Pain blossomed in her jaw. "I told you not to say anything else, bitch." He clicked the phone off and crouched down behind the rock again, gun at the ready, pointed toward the path. "Just about ten minutes now."

Nicole didn't say anything. She couldn't even rub her jaw. She struggled to sit again, pulling her legs under her so she could push herself forward if she needed to. Her head was already aching, and slamming into him headfirst seemed like a pretty painful idea, but she didn't have another plan.

He glanced over at her. "Oh, I almost forgot." He pulled something pink and black out of his pocket, and in moments the black strap was behind her head and the pink ball was up against her mouth. He pinched her nose closed until she had to open her mouth to breathe, and then stuffed the ball in. It tasted awful, like rubber and sweat. Saliva formed in her mouth, and she couldn't spit it out. All she could do was drool.

"Now that's a good look for you. Too bad I don't have time to fuck you."

The creep hadn't even blinked at her translucent shirt when he'd taken her suit jacket off to replace it with his tricked-up jacket, but stick a gag in her mouth, add a bruise and bleeding legs, and suddenly she was sexy? *Ugh.*

He went back to crouching and waiting. Every once in a while, he'd look her way and grin. Not only did it make her feel uncomfortable, it was making it harder not to tip him off to her intended lunge. But maybe he'd miss Austin or Tony,

whichever was coming, because he was distracted. She moaned and tried to make it sound like she was turned on, but even to her it sounded fake. He grinned wider.

“Shit! He’s almost past me. And running!” He stood. “The asshole ran all the way up.” He crashed through the brushes and sprinted away. He moved so fast Nicole missed him with her lunge and hit her face on the dirt.

Damn.

A few seconds later, she heard a gunshot. And she realized she was having problems breathing.

Chapter Ten

Running up the Stone Mountain loop was no easy task to start with, and it was hard for Tony to keep up with Austin, fifty or so yards behind, as intended. And Austin had a gunshot wound and a Kevlar vest on to slow him down. *And I thought I was in good shape. Have to start taking it to a new level.*

Then it all happened. Harrison came out, holding a gun, running after Austin to get a clear shot. Tony pulled his, stopped, and crouched. He had one good chance before Harrison crested a rise and he'd have to run after him again. He took one breath, let it out, and fired.

Harrison fell. Tony got up and started running. He couldn't hit a prone target with a handgun. He needed to know Harrison was down for good. *Keep running, bro. Stay safe.* A few yards later, he knew Harrison wasn't going to get up and start shooting ever again. He'd hit him, right through the chest, and red was already soaking his jacket. He'd aimed lower, but with a pistol at a moving target at that range, he was glad to have hit Harrison at all.

A hardcore jogger in a running bra and shorts stopped and stared. A man walking his toy poodle came into view, took a look, and walked the other way.

He took Austin's cell out of his pocket and speed-dialed his own. In a few seconds, Austin picked up.

"Got him. Get back down here. We gotta find Nicole and call the cops." Tony hit the Stop button after he'd said what he needed to say.

"All under control, people." He took out his wallet and flashed it open quick so they couldn't see the absence of a badge but would fill in the details on their own.

He saw where Harrison had come from, and his heart thudded. Harrison could have killed Nicole the moment they'd gotten off the phone. He crashed through the brush and spotted her behind the rock, facedown, not moving.

He rolled her over and stripped the gag off her. Her chest rose, and she suddenly convulsed, gasping for air. "Easy, girl. Easy." A gag could kill a person if they started to breathe wrong and aspirated enough saliva instead of drooling it all out. But Nicole had air now. She was going to be okay. As she gathered her breath, he held her up in a sitting position with one arm, put his gun down, and opened his cell phone. Everyone had cell phones nowadays, and the jogger and the dog owner were probably all on theirs dialing 911. But he'd lose his license if he didn't call too.

"Anthony Summers, private detective. I shot a thug on Stone Mountain because he was trying to shoot someone else. We need police for the stiff and an ambulance for the woman he was holding captive."

He looked over at Nicole. She had a nasty bruise on her jaw and scratches all up and down her long bare legs. He wanted to stay with her. He knew that wasn't his role. He let her go, holstered his gun, and stood up. "I'll get Austin to you. You take it easy, sweetheart." He ran back through the brush.

"Don't touch the gun, ma'am," he yelled to the jogger. She was bending down to pick Harrison's gun up. "Back away from the body and let the police take care of it."

"Um, yeah," she said. "I'll just be moving on."

"They take a dim view of witnesses not sticking around, so I wouldn't do that if I were you."

"Oh. Right."

Austin came running down, and Tony jerked his head toward the bushes. "She's in there; she's all right. He's dead."

Austin's eyes widened. Death wasn't pretty, no matter who it happened to. "Thanks." He ran off to find Nicole.

"Welcome. Don't touch any evidence back there you don't have to touch."

He looked down at the body. A less sadistic man might have made a good dom. Tony wasn't one to blame everything on someone's childhood, but he knew experiences shaped a man, gave one person with identical genes a love for science and turned another into a private detective. He wondered what had gotten Art Harrison to the point where he had to be gunned down like a dog. He didn't regret it; it had to be done. He just wished it hadn't been necessary. He wanted to be cool about it all, detached, but he'd never actually had to kill anyone before. He knew he wasn't going to forget the vision of blood making an ever-widening circle on Harrison's chest for a long time. But he couldn't turn away either.

Life's a bitch.

The park police arrived first and took his gun. That was fine; he and it needed time apart before they were on speaking terms again. The county cops followed and asked the same questions. They all seemed to think he was trying to kill Harrison. They all thought he was some kind of expert shot to have hit the guy right in the heart from that range while he was running. He tried to remember they were just doing their job.

It wasn't the first time he'd been told to hang around and not leave town until an investigation was finished, but they let him go. In life Harrison claiming he had a man on the inside of the police force seemed a pretty threatening possibility. In death the claim seemed pathetic. *Maybe I should have called the cops. Maybe they'd have handled it better. Maybe they'd have taken him alive.*

Then again, maybe Nicole would be dead, rather than just bruised and frightened.

Chapter Eleven

Nicole stood in front of the door to Room 513 of the Magnolia Hotel. Austin had pretended to be Tony, too drunk to remember his room number, to get the number from the desk clerk. Now he was downstairs, waiting for her signal.

Tony hadn't spoken to either of them for three days after the shooting. She knocked on the door. Nobody answered.

"Maid service," Nicole called out.

"Go away," yelled a gruff voice from inside.

Nicole shrugged. *"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,"* her mother had told her over and over. *Of course my mother didn't imagine I'd be standing in front of my lover's brother's hotel room wearing a tight red dress that will flash my ass if I bend forward. Oh well.* She knocked again. "Land shark."

"What the fuck?" She heard a rustle inside, and then the door opened. Tony was wearing jeans and a white undershirt that clung to every muscle of his torso. There was a bottle of scotch on the dresser behind him, but he hadn't gotten very far in it, and she couldn't smell alcohol on his breath.

"You," he said.

She slipped into the room, brushing against his body. "Yeah. Me." She couldn't tell whether her being her was a good thing or a bad thing. "You're lucky I wasn't a land shark."

He covered his face with his hand, sighed, and let the door close as she moved farther into the room. "Where's Austin?"

"Down in the lobby."

“Thought I’d give you guys some alone time.”

“We thought maybe you’d had enough alone time for a while. Austin’s worried about you.”

“Only Austin?”

“Only Austin. I wasn’t worried. I knew you could take care of yourself. I had another motive.”

“Which was?”

“I came to reward you for saving me.” She grabbed the hem of her dress and pulled it up, peeling the whole thing off like a sweater, then tossing it to the bed. The red lace bra and thong she wore underneath were so transparent they didn’t really hide anything. Austin had picked them out for her. That was the only reason she dared wear them with nothing else on. The last two days Austin had been in total control, both in the office and in his bedroom. She was low on sleep, but she’d never felt better.

“Austin took the big risk. All I did was shoot someone. Thank him, not me.” Despite his words, his gaze roved her hungrily. He didn’t make a move toward her, but she knew she had him hooked.

“You gonna just stand there, or are you gonna come get your reward?” The back of her leg brushed against the queen-size bed in the middle of the room.

“Austin doesn’t mind?”

“Mr. Summers picked out my underwear. He ordered me to wear them up here. He ordered me to take my dress off. And I loved every minute. His orders made my nipples tingle. They made my pussy wet. I’m melting inside right now, Mr. Summers. It’s your turn to give the orders. Please.”

Tony took a step forward but didn’t come all the way. She’d been intending to tell Tony there had to be some kind of commitment for it all to work for her. But Austin’s orders had made a difference. Austin was committed to her. And she did

owe Tony. But right now what mattered just as much was that he was hurting from what he'd had to do, and hiding from her.

"Any way you want me, Mr. Summers. You tell me, and I'll pleasure you exactly as you say."

Suddenly he was up against her. She could feel the hardness of his cock against her stomach through the denim. "What's your safe word, pet?"

A shiver ran up and down her spine. But she hadn't forgotten. "Nightingale, Sir."

"Good girl. Get up on the bed and get those clothes out of my way."

She scrambled onto the bed, heart beating fast. For a moment, she hesitated. How could she do this to her boss? How could she cheat on him, with him waiting downstairs, even with his knowledge, permission, and encouragement?

Tony glanced at her once as he crossed the room to the dresser. He picked up his cell phone from where it sat right next to the scotch bottle. He gestured for her to go on as he waited for whoever he was calling to pick up.

It had seemed like such a hot idea at the time, when she was talking about it with Austin. Talking and doing weren't the same thing. She wanted Tony. She wanted Austin. She wanted them both, and that made no sense to her at all. It would never work out. She was being greedy. Austin was nice and safe. Tony she wasn't sure about, and he was obviously affected by the shooting. He was ordering pizza, for all she knew. Her fingers slipped on the hooks to her bra, and she realized they were shaking.

"Bro," said Tony at last. "Get the hell up here and help me fuck your woman."

Austin's response was lost to her. "Whatever," Tony replied and tossed the phone back on the polished wood top of the drawers, where it spun a few times before coming to a stop. Then he looked straight at Nicole. "If you're not naked by the time your boss gets here, you're gonna be in trouble from both of us. Your cute little undies did their stuff, and the better the lingerie, the less you get to wear it. It's one of the great paradoxes. Strip."

She wasn't scared anymore, but her excitement didn't help her any with the hooks. At last, however, she managed to get them undone. She let her bra slide from her shoulders onto the bed, aware of Tony staring. She tried to look him straight in the eye but then decided she had better not. She had been blindfolded for most of their first lovemaking, if that's what it had been, and she was afraid her resolve would break under those hot brown eyes.

She slipped her thong over her hips and down her legs and placed it on top of the bra. She had shaved her mound and pussy at her boss's request—no, at his order. It made her feel twice as naked. *Maybe that's the point.* She looked up at Tony.

"Has my brother taught you to kneel?" Tony asked with a fierce intensity.

She nodded. She straightened up, moved her knees apart, arched her back so her tits were pushed to prominence and their hard peaks pointed toward her dom. With her legs spread, her pussy shaved, nothing was hidden from view. Like her boss wanted it. Like Tony wanted it too, from the look on his face. Her hands were behind her back, so they couldn't serve to cover her either.

"Stay," said Tony. He reached over and took a lock of hair that was falling forward and moved it behind her shoulders.

"Yes, Sir."

"You're wet already."

He could see that too. She blushed crimson and whispered, "Yes, Sir." She wanted something inside her in the worst possible way. But she knew it would happen only when her two men decided it should. So she waited.

He walked around her, looking at her from every angle. She kept her face forward, not wanting to see his reaction to each imperfection of her body. She heard the rustling of clothes behind her and slightly to the right. She wanted to watch, but clearly he didn't want her to. She forced herself to stare at the whiskey bottle.

There was a knocking on the door.

“Get on all fours, facing away from the door.”

Nicole scrambled to do as Tony asked. She found herself facing him. He was naked, his long, thick cock sticking out at her face. He too had shaved his nether regions. She had never seen a man like that, not even in pictures.

“Call out for him to come in, girl. Loud and proud. Then suck my dick and expect to do as you’re told for the next several hours.”

What if it isn’t Austin? But orders were orders, and Tony would protect her. “Come in!” she yelled. And then, as directed, she slipped his cock between her lips, slowly going over the head of it, then letting the shaft slide in. He tasted richly of sweat and smelled musky. Like Austin, but more so. She heard the door open behind her. Tony grabbed her head and pulled her forward. His cock tickled the back of her throat, and then he pulled her back.

“What, you thought because you were sucking cock you’d have some control? That’s not what this is all about. Austin, I think she needs your cock in her pussy.”

Yes! she wanted to shout, but she couldn’t because her mouth was full. He pulled her forward again, his strong hands on each side of her head, pulling and pushing, setting a rhythm he controlled, not her.

In one smooth thrust, Austin entered her from behind, filling her slick channel. Her tummy fluttered. Perfect. She hadn’t realized how on the edge she was until her pussy trembled. *Oh God.*

Hard and fast. Please. As if Austin had heard her unspoken thoughts, he rammed into her, filling her all the way, making her jerk forward to take even more of Tony’s cock. She tightened her lips around the shaft in her mouth. Nothing was under her control at all. Her breasts jiggled almost painfully beneath her, all heavy and tingling. It took only Austin sliding his hands forward from her hip bones to squeeze her tits to send her over the edge, her nostrils flaring to get oxygen.

Her pussy squeezed her boss’s cock. She sucked his brother as the sudden release in her core made her whole body shake. Austin rode her until she was spent, the grip she hadn’t realized she had on the sheets relaxing.

Tony took a step back, taking his cock out of her mouth. She moaned. It was kind of nice to have something to suck on while getting a mind-shattering orgasm from behind. Confusing because she didn't know where to concentrate, but definitely hot.

"You get her ass now, because you aren't as thick," said Tony.

Austin laughed. "You wish."

Nicole wasn't sure she could even tell the difference between the two cocks if Tony hadn't been shaved. They were both the same size. The two brothers didn't smell quite the same, but even that might depend on who took a shower most recently and what sort of cologne they were wearing. They didn't talk the same. She could tell them apart. But whose cock was thicker? They were both way too thick to go there.

"No, no you don't," said Nicole as Austin pulled out of her.

"That's not exactly your safe word, Nicole."

Nightingale. She wasn't going to say it. Let these stubborn men find out they couldn't get in that way for themselves, whatever. Or maybe they could. She hated to admit it, but her pussy was juicing at the thought.

Austin leaned forward. "Nicole, one of us has to direct. I'm the easier one, more likely to give in to a disappointed glance or a frown. I'm all about listening and giving you exactly what you want, even though you're not in control. Whereas Tony—"

Tony grinned. "I'm all about taking what we want from you, and making you find out you want things you never knew you did and couldn't have asked for if you wanted to. I'll push you to your limits and then stretch them. Occasionally it makes a scene go wrong, and you might have to use your safe word. But when it works, we'll amaze you and you'll amaze yourself."

Austin's soft voice took over. "You'll have to choose what sort of dominance you want tonight, because in the end, one of us has to have the final say. You don't want us to spend all night arguing about you while you wait for something to happen."

She had the feeling they'd given this little speech before, or variations of it. Austin was the dominant man she'd always wanted him to be. But she'd come up here to reward Tony. And the idea of being pushed had its appeal, especially with Austin there. She trusted Tony, but Austin made her feel extra safe. She turned to face Tony and knelt on the bed. "You're in charge tonight, Sir."

"Good." Tony grabbed a condom from the drawer, ripped open the package, and handed it to her. "Put it on me. You're going to get the fucking of your life."

She rolled the condom over his cock, making sure there wasn't an air bubble in the tip. The times before meeting Austin that she'd had sex, she'd always watched the man do it himself, but there was something definitely sexy about smoothing tight latex into place on a big, thick shaft.

She must have been grinning. "Like that, do you?" Tony teased.

"Uh-huh."

He hopped onto the bed, making the whole bed shake, and pulled her to him. "Climb on me. I want to see you do the work while I play with your tits. You're pretty sensitive there. I want to see what you can take, slave girl."

She straddled him and slowly lowered herself down over his cock. Her breasts tingled at the idea they were going to be singled out for attention. Their peaks bunched up and hardened under his gaze. She was making them available to him. *See what I can take?* She shivered.

"Don't pay any attention to what your boss is doing. He can do what he wants to you. Right now focus on me. You'll call me Sir, and him Boss, and we'll get along fine. For now you don't talk to your boss." He traced a circle around one tightened peak and grinned. "Now these look ripe for attention. See the way they've gotten all hard? And I know it's not *that* cold in here. Not with two big men sharing their warmth with you."

She could feel a cock slap her ass, and then she felt a wet finger touch her anus. And she was supposed to concentrate on Sir? She'd started to turn her head when Tony pinched her nipple and stretched it toward him. "Ow!"

“Your attention goes here, sweetheart. And I’ll do what it takes to keep it here, understand?”

Nicole breathed. “Yes, Sir.” If her boss intended to put his cock all the way up her ass, then Sir would have a challenge distracting her. The worst thing was, she was pretty sure he was up for it.

He released his grip. His hands glided over her breasts, avoiding the most sensitive spots. “Put your hands on the bed, and dangle those breasts right in front of my face. Move on me, girl. Make my cock slide in your pussy, get some friction going.”

Nicole did as directed, rising and falling, feeling him inside her. She squeezed him with her pussy. She’d thought she’d be able to push him over the edge and make him come in her mouth, and he hadn’t had much of a pause since then. Maybe if she made him come fast, she’d disrupt whatever they were planning to do to her ass and her tits. Besides, she had come here to reward him.

His thumbs brushed both her nipples simultaneously, even as a slick finger entered her ass. *Getting my breasts in his face isn’t the only reason Sir told me to put my hands on the bed. My ass is more exposed too.* He tilted his hand to one side, captured a nipple in his mouth, and sucked hard. *Oh my.*

He reached around her and slapped her right butt cheek. “Keep going.” She hadn’t realized she’d stopped, but she had, she’d gotten so distracted by the sucking and the finger. She lifted herself up and then lowered herself on his long, thick pole. Mmm. She did it again, faster, getting her legs into it, up, down, filling herself with him.

Her ass felt fuller all of a sudden, but it was still only fingers. Possibly two. Austin had put so much lube in there they were sliding around, exciting nerves she barely knew. Tony’s fingers had closed around the peak he wasn’t sucking on, pinching, pulling. Tingles ran straight from her nipples to her womb. She tried to ignore them. *This is your turn.* She squeezed Tony’s cock, slid it in and out as fast as she could go, wanting it to explode in her. Maybe someday they’d both be faithful to

her, and they wouldn't need condoms, and she'd be able to feel his cock spurting hot and wet deep inside her. Both of their cocks. Her men. Her dominants. Their slave.

"Yours," she said aloud.

"Mine," came an answer from behind as something thick pushed at the ring of muscle but didn't penetrate.

"Mine," came an answer from the man who sucked and twisted her nipples until her rear muscles relaxed and her boss's cock slid all the way inside her, stretching her farther than she'd thought she could be stretched.

Sir's hips bucked, and he took over the rhythm, sliding into her, filling her at the same time his brother did. She felt like the two cocks practically had to be touching each other; there wasn't really room for both, but somehow there was. The idea turned her on. *Two cocks. Mine. All mine.*

Sir tugged at her peaks again, followed by a hard thrust inside by both men, and her world exploded. She closed her eyes tight and screamed. She felt her ass grabbing, her pussy clenching, her breasts on fire, her core bursting. "Oh my God. Oh yes yes yes."

She opened her eyes in time to see Sir's face distort as his hips bucked, and he let out a moan softer than anything she'd imagined him capable of, followed by a soft smile. She grinned. Then another groan, behind her, as Austin's body went as rigid as his cock for a moment as he came inside her too.

"Wow." She collapsed on Sir, pushing her breasts into his face. He'd push her off if she was smothering him, but since he seemed to like her tits, he was welcome to them. And then her boss was on her too, and she was the sandwich in a great big warm cuddle, with the two big men all around her.

"We should do that again sometime," she murmured, dreamily.

"Give us a few minutes," said one of them.

She wasn't even sure she'd be ready in a few minutes. Weren't men supposed to need more recovery time? If they were serious and chose to tag team her, she

might never catch a breath. *What a wonderful way to go. But I'm safe, here, with my men.*

Chapter Twelve

Austin watched Nicole sleeping peacefully, a contented smile on her face. Tony was cuddled up against her back. Her head had been resting on his chest, but Austin had slipped out from under her so he could see her face.

To his surprise, Tony got up and signaled to him to join him as he moved to the window. Nicole made a noise as the bed rocked. Austin waited until she seemed to be settled again before very carefully getting up and heading over to the window.

“What is it?”

“I should go back to Tampa.”

Austin frowned. “Don’t the police want you to stay?”

“That’s only for a day or so; they’ll be content if they know where to find me, and I can come back when they need me.” Tony paused. “I think I’m falling in love with your secretary. I don’t know how you kept your hands off her for years.”

“Well, you obviously didn’t,” Austin retorted and regretted it. If anything, Tony had done him a favor, and he’d shown at least some restraint.

“No. I didn’t. Tell her thanks for this night of fun. It was special. Probably more special than I should let it be.” He made a face. “Never thought a woman would get to me so much. Especially if I was with her and you together. The threesome thing was always a good way to make sure things stayed loose and easy. Didn’t really work this time though.” He turned, walked back toward the bed, and started picking up his clothes. “I’ll find another hotel room.”

“Aren’t you even going to give her a chance?”

"For what? To choose? No, I'm not. It's simpler this way. I'm not going to compete with you, bro." Tony pulled on his pants.

"No. To choose both of us over either one."

"You're not serious." But he walked back over to where Austin was waiting at the window.

Austin dropped his voice back down. "I've never been more serious, Tony. Look, I'm sorry I got all jealous the night she walked out on us. I don't know what came over me. And I'm not stupid; I know being in a triad is hard work. But we could try."

"Harder than you're thinking. Sometimes I'd be alone with her, and you'd be at a meeting. Think you can handle that? You're in love with her too. And jealousy is a pretty natural thing. Evolution and all that. It's how you make sure your genes get passed down rather than some other bloke's."

"Don't try to teach *me* genetics. Our genes are the same, Tony, not that it's the issue. I don't even know if she wants children yet. I know this: she wants and deserves something more than a few nights of fun. I've been putting her off, and she won't wait much longer. *I* won't wait much longer. I can live with you being alone with her. I dealt with my feelings some tonight, and that's why I did, so I'd know how I'd feel. I need to know she's in safe hands. Hands that love her. If you love her, so much the better."

"I'd have to move."

"You told me a few weeks ago Tampa wasn't home. It's just the place you're living in, you said."

"I'm not going to hang around and mooch off you."

"No one's asking you to. But I'm hoping I can convince Nicole to move in—sorry, that we can convince Nicole to move in. There's room enough for three in my house. You can pay rent if you like. You'll certainly be asked to pay for your share of the food and everything else."

Tony glanced back at Nicole. She was lying there, naked, peaceful, smiling, her skin shining with sweat. Austin could see the wheels turning in his brother's brain.

"You're sure? Being a gumshoe attracts the attention of some people you'd rather not have attention from, and they might be interested in where I live."

Austin chuckled. "Apparently being a microbiologist attracts some of the same kind of attention. Who knew?"

Tony nodded and reached for Austin. The two men joined in a firm embrace.

"Now there's a handsome sight," said a woman's voice. Nicole. She had her face propped up, cheek on hand, while her elbow sank into the bed. "What are you two plotting?"

Austin opened his mouth to tell her, but Tony spoke up first. "We'll tell you tomorrow at dinner. Wear the dress."

Austin frowned. He might have convinced Tony on the general outlines of the plan, but now Tony would have to do it his way. He shrugged and smiled, aware Nicole was watching him.

"I'll try to be patient, Sir." She looked between them. "Might I be in the middle of one of those hugs?"

"Sure," said Austin. He and Tony walked over to her. He took the far end of the bed so he'd face her on his right shoulder rather than on his left, and Tony took the close end. Together they enfolded her in a warm hug.

Austin grinned.

* * *

"I love you, Nicole," Tony said.

"And I also love you," said Austin.

Nicole looked between the two men. Austin wore a tie. Tony didn't, and his shirt was unbuttoned at the neck. Tony's hands, holding her right hand, were rough; Austin's, holding her left, were smooth. His chin looked smoother too. They

might be identical twins, but they'd never fool her as to which was which. They were two very different people.

They want me to decide between them? Her heart hammered. She didn't know which one to choose. She didn't want to choose. She loved knowing that at any time Austin might call her in to his office, and she never knew whether it would be for business or pleasure. But Tony was even more unpredictable. She avoided their glances, squeezed both their hands, and looked at the plate of shrimp linguine Alfredo in front of her.

The two men held on to her hands when she tried to pull them back, which made it impossible to eat. They had a table off in the corner, but she still felt like people were staring at her. Her dress had attracted stares when she walked in. Her back was to the restaurant now, at least.

"I love both of you," she blurted out, not really intending to but feeling rather frustrated. "I'm sorry. I don't know what to say." She tried to pull back her hands again, but they weren't letting her. If she struggled too hard, she would surely attract attention.

"We want you, Nicole," said Tony.

"We want you as our lover," said Austin. She looked up, and they both looked into her eyes with that same intense stare. She wanted to look away.

"We want you for our slave," said Tony. That stopped her. She knew she must look like a deer in the headlights. Her heart beat even harder. Yes. That was Tony all over, to put it so bluntly. *Our slave? Tony and Austin both?* Tony brought his free hand out from under the table and put something on the middle of it. It was a half inch wide band of leather, with a buckle at one end and a steel ring dangling at the middle. A collar. The ring was for a leash. *Oh my God.*

Austin glanced over at Tony briefly and then looked back at Nicole. Tony's hand disappeared under the table again. *Is he going to bring out a leash in public?* She knew she would put the collar on, that she would let him attach a leash to her and take her out of the restaurant if he wanted. She would never be able to come

into Vincenzo's again, but she would do whatever he asked of her. Whatever either of them asked of her, really. Austin would never do that to her. She looked at Tony. *Please don't.*

Tony's hand and Austin's appeared stretched toward her at the same time. "We want you to be our wife," Austin told her. He turned his hand over, and so did Tony. Two rings glittered. The one in Tony's hand was white gold, a deep black sapphire surrounded by diamonds. Austin's matched it in every detail, except it was yellow gold and the center stone was a shimmering green emerald. "The law, alas, frowns on such things, so it will have to be our secret. But we know a clergywoman who would perform the ceremony."

Both. Both. What will I tell my mother? How will I explain all of this to anyone?

"Legally, you would be hitched to Austin," said Tony. "He's got the money. And while people might look funny at him for marrying his executive assistant, it'll be less to explain than where I come in. But both of us will love, cherish, hold, and generally take care of you as long as we live. You and only you, Nicole."

Nicole nodded numbly. *Both. Wow!*

They set the rings down on the table, one on each side of the collar. "It's all up to you, Nicole. This time neither of us can tell you what to do," Austin said. He let go of her hand, and Tony followed suit.

So what if people are staring. I get both of these hunks all to myself. That's worth a few stares.

"What if I only want the collar and not the rings?" She was still trying to process it all in her mind. It was happening so quickly, and she didn't know what to say. She'd wanted a relationship with Austin for so long, and now there were two Summers and they both wanted her. It was overwhelming. Wonderful, but overwhelming nonetheless.

"Then we'll try to bring you around," said Tony, his eyes glittering with mischief.

"It's your choice, Nicole." Austin was intent, serious.

“And what if I want the rings and not the collar?”

“Then you’ll have to get used to calling your husbands by their first names.” Austin spoke, but Tony nodded in solemn agreement.

She stuck out her hands, pointing her ring fingers toward her lovers. “Please,” she said. She needed to know if this was all just about a kinky game with them. She didn’t think much of people giving tests to their loved ones, but she needed to know.

Tony slipped his ring onto the ring finger of her right hand. Austin did the same with her left. The gems glinted as they caught the light of the chandelier above. They let her hands go again, and she stared at her rings, lifting them toward her face.

She looked at her lovers. Boss was relaxed. Sir looked faintly amused. Either way, they weren’t pushing. That was all she needed to know. She reached down, picked up the collar, and buckled it around her neck. The leather was soft. She tightened it until it was snug around her throat.

“Your slave,” she whispered softly. “What would my masters have me do?”

“For starters, eat your linguine before it gets cold.”

They all laughed. Nicole picked up her fork. The creamy sauce was still warm, as were the al dente noodles and the juicy shrimp. Food had never tasted better. She felt like she had jumped out of an airplane, but for now, at least the rush of the air felt good. *Me and two fabulously hunky men.* It seemed too good to possibly last, but she’d live in the moment. *What’s the other way to say it? If at first you don’t succeed, don’t try skydiving?* She might not believe in all they promised for the future, but there was sure to be a wild ride, and she trusted the Summers brothers to make sure the landing was one she could walk away from. *Eventually, though, we have to come back to earth. Don’t we?*

“Flip you for it,” said Tony to Austin. “Winner gets the backseat with our lovely slave girl. Loser drives.”

“We’ll wait until we get outside. We’ve already pushed the bounds of propriety in this establishment far enough. But when we’re done here, you’re on.”

They aren't asking me. They're assuming. She touched the collar around her throat self-consciously. The smell of new leather filled her nostrils. *I guess I've given them the right to assume. I'd have said yes anyway. I love saying yes.*

* * *

Austin won the flip. "Oh well, better luck next time," Tony had said with a smile.

The dress had come off the moment she was in the car, and the bra she wore under it had joined it in the pile on the front passenger seat. She was naked except for her shoes.

"Spread your legs, love," Austin told her. He unbuckled his seat belt so he could turn toward her. She did as he ordered and prayed the nearby traffic couldn't see her. The windows had privacy glass, she knew, so she should be safe. It didn't seem like she could be, since she could see them. She decided to keep her eyes focused inside the car.

"Good girl," Austin purred, leaning over and kissing one hard peak. He sucked it into his mouth, sending a ripple of pleasure down her body.

He took out a large blue plastic dildo from the soft-shell briefcase next to him on the seat, on the far side from her. She expected him to stick it inside her. Her pussy ached eagerly. Instead he drew back and handed it to her.

"Play with yourself," he ordered. "I want to see what you do when you're alone."

She felt the heat in her face and chest and thought she must be blushing all the way down. *He's going to watch?* She positioned the dildo at her entrance and pushed it inside, feeling it stretch her, aware of his gaze as more and more of the blue plastic disappeared inside her.

Her other hand slid over her smooth mound, her palm resting there and applying some pressure while her finger moved around and around her clit. They hit a bump in the road, and the plastic cock jumped. With all the little motions of

the car, she didn't miss having batteries and a switch to turn it on; it was vibrating fine on its own.

She'd never imagined she would do this in front of someone, but the look on her boss's face was enough to make her continue. That and the hardness pressing against the middle seam of his slacks. Each thrust of the dildo found her slicker, her nerves tingling more. She licked her lips.

He straddled her hips, and she had to bring her knees closer to give him space. He unzipped, and his cock stood out, thick and hard. She turned her head as it slapped her lightly in the cheek, and captured it with her lips. She inhaled, the musky scent of him filling her lungs, and slid her lips down his shaft. The groan from him told her she was doing it exactly the way he wanted. He reached behind himself and took possession of the dildo from her, sliding it faster and deeper into her pussy.

Your slave. She was so aware of the way she was naked, and he wasn't except for his jutting cock; of the collar around her neck; of the fact he controlled everything they did. Her head was up against the headrest while he filled her mouth with his cock. He was careful not to go too deep, but she couldn't stop him if he did. He was so powerful, just as she wanted him to be. She continued stroking her clit, because he had told her to and hadn't stopped her. One more stroke and she pushed herself over the edge, her body shaking, unable to scream or manage more than a muffled moan because of the cock gagging her mouth.

He pulled out of her, even though she tightened her lips around his cock as he moved back. She wanted to taste more than the little drop of forewarning she had managed to coax from his tip. She whimpered at him, surprising herself with the sound.

"On your hands and knees on the seat, facing away," he ordered her. She scrambled to obey and was rewarded by his cock sliding into her. He leaned over her and squeezed her tits, his thumbs playing with her nipples, making the ache in them seem like he was setting her on fire. He thrust hard into her, his breath

tightening with urgency. *Any moment now.* The thought sent ripples through her core, and she realized she might come first.

The car stopped. Austin slowed down. Tony opened the door, letting in a cool breeze. She was past caring about breezes. “Please, I’m almost there, Master. Please let me come.”

“Maybe you should be more concerned with your master’s pleasure.” Tony had opened the passenger door she was facing and stood in front of her.

She wanted their pleasure as badly as she wanted her own, but she felt foolish expressing it. She felt ashamed. “I’m sorry. Please come in me, use me, take me.”

Tony’s cock was in front of her; she opened her mouth and nearly gagged on it as Austin thrust hard in her from behind. He pinched her nipples, and the jolt of pain traveled straight to her core. Her pussy squeezed hard around his cock as her body shook, her scream coming out as a muffled grunt as a powerful orgasm seized her. She felt Austin pulsing, and then he cried out as he came with her.

Chapter Thirteen

Six months later

“Hey, hon.” Nicole knew the voice belonged to Tony because of the slight tickle his scratchy chin gave her ear. Also, Austin would never call her “hon.”

“Mmm.” Nicole put down her book and turned to meet Tony’s lips. As usual on a weekend, she was naked. As usual, he wasn’t, dressed in tight jeans and a muscle-hugging tee. She’d gotten kind of used to it. He apparently never would, from the way his gaze raked her body, taking her in like he had never seen her before. “Did Sir want to use his slave?” He didn’t need her permission, but she liked to remind him in case he wasn’t thinking of it. “Use” almost always meant she was going to have at least one orgasm if not more, and she’d quit worrying about whether she’d be pleased or not. It happened, and if it was denied, she’d get hers soon enough. It was more fun to focus on someone she loved, anyway. Or two someones.

“Not exactly, slave girl,” said Tony. “Today we’re going to fulfill one of Austin’s fantasies.” He brought out from behind his back a pink plastic dildo—and a bunch of straps.

She was tempted to pretend she didn’t know what it was, but she’d learned not to hold anything back. So she blurted out her question, even as she took the strap-on from him. “If it’s one of his fantasies, then why doesn’t he ask me?”

“I think he’s afraid it will damage your sense of him as a dominant. He’s always concerned about how things affect you, and what you think of him and of us. I’ve waited, seeing if he’d bring it up. But I think he needs a push. So to speak.”

“Uh-huh.” She eyed the pink thing doubtfully. It had a curve to it but wasn’t especially realistic. Its pink was the color of strawberry milk, not skin. “You realize I’d feel all kinds of silly wearing this.”

“I do.” Tony chuckled. “And that’s part of my fun. It won’t be the first time you felt silly wearing something. Like the corset at Anton’s party. Or the neko outfit at Susan and James’s. Or—”

“I give!” Nicole laughed. Yes, she’d felt silly but had dressed as her masters had ordered. And in the end it had been fun like they had promised. The goal had never been to humiliate her, but to get her on edge, and she’d been rewarded at the end with incredibly hot sex. Sometimes, she remembered with some embarrassment, incredibly hot sex with an audience, but she’d been too turned on to care. “I will, of course, do as Sir commands. If I can figure it out.”

She did, with Tony’s help. In a couple of minutes—and she suspected he was drawing the process out to feel her up as much as possible—she was sporting a bright pink dick that wiggled back and forth when she walked. It rubbed against her clit, which was pleasant enough, although at the moment it was just sort of there, enough to make her nerves alive but definitely *not* going to make her come or even feel horribly turned on.

“Very nice,” said Tony. “Hopefully he won’t cream in his pants at the sight of you packing.”

Nicole giggled. Tony had a way with words sometimes. She’d love to be able to make Austin come like that, but Austin was too in control of himself.

Her giggle stopped when Tony hooked a leash to her collar. She only got to wear it on weekends; during the week she wore a golden necklace instead, with a heart-shaped locket containing pictures of her two masters. She remembered the preacher in her mom’s church preaching a sermon on how no man could serve two masters. Maybe no *man* could. But she thought she was doing all right.

Tony started walking, and she hurried to keep pace. There wasn’t a choice anymore. Well, she could yell her safe word or fall down and make Tony stop and

pick her up. He never let the leash stay taut for more than a fraction of a second, she'd noticed. As nervous as she was about wandering around with a pink strap-on waving in front of her, she dreaded letting her masters down more. And if she purposely fell because she was embarrassed, well, that would bring a spanking she would feel for a week, and a lecture about using her safe word instead. Lectures stayed even longer than spankings, but they'd never yet been unfair with either.

They came to a stop right in front of the bathroom door. She could hear the shower running. Tony put his finger to his lips.

"You want me to, um, in the shower?" Nicole whispered.

"To fuck him. No, the water tends to wash away the lube. And you'll need lube." He kept his voice low while he reached into his pocket and handed her a bottle. "Start coating your cock with it. And grease him up too, before you dive in. We'll wait for him to come out in a towel." He put his hands on her hips and guided her to a position a few feet in front of the door. *I'll be the first thing he sees, holding this bottle and looking butch.* Tony unclipped the leash and moved back, leaning against the same wall as the door where he could see Nicole but where the door would block Austin's view of him.

So much for claiming Tony made me do it. It was still true, and she could still say it, but Tony's intentions were clear. She poured some lube in her hand as the shower turned off. The liquid was warm from riding in Tony's pocket, but the dildo was cool as she rubbed it over. She hated to admit it, but it was kind of fun, caressing something in front of her like that. No wonder guys got into it—of course, theirs had nerves. On the other hand, it did feel good bumping her clit as she pumped it. And she did want to make it warm and comfortable for Austin. *This isn't happening. He'll say no, and that will be the end of that, except I'll get a spanking for impudence. Tony's setting up a scene, but it's not the one he's telling me about. Right?*

She hadn't realized how lost in her thoughts and her rubbing she had gotten until Austin came out, wearing nothing but a towel, his usually neat hair tousled

and not entirely dry. “Uh, hello.” *This will be less awkward if I stop stroking it.* She let go.

Austin stood and stared for several long seconds. *Say something, dammit.* Instead he dropped the towel. His cock was fully erect. “How do you want me?” His voice was broken and rough, not his usual smooth self at all.

She glanced at Tony before realizing she probably shouldn’t if she was keeping his presence a secret, but Austin didn’t seem to notice. He was looking over her body, she realized. Plastic attachments and all. She pointed to the wall on the other side of the door frame from Tony. “Up against the wall, Boss, if you would like.”

“Thanks.” He turned around and did as directed. “Make sure to lube—”

“Already taken care of, Boss,” she said. She dribbled some more into her hand and pushed a wet finger into his rear. She was surprised at how tight he was, since her finger was so much smaller than either of the men’s fingers and they didn’t seem to have any trouble getting into her ass anymore. She coated every surface she could reach with plenty of lube, until she could slide two fingers in easily. From the sound of his ragged breathing, what she was doing was either torture or heaven or both.

She had to suppress a giggle as she put the tip of the dildo against the slick, puckered opening. “You want this?”

“You know I do.”

She pushed forward, sliding up and into him. He moaned in response. She pressed her chest up against his back, feeling it against her stiff nipples. It was strange to be the one in control, but it was good too. All he had to do was say the word and she’d surrender to him. She wondered if a mere safe word could give a man such certainty what he was doing to his sub was desired. Maybe. She drew back and plunged into him again.

She poured more lube on her palm and reached around and grabbed his cock. It was as hard as she’d ever felt it. *He likes it!* She slid her hand up and down the shaft in time with her thrusts, spreading the lube around and feeling it throb.

She hadn't noticed Tony move behind her, but when she felt his hands on her back, she knew it was him. She half expected him to do the same thing to her he was doing to Austin, but he didn't. He kneaded her shoulders, taking her tension into his strong hands. After a few moments, he stepped back.

Austin was breathing hard now. She knew that sound; he was trying to maintain control, to not come. And she wanted to make him lose it. She sped up the movement of her hand, and he growled. She grinned, relishing her role. She was going to make him come on the floor. She'd probably be the one cleaning up the mess, but he wasn't going to hold back on her this time.

A stinging sensation blossomed on her backside, and she looked at Tony in surprise. "Harder," he said. He swatted her again, and her glorious sense of control vanished, replaced by an even more delicious sense of being controlled again. She kept moving her hand, squeezing her boss's well-lubricated cock. She pushed out her butt for Tony's attention, and Tony followed through, half spanking her and half pushing her and her plastic cock deep inside Austin. Each swat produced a pressing urgency on her clit, swirling with the sting of his hand and somehow mingling deep in her core. *I'm not going to hold out. I'm going to come.* Stubbornly she hung on, trying not to go over the edge.

She felt the cock in her hand pulse, and the side of her hand caught some warm wetness as she forced the cum to spurt out of Austin. Then she screamed as one hard swat pressed the back of the strap-on against her and her pleasure overtook her.

Somehow they all ended up in a puddle on the floor. Two sets of strong arms held her. She smiled up at Tony and then grinned at Austin.

"He set you up for this, didn't he?" Austin's eyes still looked glassy.

She made a point of not lying, especially to her masters. "Yes."

"I'll get you back," Austin said to Tony with a grin.

"I'll look forward to it," retorted Tony. "You loved every minute."

Austin ignored Tony and looked at Nicole. “You can do that again sometime. In fact, I might make it an order.”

Nicole laughed. “Every day brings new surprises.”

“Good ones, I hope.”

“Wonderful ones.”

With that, she kissed each of her men in turn and then relaxed into their arms.

THE END

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I live in Northern Virginia with my partner, my teenage son, and a lot of fish. For many years I was active in our local BDSM community. Yes, people really do the things people do in my books!

By day I work in a public library, where I get to meet all kinds of readers. I've a soft spot for happy endings and characters who learn more about themselves, but I enjoy torturing my characters along the way, too. Hopefully you'll enjoy watching them squirm as much as I do.