



Devilishly Yours
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Chapter One

"Come on Sergeant Webster, don't put me on leave now. I swear that I'm okay."

"No, you haven't been the same since you came back from your last undercover assignment. I want you to take six weeks off." Sergeant Webster insisted, flinging the file down on his cluttered desk.

Leaning back in the leather chair, his no sense boss stared at him. "You're a young man. Take this time off to find a woman."

Ryan Lerner didn't want to take this bogus leave of absence his over protective boss was trying to toss his way. He wanted to stay busy.

He had known that what had happened to Syleena's Webster mother wasn't his fault. Vivian Webster was a first class whore, but she didn't deserve to be stabbed twenty times by one of her prostitutes.

"I swear that I'm fine. Let me have the latest jewelry robbery case." He insisted.

Standing up, his friend and boss for the past four years placed his hands face down on the desk,

"Stop asking me to take back your vacation time. It's Halloween night. Go home and pass out candy to those greedy kids in your neighborhood." One hand shot up from the desk and a finger pointed toward the door.

"Ajana Bennett isn't your problem. I've noticed how you can't take your eyes off her picture inside the file. Yes, she's a very attractive young woman but she is more dangerous than two cobras loose in your bed at night."

"But I was the one who figured out Ajana was the burglar stealing from all the local jewelry stores. It isn't fair another cop will get the credit for bringing her in." Ryan snapped. He was tired of taking a back seat like Sergeant Webster ordered him to do. He wanted to be back out there with the other men.

"Hell, it wasn't your case in the first place." Sergeant Webster yelled back falling back down into his seat. "Jones was all over this case until you talked to that reporter."

Ryan shrugged. "Can I help it if she fell for my charm? Plus, who knew I would look so damn good on television?"

"Now isn't the time for your humor. Miss Bennett stole a priceless jewel during her last robbery. We need to find her and the jewels ASAP."

"Good, I'm glad you see it my way." Ryan sat down overlooking the hard glares tossed his way. "I talked to some people that know Ajana and I think she might be back in town."

He wanted to solve this case more than anything to prove he still had it. That whole thing with Syleena turned out badly. This was a clean slate he was working with now. Sergeant Webster had to give him another chance to prove his skills as a good cop.

"You aren't going to let this go, are you?" His boss sighed, as his hand reached for the thick manila envelope on the desk.

"You know me better than that," Ryan uttered. "I'm the cop for the case. I know it's the truth and so do you."

"I'll let you work on the case under one condition." Sergeant Webster taunted, waving the file in front of his face.

"What's the condition?" He wasn't agreeing to anything until he heard what the stipulations were. Sergeant Webster grinned at him like the cat that had swallowed the canary.

"You take this file home and don't open it for 48 hours. Time is of essence in this case, but you need to rest before tackling it."

Was that it?

He didn't like the conditions but he would agree to them.

"Deal," he reached for the file only to have it jerked back from him.

"What is it? Why did you do that?"

"Are you sure you're up for this?" Sergeant Webster questioned, arching an eyebrow. He was touched that his friend was concerned about him, but there wasn't any reason to be. He was fine and all he wanted to do was move on to a different case and leave the past in the past.

"I swear if I wasn't sure, I wouldn't ask you to give me this case over." It seemed like hours passed while Sergeant Webster tapped the folder on his desk simultaneously, slowly staring him straight in the eye. Ryan fought hard not to squirm in his seat from the unrelenting look. It reminded him of something that his father would do.

"Don't make me regret my decision." Tossing the folder at him, Sergeant Webster moved from behind his desk over to the closed door. "It's time for you to go. If you need any extra help you have all of my numbers." Opening the door his boss waved him out.

"Thanks for giving me a second chance." Standing up with the file in his left hand he walked toward his friend. "I'll try my best to have this case solved before I get back from my vacation." He promised as he strolled out the door.

Ryan smiled as Sergeant Webster mumbled something under his breath then slammed the door shut behind him.

"I doubt I will have to call you. I can handle Ajana Bennett all by myself and then maybe I'll earn your respect back."

Moving over to his desk he started to clear off the top and shoved things into drawers. He didn't want any of his coworkers messing with his things playing practical jokes on him. They knew how much he hated that but they constantly did it just to get a rise out of him.

"Did you finally do all of us a huge favor and quit?" A voice joked behind him.

"No, I'm going on vacation for six weeks," he answered without turning around to look in Angelo Jones' direction. He quickly shoved the Ajana file into a stack of other paperwork on his desk. The less people that knew about him on the case, the better especially when it came to cocky Angelo Jones, he never had been a fan of the man behind him.

"The boss thinks you need all that time to clear your head." Angelo asked resting his hip at the side of his desk. "You must be in bad shape. Usually the department only gives us three weeks for us to get our shit together after a hard case."

Don't let him goad you.

"Nah that's not it I had some extra vacation time saved up so Sergeant Webster gave it to me now. I haven't had any time off since I started working those last two undercover cases. It might be fun to do something just for myself." He finished gathering up the rest of his items and shoved them into the bag on his chair.

"Well have fun while I'm gone and please don't do anything I wouldn't do." Ryan patted Angelo on the shoulder then brushed past him. He was halfway to the door when he heard.

"Lerner, do you know if the Sergeant has made any decision about who's on the cat burglary case? I want that case so bad I can taste it. Miss Bennett is hot. I wouldn't mind a few hours alone with her in the interrogation room."

Keeping his back to Officer Jones, Ryan tossed back over his shoulder.

"I don't know we didn't talk about that while I was in his office. You know how the boss can be. He always wants to be sure that he assign the right man for the case. Like I said, I'm outta here, so I'll see you next month sometime."

Pushing open the door Ryan left the fast pace of his job behind him as he strolled to his car at the end of the parking lot. He loved how the stars brightened the dark sky. He had to admit it might be fun going home and passing Halloween candy out to the little kids in his neighborhood.

He had bought a bag and it was sitting on his front room table.

Chapter Two

Standing by his car door Ryan thought about his conversation with Angelo and hated to admit that he agreed with his cocky coworker. He had taken several peeks at the photo inside the Ajana Bennett file. She was stunning with her not quite black hair that almost touched her shoulders.

Huge pecan color eyes hypnotized him from a gorgeous oval face. But what he was fascinated by the most was how the blue wraparound dress brought out the perfection of her cocoa skin.

His fingers had traced a path from her shoulder all the way down her bare arm in the photo. He couldn't get over how he wondered did her voice sound as good as he hoped it would.

"Man, you can't be drooling over the suspect in an on going investigation." Shaking his head Ryan unlocked his car, tossed his bag on the passenger side and got inside. Starting the car, he pulled out of the parking lot and headed for his house. He paused at a stoplight and watched several kids trick a treating when he felt a gun shoved in the back of his head.

"Don't turn around or say a word. I know how to use this and I don't have a problem pulling the trigger." A muffled voice threatened behind him. All his years of training still hadn't prepared him for this moment. His heart accelerated to beat a mile a minute.

"What do you want?" He needed to figure out a way out of this situation without getting his brains splattered all over his windshield.

"Didn't I tell you not to talk?" His captor shoved the gun further into the back of his head. "But since you have, I might as well answer your question: I want you to take me to your house."

"No, I can't do that." He argued. "How about we go back to the station and talk about this?" Ryan asked as the light finally turned green.

"Don't debate with me Officer Lerner. Either you drive me to your house or you'll regret it more than you could ever imagine." The voice of his attacker threatened again.

The sound of car horns blowing behind him made Ryan pulled away and go in the direction of his house. He didn't have a clue what this person wanted at his house. How long had this stranger been waiting in his car to kidnap him?

"What do you want with me?" He asked again hoping for an answer this time.

"You'll find out soon enough after we are inside your house Officer Ryan. Now stop asking me so many questions and drive. Oh and don't try to get cute when we get to your house. Pull inside your garage and close the door behind us. We don't want the neighbors meddling in our business now, do we?"

Idea after idea kept racing through his mind but none of them would be good to act on. He couldn't let this person hurt anyone if things got out of hand. When he finally reached his house Ryan pressed the garage opener and drove his car inside making sure it shut behind him.

"Okay, we're here. What do you want from me?"

"Get out of the car, and then slowly move to the back door that leads to your kitchen. Don't try any funny business. I don't want to hurt you but I can if you make me."

Ryan got out of the door, and as soon as he slammed his door shut the gun was shoved in his lower back. "Let's get moving officer. I hate to be kept waiting."

He walked as slow as he could while he wondered what would happen to him after they made it into his kitchen. Did this person bring him all the way home just to kill him?

Walking up the steps he twisted the doorknob then stepped on the sandy colored tile that covered his kitchen floor. "Talk to me; maybe we can find a way to work this out."

"Stop trying to talk me down. Move toward the living room? I'm the one running the show not you. When we get in there, I want you to handcuff yourself to a chair and be quiet until I ask you a question."

Like hell he would do that. He wasn't about to be defenseless when he didn't have a clue what this person had in mind. "No, I'm not going to do that. If you want to talk with me I can do it without the handcuffs."

He flinched as he heard the barrel cock behind him.

"Do you want to die tonight? I know I wouldn't want to die on Halloween. Now get in that damn living room and do as I say."

Ryan placed one foot in front of the other until he came into the living room. He paused at the entrance. "Can I turn on some lights? I can't see one hand in front of my face?"

"You did fine in the kitchen and the lights weren't on."

"Yeah, but the street light shining through the windows helped."

He heard a low groan before his kidnapper say. "Go ahead but remember I do have a gun."

Twisting slightly to the side, Ryan turned on the light with a flick of his wrist and the room lit up like a baseball field at nighttime. "See, I did as you ask."

"Good, now I see a chair over there in the corner that would be perfect for you to handcuff yourself to. Get over there and do it."

He wanted so badly to spin around and knock the gun out of the person's hand; but he didn't. He had to find out what this person's agenda was first then he could act later. When he turned around to sit down he was stunned to see how short his captor was.

"You're a lot smaller than I thought you would be." He uttered pulling his cuffs out of his back pocket. "Are you positive we can't talk about this? You can get into a lot of trouble holding a cop hostage."

"Shut up and do as I asked you to." The gun didn't move from his direction as the person moved closer to him. "You talk way too much. It's starting to give me a headache."

Ryan stuck his hands behind him and quickly locked the cuffs. He didn't want to push his luck. He had already gotten away with a lot. Tilting his head to the side he noticed the person wore several layers of clothes. He was having a hard time determining the age and build. Plus the black gloves and ski mask wasn't helping him any either.

"Finally, I never thought you would shut up and do as I instructed." His captor tossed the gun down on the couch. "Now you stay here and be a good boy while I change out of these clothes. I'm not about to stay covered up in this mess."

Ryan watched in shock as the person went to his hall closet and pulled out a duffel bag. How in the hell had that gotten in his house? He couldn't remember the last time he was in that closet. If he had to take a guess it was probably the middle of last week.

"I'll be right back. Don't you get into any trouble while I'm gone." His kidnapper waved at him then disappeared into the kitchen.

He heard the muffled sounds of his captor changing clothes.

He still couldn't believe this shit.

He was an officer of the law and he hadn't known an intruder had been inside his house. Maybe Sergeant Webster was right; maybe he has been off his game since the Syleena Hyde case.

"How in the hell am I going to get myself out of this mess?" He wondered out loud in the empty room.

"I can answer that if you want me to." A soft voice inquired breaking into his thoughts.

Ryan swung his head back over to the kitchen and his eyes widened from utter disbelief at the identity of his captor.

No, it couldn't be.

Angelo Jones and the rest of the Atlanta police department would laugh their heads off if they saw this right now.

"It can't be you." Sauntering across the room, his kidnapper placed her hands on either side of his chair and leaned into his face.

"Yes, it's me Officer Lerner," Ajana Bennett snapped in his face.

"Since you wanted to know where I was so badly; I thought I might as well hide out at your place until you cleared my name. I can't show my face on the streets because of you, and you're going to fix that." Moving back from him, Ajana crossed her arms over the white sweater she was wearing and glared at him.

"So, where do we begin?"

Chapter Three

Ryan couldn't believe his luck. Standing not ten feet in front of him was the woman he was supposed to be hunting down. How in the hell had she planned all of this? Was the entire police station asleep when she climbed into his car?

Damn, he was doing everything he could not to notice how her picture hadn't done her justice. Ajana Bennett was beautiful. His attraction for her only heightened as she positioned herself in front of him, displaying a killer body in form fitting clothes. He knew now why half the jewelry stores let her walk right out the door with the rings on her fingers. No, he wasn't going to get sidetrack by Ajana like he had done with Syleena. This was his second chance at redemption, and he wasn't going to blow it.

"We can begin by you getting me out of these handcuffs. After I'm free I'll call the station, and then take you in. I won't press charges if you don't put up a fight."

"Are you crazy? Half of this town thinks I'm a jewel thief, and the other half probably doesn't care if I'm innocent or not; no one cares about what will happen to me if I'm apprehended. So no, I'm not about to turn myself in. However, you will tell me why you gave an interview to that reporter." Moving his hands Ryan tried to get them free but the handcuffs were still too tight.

He learned long ago how to get out of handcuffs, and once he did, Miss Bennett would be taken down to the station and booked on two separate charges. His offer not to press charges ended the second she ignored his plea.

"I always talk to the press when I feel the leads are turning cold. I had to smoke you out some kind of way." He said factiously, "And look, it worked." He smirked. "You came to me, and I didn't have to break out in a sweat to find you."

"Why aren't you listening to me?" Ajana snapped. "I'm not guilty. You have the wrong woman. I haven't robbed any jewelry stores."

Jerking his arms again, Ryan struggled to get out of the handcuffs.

He was growing tired of hearing Ajana's lies; the station had a videotape of her in action. She wasn't going to get away with it.

"Miss Bennett, you're guilty as sin and I'm going to prove it."

Ajana didn't know how she was going to get herself out of this mess. Officer Lerner was wrong. She wasn't the thief the cops had been searching for these past two months, but it didn't seem like he was going to believe her. Everything had been fine with her last hideout, until Officer Ryan Lerner decided to go on television and display her picture to the world.

First, she had been captivated by how handsome Officer Lerner was; so much so, she hadn't heard the words coming out of his mouth. But the second her picture flashed across the screen, the fog of lust in her mind cleared up and she immediately went into action. It had taken her all of five seconds to get out of the restaurant, and into her car.

During the two hour drive back to town, her mind played out several ways to get Officer Lerner to listen to her side of the story, but not once did any of her ideas involve kidnapping the handsome cop. God, she was already looking at twelve years in prison for a jewel heist she didn't commit. Now she could add life to her sentence for kidnapping an officer against his will. If she didn't rectify this, she wasn't ever going to see the light of day.

Sitting down on the table in front of Ryan, Ajana crossed her legs and ran her eyes up and down the length of the hunk in front of her. Television showed off how nice-looking he was, but it didn't do him justice. The television diminished how thick and shiny his dark brown hair was. It failed to show the green flecks in his dark brown eyes, making them look hazel at times.

"Stop staring at me and let me go. I swear I'll do anything I can to help you get a lesser sentence." Ryan toiled in a desperate attempt to bait her. Ajana shook her head slowly.

"No, I can't let you go. You're my only hope of clearing my name of these charges. You should know that the kidnapper never let's the hostage goes until they are positive their every demand has been meet."

"Your demands aren't going to be met because you're guilty. I have all the proof out in my car." Ryan tossed back at her.

"What proof?" She watched as Ryan pressed his lips together then turned his head away from her.

"Don't tell me then. I can go out there and get it myself; but you should know Officer Lerner, I'm not going to prison for a crime I didn't commit." Spinning on her heel Ajana raced from the room back out to the car in the garage.

"I'm such an idiot!" Ryan cursed at himself. "How could I let her know that all of the evidence was out there in the car? She's going to destroy it, and I'm going to be in a heap of trouble?" He had to find a way out of these damned handcuffs, and soon. Ajana honestly believe she was innocent and a desperate people would do desperate things to prove that they're right.

He hated that Ajana was on the wrong side of the law because she was one hot little number, especially wearing the eggshell sweater and jeans. He had noticed how her butt was cupped nicely in her jeans as she ran from the room. He twisted around in the chair to relive some of the ache in his jeans. Had he really been without a woman for so long that he was lusting after the prime suspect in an on going case? Shit, after this was over he would have to dig out that little black book and find an old girlfriend to call up.

Closing his eyes he thought back to what he might have wanted to hook up with.

"Hey, I know you aren't asleep so why are your eyes closed?" Ajana came back into the room with his bag in her hand. Sitting down on the couch she tossed the gun on the table and then unzipped his bag.

"I didn't tell you that you could go through my things." He retorted watching as she tossed items from his bag onto the table.

"I don't need to ask your permission for anything that I do, handsome. I wanted to look inside here so I did." Ajana answered then smiled at him before reaching back into his dark blue bag.

"Flirting with me isn't going to make me be on your side." Ryan replied not liking how her compliment made him feel. Damn, he was hard up for a woman when a known criminal was turning him on.

"Just stating the obvious," Ajana countered. "You know that you're an attractive man. If we had met under different circumstances, I might have approached you. I have a weakness for men who look like you."

Ryan sat silently as he observed Ajana lift her file and spread it across the glass table. She didn't say a word to him as she read over her file and looked at all the witness statements that were also included. He wanted to tear his eyes away from her but he couldn't. It seemed like a light was around her that drew his undivided attention.

Ajana was totally different than he imagined she would be. She was spunky, border lining on tough; however there was a softness about her. Ajana almost had him doubting that it was she on all of the surveillance cameras.

Shit, if Sergeant Webster knew he was thinking this away, he would have an appointment with the department shrink in five minutes flat.

"This isn't me in these photos. I have never been to any of these places." Ajana uttered drawing his eyes down to her full bottom lip.

"Don't play with me. It's you and we both know it." Ryan muttered. "Look you're holding a close up of your face in your hand. Are you really going to tell me that isn't you?"

"Yes, I am. You have to trust me. Officer Lerner, I swear this isn't me in any of these pictures."

"It's kind of hard to trust you when I'm still handcuffed to this chair." Ryan commented.

Chapter Four

"Do you think I'm crazy?" Ajana chuckled at him. The sound of her laughter echoed through the house and across his tense body. She stopped laughing long enough to compose herself then she waved a small hand in his direction. "The second I let you go my ass would be sitting in that seat instead of yours."

Ryan was pissed with the way Ajana wasn't taking him at his word. Why did she think she knew him so well? They had only been around each other for maybe two hours at the most. He wasn't a man that gave his word then turned around and took it back. "No, I swear I'll sit and listen to your side. I'm open to hearing what you have to say."

He couldn't put his finger on but there was something in Ajana's eyes that made him want to believe her. Could it be the direct way she kept looking at him? Or he was just in awe of the woman's picture he had been staring at for the past sixty days?

"How many people have fallen for that line of crap?" Ajana inquired coming toward him. "You're a cop and your first duty is to protect and serve the innocent."

"You keep telling me you're innocent. Let me go so I can believe you more. If you're convincing enough, I'll do everything in my power to help you prove it."

Falling down on his lap Ajana ran her fingers through his hair. He knew shouldn't like how good her body felt against his, but he did. Ryan turned his head away from Ajana's wandering fingers.

He needed to control his body's response to her. Hell, if he didn't feel the heat between them rises, and by her heated gaze, she felt it too.

"I don't believe you, Officer Lerner. You are trying to con me and I don't like it."

Ajana breathed softly into his ear.

The heat of her breath made his pulse rise, and his groin tighten.

"Stop flirting with me Miss Bennett, it isn't going to work. We both know that you're a sensual woman, but only your brains are going to work with me, so can you please get off of me."

Ryan looked Ajana straight in the eye.

Minutes past while Ajana ran her hands from his hair across his shoulders and it was taking all his willpower not to shiver under her light caress. Why did this happen to him? First he fell for Syleena when she was already head over heels in love with Storm. Now he was getting all hot and bothered for a jewel thief.

Maybe he had some kind of chemical imbalance that needed to be fixed with medication? Tonight was Halloween and there was a full moon outside that could also explain his bizarre behavior. Soft fingers tapped against the stubble on his cheek before Ajana exhaled noisily and got up from his lap.

"You can't blame a girl from trying."

She shrugged her shoulders, and sauntered back over to the couch and sat down.

He stared at Ajana as she dropped her head into her hands, and ran her fingers back and forth through her thick hair in frustration.

He could only guess what was going on in that psychotic mind of hers now.

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Her plan wasn't coming together like she hoped. Ryan thought she was lying; and none of her friends or family wanted anything to do with her now. She would never forget this Halloween night. Tonight was the night that her life official ended along with what little bit of common sense she had left.

How had she gone from working at one of the hottest jewelry stores in Atlanta, to being the prime suspect of robbing it and five others? She knew that she would never do something like that because she appreciated her job, and could afford to purchase fine jewels. Shit, she remembered the times she prayed for a commission from a ring sale. She never thought about a five-finger discount with any of the merchandise back then, why would she try to steal it now.

She had loved her job.

Everyone there made her feel like a part of the family, she wouldn't think about hurting them like that. She needed to be vindicated, and to succeed in doing that; she must first find a way to make Officer Lerner see that it wasn't her on the security tapes. Ryan Lerner may not like it, but he was her only chance at clearing her name from this awful mess. She wasn't about to let him go anywhere until that happened.

"You are going to help me whether you like it or not." Rising to stand in front of him, she watched as he looked up at her. "I wouldn't be in half this mess if you hadn't flashed my picture across the television."

"I don't help criminals and that's what you are Ajana Bennett." Ajana took a closer step towards Ryan, when the doorbell rung.

"Who in the hell could that be?" She uttered rushing over to the window. Pulling back the curtain she peeked out and noticed several trick or treaters on the porch. Tossing back the curtains she hurried back over to Ryan.

"There are about seven or eight kids on your porch wanting Halloween candy. We aren't going to answer that door, do you understand me?"

"We have too. I give them candy every year and if I don't their parents will become suspicious, especially since they saw me pull into the garage."

"Shit."

"You know what this means don't you?"

Ajana hated the ideas formulating in her mind. "No, I'm not going to let you go to that door. Tell me where the candy is and I'll give it to them." She gazed around the room but she didn't see a bag of candy.

"You can't be serious." Ryan laughed. "It will look even odder if you open my door. My nosy neighbors know that I don't have a girlfriend; so I want to know how will you explain yourself to them, especially after having your face plastered all over the tube?"

She despised that Ryan was right. The ringing of the doorbell brought her focus back onto the situation at hand. "Fine, I'll let you go to the door, but if you try anything funny... you will regret it."

"I have an extra key to the cuffs over there in the bowl by the front door."

Rushing over to the door, Ajana grabbed the key then raced back over to the table and picked up her gun. She got close to Ryan and waved it under his nose; missing how his eyes narrowed on the gun before they shot back up to her face.

"Don't try to be a wise guy or I'll shoot you." Moving behind Ryan, Ajana quickly undid the handcuffs and followed him over to the door.

"Don't worry; I don't want a bullet in my back." Ryan opened a cabinet drawer by the front door and pulled out a huge bag of bubble gum. "Are you going to let the kids see you with that?" He questioned nodding down at the gun in her hand.

"No, I'm not." She tossed back sliding behind the door she Ryan could open it.

The second the door swung open she heard excited voice scream.

"Officer Ryan. What took you so long? We knew you were in there."

"I'm sorry my little ghosts and witches. I was tied up and couldn't get to the door as quickly as I wanted to." Ryan's deep voice answered. "I guess I have to give everyone two pieces of gum to make up for it, don't I?"

"No, I think it should be three pieces." One little girl chimed in.

"Yeah, I agree with Sara. We were waiting for you a long time Office Ryan," A little boy complained.

"Well, I guess I can spare three pieces for my favorite sidekicks in the neighborhood," Ryan joked back with the children.

She couldn't help but smile at the way Ryan let the children think they had conned him into extra pieces of candy. She listened as Ryan talked with the children before he sent them on to the next house.

"You have a way with kids." Ajana praised Ryan as he closed the door and tossed the candy back on the cabinet. "They really like you."

"They're sweet kids. I like them too." Ryan spun around and faced her so fast she almost dropped the gun.

She didn't like how Ryan kept taking steps closer to her. From her position he towered over her shorter frame; she was rapidly losing her advantage over him because she was losing control fast. Pointing the gun toward the middle of his chest, Ajana lowered her voice. "Go sit back down."

"I'm not going back to that chair and you can't make me." Ryan took two quick steps boxing her body in with his.

"I'm the one holding the gun Officer Lerner. I think I'm calling the shots here."

"I don't think so, Miss Bennett." Ryan disagreed.

"Do you want to get shot on Halloween? I'm pissed off enough to do it." She threatened.

"Ajana, you aren't going to shoot me with that gun," Ryan smirked.

"Why not?"

"Because it's a toy gun," Ryan snarled. Snatching the gun out of her hand he pitched it on the table behind them.

Shit, what in the hell was she going to do now!

Chapter Five

Ryan cursed his stupidity as he wrapped his fingers around Ajana's arm and dragged her over to the couch. Why hadn't he noticed before now that it was a toy gun? God, he should quit his job right now out of shame.

"I can't believe you forced me into my house with a toy gun." He tossed Ajana's struggling body down on the love seat. "Sit here and don't move a muscle. I have to call the station and report this. You're going to spend a long time in prison for this little stunt." Ryan promised. Ajana jumped up from the couch and he pushed her back down.

"I told you to sit still." Brushing his hand off her shoulder, Ajana threw him a look that could have melted ice.

"It's not a toy gun. My ex-boyfriend worked on a movie set. It's a prop; and it must have looked pretty authentic because it fooled you," she taunted. Ryan wasn't going to let Ajana get the best of him.

"You were hiding in the backseat of my car at night. What was I suppose to do when I felt a gun pointed in the back of my head. I didn't have any other choice but to listen to you."

A small grin kicked up the left corner of Ajana's mouth making her even sexier to him, but he wasn't supposed to notice that. He chided himself. What was wrong with him when it came to this woman? Why was he debating back and forth with her instead of calling Sergeant Webster? Was he one of those freaks that lusted after criminals after reading about them in the paper or seeing them on television?

"I scared you didn't I?" Crossing her legs, Ajana leaned back against the couch and gave him a full grin.

"Don't get smug, Miss Bennett, because you are enjoying the last of your freedom, this charade is almost over." Spinning on his heels, Ryan walked over to the phone and picked it up. Before he could dial one number, the receiver was snatched out of his hand and slammed back down.

"Please don't call the police. I'm innocent. I wasn't involved in any of those robberies." Ajana pleaded with him.

"Give me a chance to prove my innocence." She begged.

"Sorry, I can't do that. You're wanted for questioning and I have to let my boss know where you are." Ryan answered. "If you are innocent like you say that you are, my superiors will put in a word for you with the District Attorney."

"Are you that naïve?" Ajana questioned easing back from him "The second I step foot into that station with you, I won't see the light of day again."

"Are you implying Sergeant Webster won't listen to your side of this case with an unbiased ear?" She was wrong. Sergeant Webster was the most by the book man he had ever known.

"He thinks I'm guilty. Isn't that the reason he allowed you to plaster my face all over the place?" Ajana challenged. "I only want a chance to prove the charges against me are false. How can I do that from the inside of a jail cell?"

The more Ajana talked to him the more she was beginning to wear him down.

The woman in front of him didn't look like a mastermind that could pull off several jewel heists. Damn it, he hated that she was getting under his skin like this. He was the cop here and he was allowing Ajana to play mind games with him. Resting his back against the table, Ryan crossed his legs at the ankles then gave Ajana his full attention.

"Let's just say that I might give you the benefit of the doubt. What proof do you have of your innocence? It will take some pretty strong evidence to make me take your word over the evidence."

"Wait right here," Ajana uttered, holding up one finger.

He didn't take his eyes off her as she dashed across the room and dug through the bag she had hidden inside his closet. Pulling out a thick purple folder she brought it back over to him. "All the evidence I need to clear my name is right here in this folder."

"What do you have there?" He asked nodding toward the folder. Did she really have something or was she stalling for more time?

"I can't show you unless I know for sure that you're on my side." She said pressing the file to her chest. "Do you believe me?"

He plucked the folder from Ajana's finger then strolled back across the room.

"I'm not saying another word until I look at all of the facts. This could be another trick, like that damn toy gun." Ryan hated that the gun was still a sore spot for him.

"Don't open that yet. I still hadn't gotten an answer from you. Are you on my side or not?" Ajana yelled at him.

Ignoring his kidnapper's outburst, he flipped open the file. Several newspaper articles were on the top. Going into the kitchen he flicked on the lights and took a seat at the kitchen table. He saw Ajana sit down beside him but he didn't acknowledge her presence. This wasn't the time to get into another fight with her. He was still uncomfortable with how freely she was moving around his house. Yet, what was inside the folder interested him more at the moment.

Lifting the first article out, Ryan skimmed over it and then laid it to the side. He kept reading the clippings as thoughts raced through his mind. Was it actually possible that Ajana was innocent? No, he couldn't decide that until he dug deeper into all the evidence they had piled against her. Time sheets, and surveillance of Ajana backed her innocence.

A speeding ticket, if valid, proved that it was impossible for her to have been at the scene of the crime. He matched the information that she had given him, with the information that he already had.

Photocopies of witness statements were next items he picked up and gave his attention to. The witness statements weren't reliable since they all described her as a 'good looking black woman'. How was she able to get her hands on stuff like this? All of this was confidential along with being

part of an ongoing criminal case. Placing the papers face down, he moved on to the last item inside the file.

Two police reports were at the bottom. He read over them slowly, trying to draw in all of the information he could. Ryan's brow pulled down into an affronted frown as he continued to study the typed report in front of him. No, this couldn't be right, he thought. Somehow Ajana had doctored this paper.

Gathering all the information together he placed it back into the sleeve of the case then tossed it in the middle of the table. "Do you really expect me to believe any of that? How do I know you didn't have someone forge all of that?"

Ajana folded her elbows on the table and leaned closer to him, the soft scent of her perfume wrapped around his senses. God, he had to stop noticing Ajana as a woman instead of a suspect in his case.

"It's all there in black and white. Officer Lerner." Ajana gestured pointing to the folder in front of them. "I'm not guilty. It doesn't matter how much the Atlanta police department thinks I am."

"I can't take your word or use the proof that you've given to me. It wouldn't hold up in court." Ryan sighed hating the way his mind was turning. Was he really going to do this? Do what?? Had he forgotten all of the training he went through to become a good cop? Two small hands grabbed his biceps and squeezed him; making him wonder what other things Ajana's hand could squeeze like that.

Stop lusty after her!

"I've made you doubt my guilt haven't I?" Ajana grinned as she let go of his arm.

"You're going to help me find the real jewel burglar aren't you? Where do we get started?"

Chapter Six

She was beyond happy. Ryan was going to help her clear her name! Ajana dropped her hands into her lap so she wouldn't touch Ryan again. She hadn't been able to think about much of anything since snatching him from the police station; however, one thing did keep penetrating her senses and that was how fine Officer Ryan Lerner was.

Was it possible for a man to have eyelashes that long and thick?

She thought as Ryan glanced back down at the file. Television did don't Ryan any justice in the looks department. Television cameras seemed to diminish how nicely clothes molded themselves to his taut muscles. Or how the short hair cut made his earlobes a tempting treat to a woman who hadn't been with a man in over eight months. Okay, an earlobe fetish??

Trying to be sneaky, Ajana let her eyes wander over how the well-washed jeans cupped Ryan in all of the right places. How did a man this hunky stay single?

What a minute!

She was assuming he was single and lived alone.

How did she know a wife wasn't on her way home?

"Do you have a wife?" She blurted out before her mind could stop her runaway mouth. "I know you said you didn't have a girlfriend, but you didn't deny having a wife."

"Why do you want to know?" Ryan questioned looking up from the folder.

Ajana was captivated by the way Ryan's eyes held hers while he waited for her answer. His masculinity was so potent that her mouth went dry. Clearing her throat she finally found her voice to respond.

"I can't be caught here with you. You may not be thinking about turning me in, but someone else won't have a problem doing it." Seizing the file, she got up from the table only to have Ryan push her back down.

"I'm not involved with anyone. You're safe here with me," he muttered.

"Why aren't you threatened by me? I held you hostage for over two hours. I could be lying to you while planning your murder along with my getaway?"

The sexy chuckle of the man made a certain part of her lower body wet in a matter of seconds. "I'm positive that a woman who's high jacked me with a prop gun isn't a huge threat to my well being."

"Hey, you didn't think that two hours ago." She corrected.

"Yeah, don't remind me." Ryan groaned. "Biggest mistake of my life and it never leaves this room."

The look Ryan gave her meant he was serious enough to make sure she kept her word. Ajana wasn't about to get on the bad side of the man who was going to help her.

"I promise I'll never tell anyone you were frightened of a fake gun." Crossing her finger over her chest in a mock swearing, she held up two fingers. "Your embarrassing secret is safe with me Officer Lerner."

"Make sure you don't," Ryan encouraged her, getting up from the table, "and stop calling me Officer Lerner. You've called me Ryan a couple of times, so stick with it."

"Ryan it is." Ajana agreed, liking the way saying his birth rolled off of her tongue. While getting comfortable in a chair, she ogled at how wonderful his behind looked in his perfectly fitting jeans.

"I'm still a little taken aback that you agreed so easily to help me out. Aren't you supposed to think I'm guilty until proven innocent?"

Pausing with his hand about to touch the refrigerator door, Ryan faced her, he frowned, his eyes level under drawn brows as like he was still processing her comment.

"If you want me to help you then stop saying dumb shit like that."

"Why isn't that the way most cops think?" She threw back at him. "None of you ever think a person is innocent until after the poisoned needle is in their arm, pumping them full of drugs."

Ajana barely had time to blink before Ryan was across the room, trapping her in the chair with his large body. She wasn't a bit frightened; in fact, she was turned on so much she wished Ryan would kiss her.

Hold on one minute!

Chapter Seven

"If you're trying to scare me by being getting this close to my face, it isn't working," Ajana taunted. "I know you aren't about to do anything to me. You're all talk and no bite." She didn't doubt that Ryan knew how to get rough and tough with the best of them; however, she didn't believe that he would harm her for any reason. "You're what I call a good guy. That's the main reason I came to you and not Officer Jones. I didn't like the way he looked." Her nipples puckered when Ryan's body leaned closer and his chest brushed across hers.

"How do you know I don't bite? I might want to take a bite out of you right now Miss Bennett. With the way you keep looking at my mouth I think you might want the first bite to be on that full bottom lip of yours."

This couldn't happen. "You're wrong Ryan. I wasn't looking at your mouth and I haven't been flirting with you. I hadn't realized you have an ego problem." God, she had to get better at hiding her strong attraction to Ryan. She wasn't here for a quickie with a cop. She only craved one thing from the man, and that one thing was making her stomach do cartwheels.

One masculine eyebrow arched over bedroom eyes. "Oh, if I'm wrong please enlighten me to the truth." Ryan suggested pushing his body away from hers. "I'm up to learning new things."

Ajana hated how she wanted to still feel Ryan's warm breath on her face, but she wouldn't let him know that tidbit of information.

"You and I aren't compatible."

"Why aren't we?"

"You're the cop who's trying to help me on one hand; however, I'm not dumb enough to believe you aren't still trying to put me away at the same time."

"Have you always been nervous like this?" Ryan inquired going back over to the refrigerator.

Why was he always asking her questions? She should be the one tossing out the questions. Ryan was getting more from her than she should allow. He was still her hostage in some way. Maybe it was a bad idea not making him stay in the chair. He could overpower her at anytime and call the cops on her.

"I don't think anything is wrong with me and I don't like you implying that there is." Ajana complained getting up from her chair. "You aren't the one calling the shots here, I am." Chuckling Ryan opened the refrigerator and stared at the food on the counter.

"Honey, you shouldn't quit your day job. You're a horrible criminal."

"No, I'm not. I did a pretty job of getting you to do what I want, didn't I?" How dare he laugh in her face? It took planning on top of planning to get everything to fall into place. "You would still be handcuffed to that chair if those kids hadn't knocked on the door."

"See, that was your first mistake," Ryan replied kicking the refrigerator shut with his heel. He grabbed all the items off the counter and carried them over to the roll away island.

"A good criminal never does crimes on a holiday like Halloween; too many people out there to witness it."

Ajana wasn't buying into his logic.

No one had seen her when she hid inside of his car at the police station. He was just trying to make her doubt her abilities and it wasn't going to work.

"Nice try Ryan, but I did an excellent job of entering your car undetected and you're still pissed a woman tricked you."

"Let's just say I wouldn't want it in a report," he agreed winking at her. "How about you come over here and make a salad while I start on the steaks?"

"You're going to trust me with a knife?"

"Sure I am. You aren't about to hurt the guy who's going to help you; beside I'm quicker than I look. I'll have the knife away from you then you would be flat on your back in a matter of seconds."

Flat on her back with Ryan above her didn't sound so bad.

"Alright I'll remember that officer," Ajana teased sliding a knife out of the holder at the side of the island. She grabbed the lettuce Ryan had in front of him and started working on making a salad.

Maybe he was having a break down and didn't know it. That would be the only explanation as to why he was cooking dinner with Ajana instead of hauling her sexy ass down to see Sergeant Webster. How about if someone slipped a dumb ass pill into his coffee this morning and only now it was taking effect to his senses?

How many years had he been a cop? Everything that was going on right now could cost him his position on his job. Sergeant Webster was an understanding man, but he wouldn't back him when it came to something like this. He was harboring a criminal suspect in his house of all places.. What if someone had seen them drive in and called his job?

Everyone could be waiting for him to bring Ajana in, and they may be wondering what's taking him so long to bring her in.

Despite the evidence against her, he felt deep in is gut, that she was innocent, especially after seeing her evidence. He wanted to prove so bad that the Syleena case hadn't messed with his mind, so he jumped at this case without doing all of the research he would usually have done.

He also felt pressured into solving the case, with Sergeant Webster breathing down one side of his neck and the jackass Angelo breathing on the other side.

Although she was distracting, he wasn't the type of guy to be overcome by a pretty face. Despite the fact Ajana's dark toffee complexion was flawless and her body would give any pinup model phobic nightmare, he honestly believed that he could look deeper into the case without feeling biased.

Picking out the correct seasonings from the spice rack in front of him, Ryan peered at Ajana from the corner of his eye. She was chewing at her bottom lip while cutting up the lettuce for the salad.

"What does your family think about this trouble you're in? Do they believe you did it?" He laid the steaks on the grill attached to the stove and adjusted the heat.

Laying the knife down, Ajana tuned to him and lifted her shoulder. "They want to believe I'm innocent, but I don't think they do. I've always been kind of a risk taker and my dad thinks this cat burglar thing fits my personality."

"Are you sure you aren't twisting your father's words?" Ryan turned over the steak then placed the seasonings back in the rack.

"No, you don't know my dad." Ajana answered reaching for a tomato. "He doesn't believe in tarnishing the family name. One mistake in his book and you're out of the will."

The meat tenderizer slipped out of his hand and hit the counter with a loud bang. "You're kidding right?" He asked picking the container and shoved it in at the very bottom of the stand. Ryan was angry that a parent could be so callous towards his own child.

"Well...he did warn me that if I was found guilty he would leave all his money to my stepmother."

He didn't miss the way Ajana spat out the word "stepmother." He wondered how long the two of them had disliked each other. Having a stepparent in your life could be hard, he knew from experience.

"How long has your dad been married to your new mom?" Going over to the cabinet Ryan pulled out two dark blue plates. Moving around the kitchen he collected everything he needed for a nice place setting.

He had to keep busy or he would find a way to kiss those lips Ajana kept nibbling on every now and then. There was only so much a man could take when it came to a woman as seductive as Ajana. Slowly he started to set the table and fought down his desire for the lady behind him.

"Tasha Silvertin isn't my 'mom,'" Ajana hissed behind him. "She's a gold digger that my father wed and is too dumb to see his mistake."

"What makes you think she's a gold digger?" He questioned, placing the last utensil on the table. "She might actually be in love with your father."

Placing the dirty knife in the sink Ajana pivoted, then gave him a 'you-got-to-be kidding me look'. "What twenty five year old girl is really in love with a fifty two year old man?"

Ryan opened his mouth to speak but all his words had left him.

He hated to admit it but Ajana did have a point.

Chapter Eight

"How long have you not gotten along with Tasha?" Ryan inquired turning off the grill. He took the steaks off then placed them on the plates and carried them over to the breakfast nook. "Was it an instant hate?" He glanced around and noticed that he had left the steak sauce on the island. "Ajana, can you bring the steak sauce with you when you come?"

Having dinner with Ajana was wrong on so many levels, but he wanted to get to know more about her. Maybe she would let something slip and he might be able to figure out if she was really telling him the truth. He couldn't deny the attraction between them. It was sizzling up the room and he was worried how much longer it would be until he kissed her lip-gloss covered lips.

He wasn't a monk and never claimed to be; but out of all the women in his past, none of them made him wish for one night that he wasn't a cop the way Ajana had him wishing that he wasn't one. Somehow or someday she had gained his trust, which was a hard thing to do.

When he was on the undercover case that involved Syleena, all his thoughts were about protecting her. With Ajana, all he could think about was different ways to entice her into his bed and keeping her there.

His penis twitched in his jeans as he watched how her sweater stretched across her chest as she moved across his kitchen as if she owned it. How was he going to get through the night, not to mention however how long it took to prove Ajana's innocence? Turning sideways he adjusted himself so that Ajana wouldn't see the effect she was having on his body.

"Where do you want it?" Ajana asked picking up the steak sauce with her left hand and the salad bowl with her right.

Anywhere you want to give it to me, he thought as his ultimate temptation sauntered toward him. "Anywhere on the table is fine with me," Ryan answered pulling out a chair so Ajana could sit down.

"Well...aren't you the gentleman," she replied placing the items on the table then taking her seat. "I don't know what to make of you, Ryan."

He waited until Ajana sat down before he whispered in her ear. "What do you mean by that?" He made sure his lips brushed the back of her earlobe before he moved away. He smiled when Ajana spun around in the chair and pressed her hand to her ear.

"What are you doing?" She inquired dropping her hand back into her lap.

Plastering a blank look on his face, Ryan sat down at the table and grabbed the steak sauce. "I don't know what you're talking about."

He busied himself opening the bottle, and then proceeded to pour a nice amount on his steak before placing it back on the table.

"Are you going to lie and tell me your mouth didn't brush my ear?"

* * * *

Why was he doing this to her? She was trying so hard to be good and not jump across this table and plant a hot kiss on Ryan's generous mouth. Sitting back she allowed herself time to study the man in front of her; it wasn't like Ryan was going to stop her. His features were classically handsome, but below the neck the rest of him was hours, hours and double overtime hours of sex waiting to happen. Lord help her, she wanted to know how many rounds Ryan could go before her body got covered in his sweat.

When he had joked around with her earlier, she had noticed there were touches of humor lines around his mouth eyes that gave him a playful look. She wanted to do something to see that side of him again.

"I know you heard my question. Are you going to answer me?"

"It all depends." Ryan cut into his steak and placed a nice size piece into his mouth.

"On what?" She answered slicing into her own food before she took a bite.

"If you're going to answer my question about your stepmother. You left me hanging for an answer." Ryan voiced.

Swallowing her food, Ajana wiped her mouth with a napkin then placed it back on the table. "Can I have something to drink first?"

Ryan smiled at her, his teeth amazingly white against his tanned face. "Sorry, I forget about that. What would you like?" He asked getting up from the table. "I have beer, wine, soda and water."

"A beer sounds wonderful." Ajana answered then ate another piece of the tender meat.

"Coming right up."

"Here you go. I'm shocked you wanted beer and not wine." Ryan was only gone seconds when an open can of beer was set in front of her.

Taking a sip of the liquor she let it slide down her mouth and savored the flavor before addressing Ryan's comment. "Why? Don't I look like a beer girl to you?"

"No, honestly you don't." Ryan confessed. "I'm enjoying all the different sides to you Miss Bennett. I can't wait until I uncover more."

"I know you can't handle what I have hidden away," she teased back.

"Don't tease me or I might have to go against the rules and take you up on that." Ryan flirted.

"Enough of the flirting, I'm supposed to tell you why I don't like Tasha."

"Good, I can't wait to hear this. I don't like my stepfather, but I sense you despise your stepmother."

"There hasn't been a word made in the English language to describe how I feel about that heifer." Ajana snapped shoving her plate away from her.

"This slut worked at the nursing home my dying mother was a patient at. My dad went there everyday to visit my mother and Tasha made sure she was always in the room with them."

"Why was she always there?" Ryan tossed a large helping of salad on his plate.

Ajana sighed at Ryan. Surely he couldn't be that stupid and not understand what Tasha's game was.

"Money.... why else?" She shot back. "Tasha was smart enough not to flirt with Dad inside my mom's room, playing the concerned friend; but when he left the room, she was all over him." Ajana grabbed a small bite of salad for herself and then shoved a forkful into her mouth.

"Were you there when all of this happened?"

She swallowed the food in her mouth then answered Ryan. "Yes and I couldn't believe Dad was falling for it. I tried to tell him but he wouldn't listen. I think it was because Tasha found a way to sleep with him before my mom had passed." She gave a dry laugh at the thought. "Can you believe while my mom was slowly slipping away, my dad was in the bed with that slut?" She could barely keep from calling Tasha the name she wanted to.

"I can't comprehend that your dad wasn't there for your mom in her time of need. Had they not gotten along before she got sick?"

Ryan was asking her questions that she didn't want to get into. Talking about her family was a hard situation for her. "Yes and no," she continued to explain to him. "My parents loved each other. I never been around a happier or more loving couple; however, after mom started getting sick Dad changed. He became distant from us."

"I don't think he wanted to come to terms that the love of his life was dying right before his eyes, and that there wasn't anything that he could do about it," she confessed placing her hands on the table.

"That still doesn't excuse him for being an asshole in her last days," Ryan verbalized running his thumbs across the back of her knuckles. The light gesture was sweet and a little soothing to her nerves. "Your father should have been by her side until she died, not trying to get to home base with Tasha."

Ajana couldn't let Ryan shove all the blame on her father. Part of what happened with her dad was her fault. She hadn't been there for him so he found comfort and understanding somewhere else.

She eased her hands away from Ryan's and placed them back into her lap. "Why the sudden interest in my family. How is any of it going to prove my innocence? My dad isn't the ones on the videotapes and Tasha is too lazy to plot a jewel heist. All she has to do is spend Daddy's money."

"Knowing the background of the suspect always comes in handy when a major case is still under investigation. Against my better judgment I have agreed to help you, but I need to know all about the skeletons in your closet." Ryan commented gathering up the plates from the table.

How dare he insult her like that? Why did she have to be the one with skeletons in her closet? Ryan needed to stop acting like a Boy Scout and toss out some of his own skeletons.

Ryan had to be hiding something in his closet because a man as fine as he was didn't have a guilt free past and she was going to be the woman who found out what his secrets were. She'll make sure of that.

Chapter Nine

What is she thinking about now? Ryan wondered as he wiped his hands on the dishtowel and folded it over the faucet. The entire time he did the dishes, he felt Ajana's eyes burning a hole into the back of his head. He felt uneasy because he never knew what she was plotting. Ajana had a lot going for her: looks, a pinup body, and a wicked sense of humor, but what he liked the most about her was her quick mind. Nothing went over her head when they talked to each other.

A mind like that could hurt her or help her in the end. He prayed that it was the latter and not the former. Ajana didn't need to get into any more trouble. He sensed that she didn't completely trust him; he needed to find a way to make her understand that he wasn't out to hurt her.

"You know that we have a huge problem here," He turned around to face her.

She might have tricked him on Halloween night, but before this case was over Ajana's Bennett was going to be his treat. Now I just have to think of a plan to make that happen.

"What kind of problem?"

"Where you are going to sleep tonight," he smirked as Ajana's beautiful brown eyes shot him a withering glance then narrowed suspiciously.

"I'm not sharing a bed with you if that's what you're thinking." She answered quickly. "I didn't seek you out to gain a lover."

Ajana had no clue how sensuous her voice sounded to him. Didn't she realize that it was out of her hands now? He had been craving a taste of her lips since he laid eyes on her picture. She wasn't going to deny him that pleasure.

"There's only one bed in this house so where do you think you're going to sleep," Ryan exclaimed pushing his body away from the sink, "I don't trust you enough let you out of my sight, you might sneak out during the night."

"You should offer me the bed and you take the couch." Ajana insisted leaning back in the chair, as he got closer to her.

He gave his head a quick shake. "No, I don't think I'm going to sleep on the floor the first night of my vacation."

"Why didn't you tell me you were vacation before now?" Ajana snapped. "How are you going to help me if you don't have access to the police database?"

Passion! God he loved when a woman had a passionate side to her. Ajana was going to be a handful for him and he would relish every minute of it.

"What makes you think I can't log on to the police database from my home computer? All I need is my password and the right access codes."

"Can't you get fired for doing stuff like that?"

Planting one of his hands face down on the table he used the other one to brush a piece of hair away from Ajana's mouth. "No, Sergeant Webster gave me permission to work on this case while I was on leave."

"I think your mind is more on finding a way to get me into bed than working on this case, Ryan," Ajana whispered stroking her fingers across the hairs on the back of his hand.

Keep stroking me like that and I won't be able to control my next reaction, he thought glancing down at her hand.

"Have you thought about it?"

"About what," he asked capturing a pair of chocolate eyes that were beautiful and mysterious.

A pink tongue darted out and licked her full bottom lip. "What it would be like if we finally gave into this heat between us and kissed?"

Chapter Ten

Ryan didn't give Ajana a chance to tease him anymore with her soft clear voice. Wrapping his hand around the back of her neck, he tilted her face up to his and captured her lips with his, teasing her mouth more than kissing it.

He wanted to learn the texture and shape of it. For hours now, he had been dreaming of what it would feel like once they kissed and he would make Ajana enjoy every second of it.

A small hand balled up his t-shirt while a wet tongue licked at the corner of his mouth. All of his plans to take things slow ended with the first flick of Ajana's tongue over his lips. Shit! Why was she always testing his control? He tried to take things slow, but she blew up his plans by using that cute tongue of hers.

"Mmm... steak isn't the only meat that the steak sauce tastes good on." She purred giving him mouth another quick swipe. "I could lick at you all night. Would you like that Ryan?"

His cock jerked once, then twice against the confines of his jeans at the vision of Ajana's stroking that tongue of hers over parts of his body all night. Hell, if his little cat woman was good, he'll return the enjoyable favor over and over again.

"Don't promise things that you aren't going to deliver," Ryan growled. Picking Ajana up out of the chair by the waist, he spun around then sat down with her straddled across his lap. "Do you know that I shouldn't be doing this with you?" He held a perfectly formed ass in his hands and moved Ajana's body back and forth over his throbbing erection. However, if Sergeant Webster kicked the door down at this very moment and told him to stop he wouldn't be able to.

"Why don't you forget that you're the cop and I'm the suspect? How about we see who can push the envelope the farthest? We can't have sex tonight, but I don't see why we can't explore each other some more." Ajana whispered sliding her hands under his sweaty t-shirt. All this talk about licking and exploring had already gotten him sweaty and hard as granite.

What was she talking about.... "No sex?"

Chapter Eleven

He waited; wanting to hear what Ajana was going to tell him next. She had given him a taste of what he had been wondering about for weeks and snatched it away in the same breath.

Grabbing her hips, he yanked her closer to his pelvis, "What do you mean 'no sex?' Do you mean you don't want to know what it feels like to have me inside of you? Honey, I swear I'll make it so good for that you'll want a repeat performance."

"I don't doubt that, but...I'm not sure we should get that involved with each other." She confessed in a voice so soft that he almost missed it.

"Okay, what are you having second thoughts about," he sighed rubbing his hands over Ajana's jeans clad thighs. This woman had one killer body and he hoped he got to see it before the night was over.

"Stop doing that," Ajana scolded slapping at his hands. She tried to get off his lap, but he wrapped his arms around her waist holding her in place.

"Don't move. I like how you feel on my body. I promise I won't let my hand wander anymore." Holding up his hands he placed them at the sides of the chair. "Now tell me what the big deal is about us sharing a bed tonight. You want me and I can't hide how much I can't wait to discover all the hidden treats on your wonderful body."

"Sharing a bed with you will be a dangerous adventure," Ajana groaned. "I can barely think straight now."

Ryan relished that her mind was cloudy with untapped desire because his was in the same turmoil. She shouldn't be thinking about anything but how the magnetism between them was hot and heavy. He could spend the rest of the night making her feel pleasure.

What was going on with him?

This mind set was so unlike him. He never thought about sleeping with a woman the first night until Ajana dropped into his life. She had him hard and aching the second she changed clothes and waltzed back into his living room. Couldn't she see that it was fate that had brought them together? Now all that was left was for him to make her see it too; and the only way he could think of doing that was to prove her innocence. God, he hoped with everything in him that she wasn't the cat burglar ripping off the Atlanta jeweler's.

"For tonight, let us be ruled by our passion and nothing else. Who know, maybe the Halloween fairy can cast a spell on us. Have you thought that maybe all of your troubles was meant to happen so that we could have this moment?"

Grinning Ajana kissed him on the mouth then slid off his lap. "Are you saying it was fate? I didn't take you as the type of guy who believes in that silliness." She winked at him then moved toward the other side of the room.

Popping out of the seat, Ryan quickly made his way over to her; he wasn't following her line of thinking. "Honey, why are you saying something like that? Something brought us together tonight, don't you want to act on it?" He wouldn't allow her to dismiss their connection. She was someone special and only made for him. Not many women could control him the way that she had inside of his car.

All that sexiness and power would be killer when it rolled over into the bedroom. They might not make love tonight but it was going to happen and a whole lot sooner than she thought.

He was a man on a different case now: Making Ajana Bennett see that she was the woman for him in every definition of the word; however, he couldn't show his hand too soon. Ajana presented him with a tough cool exterior but the interior was a lot softer and more tendered than she let on.

"Alright, I won't bring up making love again tonight," Ryan agreed. Hell yeah! He thought as a sudden look of disappointment crossed over Ajana's face at his words. She did want him as much as he longed for her.

Ryan ran his fingers through his hair and flexed his shoulders trying to alleviate some of the sexual tension in his body, but it wasn't working. "I need to take a shower and fix this problem that's threatening to rip these jeans apart." He tried to chuckle as his hand waved down toward his cock. His manhood still wanted Ajana and so did he, in the worst way.

Ajana's sinful eyes darted down to his crotch. Her pink tongue made an appearance again as it licked her top lip. "Sorry about that, I shouldn't have teased you." She apologized in a sexy whisper then her eyes rose back up and met his. "Can you ever forgive me?"

"Don't do that," Ryan scolded shaking a finger in Ajana's direction. "Or you'll be joining me in that shower." He turned and quickly left the room before he lost what little restraint he had left.

Down the hall in his bedroom Ryan went into his bathroom and fixed the shower temperature the way he liked it. Stripping out of his clothes he tossed them in the hamper by the door and got into the walk in shower. Closing the door, he rested his head against the tile and let the water slide over his heated body. He enjoyed the flirtation between them. She kept him on his toes, but could he risk his career by having these sudden feelings for her. At first, it was mild curiosity about a mysterious woman in a picture. The kind men experienced when their eyes landed on a photo of a captivating woman in a magazine. Yet after talking with Ajana, he found out there was more to her than a pretty face.

Grabbing the unscented body wash, he poured a handful into his hands and started to rub his hand over his body, building up a rich lather. He always enjoyed this ritual after a long tiring day at the office and today was one of those days. Sliding his hands lower, he washed the six-pack. It had taken him over a year and a half of hard work to get the rock hard abs at the gym. He wasn't about to hire a personal trainer like some of the guys at work had. He wanted the pleasure of doing the work himself and he got it.

The hard on Ajana had given him was still there, and he needed to take care of it before he saw her again. Holding his erection in his hand, he lifted his head towards the sky, as he gently massaged his entire body with the bath gel. Closing his eyes, he imagined Ajana in the shower with him taking care of this problem herself. He was so lost in the fantasy that he could almost hear her asking to join him in the shower.

"Should I take your silence as a no?" A silky voice murmured from his left.

Opening his eyes Ryan swung his head over to the left shoulder in surprise. Ajana was standing there without a stitch of clothes on. Letting go of his stiff cock he pulled her into the stall with him and closed the door. "Do you know what you're doing?" He prayed that she said yes because he didn't want to stop once he got started loving this delectable body in front of him.

"Didn't I come up here to you?" She asked, running her fingers over his abs. "I thought your body would look like this and I couldn't deny myself the pleasure of being with you."

His stomach muscles clenched tighter as her fingers moved lower, almost touching the part of his anatomy he was trying to ease the ache in earlier. "Like what?" He moved his hips so Ajana's hand touched his penis.

"Hard and inviting," She enclosed her hand around his thick shaft. "Do you always get this thick or is it because of me?" Ajana purred running her thumb over the tip.

Growling deep in his throat, he grabbed Ajana's wrists in one of his hands and pulled them over her head, backing her up until her back touched the wet tile. "You do this to me."

Ryan used his knee to spread her legs further apart and slid his erection between them until the tip of him was at her wet entrance. He wanted to be buried deep inside of her so bad that he could almost feel her welcoming heat wrapped around him but he wasn't going to do it. Not until he was sure that she was ready for him.

He marveled at the fact that Ajana's had given him this opportunity to see her naked and he was going to get an eye full.

Stepping back a little, he transferred her hands over so that his left hand was holding her steady, leaving his right hand free to explore her beautiful body. "I'm a breast man and yours are magnificent. Full and heavy like a woman's breasts should be." He cupped the left one in his hand and ran his thumb over the taut nipple. Ajana shivered but didn't say a word.

The shower's water pounded down around them making their own little mini paradise that he wasn't ready to leave. Dropping his head, he stroked the tip of her nipple with his tongue. He breathed softly on the pebbled hardness before suckling its nub into his mouth. His teeth and tongue latched onto the sinful treat like a baby hungry for a pacifier.

"Oh, my God," Ajana wiggled against his light hold, but he held on to her tightly.

She had to be paid back for keeping him tied up earlier. While his mouth made work of her wonderful plump breast, Ryan let his fingers glide down her stomach toward the warm moist haven he wanted to be cocooned in later.

Letting go of Ajana's breasts with a wet "pop", Ryan ran his tongue between the valley of her breast, and back up to the soft downy of her cleavage, licking upwards along the side of a sweet neck until he reached her earlobe. "Do you want my fingers in you?"

"Yes," a tormented voice moaned barely hearing above the pounding water.

Ryan felt a huge sense of masculine pride at the ability he possessed to make Ajana go wild. Who would have thought the controlling woman downstairs would melt in the palm of his hand like this?

"I don't know if I should or shouldn't," he teased brushing his fingers against her damp curls.

"Why not?" Ajana whimpered, tugging at her hands again.

"You've been such a bad girl and you don't like Halloween which happens to be my favorite holiday." He whispered, moving his head to stare into Ajana's eyes. "Bad girls don't get rewarded. They get punished."

"I promise to be a good girl from now on. Please touch me," Ajana begged him, then moved her hips so the tips of his fingers got coated with her wetness.

Shit! If he didn't watch out she was going to turn the tables on him. He had to regain control of this situation and fast. "You aren't being a good girl now." Ryan reprimanded, pushing three fingers into the welcoming heat already dripping over his hand.

A sharp breath hissed out between his two front teeth. "Oh, damn honey you feel so good." He slowly and methodically moved his fingers inside of her silky core, sending shivers down her body as her inner walls began to contract around his fingers.

"So does your fingers," He felt her press down on his fingers.

He could stay in the shower with her like this for hours, but the water was getting colder, and he wanted this bundle of sexiness spread across his dark blue comforter when he took her.

"Let's move this to my bed." Reaching behind him, he turned off the water and grabbed Ajana by the hand.

"Slow down officer, we have all night," she laughed as he tugged her out of the shower then through the door toward his bedroom. "Don't you want to grab a towel?"

"Why? I'm just going to make you wet all over again." Ryan picked up Ajana and carried her the rest of the way to his bedroom.

Placing her in the middle of the bed he stood back up and ran his fingers through his wet hair pushing it off his forehead. A drop of water started at Ajana's collarbone and slid down over her tight stomach pooling into her navel, where the showing of an "A" navel ring that hung there. He had never slept with a woman who had a navel ring before and he couldn't wait to slide between the smooth creamy thighs of the woman who was wearing one at this moment.

Chapter Twelve

"I want to play a game with you." Ryan moved in between Ajana's legs. He spread them further apart as they could comfortably go. He then dragged the tip of his index finger between her breasts, down to the dangling navel piercing.

He knew that her body ached for his touch from the way her hands clawed at the comforter almost ripping it. He wanted to stroke the fire between them until their bodies burned from it and nothing else remained. "Do you want to play a Halloween game with me?" His asked tracing the curve of Ajana's hip with his finger.

"Is it scary?" Ajana stared up at him. "I don't like to be scared."

Something about the way she said that made him not believe her. His little cat woman loved danger and tonight he would give it to her. Tomorrow was a new day, and they would start working on finding out who the real thief is.

"No, honey it's not scary at all," he whispered, bending over to lick the soft skin right above her cute little navel. "It's really sexy and fun, but it'll take a lot of willpower, so I don't know if you can do it." With the challenge he just tossed out, there was no way Ajana wouldn't take him up on it.

Slowly and seductively, Ajana's rich eyes slid down his body and back up to his eyes. Her gaze were filled with such an intense heat that he almost exploded against her leg. "I'm ready for anything you may toss my way Officer Ryan Lerner. Are handcuffs involved? I've never been cuffed before," she purred stroking his back with her fingers.

Next time...honey next time he thought as his mouth covered hers. The touch of her lips against his was a delicious sensation through out his entire body. Parting her lips with his tongue, he explored the sweetness he knew that would be there. Pressing Ajana's body deeper into the mattress with his body weight, Ryan blocked out the little voice in the back on his head warning him against doing this, as he succumbed to the kiss.

As he aroused her passion, his own grew stronger and hotter. He had to stop kissing her or this game would be over before it began. He planted a couple more kisses on her mouth and tried to move back, but Ajana wrapped her legs around his hips stopping him.

"No, don't you leave me. I want you," she groaned cupping his butt in her hands. "Can't we play your game later? You feel so good and I don't think that I can wait any longer."

Chapter Thirteen

Ryan couldn't have told Ajana 'no' if his job depended on it, but he had to do one thing first. Untangling her from his body he reached over the pulled open the nightstand drawer and quickly put on a condom. Her body started to squirm beneath his the second their chest touched again. The perfect shape of her naked body taunted him in ways he never thought possible. Lightly touching her hardened nipples with the palm of his hand he watched, as they grew harder.

She gasped when he turned his head so his tongue could lick the underside of her breasts. Peaches and another scent he wasn't familiar with drew his senses making him take another swipe with his tongue. Sitting Ajana up on the bed, he moved her to the edge and kneeled

between her legs. He felt his way through her entire body with his hands discovering all the dimples and curves of her back, waist, and hips. He continued to let his hands travel back up her thighs, testing the wet core making sure she was ready for him.

“Ryan stop doing this to me.... I want you so bad.” She panted as his lips lightly brushed across her inner thigh. Licking a path up her silky smooth body, he was disappointed when she pulled his mouth away from her creamy delicious center.

“I need you in me now.” Ryan slid up her body, and positioned himself over her as readied his staff to enter her.

“I want you to, honey,” he confessed then entered her with one thrust of his hips. “Oh baby.”

He watched as Ajana’s head fell back bed in pure ecstasy. He loved the mewling sounds that she was making as he worked his cock in and out of her body. Slipping his hands under her hips, he lifted her up and placed her back in the middle of the bed without losing any of his tempo; flexing his hips a little more harder, Ryan found a way to make Ajana’s snug hold on him even tighter as she wrapped her legs around his waist and relished in the terrific pounding that he was giving her.

Soft purrs of pleasure poured from her mouth, pushing him to thrust harder inside of her, making Ajana scream his name at the top of her lungs.

Beaded sweat covered her dark toffee skin, as he thrust in her, showing her with his body, what was difficult to say with words. Unable to resist tasting the droplets of sweat, he bent his head and licked at the salty dew on the side of her neck. The salty taste of her skin made a low rumble erupt deep from within his throat. Unable to stop himself he drew a tender flesh between his front teeth and started to nibble on it.

Perfect.

That was the only word pushing through the fog in Ryan’s mind as he kept loving Ajana in his bed. With the full moon shining through the open window, the beams from the moon highlighted their damp naked bodies.

Ryan kept plunging into her, whispering words in her ear as she moaned and panted his, Jesus, and God’s name. Biting on her neck again, her felt her inner walls contract around his cock as she climaxed, squeezing his cock, until he thrust at a frenzied pace, releasing his climax right after hers.

* * *

She was the perfect fit to the emptiness that seemed to have surrounded him the past year

“Honey, you’re so good.” Ryan hissed into the velvety ear by his mouth. “Once isn’t going to be enough for me.”

He collapsed on top of Ajana’s heaving body for a few seconds before rolling off. He didn’t want to crush her with his weight. “You definitely made up for being a bad girl.” Ryan whispered as he disposed of the condom into the wastebasket by the bed, and then he pulled Ajana’s to his well-satisfied body.

"Um hum." She agreed drowsily. And within a few minutes, she was asleep.

"Now I've to make Sergeant Webster understand you're not guilty and then I need to find the person who is." He promised before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter Fourteen

The loud shrill of the phone woke him up out of a well deserved and exhausting sleep. Reaching over the nightstand, Ryan picked up the cordless phone on the third ring.

"Hello." He muttered in a sleepy voice.

"I'm surprised you're still in bed." Sergeant Webster laughed. "I thought you would be down here bright and early this morning, bugging me about your job."

Sitting up in bed Ryan rubbed the sleep from his eyes, "Hmmm...I was taking your advice," he lied. "I slept in." His boss couldn't find out the real reason he wasn't at the station this morning.

"Oh," Sergeant Webster sighed, "I thought maybe you called one of your many girlfriends and spent the night celebrating Halloween. You're young and you need to be out having fun, not wasting you life away worrying about cases."

A twinge of guilt hit Ryan in the middle of his chest as he stared down at the sleeping body next to him. Moving the covers down some he traced the small of Ajana's back with his fingers. He celebrated Halloween the way his boss had wanted but not with whom he would have approved of.

"You know I don't have time for that," he lied again as he removed his hand off his bedmate's body. "I'm working hard on the robbery case."

"Yeah, that's the reason I called you, we got another call last night about a bracelet."

Ryan sat up even straighter in the bed. If the robbery happened while Ajana was with him then she was innocent and Sergeant Webster would have to drop all the charges against her.

"Sir, where was the robbery last night and what time did it happen?"

Ryan suddenly flinched as a warm soft hand slid underneath the covers and wrapped around his morning erection. His eyes flew over to Ajana and she winked at him then brushed her thumb around the tip of his hard on. He tried to swallow down his moan but it slipped out anyway.

"Ryan, are you okay?" Sergeant Webster questioned from the other end of the phone. "You sound a little strange."

"I'm fine.... sir." Ryan choked out grabbing Ajana's wrist to make her stop, but he wasn't quick enough. She began to suckle his nipple into her wet mouth.

"OH GOD...." He moaned as his hand fell back down to the bed allowing Ajana to continue her earlier assault on his lower body.

Moving up the bed her raspy voice murmured in his ear, "Don't let him know that I'm here or I'll have to stop." She uttered sliding her hand up and down his penis. "Act cool and professional." Ajana kissed on the side of his mouth then went back to sucking his nipples while her hand worked at of his erect staff.

God help me. He prayed

"Sorry sir about the interruption I thought I saw something outside my bedroom window." Ryan was surprised by how easily the lies rolled off his tongue.

"Son...you should get out of that house and do something. You can't find a woman staying at home for the next six weeks. How about I come over and go over the call from last night?"

"NO!" Ryan shouted pushing Ajana away from his body as he sat up on the side of the bed. "You need to stay at work and keep Angelo in line. Make sure he doesn't eat all my peanut butter crackers I have hid in my top drawer."

He knew that his excuse was lousy, but he was desperate. Sergeant Webster couldn't find Ajana at his house. He wouldn't understand what had happened between them last night. Sitting on the bed he watched Ajana walk past him wrapped in a sheet. She went over to her black bag in the corner and grabbed some clothes along with a small bag with the word cosmetics written across it.

Then she strolled into the bathroom closing the door behind her, leaving him all alone in the room with a bad case of morning wood. A second later the shower water started to run and he tried to relax the tense muscles in his body.

"Ryan are you positive that you're okay? You really aren't acting like yourself." Sergeant Webster's questioned drawing his attention away from the closed bathroom door.

Hell maybe he could make this conversation short and join Ajana in the shower so she can fix the predicament she had left him in.

"I swear I'm fine, I just had a restless night thinking about the Bennett case." No, you had a restless night because you were doing the prime suspect in the Bennett case, his mind corrected him.

"Well to answer your questions. The jewelers were located about two blocks from the station and the merchandise was stolen about an hour before you left. The owner didn't know until he started going over the inventory."

Ryan felt his heart starting to sink to the pit of his stomach. "Did he get a look at her face? Was it Ajana Bennett?"

Please don't let it be her. He prayed glancing at the closed bathroom door. The woman behind there had made him feel something special last night, and he wasn't ready to lose her.

"He wasn't the one who weighed on her. A new employee did and he couldn't give a good description because she was wearing a black hat and sunglasses. The owner is pissed because a diamond and ruby bracelet worth half a million dollars was stolen."

"Are you positive that it was Ajana and not some copycat?"

"No, the same skill was used. She had the clerk show her about five or six different pieces and then she one on without the clerk even knowing that it was gone. We have to find her and soon or the FBI is going to get involved. This is our town and I want us to bring this woman in."

How do I ask the woman I made love to last night is she pulling the wool over my eyes?

"Ryan, if you want to back out of the case you can. I can give Angelo the copies of the information I have and get him right on it." Sergeant Webster chimed in.

"I can do this myself. There isn't any reason to give him my case." Ryan sighed. Running his hand along the back of his neck he looked around the room and spotted Ajana's black bag in the corner. Getting up off the bed he walked over to it and picked it up. He brought it back over to the bed with him, and then sat down on the bed.

"Do you know if she got a chance to pawn it yet or not?" He asked unzipping the bag.

"None of the pawn shops have anything like it yet, so it must still be on her body," Sergeant Webster answered. "We need to catch her with the jewelry still on her body. It will make the case open and shut."

Ryan searched through the items in the bag. He wasn't finding any bracelet and as he was about to zip the bag back up, he stopped at a smaller zipper along the inside of the bag. His hand started to tremble before he even unzipped the bag and stuck his hand inside.

He fell back down on the bed as his hand touched something cold. "Tell me what the bracelet looks like again." It can't be her. Please don't let it be Ajana.

"It's a little bigger than a tennis bracelet; it's covered with diamonds and rubies even the clasp has a diamond on it."

Pulling out the object in the bag, Ryan cursed under in his breath as a diamond and ruby bracelet hung from his fingers and sparkled as the sunlight from his window hit it.

"Sergeant Webster, I've to call you back." Ryan whispered tossing the bracelet down on the bed. "Something has happened that I need to take care of." Ajana lied to him. He'd played for a fool.

"Ryan, you honestly aren't sounding like yourself. Are you sure that I don't need to come over there. This is becoming a high-profiled case and I don't want you to get overwhelmed by it."

"Thanks for you concern, Sir. But I've everything until control," he replied then disconnected the phone call. Ryan got up off the bed and went over to his closet. Snatching a pair of pants off a hanger he shoved his legs into them thinking about how he had to go into the bathroom and arrest Ajana.

Making his way over to the closed bathroom door he prepared himself to do something that he really didn't want to do.

She actually made him believe that she wasn't guilty of all the charges pending against her. Why did it have to be her? He should have gone with his gut instinct and hauled her gorgeous ass down to the station.

I can do this. No matter how much she begs and pleads with me. I won't help her out.

Ryan knocked once on the door then went inside. Ajana wasn't washing anything he hadn't licked or sucked last night, so he just walked in. Standing in the middle of the floor he got the shock of his life. The shower was empty and the bathroom window was wide opened. Ajana was gone! As he turned to leave the room a splash of red on the mirror caught his attention. Moving closer he read the note written in fire engine red lipstick.

Sorry Handsome

I can't stay.

I wouldn't look good in a jail uniform.

A.

P.S. Don't worry; we'll meet up again and thanks for a wonderful Halloween

Epilogue

"Did you check the documents? Where they fakes?" Ryan asked moving away from the window. He still couldn't believe Ajana slipped out of his bedroom window while he had been on the phone with Sergeant Webster.

"I have a handwriting analysis expert checking them out. He's pretty backed up so it might take a couple of weeks until he gets back to us. What are you going to do until then?"

"You have to ask?" Ryan inquired. "I'm going to find Ajana Bennett and bring her back here." He wouldn't let her get away with tricking him a second time.

"Are you sure you can win this battle with her? Miss Bennett is sexy and crafty. That's a dangerous combination." Sergeant Webster pointed out.

"Don't worry, that little she devil won't get away from me a second time." He promised thinking of a way to track down the woman who'd stolen his heart on Halloween night.

THE END