

Glass Towers

Surrendered



ADLER AND HOLT

GLASS TOWERS

OceanofPDF.com

Book 3: Surrendered

By

Adler and Holt

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To our beloved readers, we greatly appreciate you! Thank you for reading!

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I love who I am when I am with you.

Being with you makes me alive and strive to be a better person.

Each and every day, I fall in love with you all over again.

You were made for me and I will always feel the fire you ignite within me.

~Harrison Towers~

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Chapter One

“Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking, on behalf of myself and the rest of this morning’s flight crew, I want to welcome you aboard Cayman Airways flight 416: service from Grand Cayman heading non-stop to Atlanta, Georgia. We are currently level at 33,000 feet, and that will probably be our final cruising altitude today. It appears that we will have a smooth flight ahead, and I can turn off the Seat Belt Sign.” (Ding as the lighted sign goes off) “Please feel free to move about the cabin as you wish. We only request that while you are in your seat, please keep your seat belt fastened snugly about you. That is what we do in the cockpit, just in case we encounter some unexpected turbulence. In the mean time, please sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight. If there is anything that anyone of us can do to make your flight a more pleasant one, please let us know. Once again, welcome aboard.”

“And for you, Mrs. Towers?”

I feel a poke in my rib, “I’m sorry, what?”

Gah. Mrs. Towers? That sounds incredible, but oh so foreign. I take my gaze away from the sparkling ring on my finger and turn to my husband, who is looking at me with an amused smirk. I look up to see the impatient flight attendant staring down at me with both eyebrows raised.

Harrison speaks up, “She will have a mimosa please, and some sparkling water.” He tilts his head at me and bites his lower lip. I have half a notion to lean over and bite that lip myself. Harrison was not able to buy out the entire section of First Class on this flight, so that might be a bit too much PDA for now.

“What has your attention *mi amore?*” He takes my hand into his and rubs the ring on my finger, pushing it around in a slow circular motion. He looks at me with hooded ‘I want sex’ eyes.

There go my naughty loins again. My body seems to be lacking an off switch when it comes to my reactions to Harrison.

I smile up at him. “I am just feeling so happy right now. Can’t we just stay in paradise, live in a little grass hut and shut the world out?”

He sighs. I know we are going to have a shit storm when we return. Frankly, that worries me a bit too, but Danielle, we have our whole lifetime ahead of us, and I want to show you the world. We can’t very well do that in a grass hut.”

The flight attendant serves our drinks and we toast to ‘us’. I lean my seat back to get a little snooze in before we land in Atlanta. In just a little over 8 hours, we have to face reality in Portland. Something I have been avoiding for the last ten days. I close my eyes, hoping sweet dreams of the last week will come to me.

10 Days Ago...

I stepped off the plane when we reached Grand Cayman Island. The warm tropical breeze flowed through my hair and warmed my face. At first glance, this island was absolutely beautiful. It was like something out of a movie, with swaying palm trees, crystal blue waters and the music of the Caribbean playing in the background.

I looked to the crowd and spotted Harrison, waiting for me as all the passengers exited the plane. His face was excited, warm and loving. He mouthed to me as he smiled, “I love you.” Oh! He was a sight for sore eyes, and the butterflies in my stomach resumed their flight of fancy. He looked to fit right in here in the tropics, with his blue plaid Bermuda shorts and a white, short sleeve snug-fit v-neck shirt. He was already sporting a tan and looking simply gorgeous.

I locked eyes with him, and in one fleeting moment, I had the feeling I had desired my entire life. I felt as if a huge weight has been lifted off me. All the craziness dropped to my feet. I felt a sense of security once I was with Harrison at that moment in time.

Every time we escape to be with each other, I feel as if we are living in a completely different world. A life where there are no worries, no stalkers or crazy women, and we just have each other, without any outside influence crashing into our world. This is really what it is all about. Happiness with the one you love. My love.

I walked past the small three-piece Caymanian band, sitting near the entrance of the main airport building. The airport is so small that everyone deplanes on the tarmac. After I made it through customs, I joined Harrison, who was waiting for me outside. He grabbed my bags and led me to the black-tinted Hummer sitting outside the airport.

“Mr. Towers,” the driver nodded then turned his attention to me. “Ms. Austen, welcome to Grand Cayman.”

The friendly driver took my bags and we headed off. We drove through Georgetown. My face close to the tinted glass, I could see cruise ships in the distance and many people crowding the shops, bars and restaurants in town. Harrison took my hand into his as he scooted closer to me.

“Are you ready for Grand Cayman, Danielle?”

“I hope so. This island looks so alive! Honestly, I am ready to be anywhere with you and only you.”

“Me too, *Mi Amor*.” He leaned over and gave me a brief, but tender, kiss.

“Where are we staying? In town?”

“Not exactly.”

“Oh. Are we staying in a hotel on the beach?”

“So inquisitive aren’t we, beautiful. Don’t worry you will love where we are heading.”

Oh my. Not staying in town, not in a hotel. I could only imagine the grand plan Harrison has set up. He is always prepared and with nothing but the best. I really could get use to this! We drove on the main road that outlines the island. We passed by beautiful homes, restaurants, diving spots and miles of gorgeous, white-sand beach and crystal blue water. We seemed to be heading away from all the tourist spots. All the beach entrances were really quiet and some didn't have any people playing in the water at all. We had driven about 30 minutes, through miles of pure paradise. I was just taken with how beautiful the island was and how untouched many spots appeared to be.

“Ah, here we are, Danielle. Cayman Kai.”

Lining the right side of the street were gorgeous estates, many with gated entrances. They really were all different and unique. Some were blue, peach, yellow and some were simply modern, neutral colors. Most of them had signage near their entrances, naming the property. Some read, Tranquility, Cayman Jewel, and Sunset Sky. Each home titled to fit its personality and look. There was definitely a mix, but I could tell from the drive that we must be on a more high-end part of the island.

The Hummer began to slow down, and turned into a gated entrance.

Harrison leaned over and whispered near my ear, “Welcome to Serenity, Danielle.”

I inhaled sharply and held my breath for a few seconds. Literally, breathtaking. There was a small sign on the stone wall that said ‘Serenity’. Oh, yes Serenity! I need a large dose of that!

“This will be ours for the week. Are you ready?”

“Harrison, it is just enchanting. I can't believe this is all ours!?”

We drove through the gates and up a driveway with palm trees lining each side. The house was a large Mediterranean estate, with stone and stucco accents. Harrison definitely has a thing for European design.

Harrison turned to me and grabbed my face with both hands. He kissed me sweetly on the lips and looked deep into my eyes. His gaze was piercing, I was ready to crumble right here on this leather seat.

“Prepare yourself for the week of your life. I promise you, Grand Cayman will change you forever. I love you Danielle.”

Swoon! Dear lord, how in the hell did I get to this point in time with Towers, himself. I should pinch myself. I felt as if I was completely in a dreamland.

We walked through the large wooden doors, and I almost fell to the floor. Gasp! The entire house was glass and facing the water. Floor-to-ceiling windows showcased the gorgeous, blue water. I felt as if I was looking at a painting. Everything was pristine. From the white and cream furniture, to the coral and gold accents, this house was the epitome of luxury meeting Caribbean chic. Dark wood, cream-colored tile and marble, and a giant crystal chandelier in the entryway. Exactly the way I would decorate this estate. I was in complete awe. I had never stepped into anything that grand of scale, let alone stayed in, in my entire life. I just wanted to run and jump on the sofa and scream at the top of my lungs. Squee!!

I stopped myself to tune back into reality. Harrison was standing against the marble pillar in the entryway, just staring at me. His eyes amused and at ease. He looked relaxed and carefree.

“Harrison this is...”

“All ours, Danielle,” as he walked over and planted a tender kiss on my forehead. He swept me up with one hand under my knees and the other supporting my back. I felt so safe in Harrison’s strong arms. His smell was intoxicating, as usual. His hair perfectly brushed back, with loose locks curling up at the end.

“I don’t want to let another minute slip by. I want to savor each and every minute with you this week.”

Melt. All I could do was melt completely in his arms. My body had never felt so weak, yet so alive, in my life.

Harrison carried me out on the entry-level deck, which was the length of the estate. The pool flowed out from underneath the deck and had an infinity drop. When looking over the deck, all you could see was water. The glistening pool almost looked as if it overflowed into the blue-green ocean. I felt at peace.

Harrison placed me down on the ground, as I grasped onto the clear railing of the deck's see-through wall. Harrison placed his hands on my shoulders, as our bodies remained touching.

“The thought of your body pressed against mine, Danielle, drives me insane. I have missed you, all of you.”

I buried my head into Harrison's shoulder, as I let out a long sigh.

“The feeling is mutual, Mr. Towers. I am ready to get into that water with you, and unwind. What do you think?”

“Well, that is one location in which we haven't made love,” he chuckled to himself.

“Oh, Harrison. I should have known you would say something like that. You are determined to make love to me on every surface and medium you can imagine.”

“So, are you complaining?”

“Not at all, handsome. I am game!”

“Good. I figured so. You know I am going to make love to your sweet body in more ways that you have never imagined.”

Lord! I am not sure he will ever lose his sexual appetite. I mean come-on, I should nickname him the bionic sexual man. But, still, I am not

complaining!

Harrison helped me unpack; we took a little snooze to recharge our batteries and headed out to the ocean. We spent the remainder of our day swimming, snorkeling, collecting shells and just enjoying our alone time with each other. Making out under the sun, our bodies were against one another every minute of the day. We could not seem to keep our hands off one another. That evening, we ventured into town and spent the night dancing away at the Warf, which overlooks the ocean in Georgetown. I have never ever seen Harrison so out of his element. He was fun, carefree and out of his head. Of course, every woman in the restaurant and dance lounge was eyeing him all night long. I did not mind. An exotic location, with the best-looking man in the joint and his arm around me and mouth pressed against my lips the whole night, I could not picture doing anything else. Who knew Harrison had such moves! Okay, I figured, since he rocked the sheets, he would do the same on the dance floor. And, did he ever deliver!

We danced about two hours and it was nearing 11 PM. Harrison grabbed my hand and pulled me off the dance floor. He led me through the crowd of people, while everyone was staring at us. Well, mainly, staring at Harrison, for that matter.

He pulled me into a corner, outside on the patio of the restaurant. Grabbed both sides of my face and planted the most delicious, sensual mind blowing attack on my lips. His want and need showed through in the way he kissed me. As if he could not get enough. God, that made me so hot. My whole core and sex were pulsating with desire. I just wished he would pull my dress up and fuck me right there, right then. His body pressed up against mine, with his hands now firmly against the wall. He had me captured in between the wall and his body. Exactly where I always want to be. I can never get enough of this man.

Harrison tore his luscious lips away from mine, his breathing ragged from passion. He got close to my ear and whispered, “Danielle, you have absolutely no idea how hard it is for me to force myself to stop thinking about you. Not sometimes, but all the time.”

Shit! Swoon! Melt! I was melting damn him, just melting. Limp. That was exactly how I felt. He knows exactly what to say to me at the most perfect time. He can't ever stop thinking about me. God, I love this! If he only knew that he consumes my every waking second of every damn day.

So, this is love. True, honest, uninhibited, passionate, vulnerable love.

Harrison proceeded to grab my hand and led me down a stone staircase. It put us right out on the sand. The water was calmer than I had expected it to be. Harrison and I walked hand in hand down the beach about a half a mile. The beach was pretty quiet, maybe only a handful of people out while we walk Seven Mile Beach. Grand hotels and palm trees line Seven Mile. This was a nice change from our secluded resort estate. I loved being immersed in the Cayman culture. Absorbing the Caribbean music, eating conch fritters and all the delicious seafood dishes. The Caymanians are really some of the nicest people I have met, in my entire lifetime. The island was so clean, safe, and full of life that it made you feel good to be there. 'No worries' I guess should be the catch phrase for Grand Cayman.

Harrison found a secluded alcove on the beach. It was almost like a private little beach, surrounded by large rocks. We ducked through, and Harrison grabbed my hands. He pulled me close to his body and ran his tongue from left to right, over my bottom lip.

"God, I want to just bite this delectable, firm lip of yours, Danielle." His hands slid up my dress and grabbed my ass firmly, as he pulled me into him. The sounds of the crashing waves against the rocks covered my sensual moans. He started to work his tongue over my lips and down my neck. Running his tongue up and down my neck, while stopping to suckle at my ear, he hit my sweet spot, sending shivers down my spine. He pulled the rest of my dress over my head and tossed it behind him. He began to slide his body and tongue down, down and down. He stopped at my breasts. Grasping both of them in his hands and squeezing firmly, as he pushed his face in between them. Licking underneath my hard tits and flicking his tongue all around them, while he took each one deep into his mouth. Devouring every last inch.

“Jesus, Harrison.”

He looked up at me and gave me that devilish smile. My body trembled as I grabbed his hair and pulled him closer into me.

His tongue was moving south, over my belly button, and then horizontally to my waistline. He began to run that expert tongue up and down the length of my sides, while holding firmly onto my hips.

In a matter of seconds, his mouth was on my soaking wet heat, through my lace panties. Running his tongue up and down the length of my swollen, needy lips. I felt as if I was ready to combust. He continued to tease me, ever so well. I faintly remembered him doing this before. Honestly, this was one of the hottest things that I had ever experienced. Harrison continued trying to plunge his tongue through the lace. I wanted it so bad. My panties were soaked with his desire and my juices. I reached down, as I could not take it any longer. I slid my panties to the side and pushed his face into me as he went wild on me. He pulled back just a little. His tongue flicked at my entrance, and then slightly parting the tissues, he threw his hands behind my ass and pushed me into his mouth as he slipped his tongue deep inside me. His whole face devoured inside of me. He continued, faster, harder, and with the most passion that I have ever felt when he has eaten my pussy out. This is one thing that I could never live without. Number one would be Harrison, and number two would be how he makes me cum with that skilled tongue of his. Damn! I lifted one of my legs and placed it on the rock to the right of me, leaving Harrison beneath me. Wrapping his hands under my thighs and holding my body tight, he attacked my sex.

I started to feel the build up and my wetness was pulsating hard on his tongue. I just wanted to come all over that sweet tongue of his. He loves it when he can pleasure me like that. I can feel his strength and determination to get me to climax in record time. All of the sudden, he stuck one finger inside of me, as he was tongue-fucking my pussy. The pressure of his finger and his tongue heightened the pleasure. The feeling of having both inside of me, pleasuring every inch of my sex, set me off. I threw my head back, as I grabbed onto those hot locks of his. Pulling tighter with both hands as my orgasm intensified. My body was shaking and pulsing. That full-body cum

that he was giving me, led me to scream out his name, while losing all control of my breathing. I feel as if I have just run wind sprints for 30 minutes. I could not keep up. The orgasm did not stop. I pushed Harrison's head away as my orgasm came down, I could not take any more of his tongue on my dripping sex.

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Chapter Two

I awoke the next morning in the master bedroom of ‘Serenity’.

I looked next to me, and found that Harrison was not in bed. On his pillow is a sunset-orange and pink rose. I picked it up and it smelled divine. I climbed out of bed, threw on my robe, and ventured out to the Great Room. I could smell the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. The kitchen island was arranged with every type of breakfast food that I could imagine. I headed out into the Great Room, and I could see Harrison outside on the deck, talking on his cell. I watched him while he conducted his call. When he hung up, he seemed to be staring out into the light blue ocean. He was wearing nothing but a low-rise pair of white cotton pajama pants. Damn, he was fine. A true sight, with those messed up ‘I just got rocked’ locks flowing in the slight breeze.

I headed out onto the balcony.

He turned, as I opened the sliding glass door.

“Aw, my love. You slept well. How do you feel?”

“I feel amazing,” I reply, while holding the rose in my hand. “I really don’t want to leave here. I like spending every minute and hour of every day with you.” I took the rose and held it up to my nose to take in the sweet aroma.

“Me too, beautiful. I wish I could just whisk you away and never return back home. Come, you must be hungry.” He took his hand in mine, and we walked inside the kitchen.

“Thank you. For the rose. That was so romantic to see when I woke up. I’d rather it have been you, but I love it.”

“You are welcome. It is called a sunset rose. I thought it would fit tonight just perfectly.”

“What’s going on tonight?”

“Oh, Danielle. Do you really think I am going to give all my cards away?” He smiled with a devious little grin. I knew that a plan was churning in his head. I could tell that he had this whole trip planned to a T.

We finished breakfast, relaxed poolside for a while, and got dressed. It was late afternoon, and I felt refreshed and rejuvenated. We headed out the front doors to find a Jeep Wrangler, with the top off, waiting for us.

“Is that a part of our adventure today?”

“Mmm hmmm. That it is.”

“Wow! I have never been in one before. What a great way to explore the island! Okay, so where are we heading to, Harrison?”

“If I told you, everything wouldn’t be so exciting anymore, now would it?”

“Okay, Okay...I know the drill. Let’s go!”

I could see the young smile on his face wash over him. He looked like a college boy who was just taking his new girlfriend on their first date.

We took a long drive through Georgetown and made our way to the west side of the island. Through winding roads, we made our way to a place where there were no hotels in sight. Small, brightly colored homes lined the streets. There were a few roosters here and there, and a cow!

Whoa! A cow on the side of the road! Ha! With a bell around its neck and all. Okay, that was just hilarious. I love this island. Laid back is an understatement.

We pulled into a driveway and I saw horses in the distance.

“Horses?!”

“Harrison, look at me. Are we going horseback riding?” I could barely contain my excitement.

“Maybe.”

“Oh, come on!” My voice escalated with excitement.

We pulled into the sand parking lot, and I flew out of the car.

I walked as fast as I could up to the fence of the arena, where the horses were kept. Three horses were already saddled. .”

“Do you like them, Danielle?”

“Like them? I am loving this. We actually used to have a horse when I was younger. I was small, but I remember that we had to give him away to a good home.”

“Oh, I had no idea. Is this okay for you?”

“Okay? Yes of course! I love horses. This is beyond what I could ever imagine that you would have planned for us. I was really little when I used to ride, you will have to teach me all over again.”

The guide took Harrison and I out to a secluded beach, miles of white sand beach and ocean, with no one in sight. It was so romantic. If only we could have gotten rid of the guide who had to escort us. We ended up at the tip of the island. The horses trotted through some shallow water, where the ground was covered in conch shells. Large, gorgeous, pink, orange and ivory shells were tucked near the green grasses that grew out of the water.

Harrison turned to me and I knew that he could see the excitement in my eyes. He jumped off the horse and gathered about six shells. He had tucked

away a large plastic bag with him. So sweet! I overheard him ask the guide to help us. Harrison handed our guide the bag of shells and helped me off my horse.

“Harrison, what are we doing?”

“Well, I thought we could swim with the horses.”

“Swim with the horses? Are you kidding me? Since when do people swim with the horses?”

“Haven’t you heard of this? So you don’t want to?”

“Oh, my! This is not going the way I planned. This just seems all too dangerous.”

“Don’t worry, pretty girl. It will be just fine. I promise,” the jolly Caymanian man says to me.

“Okay, it is now or never. Let’s do it.”

“That’s my girl. Okay, Ben will go out first, and then our horses will follow him. Are you okay with that?”

“Um, sure. This is safe right?”

“Ben, have there been any accidents while doing this since you have worked at the stables?”

“Oh, just one or two. Nothing to worry about.”

“Okay that is reassuring, Harrison. One or two? See how he doesn’t go into detail about what happened!?!?!”

“Will it make you feel better if we share a horse?”

“YES! Oh God, yes.”

“Okay.”

Ben guided his horse into the water, and we watched him as the horse swam with Ben on his back.

Amazing. Just amazing. It looked as if the horse liked it as well. I had never seen anything like that.

“Don’t worry, pretty girl, they are trained to do this. You will be fine!”

Harrison and I slipped into the water. The horse let out a loud neigh, and scared me half to death. I grabbed Harrison’s hand and squeezed it as tight as I could. Am I really riding with Harrison on a horse, in the water, on Grand Cayman! Someone pinch me now!

The experience was exhilarating. A once-in-a-lifetime experience. The horse enjoyed the warm water and the swim as much as we did; I will always treasure that memory.

After we finished our swim, Ben took my horse and shells back to the stables. Harrison and I removed our wet clothes and rode back on one horse, in our swimsuits. Our bodies dried quickly in the warm Cayman sun. I was riding in front, with Harrison behind me. His arms wrapped around my waist, as his hands guided the reins of the horse. The sun was beginning to set, as we made our way back to the stables. We started to slow down so we could watch the sunset together. It was one of the most romantic moments of my life. Our bodies damp from the water, skin touching skin, the burning chemistry running through our veins. We turned to look at the sunset, while Harrison kissed me gently along my shoulder. He planted sweet kisses up my neck, as he wrapped his arms around my waist and held me close.

Chapter Three

We made it back to the estate, got cleaned up and ready for the evening. Once again, I had no idea what Harrison had planned.

I walked out of the bathroom, to the master bedroom, and there was a rack of clothes against the wall. Oh, my! Seriously!?! The most gorgeous brightly colored, high-end designer dresses. Below them, sat an array of shoes, jewelry and clutches and a white box with a turquoise ribbon. I untied the ribbon and opened the box. Inside the box was a breathtaking white fitted corset top, made of satin and lace and matching white lace panties. This brought back memories of the other lingerie Harrison had given me in the past. None of them have ever been white.

“Aw yes, that will look amazing on you against that Cayman bronzed skin, Danielle.”

“Harrison, is it gorgeous. Thank you. And the dresses, they are exquisite.”

“I want my love to be happy. I want to take care of you, Danielle. I want to always take care of you.”

Omigod, he said it. He wants to take care of me always! Shit! What does this mean!?! White lingerie, romantic days and nights, and wanting to take care of my every want and need.

“Here, this is the one.”

Harrison handed me a blush colored dress from the rack. It had intricate beadwork and lace mixed in. It was just perfect.

“I will meet you out on the deck, Ms. Austen.”

Oh, shit! How does he always do this to me! I wonder if it will always be like this when we are together.

I walked out on the terrace, and there he was. In a white linen, short sleeve shirt, tucked into his navy dress shorts and a pair of deck shoes without socks. God, he is sexy. He turned when he heard me making my way out onto the deck. He was holding two glasses of what looked to be champagne. He advanced toward me and handed me a glass.

“If I forget to tell you tonight, you look beautiful, Danielle.”

We walked past the pool and down the steps. Harrison’s arm around my waist; it felt oh so good there too. There was a low table set up in the sand, with candles in clear vases, of all sizes, surrounding the table. I could see wine and food spread all around. A white blanket covered the sand and tons of white and ice blue throw pillows were placed all around the blanket. Gorgeous blush and pink roses, in small vases, sat on the table.

Oh my! “Harrison...wow, how did you do all this? Did you put this all together?”

“Ms. Austen, do you really underestimate the romantic gestures I can draw up on my own? Yes, I threw this all together. For you. This was a first for me. I wanted it to be perfect and to be exactly the way I envisioned this night to look.”

Wow, I could not believe what I was hearing. Mr. Mogul, himself, planning romance at every corner of our trip. I was loving every minute of it, of course. All of it. He was evolving, from a man who was so concise and to the point into a romantic, chivalrous man. The all-business executive was slipping away, and I could see a man who truly enjoyed making me feel loved.

We sat down to a wonderful meal. A trio of fish with mango salsa and caramelized onion had been prepared for us, with mashed potatoes and veggies on the side. A huge bottle of Dom sat ready for us in an ice bucket;

although, we saved that for after dinner. We enjoyed a nice glass of Towers Vineyard Reserve with dinner.

“So, Danielle. Where do you see yourself in, say, five years?”

Whoa! He was throwing out all the good questions early.

“Honestly, Harrison, I suppose that I want to be settled down, married, maybe starting a family. I would not want to waste any time, if it was with the right man. I want to have my career on the side, and strive to be the best mom, wife and partner that I can be. I know that I was destined to be more than a career woman. I was meant to be a mother and wife as well.

“The right man, you say. Do you think I would ever be the right man, Danielle?”

Holy shit! Was he asking me if he was worthy to be the man for me? Since when did confident, powerful Harrison become so vulnerable?

“You, Harrison, are the only man for me. I cannot go for one day without you crossing my every thought and action. I cannot bear to breathe normally when you are not with me. I get anxiety when I have to be more than a few hours away from you. My body craves your body, like a moth to a flame. After the past few days, Harrison, I know what it is that I want.”

“What, Danielle. What is it, exactly, that you want,” he gazed intensely across the table, the candlelight flickering between us. For a few seconds, all I could hear was the sound of waves gently crashing against the sand.

I inhaled deeply and slowly until the air filled my whole chest, and then I exhaled slowly, not sure, if I could make the words come out of my mouth.

“Danielle, I love who I am when I am with you. You have no idea how fast my heart beats when I see you and when I’m with you. Being with you keeps me alive and makes me a better person. Each day, I fall deeper in love with you.”

Holy hell! Where is he going with all of this?

Harrison stood up and moved closer to me. He grabbed my hands in his and looked deep into my eyes.

“I was made for loving you, Danielle. I want to be the reason that you wake up smiling every morning. You are everything that I could ever want and need.”

I felt the tears start to swell in my eyes. Was this going where I think it was going? I started to tremble. Not out of fear, but out of happiness and joy. Was I about to hear the words that I thought I would never again hear.

Harrison pulled off the top of one of the decorative boxes on the table. Inside, was a beautiful oyster shell box. It almost looked like mother of pearl. Gorgeous. I started to panic. My breath quickened and slowed all at the same time. I tried to take a deep breath, as I bit my bottom lip.

Harrison took one hand behind my head and leaned in for a soft, sensual kiss. I could have stayed there, in his embrace, for days. Finally, Harrison released me enough to face me. He quietly stared into my eyes, as if to see everything inside of me. “I want to make you so happy, Danielle. I don’t want to go on another day without you by my side.”

He opened the small box, and my heart skipped a beat.

Harrison pulled out the most exquisite diamond ring. It was a four carat, cushion-cut diamond, set with two rows of pave diamonds all around the band.

GASP! “Oh, Harrison, what....I mean....does this.....”
I could not get anything out of my mouth. None of my words made sense, and I could not complete a sentence.

“Danielle, I want to start living the rest of my life right now, with you, and only you forever. You are my world, and I cannot imagine another day without you. Will you make me the most blessed and happiest man in the

world, Danielle? Will you be my partner for the rest of our lives? Make beautiful babies together? Travel the world and conquer our dreams together? Make love and cherish one another for all the years ahead of us? Will you marry me?

“Harrison, I.....Yes....YES! Of course, I will marry you, Harrison! I can’t believe this is

Harrison cut me off and his mouth sealed over mine. Our tongues found each other with deep, pure passion. After that long, deep kiss, Harrison broke our embrace and gazed at me with his sincere, loving eyes, “I am going to make you the happiest woman, for the rest of our lives, Danielle.”

He slid the ring onto my left ring finger and brought my hand up to his lips. He kissed my ring finger gently whispering, “I will cherish you every day of our lives. I promise you, Danielle.”

“Harrison, you have already made me the happiest woman in the world. I can think of nothing else, but spending the rest of our lives together. But wait, how are we able to get married, Harrison? The whole world thinks you are engaged to Marion.”

“Don’t worry; it’s all been sorted out. The short version of the story is that I had the bank manager track down the deposits before I got here on Friday. The Bank’s fraud department found an electronic trail to a bank account, where Marion was stashing the funds. I recovered the funds, and they have already been wired to Towers Enterprises in Montreal. It was quite simple, really. Either she walks away quietly and leaves us alone, or she gets hauled off to prison. I am sure that she will choose the former.”

“I see, but I am confused! You had the funds wired to Towers Enterprises, not Holdings?”

“Right, my company is Holdings; my father’s company is Enterprises. “

“Ok, that makes a lot more sense. I guess I never realized the name difference.”

“Anyway, Enough about *her* Danielle. Let’s not waste another minute of our time together talking about all of that. I want to focus on the here and now.”

Finally. After all that bitch has put me through, may she rot in hell. I can’t believe there are actually women like this in the world. It must be a sad life to live. She lost, and how she did not see that coming, is beyond me.

I heard music begin to play in the background. A soft smooth jazz was coming from the main house. There must have been an outdoor sound system. How romantic!

“*Est-ce que je peux avoir cette danse mon amour?* May I have this dance my love?” Harrison stood and extended his hand to mine, as he gave me that killer smile. I get to be with this man for the rest of my life! This is unreal. I sincerely hope that nothing gets in the way of our happiness.

I reached for Harrison’s hand, and he pulled me up from my seat. I sprang into this chest, as he caught me. He took his finger and placed it under my chin, as he brought my face up level to his. Our eyes caught. Love and sensual seduction were written all over them. I grabbed Harrison on both sides of his face and gently brought him to my mouth. I kissed him softly, as if I never wanted to let him go.

We danced under the Cayman full moon. Close, skin to skin, our breathing heavy with passion and our bodies locked as one. The ocean splashed against our bare legs. It felt so good to be in Harrison’s strong embrace. I felt safe for a change.

Harrison turned me towards the water and placed his arms around my waist, as he held my hands. We stared off into the moonlit water, silently swaying ever so slightly to the cool sensual music that played in the background. Not a person, boat or home was in sight. That moment was all ours.

Harrison swept my hair to one side and gently kissed my shoulders, dragging his lips to my neck. Sensually, he trailed his tongue along the back of my upper shoulder and to the other side. His tongue sent shivers and electric waves of pleasure through every vein in my body. My skin was turning hot and my sweet spot getting wet and turned on. Harrison's hands ran up my side and down to my hot core. He cupped my pussy in his hand and squeezed it ever so firmly.

“Ah, you are ready for me aren't you, Mrs. Towers,” he whispered in my left ear.

Mrs. Towers! God that sounds good! What a fucking turn-on.

My body was melting into his, and pressed up against his firm, hard cock. I felt every inch through his shorts getting aroused. He slid his hands over my belly and up to both breasts. He massaged them, then squeezed my full breasts in his hands. I threw my head back into his shoulder, as I reached both hands and grabbed his hips. I had to steady myself somehow. I was so turned on, I felt weak.

All of the sudden, Harrison stopped, and turned me around. He kissed my forehead tenderly and then my lips again.

“Come, let's eat our dessert. We can't skip that.”

“Really, Harrison? Dessert?”

“Mrs. Towers,” Harrison said seductively as he slid one finger inside me.

Holy hell! Yes, there... right there. God, that feels so fucking good. Don't stop.

“Yes, you *are* ready! Well, let's just keep this warmed up. You are going to need it tonight.”

Warmed up, was he kidding me? He had just proposed to me, and he wanted to play these little sexual mind games with me?

I turned and walked a few steps back to the spread that he had on the beach for us.

“So, Harrison, I have a few questions for you,” I began, as I refilled our glasses of champagne. I was then sitting on top of the short rock wall that stood behind our beautiful spread. Harrison walked over from the table. He grabbed his glass of champagne, and threw half of it back.

“Yes, Danielle?”

“Don’t you think we are moving rather fast? I mean, it has only been a few months since we met.”

“Danielle, I have been waiting an entire lifetime to find you. I spent many years mourning Adelaide’s death, and I am surely not going to spend another year without you. I knew it was you, Danielle, from the moment I laid eyes on you. I was hit over the head, so to speak. It was almost as if the angels were singing when your eyes caught mine. I know for a fact that heaven brought us together. We are meant to be; there is no doubt about that in my mind.

I threw back the rest of my champagne. Harrison finished his.

His words amazed me. All I could think about was how I wanted so badly for this man to throw me on the sand and make mad passionate love to me.

“How about you, Danielle? What are you thinking?”

“I have never moved this fast in my entire life. However, I can’t see my life, my future without you by my side. I don’t think I could ever go on without you. I guess if it’s meant to be and it is right, then nothing should slow us down. There is no interrupting fate, and this is exactly what it comes down to.”

The sexual tension was growing strong. I could see Harrison’s intense gaze lit by the candles. His finger running intently over his lower lip, back

and forth. I just wanted to reach over and bite it.

I stood up and poured myself another glass of champagne. I took a large sip, and proceeded to place it on the rock wall. I turned to look at Harrison. He met my keen gaze and kept his eyes fixated on mine. I ran my hands over my chest, down my belly, and over my soaking wet sex. The tension between us was almost unbearable. Harrison threw back the rest of his champagne. I took both hands and slid my silk dress to my hips. I grabbed the material and wiggled it down to my ankles. I wasn't wearing a bra, but I was wearing the white lace thong panties. The look on Harrison's face was of a bull about to rage against a red satin flag.

I grabbed my glass of champagne and sat on the wall, crossing my legs. I started sipping from my chilled glass. All the while, Harrison didn't take his eyes off of me. I knew that was driving him mad. He was the one who wanted to take control of the pleasure that night. I took the glass, and as I took a sip, I let the champagne slip past my lips and drip down over my bare breasts. It trickled all the way to my wet heat. God, that was hot. That's one of Harrison's favorites, licking every last bit of champagne off of me. However, he didn't move toward me. He just licked his lips, biting the bottom one, while shifting in the sand. I uncrossed my legs and began to give him a show. Running the cool, wet flute over my breasts, making my nipples hard and ready. I moved down, tracing the inside of my thighs with the glass and running my hand down my other leg. I could feel myself tense up and craved Harrison's tongue inside of me. He was not budging. Damn him. I could tell, though, that he was thoroughly enjoying that power challenge.

I then stood up and walked over to him. I sat down on the low table, facing him with my legs open. I leaned into him and said in his ear, "Mr. Towers, I want to fuck you for the rest of my life."

That did it. His arms jutted toward me, pulling my thighs closer into him. He ripped the panties off me and tossed them into the sand. His tongue was inside me in a matter of seconds. He sat up and kissed me again passionately on my lips and ears. He started to bend me back onto the outdoor table. My back met the white linens. His tongue began attacking

every inch of me, from top to bottom. He held both of my hands down, as he worked his way inside of me and all around my pussy. Both of his hands ran from my belly, up to my breasts and back down again. I was about to climax, and Harrison could sense it. I glanced down at him, as he looked back up at me. I could feel my climax coming over my body when Harrison pulled his tongue out of me. He picked me up off the table, and once again, he prolonged my damned orgasm.

“*Cheri*, I know you want to cum so bad don’t you? I want you to cum hard and long for my cock. Just wait, it will be the hardest cum you have experienced,” he said to me in a rough but sensual tone. He carried me over to the blankets on the sand. He removed his shorts and proceeded to grind his cock on my pussy. I couldn’t take it anymore. I slid my hands down and pulled his briefs down enough to free his hard, yummy cock. Harrison did not penetrate me. He just moved that fine piece of work over my wet, hot sex. The convulsions of my pussy were threatening to erupt any minute

He enjoyed teasing me too much. I reached down and grabbed that hard, delicious cock of his. I grabbed the crown, and proceeded to tease him. I inched it around my wet opening and slid it inside a little bit. Harrison moaned and his body tensed. I removed his cock and began stroking the shaft, while kissing him intensely. I repeated my previous move, only this time, I stuck him in a little deeper. He had a look of pure torture on his face.

“Put me inside you, Danielle. I want to be inside of you now!”

I grabbed his cock. I wanted to make him wait, but I couldn’t take it anymore either. I slid him inside of me, and Harrison plunged it deep. Fucking me slowly and passionately, while kissing me all over. I pulled up my legs so they were higher in the air, and he could get even deeper inside me. I pushed him up a little, and flipped over while keeping him inside of me. I was then on top and riding his sweet cock in slow, torturous circles with my body. Hitting every angle and crevice. I knew where to hit it just right, making him moan in primal pleasure. I rode him deep, while picking up my pace. His cock was getting warmer and preparing to release his cum all inside of me. I arched my back and grabbed onto his hips to steady myself. My pussy was grinding on his length as every muscle in my core

tightened, preparing for the roller coaster of orgasms that I was sure to endure. We came in unison, convulsing out of control, as Harrison grabbed my breasts and squeezed them hard while we came. His hips thrust up to mine, as the aftershocks took over his body. I came so hard. It was the strongest, most passionate orgasm that I had ever encountered. I collapsed on Harrison's chest. Safe, warm and in love. That was making love. The intense connection between our lips and bodies was indescribable. We remained next to each other, just holding one another. We listened to the waves wash ashore, while we curled the blanket over our flushed but chilled bodies

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Chapter Four

I must have fallen asleep hard that night, because the next morning I woke up next to Harrison in the master bedroom. We were both lying together, our bodies locked. I turned to look at the clock, and it was 7 AM. There was a large dried starfish sitting on my night stand. It was white and so beautiful. I turned to Harrison and kissed his lips. He opened his eyes, gave me one of his gorgeous smiles, and let out a contented sigh.

“Ah, *mon amour*. You are quite the sight in the morning.”

“Harrison, did you carry me in last night? I don’t remember coming inside.”

“Yes, I didn’t want to wake you. You looked so peaceful.”

I glanced down and spun the gorgeous ring on my left hand.

“Mrs. Towers, I trust you slept well.”

“I am really starting to like the sound of that, Harrison.”

“It fits you perfectly. I knew it would, Mrs. Danielle Towers.”

“Well then, when were you thinking we would tie the knot in the midst of all the craziness?”

“Today.”

“Today!?!? What? Have you lost your mind? How in the world would we get married today?”

“Don’t worry, Danielle. I have it all taken care of.”

“Taken care of? Wait, this is really going to happen today?” Okay, now things *are* moving too fast.

“I wanted to surprise you, my love. I thought you would be ecstatic about it!”

“Oh, Harrison. I am. It’s just that I’m worried because there is so much planning that goes into a wedding and that is moving a lot faster than I had envisioned.”

“Well, actually, my plan was to have this wedding in the Caymans with just us, and another one in Montreal with our loved ones in a few months or perhaps this coming summer.”

I was just shocked. He planned a whole wedding ceremony from another country. I really felt like I was living in a fantasy.

“*Mon amour*, please...don’t worry. This will be romantic, and it’s all taken care of. We are going to have a wonderful outing today around the island, and when we return, you will become Mrs. Towers.” He gave me his megawatt smile.

“Just so you know, the big family wedding that I would like to have in Montreal is all yours. You will get to plan everything. I want this Cayman ceremony to be special and stress free for both of us.”

“Harrison, I’m so excited. Thank you for always treating me like a queen. I can’t believe today is going to be the day that I officially become Mrs. Towers!”

I threw my arms around his neck and rolled on top of him. I kissed him, I knew that day would be the first day of the rest of our lives together. We proceeded to make love in the morning light.

We showered and got ready for our day around town. We hopped into the jeep with our bag full of sun essentials, towels and refreshments.

“So, what exactly do you have planned for us today?”

“It is a surprise, my love.”

“Oh come on. Any sort of hint?”

“Well, you got a hint actually this morning.”

This morning? Huh, what in the world? I really had no idea.

“You don’t remember do you? Good, it will be a wonderful surprise for you then,” he said with his eyes gleaming with amusement.

We drove a few miles and passed a sign that said Rum Pointe.

“Rum Pointe, doesn’t that sound fun?”

“Oh yes, we will stop by there on the way back. You have to experience Rum Pointe and Stingray City.”

“How do you know so much about the island?”

“Well, my family has been coming here for years. It is one of our favorite Caribbean vacation destinations. Everyone is so friendly, it’s clean, safe, and there are so many things to do, including some of the world’s best snorkeling.”

“Ah, I see. It does seem to be such a great family destination. What about surfing? Are we going to get a chance to do that while we are here?”

“No, the water is too calm. I will take you to Hawaii and show you how it’s done in the near future.”

He took my hand, “I do hope that someday we will bring our children to this island. I know we will have such great memories to create here as a family.”

Oh yes! Oh my! Our children will vacation here. Those words were just sweet music to my ears.

We entered a long, narrow rock drive. It really looked like it was going nowhere. I had no idea what Harrison had in store for me. It ended at a rope chain fence with an opening just big enough for a car. We drove on through. The beach was to our left, and it was just lovely.

“Harrison, what is this? A park or something?”

“Just wait. I have to find the secret opening here.”

“Secret opening?”

There was a rope fence that blocked off access to the beach. Harrison proceeded to drive to the right, around a tree, over a few bumps and out we went! I could see the warm blue waters in the distance and a cluster of yachts on the other side of the island.

We jumped out of the car, and it was exactly what I had been hoping for. A private beach, just for the two of us. No one around. Just the sand, crystal water and complete silence.

“Wow, this is unbelievable. How did you ever find this place?”

“My father actually used to take me here when we vacationed. It was our secret spot. Come, I want to show you something.”

We pulled off our cover-ups and plunged into the water. It was warm, almost like bath water and very salty. There was a lovely beach and shallow water to wade and swim in. I could see all sorts of tropical fish. We walked out a little farther, and all of the sudden....

“Oh my, oh my, oh my Harrison! Come and look!”

The biggest smile had come over his face.

I picked up the most beautiful copper orange colored starfish. I have never been up so close to these in my life. You have to keep the body under the water so it can survive. I have only seen these in tide pools attached to rocks in the cold Pacific or in aquariums.

“These are just gorgeous, Harrison, wow. I am in total awe!”

There were eight more, scattered where we were frolicking.

“Let’s walk in a little deeper.” About five steps into deeper water, we came across more shells. The beautiful, colorful conch shell. That was just our luck. We found so many of those where the horses had taken us too. These, however, were coral and different shades of pink. We finished collecting shells, lied in the sun for a while and made love on the white sand.

The private beach was exactly how I wanted to spend my uninterrupted morning with Harrison. We played for hours on the beach in every imaginable way. Afterwards, we stopped by Rum Pointe for a quick casual lunch followed by a fun round of sand volleyball. We wrapped it up by more lounging in the hammocks that overlooked Rum Pointe. That had to be the most relaxing day, just the two of us, before we said our vows that evening

Chapter Five

We headed back to the Estate, a short drive from Rum Pointe. Harrison led me into one of the upstairs bedrooms. When I walked in, I was completely floored. There was an array of beautiful designer dresses hanging on a rack.

“Wow, they are just gorgeous! How in the world did you...”

“Simone actually helped out with this one.”

“Ah, Simone. Of course. That girl knows me like the back of her hand. This is just amazing.”

“She did spend quite some time selecting these for you.”

I walked over to the rack and started sorting through the hangers, while eyeing each of the garments from top to bottom. There were a few each in white, nude and blush.

“I love them. They couldn’t be more perfect.”

“Good. They are all yours.”

“All mine?”

“Yes, each and every one of them. I know we will get good use out of the dresses for various future events. They are all unique and will look exquisite on you. I’ll thoroughly enjoy taking each of them off you *Mi Amore*.” He said seductively.

I felt my face blushing, and I was so taken aback by the whole thing that I didn’t have a quipped response. “Well, thank you. I love them all.”

“I love you, Danielle. I want to always see you happy like this.”

“Your hair and makeup team will be here shortly. Antonio is our wedding coordinator for this evening. He, of course, was chosen by Simone, and they have been working closely to design a beach ceremony for us.”

“How sneaky, but genius. I can’t believe she didn’t spill the beans to me! Knowing she can’t keep anything a secret.”

“I made it worth her while, she graciously agreed.”

“Oh you two. I am just ecstatic over this. I can’t believe this is actually happening in a few hours. So, if Clarke knows, does anyone else know?”

He smiled his panty-dropping mega-watt grin. “Well, remember the night I surprised you at the beach. I had some time with your father before you and your mom came home. While we visited, I asked your dad for your hand in marriage.”

I gasped. “Seriously? How gallant of you, Harrison.” I purred, “ So, do my parents know we are getting married now? I mean do they know you planned this getaway and wedding?”

Again, he smiled in his delicious way. “Yes and no. I told them that I planned to ask you to marry me when you got here, if you said yes, then we were going to marry right away so the rest of the trip could be our honeymoon. I have not contacted them yet; we can call them tomorrow to tell them. Now, Simone knows everything, I needed her help to pull this off.”

“I still can’t believe she kept this under wraps. No wonder she was being a little standoffish when I was getting ready for the trip. So what about your parents? Have you told them?”

“Yes, they are thrilled I have found someone with whom I want to spend the rest of my life. They were a bit hesitant because it does seem rushed to

them, but they are excited to welcome you into the family. My mother said that any woman that would pull me out of my slump was daughter-in-law material.”

“Oh, am I dreaming? This all seems so surreal! I guess I was the only one who didn’t know about the plan.” I giggled.

He made a move toward the door, “Ok, I will let you relax and get ready. Next time I see you will be at our beach ceremony.” He paused, “You know, you have made me the luckiest man in the world. I love you *mi amour*.”

“I love you.”

Oh, swoon! Harrison kissed me gently on the forehead and then my lips. He excused himself and set off to get ready.

I rummaged through the rack again, and came across a floor-length white silk and chiffon dress. It had a halter neck and a long slit up to my mid thigh. There was also a small gathering of material in the back that swooped down, resembling a train, and the back was open. That was the perfect beach wedding dress. If there was a slight breeze, it would sway a little in the warm air. I slipped it over my head. It fit just beautifully and accentuated my natural curves.

About ten minutes later, the ‘glam team’ arrived to doll me up. I was so glad Simone thought of every last detail! Goodness knows I need the help sometimes! The hair stylist put soft curls into my hair, so it was loose and flowed freely about my sun kissed shoulders. For the makeup, she applied a soft shell pink on my lids. To add drama, she lined the top lid at the lash line and the corners. It simply enhanced my natural beauty, as the ‘glam gal’ put it. I thought it made my green eyes simply pop. She brushed a little bronzer on my cheeks, forehead and chin, which gave me a dewy, glowing appearance. Though, I doubt that I would have needed it. The light inside me was blazing bright that night, and that had to be radiating through my skin. A little coral lip stain and a touch of gloss and I was good to go. I rubbed some vanilla scented skin glow lotion over my entire body. I slipped on a pair of silk thong panties then I put on the gorgeous gown. I stood in

the mirror, admiring myself, when goose bumps traveled up and down my spine. I was so happy that I for a second thought it may have been a dream. For once in my life, I was letting myself live without restrictions. I acted with wild abandon for the man I love. Satisfied with my appearance, I turned to leave the room and follow my destiny.

I walked downstairs and ran into a handsome young man. He was on the main landing of the entryway, pacing the floors back and forth, holding a pen and notebook. He was about 6'2, strong build, green eyes, dark loose tousled hair, tanned skin and wore impeccably tailored clothing. That was the guy Simone hired to plan the ceremony? Mr. Gorgeous? I hoped he could execute the secret plans she had been keeping from me.

“Oh, daaarling....you look absolutely stunning. Just stunning! Come here let me take a look at you.”

“And you must be Antonio,” I extended my hand to his.

He bypassed my hand and threw his arms around my neck.

“Oh, Mrs. Towers, well soon to be, it is a pleasure to meet you, gorgeous. Just radiant,” he gushed as he grabbed both of my hands and extended me out to arm’s length looking me up and down.

Gay, of course, he is gorgeous and gay. Simone really knows how to pick them. I just love all her friends in the ‘industry’. I was seriously relieved. I was sure that he knew what he was doing.

“I got a sneak peek of your soon-to-be husband, and let me tell you girl, he is fine beyond belief. You and Simone sure know how to pick them!”

I just stood there with my mouth slightly agape. I was not sure how to respond to him.

“Now then daaarling, Miss. Simone herself has planned everything, and I have simply executed it, I believe, almost perfectly! Come, let me give you a peek at what is going on outside,” he sing songs.

“Where exactly is Harrison?”

“Oh, he is in the guest house. We wanted to make sure there are no chances of him seeing you.”

Antonio took me into the Great Room, and we both peered out the windows. The sun was beginning to go down and the lighting was just beautiful over the Cayman waters. There was a beautiful archway made out of vines. Lovely white and blush colored flowers filled the whole structure. On the ground, there were about six conch shells filled with what looked to be coral, blush and white orchid as well as roses and tropical flowers.

“Are those....”

“Yes beautiful, those are the shells that you and your man collected on your horse adventure. It was actually Harrison’s idea. He brought these to me and asked to have them filled with your favorite flowers, to match the other decor. He is a very thoughtful man. I don’t believe I have ever had a groom come up with such a genius idea. So romantic, if you ask me.” He fanned himself in a dramatic fashion.

Various large and small vases, flickering with candle light, lit up the sand. Finally, there was a pathway made of coral rose petals that trailed from the steps to the beach, all the way to the archway. It was absolutely perfect. I couldn’t have designed the scene better myself.

“Oh Antonio, this is beyond what I could ever imagine. Thank you, thank you!”

“Oh doll, you are so welcome. It is my pleasure.”

“Wait! I have one last special surprise for you before we get started with this grand evening. Come with me.” Antonio grabbed my hand and led me back to the master bedroom. There was a massive full-length mirror lying against the wall in front of the bed. Harrison and those mirrors!

“Okay, I have specific instructions. What I am about to give you is your wedding gift from Harrison. You must stand in front of the mirror and close your eyes.”

“Really? Okay.”

I walked over to the mirror, and Antonio followed behind me. He placed his hands on my shoulders and whispered, “Are you ready for this?”

Oh god! How many times have I heard that line in the past few months!

“Yes! Yes ready!”

I hate surprises!

“Remember do not open your eyes for anything.”

“Okay, got it.” I took a deep breath and held it for a few seconds. My nerves were getting the better of me. What in the world could he have had up his sleeve?

After the longest two minutes of my life, I heard footsteps behind me. All of the sudden, I felt cool metal on the skin around my neck. A necklace.

“Antonio, can I open my eyes now?”

“Ah *mi amour*, this completes it.”

“Harrison?”

“Open your eyes my love.”

I slowly opened my eyes and grabbed my neck. GASP! Oh my, the necklace! The blue sapphire and diamond necklace I wore to the Gala in Hood River!

“This is yours, Mrs. Towers, all yours. You are stunning.”

Harrison kissed me on the shoulder and grabbed both of my hands from behind me, as he nuzzled his face into my hair.

“Oh Harrison, this is the necklace I wore to the Gala. I will never forget that evening.”

“And you will never forget this evening either.”

Oh my lord, I thought. This stuff only happens in the movies, not in my life. I was floored.

“Something blue is the necklace. Now, for something new. These are also for you my love.”

I turned to Harrison holding a small white box. He opened up the lid, and inside were a pair of diamond cushion cut earrings. They looked to be two carats each.

“Oh Harrison, you really know how to buy some jewels. Wow, I love them.”

“These are classic and sophisticated. As soon as I saw them, I knew they were you.”

“Now, for something old. I want you to have this.”

Harrison reached into his pocket and pulled out a fabric hankie with lace edging, which was rolled up. He unraveled it, and out fell a beautiful hair clip. It was encrusted with diamonds and pearls, and looked vintage.

“This was my grandmother’s clip. She wore it on her wedding day. It was given to her by her mother. Then, she gave it to my mother, whom also wore it when she and my father were married. Now it is yours, and you will pass it to our daughter.”

I started to tear up, as I took a piece of hair and slid the clip into place, delicately holding the strands of hair at the side of my head.

“It is beyond beautiful Harrison. I will always treasure this piece. What a wonderful gift. Thank you so much. Words cannot express how full of joy I am.”

He leaned in and cut me off. His lips pressed against mine, as he cupped my face with his right hand, and holding my left hand tightly.

“You know, Harrison, you really aren’t suppose to see the bride before the big reveal!”

“I know but I figured this whole wedding is anything but traditional. I will take my leave nonetheless. I will see you in a bit, my love.”

He kissed me on the lips again, and that time it was longer and more passionate. Before he walked out the door, he gave me those ‘I want to lay you out right here’ eyes. Damn he was fine, and he would be all mine in a matter of minutes.

Harrison headed outside to prepare for our ceremony. I took one last glance in the mirror and smiled to myself. This is really it, the day I thought may never come again is actually here.

“Oh gorgeous, look at those jewels. Lord almighty that man knows how to ice you up, that is for sure. Quick, let’s freshen you up and get this show on the road to diamonds and romance! Oh, before I forget, here is a glass of the sparkling 2011 production. Your soon-to-be hubby thought you might need to be loosened up.”

“Oh, of course he did. He is always thinking ahead!”

I grabbed the glass of champagne and slurped it down. Yum. That should take the edge off a little.”

“Damn girl, are you nervous?”

“Not at all. Okay, let’s do this. I am ready to be Mrs. Towers for the rest of my life.”

We headed into the warm tropical breeze off the terrace. I could see Harrison in the distance as he looked toward me. At that point, I was getting very nervous.

“Right down those stairs, Mrs. Towers. Would you care for me to escort you to the bottom?”

“I am okay Antonio. Thank you for all your help, you really delivered. I am so happy you were here.”

He nodded and smiled. I headed down the stone staircase to the sand.

Harrison was sporting one of the biggest smiles I think that man had ever displayed. I could tell he was genuinely happy and at peace. He looked more gorgeous than I had ever seen him. His tanned skin and sun kissed hair was glowing in the early full moonlight. He was wearing a casual cream soft cotton jacket and pants suit that was a trim modern fit that looks so good on him. Under the jacket, he was wearing a white cotton button up shirt, open at the neck to expose a little glimpse of his bronze chest.

We held each other's gaze, and I could feel my cheeks hurting from the smile that was plastered on my face. I don't think I have ever had so much to smile for in my life. My new life would start in a few short minutes as his bride. I walked all the way down the rose petal path and finally reached Harrison. He took both of my hands in his and kissed me on the top of my right hand. I could smell his spice market scent that always intoxicates me. The minister proceeded to marry us by having us recite our vows. Once he had said the matrimony prayer and we exchanged rings, he asked us if we had anything else that we wanted to add before he made his final blessing.

We both nodded.

Harrison turned to me, looking deep into my soul. I, in turn, searched his eyes and saw our future staring back at me.

“Danielle, you make me a better man. I am happiest when you are around, you will be an amazing mother, friend, lover, wife and soul mate. I

will cherish you each and every day of our lives together. I love you, Danielle, and can't wait to start writing our story, and our family's story. I love you, *mi amour*."

"Harrison, you are my world, my everything. From the first moment that you ran into my life, I just knew you were meant for me. Through all we have experienced so far, our love for each other has kept us strong and we are bonded in ways no one could ever imagine. I will love you, cherish you, and take care of you all the days of my life. I too am ready to begin writing the rest of our story together. I love you."

"Harrison and Danielle, having witnessed your vows before God and those who are assembled here today," Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Antonio and the glam team watching from the terrace.. "By the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride!"

My husband grabbed my face with both hands and our vows were sealed in a passionate kiss.

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Chapter Six

"Folks, we have begun our descent to Portland. The current weather is 52 degrees, and we will be at the gate in about twenty minutes. We'd like the flight attendants to prepare the cabin for arrival. We want to thank you for flying with Cayman Airways today."

I take in a deep, cleansing breath, and then look over to Harrison and see that he is looking at me intently.

"You ready for this, Mrs. Towers?"

"My stomach is in knots, but I think I am ready. As long as I am with you, I am ready for anything."

Harrison grabs my hand, kisses the back of it, then leans in and gently touches his lips to mine. He pulls back and looks into my eyes. "I love you Danielle. You and I together will get through this and everything else that comes our way."

"I love you too, Harrison."

"So, are Albert and your team going to be ready for us at the airport?"

He nods, as we both put our seats into the upright position, as instructed by the flight attendant.

"Yes, when I spoke to Garrin during our layover, he said arrangements have been made with the airport security to aide us in leaving the premises. I have the utmost confidence that it is handled. Don't you worry!"

I sigh, as I look out the window. In just a few short minutes, we will land and be back to reality. I know Harrison is correct, that we will get through this. What I dread most is Marion's reaction when the board fires her.

During the layover in Atlanta, Harrison sent an overnight package to Montreal. The package contains the documents implicating her in funneling the funds to the bank in the Caymans. Thankfully, the board is going to do the deed, leaving Harrison out of it. It still makes no sense to me why she would have been so careless. She left a virtual paper trail that led right to her. I am beginning to understand that this woman is not only a bitch, but she is an unstable bitch. A dangerous combination.

It would be foolish to think that Marion will just walk away. I dread her wrath. Harrison tells me not to worry, that he will handle it. I can't help myself; I am worried.

Harrison reaches over and nudges my hand to get me to stop twisting my hair around my finger.

"I know that look *mi amore*, stop worrying. We are almost home and ready to start our new lives together. Tomorrow the board will take care of Marion, and we can put all of this behind us."

"Harrison, do you really believe that she is just going to walk away and take their offer of amnesty, if she agrees to go quietly?"

He scoffs, "She hasn't any choice. Either she takes what the board is offering or they turn the information over to the authorities and have her brought up on embezzlement charges. It is more than fair, and she is not stupid. She will agree to our terms."

"I don't know, Harrison, I really think it is not going to be as clean as all of that. She is off kilter; she harmed Adelaide and has been behind all of the craziness in my life. Since our elopement has made it to the front-page of the rag magazines, she has to be humiliated and ready for retaliation. Surely, you know the idiom, 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'"

"Now you are just being melodramatic. I agree she has subjected you to relentless harassment, but the threat of serving behind bars has to inspire her to cease. She will be mad for a while, but she will lick her wounds and bounce back. She can work for her father's company and land on her feet."

I grab my hand away from his. He is making me upset. I can't believe he is being so blind.

“Well, in my opinion you aren't being hard enough on her.” I hiss “She has put me through hell, and all she gets is *fired*?! You mark my words, when she learns of her dismissal, it will be like letting the hounds of hell loose from their cage. I just pray that I am not in their path.”

In a hushed tone, “You are not being reasonable. I would like nothing more than for her to serve time for her crimes. However, you are failing to recognize the rift that would create with the Devereauxs. They are one of the largest exporters of our product to the EU. Without them, we would have to find another distributor. Not such an easy task, but even bigger is the relationship we have had with that family for a mere couple of centuries. One bad egg should not sever those long-standing relationships. It may be hard for you to understand, but once again, I am asking you to trust me.

“I understand all of that Harrison. It is just hard to believe that her family wouldn't want her to be held accountable for all the suffering and heartache she has inflicted on so many! I would think *that* would be embarrassing for the family.

“Look, I agree. Of anyone, you and I have suffered the most at her hand. However, this is how the board of directors wishes to handle her and I have no choice but to follow their wishes. It does not mean that I agree with them. Maybe now, you can appreciate why I started my own life here with my own money, where I the make the decisions. I wanted to get away from the old-school aristocracy and make my own way, without the board looking over my shoulder and dictating every move I make.”

“I had not thought about the board being so controlling, but it does make a lot of sense. I just don't understand this antiquated way of thinking.”

“Well, it is the way business used to be done and they have no reason to change it. Now, let us enjoy the last two minutes of our honeymoon *mi amore*.

As the plane completes its final descent, Harrison grabs my hand, and we head into our new life.

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Chapter Seven

As predicted, the airport was abuzz with camera crews and paparazzi. I didn't think sleepy water-logged Portland had this much media. We both put our sunglasses on and averted our faces, while being ushered away from the crowd. If it were Simone in my shoes, she would be stopping and posing like you see celebrities do at red-carpet events. Not us. We want to power through this crowd and obstruct this pack of hyenas from getting the money shot.

The ironic part is that Harrison is not actually a celebrity. He simply caught the attention of several "eligible bachelor" lists because of his mogul status, not to mention he is drop-dead gorgeous. He is in the public eye a lot with his various philanthropic projects, especially the reading foundation. He has developed amazing properties over the years and he has been a confirmed bachelor, until now. I know firsthand his prowess in the bedroom, so yes; he *was* the most eligible catch for sure. Thank God, I am the one who caught him.

We head out to the waiting town car. I notice that it is not the usual Towers Holdings car. I wonder why we are in a different car?

Once inside, we make a quick getaway. I turn to Harrison, whose body looks tense and stiff. I, on the other hand, found that experience to be somewhat exciting, in a strange sort of way. I wouldn't want to have that greet me every time I got off a plane, but it did add a little sizzle to the otherwise mundane airport. I did find it a bit exhausting and look forward to arriving at the penthouse.

Harrison turns to me. "That was the easy part. I am told that the camp set up at the Towers is something else." His brow is furrowed, and he looks stressed out. His look reminds me of the night he showed up at my condo to explain his engagement to Marion.

Wow, it's as if he is reading my thoughts, "Oh! That was easy? Now I am really dreading going home."

It really is quite something to think that when I left as Danielle Austen I had no idea that I would be coming back home as Danielle Towers. I never would have even had the slightest clue that I would be returning to Portland, married to Harrison Towers.

Harrison is busy on his phone. I glance down and become mesmerized by the ring on my finger. It just seems like a fairytale. Or, at least one of those romance movies you go see, and say to yourself, 'only in the movies'. That is my life, and I would not change a thing. I find my strength in knowing that I am in very capable hands. I feel safe and cherished. Just as if I had custom ordered the traits my father possesses. Harrison is shifting in his seat, and I can see why. Up ahead I can see the Towers lit up by all the media lighting.

"Holy shit!" Without thinking, the expletive escapes my mouth. Harrison flashes me a quick glance, and then he is on his phone calling who knows who.

I see a swarm of people with cameras, as we approach in the unmarked black town car. It has tinted windows, but I feel like they can see right in with the flashes of their cameras.

The security gates to the underground parking open, and the town car slips into the garage. I look behind me and see security guards standing in the open entrance, as the gate is being lowered. There is literally a mob of flashing cameras and people shouting Harrison's name, asking if it's true that we got married. I find it somewhat of a relief that we are gated in. We are escorted to the elevators and Albert appears to take us up to the penthouse. He turns to me and says, "Welcome home *Madame Towers*."

Oh, I like how that sounds even more! "Thank you, Albert." I smile.

"I thought that would be worse than it was. It was rather easy. I feel unscathed, at least."

Harrison smiles, “Well, I had hoped it would go this way, but I did fear it was going to be much worse. I have arranged for us to do a press conference tomorrow afternoon, here at the Tower so we can put to rest all of the rumors and frenzy. Hopefully.

“Harrison! I don’t want to be on television or have my picture taken! You know I am a private person.”

“I think it is a wise decision.” Before I voice my objections, he puts his finger up to pause me. “However, we will talk about this in the morning, after we have had a chance to get settled in.”

The elevator door opens to the penthouse. Harrison turns to me, “Oh no allow me.” Then in one swoop, he has me in his arms as he carries me across the threshold into the foyer. He sets me down as I giggle. He reaches his hand behind my head and pulls me in for a long, sensuous kiss. His tongue seeking mine, we hear an “Ahem”. We both stop and look up at Albert grinning down at us.

I gasped. I don’t recall ever seeing Albert smile that big.

We had forgotten ourselves and were so absorbed in each other that we failed to notice, the whole staff standing in the entry to greet us. It reminds me of a scene out of *The Sound of Music*. In unison, they all say “Welcome Home.”

Harrison steps away from me for a second. “Thank you everyone. Now, if you will excuse us, my new bride and I would like to get refreshed before we have some dinner and unwind from our travels.” With that, the staff quickly dissipates. Harrison grabs my hand, and leads me down the long hallway to the master bedroom. He shuts the door behind us, locks the door, and then he picks me up again. This time, depositing me on the bed. “Now, where were we?”

He starts kissing me with his sensual tongue, seeking out every crevice of my mouth. He moves to my neck, and then finds his way to the top of my

cleavage. Just as my loins start to respond with complete abandon, he stops and sits up. “How about we go freshen up from our travels?”

“Yes, I would love that actually. I feel like I have been in these clothes for days now!”

He slides off the bed, grabbing my hand and leading me into the bathroom. Oh, we have such wonderful memories in here, and I have a hunch we are about to add more. I look around the room, and nothing has changed since I was last here about a month ago. It is so hard for me to wrap my mind around how much my life has changed in a mere five months.

Harrison takes the remote from the counter and dims the lights then turns on some music. It is that making love, thrusty-beat kind of music. He walks over to the tub, turns the water on, and dumps a substantial amount of aromatic bubble bath under the steamy stream of water. He turns to me and we lock eyes.

Oh, Lordy. When he gives me that look, I almost want to cum right where I stand. He motions with his finger for me to come to him. I walk over to where he is next to the tub, never losing eye contact. He reaches out to me and starts removing my clothing. I try to reach out and help him out of *his* clothes, but he pushes my hand away and clicks his tongue at me. After he finishes removing my clothes, he leans down, and takes one of my nipples in his mouth. He begins to assault me with his teeth, nibbling and flicking his tongue across the sensitive tip. My pussy is wet and ready for the taking, but I know that he has more that he is going to do to me first.

He picks me up again and places me in the tub. He turns off the water, and then turns back around and faces me while he undresses himself in front of me. As his button up shirt drops to the floor, I feel a gasp escape my lips. His tanned, carved body makes my core tingle with anticipation. I want to run my hands up and down his body. He unzips his pants to reveal a tight fitting pair of red boxer trunks bulging with his arousal. Another wave of heat travels through my anxious loins. He slowly removes his trunks, and out springs his hard, generous cock. He moves over to me, as I am sitting in

the tub. I grab his cock and pull it into my mouth. I trace my tongue around his swollen tip, and then immerse his whole length to the back of my throat. I suck hard and hear a loud moan come from Harrison. I increase the pressure and use my hand to cup his balls, gently squeezing. His hands are on my head, as I give him pleasure. I start moving my mouth and hand up and down his length as his pleasure increases. Pulling his cock out of my mouth, Harrison swiftly joins me in the tub. He pulls me up out of the water, into a standing position. He places my hands on the side of the tub, bending me over at the waist. He inserts his hardness into my sweet spot and starts moving in and out in swift motions. He pulls my head back by grabbing my hair and suckles my neck in that magic spot that sends me into oblivion. Releasing my hair, he grabs me by the waist and rasps “You ready?”

Gah, ready for what I think to myself?

“Hang on.” As his words linger in the air, he slams his rod into me with a force that rocks me forward. I wasn’t prepared and almost lost my grip on the side of the tub. I let out a loud shriek. He stops for a minute, “Shit! Did I hurt you?”

I can barely breathe, “No keep going!” My God, that feels hot!

He begins moving slowly in and out of my aching pussy, picking up the speed with each thrust. Placing his hands on my hips again, I can tell he is ready to fuck the shit out of me. I brace myself, waiting for the fucking to begin. I tingle and throb, anticipating his assault. He withdraws his length to my opening and then wiggles it in and out at the sensitive entrance. Oh, he is teasing me. Naughty man. His cock penetrates me to my core and sends shock waves all up and down my spine; he repeats it again and again. I feel my body is on fire. He is slamming his cock so hard into me that I am hanging on tight to the side, bracing myself at each blow. He is moaning loudly as I match his fervor with my hips moving to meet his. I find one of my hands has made its way to my pussy, and I am now touching his cock, feeling it move in and out of me. That simple touch is what sends us both into a heated crescendo. He yells out my name loudly “Danielle!” Followed by a long groan, as he continues to shoot his seed into my sweet spot. I

shudder again as the aftershocks continue to travel through my body. All at once, I feel the fatigue settle in. He withdraws his length and turns me around. Placing his hands on each side of my face, he looks me in the eyes, “God I love you!”

I melt into him.

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Chapter Eight

The next morning, I wake up to an empty bed. I rise and look around the room. It is a complete mess. After we rocked it out in the bathroom last night, we bathed and then had a late bite to eat. We returned to our room and made love before we went to sleep. As per my usual methods, my suitcase has exploded everywhere. I notice his suitcase is still sitting unopened where we left it. I suppose he will have his ‘man help’ put that away. Or, is that my job now that I am the lady of the house?

I put on my workout clothes to get ready for a run and head to the kitchen. Harrison is nowhere to be seen. I see a note on the counter from Philippe indicating breakfast is in the usual warming oven. I am transported back to that week that I spent here by myself while Harrison was in Montreal. It shoots a pang of uneasiness into my stomach. It reminds me of Marion and I am still on edge. Last night, Harrison told me to not go anywhere without Albert until further notice. I didn’t try to argue with him.

I ate the breakfast of scrambled eggs and fruit by myself in silence. Left alone with my random thoughts when my phone buzzes. I look to see it is a text from Simone.

8:31 AM

Clarke

Welcome home Mrs. Towers!! How does it feel to be a mogul’s wife??

I giggle shaking my head. Leave it Clarke!

8:31 AM

Me

**It feels wonderful! I wish you and my folks could have been there!
How are you?**

8:31 AM

Clarke

I am really good Danners. Miss having you underfoot here. When do you want to come get your things?

Oh, that's right. I forgot that I have a whole closet full of clothes and other belongings to move over here. When I left for the Caymans, I only took my vacation items, a few workout ensembles and my laptop, which I never used.

8:32 AM

Me

How about later this afternoon? Harrison has a press conference scheduled and I can come after that?

8:33 AM

Clarke

Perfect! Can't wait to hear all about you and the mogul tying the knot! Text me when you are on your way. I'll get the cork popped!

Smiling to myself, I put my phone down and finish my coffee, gazing out at the cloudy sky. There are geese flying in a V-formation. I presume they are flying south for winter. After coming back from a tropical paradise, I can totally relate.

After I put my dishes away, I head out to the foyer and start my stretching. My phone is vibrating in my pocket. I see it is Harrison.

Before I can say anything, “Good Morning, *mi amore!*”

Oh, that makes me tingle all over!

‘Good morning to you to! You were out early!’

“Yes, I had to get to the office, so I could cover some things with my father before the board met with Marion.”

“Oh. When are they meeting with her?” My mouth is sticky now.

“They have already met with her.”

“Really...already..that’s early!”

“Yes, remember there is a three hour time difference.”

I realize my mouth is super dry and I am holding my breath. “Oh, right, of course. Well, how did it go? Did you speak to them afterward?”

“I spoke to my father a few minutes ago. It went as we expected. She spit all sorts of venom. Threw around some lies and then laid a bomb on the board.”

I take in some air finally. “What was the bomb?”

He hesitates, “She is claiming that my father had an affair years ago and he is Garrin’s father, not Philippe.”

I gasp. “What a bitch to throw around such inflammatory lies! On top of everything else she has done!”

Harrison does not respond.

I wait another second before it dawns on me that it could be true. I seemed to remember Harrison telling me that Garrin’s mother took him and his siblings away to France when he was very young, and he only came back to Montreal as a young adult.

“It’s true isn’t it?”

He sighs, “It is entirely possible. My father is in a state of shock, so he neither confirmed nor denied, and I did not push it. It does fall within the timeframe of when he does admit to having had a onetime fling with Garrin’s mother. My mother and father were having marital problems, and he had an indiscretion as a result.”

“Does your mother know about the affair?”

“Yes, apparently. My father just told me that she knew about it when it happened because she found them. But, that is all he will tell me. He wants to speak to everyone to get the truth sorted out. It is one of those things that is best to deal with straight on, rather than to side step it. Us Towers men are really good at avoiding things.”

I snort, “I know that too well. So that must be what Marion was holding over Garrin’s head for blackmailing him into doing her bidding.”

“Exactly. So, it may be that Garrin knew all this time, but since it would crush Philippe, he did not want him to know. I have not spoken to Garrin yet, but I have a suspicion the only ones who didn’t know are my parents and Philippe.

“Well, it sounds like you may just have a half-brother.”

“Yes, it seems that way, or at least highly possible. Honestly, I would be proud to call Garrin my brother, so if turns out that her claims are true, then we will all embrace him. That affair was so many years ago, and my parents are solid. I do worry that it will cause waves with them for a while, but they are strong.”

“Besides, I have my own marriage to focus on.”

“Oh, I like the sounds of that.”

“Danielle, hang on, I just got a text message.”

“Ok,”

I hear him make a growling sound. Not the good kind he makes when we are having sex, more like the kind a wild animal makes when it is going into fight mode.

I’m alarmed, “Harrison? What is it?”

“Damned bitch!”

“Who? Marion?”

“Yes, she just sent a text that says ‘You are going to regret your actions. We were meant to be together and I am going to see to that. You can’t get rid of me that easily.’ She is a lunatic!”

“What the hell does she mean by that? Are you going to show that to the detective?” My heart is now racing.

“I’m not sure, Danielle. What I do know is that she signed a contract with the board that they won’t press charges against her for her embezzlement, if she leaves me and my family alone. If she doesn’t abide by that, all bets are off.”

“Harrison, what does that mean exactly?”

“Never mind, Danielle. I don’t want you to worry about it. Just promise me you will have Albert with you at all times. That woman is on the loose and if she is brazen enough to send that text to me, knowing the ramifications, she is bound to do anything.

“Well, I guess the honeymoon is over.” I try to mask the sadness in my voice but it is hard to do. I am scared to death of what this woman might try. I guess the only relief is that she is physically in Montreal.

“*Cheri*, I will make this right, I promise. My mission in life is to make you happy and keep you safe. I am not a man who breaks his promises. Now, I must go. I have to deal with the fallout. Remember, Albert is to be with you *at all times!* In fact, maybe you should just stay put today. There is still a lot of media camped outside the Towers. ”

“No worries there. I am pretty much scared to death now to leave the penthouse. Except, I do want to go for a run. You know, come to think of it *who* is protecting *you* Harrison?”

“Don’t worry about me. I have security posted in the lobby and up here in the office. It’s only a precaution. It’s not me for whom I fear. If you go for a run, make sure Albert pays close attention and have him make certain you haven’t been followed. Before I forget, we are on for 3:00 PM this afternoon for the news conference.

Oh, shit! In all the Marion talk, I forgot. I was already not in the mood and now I am positively opposed! “Oh Harrison, cant we do it another day? I feel jet lagged and I don’t have much to wear here. This whole thing with Marion has my stomach in knots. I am supposed to get my clothes from Simone’s later this afternoon. Can’t we reschedule?”

“I’m sorry, Danielle, I can’t reschedule. We really need to get this taken care of. It should only take a half hour, tops. Just wear something simple. You always look beautiful. I have to go. I’ll be over a little before the reporters are due to arrive. Meet me downstairs in the lobby.

“Fine, I’ll see you then. I love you.” Much to my discomfort, I guess we are meeting the press.

“I love you too.”

I look around for signs of Albert. I need this run more than anything to work off some major stress and anxiety.

Noise is coming from the media room, and I would be willing to bet that Albert found the remote and is making good use of it. I walk in the room and sure enough, Albert is sitting there with his legs up on the ottoman enjoying some kind of morning talk show. I just have to smile. He hadn’t noticed my entrance, so I clear my throat and he jumps up out of his seat, dropping the remote.

“Madame, pardon moi!”

I have to giggle at the sight of the lumbering giant jumping as if he just got caught sneaking a cookie.

“Good morning, Albert. I am ready to go for a run, and I am under strict orders to have you with me at all times.” He nods as he turns the TV off.

As we are walking to the elevator, “I thought we could change things up and go to a park today.”

He nods at me, but I can see by the look registering on his face that he would rather get a tooth pulled. Heading out to the car, I toss the keys to Albert and tuck my phone into my pocket. As we head out of the parking garage, I take a deep breath. I always forget to breathe. We leave the garage and see swarms of media, still waiting for a story. I can’t understand why they are so interested in us. So we eloped, it’s not as if that’s news worthy. I instruct Albert how to get to the park by taking neighborhood streets, hoping that if anyone was following, we would be able to shake them. Within a matter of minutes, we reach our destination. I get out of the car, looking forward to a long run, and the release that comes with it.

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Chapter Nine

I hear Bradley's voice, as I slowly open my eyes and look around. I can't figure out where I am. I strain to understand what Bradley is saying. It sounds like he is mumbling, and my head is simply throbbing. Where the hell am I?

"Dani, I never meant to hurt you this way! You have to believe me." I feel so loopy; I hardly recognize his face because my vision is blurred. My eyes just can't seem to focus. I can only make out shapes. Fuzzy ones at that. I turn to see the outline of something like a monitor on a cart. Straight ahead on the wall is what I think may be a television. I try to move my head, but it won't budge. I can't feel my legs or anything but my throbbing head, for that matter. My heart starts to pound, as I open my mouth to speak, but nothing comes out. All fades to dark again.

He is gaining on me. I can hear his footsteps getting closer, as I pick up my own speed. He is keeping pace with me. I don't know that he is actually following me. I just have a bad feeling. His steps sound a little fainter, so I think I might have gained some distance between us. I keep pushing forward increasing my speed even more.

I have been running this path in Forest Park for years and have never felt this sense of foreboding before. I never stray off the path and there are always other joggers or bicyclists around. Not today though. I am practically isolated because I opted for a more scenic wooded path, and now I am afraid that was a horrible, possibly fatal decision. I can feel in my bones that something isn't right here.

I don't have time to give this much thought. I know a shortcut that will take me back to the main paths that are more populated. I quickly make the decision and step off the path, heading into a small level grove of trees. I look back over my shoulder again to see if I am still being followed and gauge how far back my pursuer is. He is for sure following me and is just

about 40 feet away, dressed in a black tracksuit. He has the jacket zipped up with the hood up around his head. I can't make out his face. I feel stricken with fear. Every nerve in my body is at attention, as I feel the adrenalin kick in. I feel like a gazelle, being hunted by a hungry lion.

I realize now that I should have taken my run where Albert could have followed me in the car, as usual. I glance back over my shoulder again, as the flow of adrenalin boosts my speed. He is even closer now, I start to panic and shriek **HELP, HELP, HELP!!!** Just as I turn my head forward, I *slam* head-on into a tree. I gasp for air, as the wind is knocked out of me from the impact. I stumble backwards, feeling my body slump to the ground as my legs collapse out from underneath me. I feel my head collide with something hard. Just before everything goes black, I think about how Harrison is going to scold me for letting Albert stay in the parking lot.

Four weeks later...

“Here, Mrs. Towers, it's time for your medication.” My eyes shoot open as I awaken to an unfamiliar voice. I look up to see a middle-aged woman who, if I were to guess, is around fifty-eight. She has a pleasant round face and soft fading-to-gray blonde hair. She reminds me of Meryl Streep. She looks down at me from beside the bed and introduces herself to me as nurse Glenda Barnes. She instructs me to call her Glenda. She is replacing the last private nurse who has been reassigned to another patient. I try to speak, but my throat is so dry that nothing comes out. I struggle to adjust myself, as she rushes to place the meds cup and glass of water on the bedside table.

“Now, now, let me help you with that. Don't strain yourself.” She says, while she skillfully puts her hands under my armpits and helps me to a sitting position. After she is done fluffing the pillows behind me, she turns back to the table and hands me the medication and glass of water. I throw back the nasty pills, practically choking, washing them down with the cool quenching water. “There's a good girl. Now, Mrs. Towers, what can I bring you for lunch?”

Gah!! Mrs. Towers...Mrs. Towers, I love how that sounds. I won't ever get tired of hearing that as long as I live. I don't even correct her and ask

her to call me Danielle. No, I like the way the words, “Mrs. Towers” fill the room with happiness. I smile up at her and ask for some soup and crackers. My stomach has a hard time digesting the medication. I haven’t been able to keep much down lately. I feel like skin and bones and so very weakened.

“Glenda?” She turns back to me just as she is about to leave the room.

“Yes, Mrs. Towers?”

“My husband, is he here?”

She frowns, looks over her shoulder out into the hallway and then looks back at me. I have only just met her, but she seems nervous to me.

“I am not sure; would you like me to ask about that?”

“Actually, maybe you could just bring me my phone? I see it’s not on the table.” Again, she looks nervous. Actually, now that I think about it, I haven’t actually seen my phone since the morning of my attack.

“Uh, I only got here this morning. I will ask the French man in the kitchen, Philippe, is it?” I nod.

“Thank you and I hate to be a pain, but could you bring me the crackers soon? My stomach is already in knots, and the medication is making it worse.”

She smiles, “Of course, I will bring you some right away.”

Once she has left the room and I am alone, I glance around my surroundings. I’ve haven’t had a chance to get settled in here. We were back for less than 24 hours from our honeymoon when I wound up in the hospital. I have been in and out of consciousness for a few weeks now. Some of the medications they are giving me are heavy narcotics. In my opinion, the side effect is that I am rarely completely lucid. I spent almost three weeks in the hospital, and of that, I was in an induced coma for the first ten days. Initially, I had significant swelling in my brain, so they had to

keep me heavily sedated to decrease the swelling. I suffered a significant concussion that resulted in my having a series of seizures before they were able to stabilize me. They had to operate to reduce the swelling in my brain, so there's a large patch of my hair missing. I know I should not be so vain, but I do worry about how that is going to look when I am up among people again.

I have no recollection of the first two weeks that I was in the hospital. Everything that I know about the last few weeks, have been told to me. My parents have been staying at one of Harrison's hotels downtown, and they have an employee watching Stormy and the gallery. My dad and Harrison have bonded. Harrison has told them everything. I mean absolutely everything about the frequent unknown calls, the condo break ins, and especially Marion.

I have three fractured ribs, a broken nose, my face is scratched and bruised, and to make matters worse, I have torn ligaments in my knee. I am told that a few of the surface contusions and broken nose were from my running into the tree. The rest of my injuries were from the man in the black tracksuit who had been chasing me. At least, that is what the police think, based on what the eyewitnesses have told them. The doctors have confirmed that is the case, based on the nature of my injuries.

The attacker basically kicked me to a pulp and then ran off into the woods. I am lucky that someone heard my blood-curdling scream when I collided with the tree, just as the air was knocked out of me. Had I not screamed prior to my blacking out, I would have most certainly been left for dead. My attacker made good use of the few moments he had and inflicted all that damage on me. If he had been given any more time, I would not be here. Every time I go to sleep, I relive it in my nightmares.

Apparently, I owe my rescue to a group of young women jogging on the path toward which I was heading. They heard my screams and instead of ignoring them, as many people would, they called 911 and came to my aid. My guardian angel was clearly on duty that day.

I have been home from the hospital for a few days now. Harrison has been on a rampage for over three weeks now. I was right, he is mad that Albert stayed in the car and didn't jog with me that day. He told me that I don't make good decisions. Harrison fired Albert, but when I regained consciousness, I insisted that he hire him back. It was not Albert's fault. How could any of us have known that I was going to be attacked in broad daylight in a public place? Harrison has every right to be upset, but Albert is not the one on whom he should take out that anger.

Harrison spent every night in my hospital room, by my side. I am sure he was horribly sleep deprived, as there is no way he could have gotten any sleep on that hospital pull-out bed. He has been irrational also. My mom told me that one day, when she was visiting, Harrison almost beat up an orderly in the hospital who looked at me the wrong way. Simone visits me often and has been keeping me updated on the details of the outside world and the budding romance between her and Garrin. I called that one. I knew they were attracted to each other.

Because those nightmares are present every time I go to sleep, I am horribly fatigued and not making the progress that I need to in physical therapy. The medication puts me in such a deep sleep that the nightmares are more real than reality itself. I dread going to sleep because I know the nightmares are waiting for me as soon as I shut my eyes. The dreams are always the same. The dark shrouded figure chasing me. It's not always in the woods, though. Sometimes it is down long corridors like those that you see in enormous office buildings. The walls are stark white with matching gleaming floors. I am running, but when I look to see who is chasing me, the figure disappears. I know there is symbolism there and if I went to see a shrink, he would likely tell me the figure stands for someone or something in my life that is causing me anxiety and stress. I would say, yeah, no kidding! I have been in a constant stress mode ever since the stalking began.

The doctors are weaning me off the medication, and I should be fully off the painkillers by the end of the week. I am relieved because I am not fond of feeling as if I am in a constant stupor. Maybe, I will get better sleep once I am off the meds also. I can only hope.

The police have no solid leads on my attacker; however, someone did see a black SUV tearing out of the parking lot about the same time or shortly after my attack. They got a partial license number but not enough to narrow down a suspect. Detective Burke tells us that they are closing in, though. He can't tell us too much anyway, and he is likely telling us that so we don't go ballistic on him. Harrison told Detective Burke about Marion and showed him the text message from her the morning of the attack. He also told the detective about the high possibility that she is the one who is bank rolling the thug who broke into my condo the first time. The Detective seemed elated to receive that information, but was miffed at Harrison that he had not been straightforward about his suspicions sooner. He told Harrison that it may have sped things along, and that I may have never been attacked, had he said something sooner.

The Detective's thoughtless comments really cut through Harrison, especially since he has been carrying around the burden of guilt about Adelaide for all these years. Now, he feels it is all his fault that I was attacked. I am so banged up and that is eating him up the most.

Since I have been home from the hospital, Harrison has been sleeping in a portable bed in the room with me. My body is still so damaged that he is afraid to be in the same bed with me. He is concerned about inflicting any further pain on me during sleep. Our sex life is totally non-existent, and who knows when we will be able to resume our activities. He acts as if I am a delicate china doll and as such, he will hardly kiss me, let alone touch me in any way.

Despite all the pain I am enduring, I find myself thinking of Harrison and how he makes my body feel. I feel alive when I am having sex with him. Better than alive! I feel like the most desired woman in the world the way he worships my body and gives me pleasure. He feeds me emotionally. I never feel starved for affection or adoration. He gives me all the things that I was deprived of and so desperately craved in my previous marriage. I miss the intimacy of his hands and mouth on my body, exploring every surface and crevice. Not to mention, his body blows my mind. I marvel at it each and every time he is naked. I feel my loins burning an inferno through the bed sheets, as I think of my husband naked. Oh, I must be getting better,

if through this pain I can think of all the places, positions, and body parts that I want to experience and explore with my new husband. I love those words, “my husband”.

I am interrupted in the middle of my random, disjointed thoughts.

“Here we are Mrs. Towers. I have your soup and crackers here. I am sorry I didn’t hurry back with the crackers. It took me some time to find your phone. I had to ask around. You have quite the staff here, but nobody knew about your phone.” She shakes her head, as she places the tray of steaming soup across my lap.

I glance down and see a phone on the tray, but it is not mine. I look back at the nurse.

I’m confused, “This is not my phone. Where did this come from?”

“I don’t have the slightest idea. This phone was finally given to me by one of the men out by the elevator. As I was passing back through with your tray, he laid it on the tray for me, since my hands were full.” She gives me a side-glance.

I don’t think I trust this woman. Her responses to me are fine, but her body language is odd. I pick up the phone and swipe my finger across the screen. I see a little envelope in a circle. I touch it. A message window pops open and there is a text from Harrison.

11:47 AM

Your Husband

***Mi Amore.* I got you a new phone. I switched you to a new network under Towers Holdings. Do not give your number out to anyone other than who I programmed in the phone.**

Wow, ok. I wonder whom he deemed worthy of making addition to my address book. This is a new brand of phone for me, so it takes me a minute

to locate my contacts. I scroll through and note that just a few of my usual personal contacts are present. I notice one in particular that is missing: Bradley. I smirk to myself, knowing full well why that contact is missing. It looks like I will need to enter all of my business contacts. I'll have to do that another day.

I go back to messaging and reply to Harrison.

12:24 PM

Mrs. Towers

Thank you for the new phone. Why did you replace my old one?"

12:25 PM

Your Husband

Mrs. Towers. We can discuss that later. I am glad you are awake. How are you feeling?

Oh no, he doesn't! I am not letting him skate around my question. No way!

12:25 PM

Mrs. Towers

Mr. Towers. I would appreciate a straightforward answer. Why did you get me a new phone? I feel weak and nauseated. I took my meds so will be passing out right after I eat some soup.

12:26 PM

Your Husband

Mrs. Towers. I will discuss your phone later. I miss you.

Aaack! He is so exasperating. I type my message as fast as my fingers can fly across the touch screen.

12:26 PM

Mrs. Towers

Now. Tell me now!

No response. I get zero response from him. What the hell? I wait a couple minutes.

12:28 PM

Mrs. Towers

Damn it. Tell me. Now I am upset!

12:28 PM

Your Husband

Your phone was stolen the day you were attacked.

Oh. I feel like I just swallowed a lead weight.

12:28 PM

Mrs. Towers

You mean it has been gone all this time? Why didn't you tell me?

12:29 PM

Your Husband

We have enough to worry about. Your phone was hardly at the top of the list.

I begin to write back a snappy response, but I stop myself. What am I doing? I shouldn't attack Harrison. He is just protecting me. As always. The temples of my forehead are pulsing and my stomach is sour from the meds. I quickly write a response, so I can choke down some food.

12:29 PM

Mrs. Towers

I understand. I am just so frustrated. I just want to be back on our honeymoon Harrison.

12:30 PM

Your Husband.

I know. Me too. I love you Danielle. As soon as you are well, let's go to Montreal. I want you to meet your new family.

Gasp. I wasn't prepared for that. I want to meet his family. The thought of it is just a bit much for me now, considering what I have been through. I eat a couple bites of chicken rice soup and sodium crackers then respond.

12:33 PM

Mrs. Towers

When do you think we will go? I am nowhere near fit to travel yet. I have physical therapy to finish.

12:35

Your Husband

I know. We have some time before you are ready. I just thought you would be excited about meeting my family.

12:35 PM

Mrs. Towers

Oh, Harrison. I do want to meet your family. I am just not ready.

12:36 PM

Your Husband

I was thinking we could go back to Montreal around my birthday and stay through the New Year.

Oh my gosh! That is right! His birthday is in several weeks. With everything that has happened, I barely know what day of the week it is.

12:37 PM

Mrs. Towers

Ok. I guess that will work. I am sleepy now. Can we talk about this tonight?

12:38 PM

Your Husband

Yes, I have a conference call this afternoon but will come home right after.

12:38 PM

Your Husband

I love you

My insides get all tingly whenever I hear that. It's the most wonderful feeling in the world to love and be loved. I don't care how much I might sound like a sentimental sappy song from the seventies. I love being loved.

12:39 PM

Mrs. Towers

I love you too. See you tonight.

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Chapter Ten

Two weeks later and I am completely on the mend. I still have telltale signs that I had an accident. My slight limp and swollen nose give some clue to my recent history. Otherwise, I am feeling a lot better and my strength is returning. I am finally completely off the meds, which has helped with my nightmares.

It has been six weeks since the accident, and I am terrified to leave the penthouse. Albert has stayed on with us. He is still here fulltime and we have two security guards, who patrol the Towers grounds. My parents went home to resume their life at the coast almost ten days ago. I am doing great with physical therapy on my knee. Today was my last day, in fact, and I am now cleared to resume normal activity. Except for running. I have no desire to go running anyway. I am opting for the treadmill Harrison has brought in and set up in one of the extra rooms. In fact, he had the guest room furniture removed and set up a makeshift gym for me. There is a nice executive gym in the Towers HQ, but he essentially doesn't want me leaving the penthouse, unless it is for a doctor's appointment. Harrison and Albert both accompany me to my appointments. I know he is trying to protect me, but I feel like a prisoner here.

I have been unable to conduct my business, so I referred my new clients to a colleague. I know her from when I worked for the Davenport's firm, back when I was still married to Bradley.

Harrison just dropped me off after returning from my physical therapy appointment. I am heading in to take a shower, when the pile of boxes and suitcases catches my attention. I suppose I should work on getting the rest of those emptied and finish moving my stuff into my new home. It is hard to believe that I am now living in the place I decorated six months ago. You never know what twists and turns fate has in store. I just hope that Harrison and his men can expose Marion soon. I can't take living in fear much longer.

I walk over to the boxes and start unpacking. While I was in the hospital, Harrison had my condo packed up and all of my personal items were delivered here, but all of the furnishings were packed and stored. Simone packed up my things at her place, and Garrin brought them here. All of the things from my condo have already been put away neatly by one of the staff, I presume. The belongings from Simone's are all that is left for me to unpack.

At the bottom of one of the first suitcase, I find my pink velour tracksuit jacket. I start to re-fold it, when something falls out from one of the pockets. I reach down and pick it up. It's a small silver metal emblem in the shape of a *fleur de lis*, about the size of a dime. It's as if it came off a piece of jewelry or something. I am staring at it in my hand when it occurs to me where I have seen this before. My blood runs cold. This is the same exact emblem that was on the silver cufflink I gave to the detective. How can that be? I sit down on the edge of the bed to think. Why was this in my pocket? When is the last time I wore this jacket? Still staring at the emblem, it suddenly comes to me where I found this. I vaguely remember picking this up in Simone's mudroom. I am struggling to remember the details, though. I stand up, walk over to my bedside table, and place the object next to my phone. I will save it and give it to Harrison. He can pass it on to the detectives.

In the meantime, I have other things on which to focus, like getting ready to seduce my husband tonight. The doctor said I was able to return to normal activity, and having sex with Harrison on a frequent basis is certainly normal for us.

After I finish unpacking, I have the new maid, Alicia, come in and remove the empty moving boxes and suitcases. Harrison hired her when I was on bed rest. She came recommended by the private nurse, Glenda. I warmed up to Glenda, but I felt very guarded around her at first. She always seemed to be watching me, and it was creepy. I'm relieved that she was only here for a week, and now she is gone. Alicia is a nice enough girl, but far too attractive for my liking. I would rather have an average-looking middle-aged woman. Instead, I have Alicia who is barely twenty-one, with blonde hair, blue eyes, a petite little figure and stands no more than 5 feet

tall. I swear I have caught Harrison checking her out. Of course, that could simply be my insecurity rearing its ugly head. Having been cheated on profusely, turns even a secure girl into a raving, insecure lunatic. I fight the lunacy on a regular basis. It is not easy to trust, even when someone hasn't given you reason not to.

I shake myself out of my silly musings and decide to hunt down Philippe, to discuss my dinner ideas with him. I head down the hall to the kitchen and as I pass by Harrison's study, I notice the door is ajar. I take a step toward it to peek in, and at the same moment the door flies open and out walks Alicia. We are both startled, but she is clearly surprised to see me standing there. As she begins to speak, I cut her off.

“What are you doing in my husband's study?”

She stammers, “I...uh...was cleaning in there.”

I look down at her hands and do not see any cleaning implements in her grasp. She must have noticed her faux pas as she quickly adds, “Well, I was about to clean in here, I wanted to take a peek around and see what tools I was going to require.”

It sounds plausible enough, but I am just not buying it. I think she was snooping around.

‘So, what did you surmise?’

She looks puzzled and nervous, “Excuse me?”

“Well, what needs to be cleaned in here?” I step into the room and take a quick glance around to assess the room's cleanliness. I notice some papers look to have been shuffled through. Now, why on earth would she be going through Harrison's papers?

She still has a puzzled look on her face, “Oh, just the usual. I'll just go get the vacuum and duster.” As she brushes past me, I notice her put her phone in her front pocket. She has just given me more reason not to like her

being here. I walk over to the desk and look at the papers; I notice that the top papers are copies of the permits Harrison had his contractor pull for the wiring and plumbing updates that are going to take place at the manor house. I quickly thumb through to the next layer of papers, and nothing jumps out at me. I drop the stack of papers just as I had found them, and move away from the desk right as I hear Alicia returning with the cleaning tools. “After you are done in here, please lock the door behind you.”

She gives me a nod and mumbles, “Ok”.

As I leave the room, I glance back to see her standing the middle of the room. She doesn't seem motivated to get the work done. She doesn't seem like a housekeeper at all. Alicia will not be here long, if I get my way. I continue on my search for Philippe.

Around 7:00 PM, Harrison arrives home. I was beginning to get upset because dinner had been set for an hour earlier, but he had been waylaid at the office. I am waiting for him in the foyer with a simple emerald green silk wrap dress, black suede stilettos, and underneath, my black teddy with the green lace trim. I put on a pair of shear black thigh highs to complete the ensemble. I put some soft waves in my hair and used a couple clip-in hair extension pieces that Simone bought me to cover up the patch of missing hair. I felt sexy and ready to seduce my gorgeous husband.

“Good evening, Mr. Towers, may I take your coat?”

His megawatt smile spreads across his face, as he looks me up and down with obvious appreciation. “Mrs. Towers, what a nice surprise!”

I walk over, take his coat from him, and hang it up in the adjacent closet. I turn back to him and see his eyes running up and down my body. I begin to walk toward the dining room, beckoning him to follow me with my eyes. We arrive to the dining room in silence but for the rain pounding against the glass windows and the sexy music thrumming in the background.

Smiling, he turns to me, “Well, what have we here *mi cheri*?”

Ohhh, I feel my body reacting to his nearness and the way his voice vibrates through my soul.

The sleek metal table is set with flickering candles and modern white dishware. The scene is sexy, with the drops of rain sliding down the glass windows, blurring the sweeping city views. I motion for him to sit down. He shakes his head no, walks over to me, without saying a word, and swoops me into his arms. His supple lips crash hard onto mine. He puts his hand behind my head to steady me and continues to seek out my tongue with his. My loins are on fire and burning out of control. He leans into me with his obvious arousal pressing against me. He moans and continues to assault my mouth with his own. When we finally come up for air, I realize that we are not alone. I struggle to regain my composure, as I am lightheaded, and my legs feel like rubber. I straighten my dress, and myself as Harrison turns to see what has me distracted.

“Alicia, we didn’t see you there. Do you need something?” Harrison seems out of sorts.

“Uh sorry, Philippe sent me in to ask if you are ready for us to start serving? Should I come back?” She seems jittery.

I step forward and take charge, as Harrison just stands there staring at her. What the hell?!

“No, Alicia, tell Philippe we are ready for the first course. And, Alicia, could you please bring out the Champagne instead of the wine? We are celebrating.” I give her the most authoritative look I can muster.

Harrison sits down and looks at me with his eyebrow raised, “What are we celebrating?”

I think quickly, “This is our first dinner together, eating in this dining room, as a married couple. Besides, the last time we used this table, I believe we weren’t eating.” I feel the flush travel across my face, as I remember the day he laid me out on this cold table and took my body to

new heights. He must be thinking about that too, as he is slowly biting his lower lip and looking at me under hooded eyes.

Alicia walks back in with a serving tray and lays out salads in front of each of us. I notice her hands are shaking, as she pours the champagne. I look up at her face and she isn't even looking at what she is doing; she is busy looking at Harrison. Does she not realize that I am sitting right here and furthermore that he is old enough to be her father?

Harrison is the first to speak. After she leaves the room, he lifts his glass, "To your recovery and to us and all the future holds."

"Cheers!" as I clink my glass with his.

As we eat our salads, we discuss his day at work and my day at home. Then we move on to the holiday rapidly approaching.

"Harrison, I was thinking we should invite my parents to Thanksgiving dinner and we could host it here."

He doesn't hesitate, "I think that is an excellent idea. In fact, why don't you invite Simone and whomever else you would like. It will be nice to entertain."

"That sounds great. I will call Simone later and invite her. Although, it is likely she will be spending it with her humongous family. Maybe she can work us all in."

"Since we are on the subject of holidays we haven't touched on the Christmas season. I would really like to get you up to Montreal. My parents are excited to meet you."

I take in a deep breath. I know that I should be excited about meeting my in-laws, but I worry that I won't measure up. Maybe, I won't fit into their world or ideas of whom Harrison should marry.

He always seems to know where my mind has traveled. “They are going to love you. Do not worry.” He takes my hand into his, rubs my ring, and brings my hand to his lips, planting a sumptuous kiss. As I gaze into his eyes, I feel myself practically swooning.

“I love you Harrison.” I lean over to him and kiss him on the cheek. My naughty body is stirring, and I could care less about finishing our meal. Just as I am about to suggest that we skip the rest, in walks Alicia. Damn it!

She walks over, removes our salad plates, and replaces them with our main entrée. Once again, she is hardly paying attention to what she is doing. As she is setting my plate in front of me, she practically knocks over my glass of champagne. My hand darts out to catch it before it spills.

Her face is bright red, and she stammers an apology. Then she scurries out of the room.

I turn to Harrison, who looks far too bemused. “Seriously? I really don’t know why you hired her. I am getting the feeling that she doesn’t know what she is doing, and she is far too interested in you.”

He laughs, “Now. don’t let your imagination get away from you. She is just young.”

“Yeah, and cute, with a killer figure.”

“I hadn’t noticed, Danielle.” He’s not looking at me but seems to be rather engrossed with the contents of his plate. With Philippe’s help, I selected a fresh Chinook Salmon, which is in season right now. Along with roasted fingerling potatoes and a lightly seasoned steamed vegetable medley.

“Yeah right, and I was born just yesterday.”

He looks at me with a straight face. “Do I sense some jealousy?”

“Sure, I guess you could say that. You, of all people, should know what damage has been done to me from my previous marriage. Trust is hard for me, after what Bradley put me through.”

His look changes with the furrow of his brow. “Well, let’s not forget, I am nothing like Bradley. I don’t even want to hear his name brought up at my dinner table or in this house again. Do you understand me?” He snaps at me.

“What the hell Harrison? I was merely reminding you why I might still be insecure from time to time. It was certainly no reason to bite my head off.” Sheesh.

He continues to eat without responding to me. After a few minutes of silence, much to my relief, in walks Philippe. Smiling, he nods at me and walks over to remove our plates. Harrison looks down at my plate and then at me, “You didn’t finish your food.”

“No, I lost my appetite, but it was good.” I add quickly, so Philippe can hear me.

Philippe turns to Harrison, “Would you like your dessert now?”

“No thank you, Philippe, perhaps we will have some later.”

Harrison turns back to me after Philippe exits the room. He stands up and puts out his hand. “Come, let’s go to our room so we can talk privately.”

Oh! I sure hope he doesn’t think he is getting me as dessert after how he behaved at dinner!

We walk down the long hallway, toward the master wing. I notice that our bedroom door is slightly open. Strange, I remember leaving the door closed after I came out to wait for Harrison. My suspicious mind goes right to Alicia. I need to talk to Harrison about her.

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Chapter Eleven

Once we are in our room, he shuts the door behind us. I reach over and flip the lock, which causes him to raise his eyebrow at me. I walk over to our seating area and switch on the fireplace. I sit on the sofa and bend down to remove my pumps. I curl up on the sofa and wait for Harrison to join me.

He removes his tie and unbuttons the top three buttons of his shirt. I am mad at him right now, but my body has a mind of its own. He looks hot, and I would like to run my hands under his shirt, over his hard-carved muscles. Instead, I start twisting my hair around my finger. He sits in the stuffed chair with the ottoman and gets comfortable. Without saying a word, he looks at me with his piercing blue eyes. I take in a quick shallow breath. The tension in here could be cut with a knife.

I can't stand it anymore. "Harrison, why are you so angry with me?"

He doesn't answer me right away. He seems to be thinking about something.

"I do not like the way I am feeling right now, Harrison. I feel insecure and as if there is a distance between us that I can't put my finger on. I need you to communicate with me."

"Danielle, I have never liked nor trusted your ex husband. It offends me to no end when you compare us or group me in with him. We are not in the same league, and it is careless of you to suggest anything otherwise."

I am taken aback. I had not realized that his dislike of Bradley ran so deeply.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult you. I understand that you don't like him, but do you have to be so volatile with me about it? "

He crosses his arms and studies me. I hate it when he does this. It makes me feel inferior to him.

“What? Would you say something instead of just looking at me like that?”

“You know, a lot happened while you were in the coma. The least of which, is that the leech tried to visit you. He actually told the nurses that *he* was your husband. I nearly got into a fistfight with him one day, when he showed up while your parents and I were there.”

“Wait, you almost punched an orderly *and* my ex?”

“No, I only told your mother it was an orderly who was gawking at you. I did not want to explain the situation to your mother. She is too nice and would have probably allowed him access.”

I shake my head, “Don’t be so sure, she is convinced you walk on water, and she doesn’t like him for what he did to me.”

“At any rate, Danielle, the nursing staff was confused and allowed him to visit you on several occasions, when I wasn’t there. He is a crafty one. He’d go when there was a shift change and I wasn’t there. When I learned of this, I made arrangements for you to have a private nurse in the room with you.”

“So, then was my phone really missing, or did you simply get me a new one so he couldn’t contact me?”

His brow is furrowed, “No Danielle, your phone was really missing.”

Darn! I had hoped that was the reason and not that someone had really taken it.

“Listen, I’m sorry I got so mad at you about your ex. I just want him away from you and out of our lives. I don’t have any use for him and let’s just leave it at that. There is no reason to keeping hashing this out.

“I couldn’t agree more. Besides, it’s you whom I planned this romantic evening for, not my ex.”

I get up from the couch and walk over to his chair, hiking my dress up; I straddle his lap and begin kissing his firm, supple lips. He responds with vigor and darts his tongue in my mouth, seeking my tongue. I grind my sex against his hard cock. I feel his body burning under me, while I grab his head and run my fingers through his hair. He moans and moves his hands to my ass, as I continue to grind myself on him. I reach down to remove my dress, pulling it over my head, revealing the sexy lingerie. He sucks in his breath and moans as he kisses the tops of my heaving breasts. I take my hand and rub his cock, through his pants. That was enough for him. He picks me up off his lap and places me on the ottoman. He stands up, as I kneel on the ottoman. I take his shirt in both my hands and rip it open as the buttons fly off. He removes his pants quickly and unleashes his eager cock. I am so turned on by his arousal. I can hardly contain myself. It has been about six weeks since I have felt him in me. My loins ache with need.

I take his hardness into my hand and run my palm up and down the shaft. He moans and then rasps, “I need to be in you. I want to feel you from the inside.” My pussy is pulsing; my juices are flowing, making me sopping wet and ready for him. I lie back on the ottoman and peel off my panties, slowly to turn him on even more. It backfires on me. He is impatient and takes his hands, ripping my panties off, as he has done so often. He takes his fingers and pushes them into my hot heat, swirls them around, leans forward, and laps at my clit. I arch my back and yell out his name. I grab the sides of the chair to hang on. Taking that as encouragement, he nibbles at my clit and moves his fingers in and out of me quickly. I start moving my hips under his assault, as he pulls his fingers out. He picks me up and carries me over to the bed. He disappears into the closet. I hear him open one of the built-in drawers, and then the light goes out. He climbs onto the bed with me and I hear a click and smell a familiar mandarin orange scent. He moves his hands from my tummy down to my sex. I feel a warming sensation as he leans down and blows on me. My core heats up like a raging inferno. He inserts his tongue into my hot pussy. I arch my back, writhing under his command. His finger is in me, alongside his probing tongue. The

warming liquid is incredible on my body, but now I want him in me. All of him. I reach down to grab onto his cock, to prime him for pumping me.

With only the light from the fireplace, I look up into his face and see nothing but passion. He moves into position, and I help guide his cock into my waiting wet heat. As he slams himself into me, I yell out in pleasure. He slows himself down and grinds his hardness into me with his pelvis causing friction on my clit. I toss my head from side to side, as the pleasure is almost more than I can bear. Harrison takes his hand and moves my face in line with his. He moves into an upright position and groans loudly. I watch his fire-lit face and feel waves of passion escape my lips. I am moaning his name, and it sounds foreign. It's as if some temptress has taken my body over as I move my hips in rhythm with his. He grabs my hands in his and laces his fingers with mine, while his hooded sex eyes lock onto mine. The intense connection is more than I can handle, tears start spilling from the corners of my eyes, as I feel my body convulse uncontrollably one explosion after another in my hot core. Harrison picks up his pumping and with one last thrust, he joins me in my euphoric haze. He stays in his sitting position, locking eyes, as we both cum. The tears still streaming down my face, he leans over and releasing one of my hands, he wipes the tears away, and then he collapses next to me on the bed, removing himself from me.

He leans up on one arm and looks at me with eyes that I don't recall having seen before. It is probably the most intense look that I have yet to see from him. "What is it Harrison?"

He has a finger tracing the lace of the corset that I am still wearing. He takes in a deep breath. "Nothing, it is nothing *Mi Amore*." He lies on his back and turns away from me. I put my hand on his shoulder and gently pull him toward me.

"Harrison! I can see something is wrong. Please! Tell me!" To my surprise, he sits up quickly and pulls me into an all-encompassing embrace. He is mumbling something in my ear, but I can't hear him. He releases me and I see the terror in his eyes. Harrison looks terrified. My heart is racing, in fact, I feel like it is going to spring out of my chest!

“Oh, Danielle, I have to tell you; I can’t keep it secret anymore.”

“What Harrison? You have me about to jump out of my skin!” I am grabbing at his arms, practically shaking him.

“Danielle, you were almost D.O.A when they brought you into the hospital. They worked on you for nearly a half hour before they brought you back with vital stats.”

“What? I don’t understand Harrison. Why, what....I was dead?”

“Not exactly dead, but you were on the brink. Your body was in shock from the blunt force trauma. They had to resuscitate you in the ambulance, and then they had trouble stabilizing you in the ER. When they did get you stabilized, they rushed you into surgery to relieve the pressure and swelling on your brain.”

“So, what you are saying is that everyone lied to me, and I was a thousand times worse than you all led me to believe?”

“Danielle, you have to understand where I was coming from.” He reaches out to touch me, but I pull away.

“Why is it always about you and what you want? Don’t you think that is an important piece of information? Why haven’t the doctors or any other medical staff said anything? Did you bribe them with a new wing for the hospital?”

I lean over and switch on the lamp on the bedside table. I turn to Harrison, who is looking up at the ceiling, not me. I walk into the closet, grab my robe and return to sanding by the bed.

He reaches out his hand to me. “Come here, Danielle.” I shake my head no and stay standing beside the bed, with my arms crossed. I am trying to keep my anger in check until I hear him out. I will then decide if he is sleeping in the guest room tonight or not.

“You are not being fair. I did not bribe anyone. We discussed the pros and cons of telling you. Your parents, Simone, and the doctors all agreed that you would be told once you were recovered. There is a lot of information that suggests that trauma patients need to work through the shock of the accident, or in your case, the attack and then deal with the physical ramifications. If you were to have known as soon as you were conscious, it actually may have hampered your progress. Look at you, after only six weeks, you are almost back normal.”

I uncross my arms but don't join him on the bed. He is now sitting on the edge of the mattress.

“Harrison, I feel like I was lied to by a whole lot of people. I find it hard to swallow. The one I am most disappointed in is you. When we said our vows, I am pretty sure honesty was implied.

“Damn it, Danielle. That is simply bullshit. I was protecting you. If you had taken Albert with you on the run, as I told you to, we wouldn't even be having this conversation. Things have happened that are out of my control, and I have been doing the best that I can.”

“Stop, Harrison! It sounds like you are blaming me for the attack. Please tell me that I misunderstand because I don't think I will ever be able to forgive you otherwise.”

“Dear God, Danielle” He is shaking and shouting. ‘Don't you understand....I almost lost you! I almost lost the woman I love...again! I would not have been able to live with myself, if I had lost you.’ With that, he is off the bed and has me in his arms as his whole body is shaking and convulsing against me. He is hanging onto me and crushing me with a ferocity that releases all of my anger and replaces it with compassion and understanding. This man loves me, and he wasn't trying to deceive me, he was terrified of losing me.

After several minutes of holding one another like this, I feel his body relax. He finally pulls away from me. Without looking at me, he turns and walks toward the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. I hear the water

running in the shower. I decide that I should go in and join him and I turn the handle only to discover he has locked me out. Now I am confused.

I lie down on the bed and crawl under the covers. I must have fallen asleep because when I wake up, it is pitch black in the room, and I hear the gentle rise and fall of Harrison breathing. I look at him in the moonlight, and my heart begins to burst with love for this man. My eyes fill with tears, as I think about what he must have gone through while I was in a coma. If roles were reversed, I would have felt so helpless and desperate. I can't imagine how I would have coped, had he been the one in the hospital. Harrison is so in control and capable where I am so unsure of myself and still getting my legs firmly planted beneath me. I look to Harrison as my rock and my foundation. If he were taken away from me, I don't know how I could live without him. I am sore at him for not telling me sooner, but I cannot be mad at a man who would part the Red Sea for me, if he could. His breakdown tonight showed me a side of him that I never knew existed, but I had hoped it was there. It scares me to see him so vulnerable. I almost hope that I never see that side of him again. It was intense grief and terror that brought that side of him to the surface, and I hope for rest of our lives we never experience that again. I wiggle closer to Harrison and wrap myself around him. He makes a contented cooing sound, and I drift back to sleep.

Chapter Twelve

Three days later, it is Thanksgiving Day and our home is abuzz with activity in making final preparations for our family feast. My parents have driven into town from the beach. They are staying, once again, at Harrison's Hotel downtown. Simone is going to join us after her family function this afternoon. She is taking Garrin with her as her date. It will be fun to have Garrin here at the table with us, as Harrison's brother, not employee. Marion's claims were confirmed, and the whole story about Garrin being Harrison's half-brother turned out to be true. It has caused some drama, but it is my understanding that Harrison's parents seem to be handling it well. I am willing to bet that behind closed doors, it might be another matter, but they are not letting on otherwise.

Harrison had the little metal piece that I found in my jacket pocket delivered to the detective yesterday. He received a phone call from the detective that it was an exact match to the cuff link found in my condo. Since I have left Simone's, there haven't been anymore odd happenings there, much to my relief. She claims that it's because she has Garrin there to protect her. I just have to laugh at her.

I put the finishing touches on my makeup and carefully arrange the clip of hair to cover my bald spot, courtesy of Clarke. I find it creepy to be pinning someone else's hair onto my head, but I must admit, the patch of missing hair is even creepier. I guess it is the least of the two evils. Speaking of evil, we have not heard anything from the Wine Witch lately, so it has been peaceful for the last few days. That is enough in itself to be thankful for today.

It's now early evening; I hear a raucous noise coming from down the hall. I surmise that my parents must have arrived. Smiling, I head out into the foyer. Sure enough, my crazy and boisterous folks are here. My mom turns to me and her eyes grow wide.

“Oh, baby girl, you look simply lovely!” She takes me into her arms and plants a big kiss on the side of my cheek. I feel my dad patting me on the back.

“Now don’t hog her, Donna!” I giggle, as I turn around and find my dad motioning for me to give him a hug, by doing a funny thing with his hands.

What has gotten into these two? I wonder if it has to do with my having been near death recently. After I was sufficiently squeezed by them both, they decide to go on the hunt for my unsuspecting hubby.

I head down the hall, toward the kitchen and notice, once again, that Harrison’s den door is open. I peer inside and there is Alicia, again. What the hell?!

Surprised, “Alicia! I thought we gave you the day off?” I say, as I push through the door into the room. She drops her phone on the floor and is clearly taken aback.

“I uh, yes I do have the day off, but I knew you were having guests, so I came to help Philippe. I already had a thing with my family earlier.” She blurted out without taking a breath.

I reach down and pick up her phone. Before I can hand it to her, she quickly snatches it from my hand. I give her a questioning look. “What are you doing in here, anyway?”

“Oh, I was making a call.” She puts her phone in her pocket and then looks at me. Brazen little thing, if you ask me.

“Please find somewhere else to make your calls. My husband would not be happy to find you in here doing anything other than cleaning.”

As she turns to head out of the room, I swear I hear her mumble under her breath, “I doubt that.”

“What did you say?” I demand.

“I just said I’ll do that,” she hisses without looking back as she leaves the room.

Harrison is going to hear about this! I will not have this snit working in our home any longer.

Locking the door behind me, I step out into the hallway and hear happy voices and laughter filling my ears. I decide to speak with Harrison about Alicia after our family dinner. For now, I want to enjoy our first Day of Thanks together.

“Ah, there you are, honey. Here, I was just about to propose a toast.” My dad is in fine spirits today. He hands me a glass of champagne, and I take my place next to my love. Harrison looks down at me beaming. He looks happy, which makes me overflow with joy.

“Everyone raise your glasses and let us toast to a wonderful day, on which we all have a lot to be thankful for. Harrison, thank you for welcoming us into your home and putting us up in that beautiful suite.”

Before he could say any more, my mother chimes in, “Yes, thank you for having us and for making our daughter so happy and taking such good care of her.” She looks straight at Harrison, and they seem to exchange knowing looks.

Philippe walks in with Simone and Garrin following behind. Simone rushes forward, hugging her way around the room. I forgot that they had all spent a great deal of time together when I was in the hospital. Everyone pairs off, with Simone and my mother chatting on the sofa, and Harrison and my dad discussing restoration details of the manor house. Philippe and Garrin disappeared into the kitchen. I am standing in the middle of the great room, feeling like an outsider. It makes me happy that everyone is enjoying themselves, but I find myself feeling like an onlooker.

Finished with my champagne, I set my glass down and decide to wander over to the sofa, where my mother and Simone are sitting. Just then,

Philippe enters the room and announces that dinner is ready. Everyone makes way to the dining room, chatting excitedly.

The table is beautifully set with a large floral centerpiece running down the middle and votive candles flanking each side. The table has been set for eight. As Harrison instructs everyone to take a seat, I begin to take my seat next him. He shakes his head and points to the other end of the table. I am not used to things being so formal. I take my place at the end of the table, with Simone sitting to my right and my father to my left. My mother sits next to my father, across from Garrin who is sitting next to Simone. I assume Philippe will be joining us, but I wonder to myself why there is an extra place setting.

Philippe and Alicia enter the room with trays loaded with food. Once all the food is placed on the table, Philippe takes his seat to the right of Harrison and then Alicia sits in the empty seat to Harrison's left. My jaw drops and the hairs on the back of my neck stand at attention. Just what the hell is going on here? I look around the table and see that nobody else seems to be bothered or even to notice for that matter. I am just about say something when Harrison clears his throat and says, "Everyone, if I can ask Mel to do us the honor of saying grace."

My dad is beaming. He nods at Harrison, and then proceeds to give the heartfelt Thanksgiving prayer that he has been giving every year as far back as I can remember. When he is finished, we all say Amen in unison, and then politely pass the food around the table. I look up to see Harrison watching me. I smile at him and he mouths, "I love you." I feel my heart skip a beat. I respond to him by mouthing, "I love you too." I look to his right and see that Alicia is watching him intently. My stomach turns sour. Harrison seems to be oblivious to her sitting next to him, as he continues to discuss the plans for the manor house with my dad. Since my dad has such vast knowledge about antiques and old architecture, he has asked my father to give his input in the restoration efforts. My dad, of course, is over the moon and excited to consult on the project.

The meal was delicious, with all of the typical Thanksgiving fare. The turkey was succulent and all the side dishes and trimmings were delectable.

As we linger at the table over coffee and pumpkin cheesecake, Harrison stands up and taps his spoon on his glass to gain our attention. Philippe is still seated at the table, but Alicia had already returned to the kitchen, much to my relief.

“I want to thank you all again for making our first Thanksgiving together so special. As you all know, we are heading up to Montreal in a few weeks to spend the Christmas Holiday and New Years with my family.

I chime in, “Don’t forget your birthday too!”

He chuckles, “Right, my birthday too.” He walks around the table to where I am sitting. Harrison gets down on one knee, and I am simply puzzled.

“Danielle, you have already made me the happiest man in the world the day you said ‘I do’ in paradise. I have found my purpose in you, and I am a better man because of *you*. I am excited to start the rest of our forever together.” I feel like I may bust out of this chair and right into his arms. “The reason I am here on bended knee, is that I am asking you to marry me again in front of our loved ones in Montreal on New Year’s Eve.”

There is a collective gasp around the room. I can feel everyone’s eyes on me.

“Harrison, I thought we agreed that we would plan something for this coming summer. I don’t know if we can pull off an entire wedding in a month.”

His face falls.

Shit! Now I’ve done it. As he starts to stand up, I reach out my hand and place it on his face. “If you want to get married on New Year’s, then I am all in. I love you Harrison.” I lean over to kiss him and then hear my mother sniffling. Clarke jumps up from her seat squealing and clapping her hands.

“Oh, this is great! I am so planning your ensemble.” She stops, “Can you still wear white?”

My mother steps in, “Of course she can.” Then she turns to Harrison, “Oh, you scoundrel, you never told us you were planning this.”

He gives my mother his mega-watt smile. “Well, I only decided a few days ago. I figure there is no reason to wait. It’s more for our loved ones than anything, but I want to shout out to the world how I feel about my love for your daughter.”

“I have already spoken to my family, and they are ecstatic.” He turns to me. “My mother is anxious to meet the woman who captured my heart.”

My dad is stands next to Harrison, patting him on the back. It’s fun to see the bond my dad has with Harrison. He never warmed up to my ex like this.

I turn to Clarke, and she is beaming at me. “Clarke, will you be my maid of honor?”

She gasps, “But of course, Danners! I am so excited, I’ve never been to Montreal and how exciting, New Year’s Eve!”

All of the sudden, the blood empties from my face, and I feel a chill down my spine. In all the excitement, I had forgotten that was the date the Wine Witch wanted to marry Harrison. It has been a while since we have heard anything from her. I wonder if we are actually rid of her or if she is sitting back licking her wounds and planning more. Well, news of this will travel fast. We shall see if this smokes her out, or if she has conceded and moved on.

“Danners, hello DANI?” Clarke is flapping her hand in front of my face. I look at her and take a deep breath. “What is it? You look like you just saw your dead uncle?!”

I try to perk up, “Oh, nothing, just a lot to do in a very small amount of time. I suddenly feel really overwhelmed!”

She takes me by the elbow, “No worries, I will help you however I can! Actually, is there somewhere private to talk? We haven’t had a chance to catch up, and I have some stuff to tell you.”

“Sure, of course. Let’s go to my room.”

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Chapter Thirteen

Walking down the hallway, I notice Harrison's den door is still closed. I quickly grab the handle and give it a turn. Good, still locked.

Clarke throws me a funny look, and I shrug my shoulders at her.

Once inside my room, we settle into the sofa, and I flip on the fireplace.

'So, girl talk time huh?'

"Danners, you know I am not much for small talk. I just thought you should know what a certifiable lunatic Bradley has turned into."

I am alarmed, "Why do you say that? what has he done?"

She scoffs, "What hasn't he done? He is calling me constantly to ask about you. Your hubby had him thrown out on his ear when you were in the hospital. He was sneaking in at times the rest of us weren't there."

I nod, "Yes, Harrison told me this the other day. He also told me how grave my condition was when they first brought me in to the ER. I am shocked that you all lied to me, Clarke."

She stands up and walks to the fireplace. She sits on the hearth and says in a sober tone, "Well you can be sore at me all you want; the last thing you needed to hear while you were recovering was that you had almost died. We all decided together that when the time was right, you would be told. Besides, you are here to talk about it now, and that is all that matters. You are like a sister to me and the thought of losing you was devastating." She hops up quickly and returns the sofa, fanning herself.

"Ok, so what else about Bradley?"

“Right. Well, since he can’t call you and you live in Fort Knox, he keeps dropping off bouquets of flowers at my house and office for ME to deliver to you. Apparently, he watched the reception girl in the lobby downstairs throw away one bouquet after another.”

I feel sick. “Doesn’t he know that I am married to Harrison now? And how do they know the flowers are from Bradley?” I now understand why Harrison was so adamant about my not engaging with or mentioning Bradley.

“Oooh, yes! Bradley knows about your skipping off and getting hitched. I know for a fact that he has not accepted it. He kept telling me the other day that he was going to make right by you and fix everything. I am not sure what that means exactly. It was creepy, though. He just kept saying it over and over again, like one of those nut jobs you see blurting out stuff on the streets. I told him to leave you alone and never to contact me again. Seriously, I don’t know what has gotten into him. He is just so freaking gross now! It is hard to believe he used to be so hot!”

I nod. “It’s like he has snapped. I can’t help but to feel a little sorry for him. He seems like he is teetering on the brink of completely losing it.”

“He dropped off a letter that he wrote to you that he wants me to give you. I almost threw it out, but I thought I should give you the opportunity to see it and make up your own mind about how you want to handle Bradley.” She reaches into her blazer pocket and pulls out a folded envelope. As she is handing it to me, we hear a voice from behind.

“Well, isn’t that clever of the old boy? Sneak around the husband and go straight to the best friend to get to my wife.”

I jump up from my seat and see Harrison standing in the doorway with his brow furrowed and the look of rage marching across his usually handsome face. He walks over to us, and I place the envelope in his outstretched hand. I look from him to Simone and realize he is really mad at me. His eyes are fixed on my face, with flames licking at the corners of his brows.

“Harrison, Clarke was just telling me that...” He puts his hand up and looks at Simone. She hastily leaves the room, shutting the door behind her.

“I thought that I was perfectly clear about your ex husband. I came in here to tell you that I was going to send you, your friend and mother to New York to Maxwell’s to buy your dress. Imagine my distress to hear you and your little friend discussing the very man whose name makes my blood boil. Do you still have feelings for him? Is that why you can’t let him go? Am I not enough for you?” He is now shouting. I am sure everyone in the living room can hear.

I sit back down on the sofa and stare ahead at the dancing fire. When I look back at Harrison, he looks tormented.

“Harrison. Sit please.” I motion to the stuffed chair.

At first, he shakes his head, and then he sits down with the envelope still in his hand.

“Before you say anything, Danielle, maybe you should understand a few things. I never planned to fall in love again. I never thought I would find someone that would fulfill me as Adelaide did. The day she died, my soul died with her. I was a shell of a person, seeking out pleasure without strings. When I first saw you standing in the master bedroom in the demo home last summer, something stirred in me. At that moment, I had an idea that you were to be the one who was going to resuscitate me and save me from myself. I can’t live without you, Danielle, but I also can’t live with someone who has feelings for someone else. I have given my soul to you, Danielle, please tell me that wasn’t a mistake.

I jump up from my seat and kneel beside Harrison, taking his hand in mine. I look deep into his tortured eyes.

“*You* need to understand a few things. I want nothing to do with Bradley. He is my past and you are my future. I can’t imagine living a single moment without you. I was a broken woman when I met you. It hurt so intensely when I thought you were marrying that bitch! I felt as if I had nothing to

live for. I have never felt like this before, especially in my previous marriage. It was void of passion and connection. My past needs to stay in the past; all I want is you, Harrison.”

I snatch the envelope out of his hand and proceed to rip it in several pieces, letting it fall to the floor. Harrison grabs my face with his hands and presses his firm, supple lips to mine, while he holds me in a soul speaking to soul embrace. After several minutes of our tongues dancing with each other, we release one another.

“By the way, you are more than enough for me.” I look into pools of limpid blue and know that my strong, secure sex machine is back.

He groans and then pulls me onto his lap, as he kisses my neck in that magic spot that sets my core on fire! “God Danielle, I want be buried inside you so bad! I wish that everyone would just leave!” He kisses my lips again and then allows me to stand back up.

I straighten out my skirt and fluff my hair. “Did you mean what you said about going to New York?”

He grunts, “I don’t know, I don’t know if I trust your friend. She is sneaking behind my back and playing messenger for your ex husband.”

“Oh Harrison, now you are sounding insecure again! I get where you are coming from, but she is only trying to be my friend. We are practically sisters. It’s like it’s in our code. She would never do anything to come between us. She doesn’t like my ex anymore than you do. In all fairness though, he is acting completely out of character for him. It’s like something or someone has a hold on him.”

He grunts, “Yeah, well I am beginning to wonder if he is obsessed with you.”

“No, of course he’s not. He just doesn’t know how to move on.”

“He’d better figure it out quickly before I start legal action to force his moving on.”

“Oh Harrison, let’s just focus on keeping that crazy woman away from us. Have you heard anything?”

“Not exactly. She seems to be keeping her distance after the board served her a formal warning following her text message to me. My father did say that she is hiding out at the Devereaux compound. That is all I know.”

“I still have my suspicions that we haven’t heard the last of her. I wonder what she will do once she learns that we will be marrying on *her* turf on *her* wedding day?”

He looks stricken, “Oh Danielle, I can’t believe I didn’t even think about the date. It had not even crossed my mind. She can’t do much, as I will see to it that we are heavily secured. Let’s talk more about this later. We have guests to see to out there, and I plan to ravage your body the minute everyone leaves.”

Oh! There goes my body responding to him as it normally does. As inappropriate as it is at times, I hope that I always react to my husband with such abandon for years to come.

True to form, after everyone left, Harrison takes me to our room and devours every inch of my body. We explore each other’s bodies for the better part of the night. When I finally fall asleep, another nightmare greets me. I dream, once again, of the dark hooded man chasing me down the corridors, out into the street. I turn to look behind me, and he is no longer there. I look forward again and there he is, standing in my path and I am about to hit him head on. I scream at him, but no sound comes out of my mouth. I feel my heart pounding, and I can barely breathe, as if his hands are around my neck. I hear a sinister laugh. Then, I wake up. I lie there for a moment, as my breathing slows back down to normal and my heart stops racing. I turn toward Harrison, but he is not there. I sit up and look at the clock on my phone. It is 1:48 AM. I climb out of bed and put on my robe. I

am sore from all of our recent lovemaking. I slowly walk out into the hallway and I about to call out his name, when I hear the tinkling sound of a woman laughing. I strain to hear. Is it the television? It is coming from the direction of the media room, so it is possible, though watching TV is not something Harrison engages in very often. Maybe Albert is up. I tiptoe across the cold travertine floor, wishing I had worn slippers. You would think that I would have learned by now. Just as I am about to enter the room, I hear the giggling again and it is definitely not the TV. I walk through the door, into the media room, and there are Harrison and Alicia sitting on the sofa together, talking.

“What the hell is going on here?” My mind is racing a mile a second.

Harrison looks at me, with a surprised expression. “I couldn’t sleep and I didn’t want to wake you. I came out here and found Alicia up watching TV, so I came in to join her.”

She looks at me with a smugness that I would like to slap off her face. “Harry has been lecturing me about going back to school. I think I am convinced, but I just need to find the funding.” She giggles.

Harry? Did she just call my husband Harry?

“I see, well *Harry*, perhaps you would like to join me back in our bedroom?” I look at Alicia, “Don’t you have a TV in your room?”

I notice that she is wearing a pair of slinky pajama bottoms and a low cut, practically threadbare, light pink colored t-shirt. I swear that I can see her perky nipples through the fabric. Oh my gosh, I am losing it. I just need to have Harrison get rid of her.

“Yes, but this one is bigger.” She doesn’t seem to have once ounce of humility.

I look at Harrison and turn to leave. I hear him get up and follow me out into the hallway. Turning back to Alicia, “You might want to get to bed too. We like to get things started early around here.”

She mumbles something, switches the TV and lights out, and then heads the opposite way to her room.

Once back inside our bedroom, I turn to Harrison “What the fuck was that all about?”

He actually has the nerve to give me a perplexed look. “What are you getting at?”

“What am I getting at? That girl is seriously trying to come on to you that’s what!”

He laughs, “She is not coming onto me. I am sure I am a little too old for her. Besides, I am taken by the most beautiful woman in the world. How can she compete with that?” He grabs me and suckles at the magic spot on my neck. I try to push him away, but it feels too good. I guess this can wait until the morning. We make love again before I fall back into a fitful sleep.

Chapter Fourteen

The next day, Harrison goes next door to the Rogue Tower to get in a workout. He claims the little workout room he had put in for me doesn't have manly enough equipment. I set about doing some online shopping for things we will need to take to Montreal with us. I have lots of Christmas shopping to do, but no way am I going to head out to the malls. Harrison wouldn't hear of it anyway.

I set myself up in the great room on the white leather sofa. It is a dismal day, but it still seems cheery in this room. While my laptop is firing up, I head out to the kitchen to make myself some tea. I walk in and must have startled Alicia, as she jumped when I said hello. She quickly tucked something into her apron pocket, mumbled a hello, grabbed her rag, and left the kitchen out the other doorway. I notice something on the floor where she had been standing. I bend over to pick it up. It's a piece of off-white torn paper. The longer I look at it, the more familiar it is. It finally occurs to that it is the same paper as the envelope Bradley's letter was in. How peculiar.

I put the piece into my pocket and go in search of Alicia. She is in the powder room, cleaning. "Ah, there you are. I was hoping I could send you on a couple quick errands?"

She seems to jump every time I speak to her. She stammers, "Uh, sure. I guess so. What do you need?"

"I have a craving for a few things, so I was thinking you could run up to Zupans in John's Landing area."

"Okay, let me just change real quick and I will go, just make me a list."

"Great." I head back into the kitchen, make a quick list of things, and grab some cash from my purse. I wait for her in the elevator foyer. I am

perched on the edge of the water feature ledge when she walks in. She is dressed in typical college student garb, a hoodie sweatshirt, jeans and sneakers. As I look her up and down, I have not a clue why I am so threatened by her. She is the last thing that would make Harrison hot.

I hand her the list and money and ask her to pick up the dry cleaning as well. That will get her out of the house for at least an hour. I have some investigative work to do. Once I hear the elevator descend the shaft, I go in search of Albert. I need to enlist his help. As I suspected, Albert is parked in the media room watching his morning talk show circuit.

“Albert?”

“Hmm, oh *oui Madame?*” He stands up.

“I need you to keep an ear out for the elevator for the next thirty minutes or so.”

He tilts his head looking confused.

“I know don’t ask, just work with me, okay?”

“*Oui Madame*, whatever you want.”

I head back to my bedroom and into the master closet. I remember seeing a ring of keys in one of Harrison’s drawers. I grab the key ring and head back down the hallway. I get to Alicia’s door and try it. Sure enough, it is locked. I pull out the ring and begin trying the different keys. I am on my fourth try, when I hear someone walking up behind me. I quickly turn around to find Albert standing behind me. “Here, I have a master.” He swiftly unlocks the door, and I give a smile of thanks. He continues to stand outside the door, as I nervously look around. I would just die if I were to be caught. I walk over to the closet and open the door. On the floor of the closet, is the apron she was wearing earlier. I pick it up and put my hand in the pocket only to come up empty handed. I drop the apron back to the floor and shut the closet door.

The nightstand drawer is slightly open. I open it far enough for me to see in, and sure enough, there are the pieces of the ripped envelope and letter. My hands are now shaking. Why would she have kept this and when was she in our room that she would have collected the pieces? I am not sure what I should do now. I reach into my own tracksuit jacket and pull out my phone. I start to call Harrison, but something else catches my attention. Under the ripped pieces of paper is what appears to be a journal. I open it up and skim over the pages. At first, it seems to be the notes of a nurse, but then the handwriting changes. I go back to the beginning again and actually read what is written. Once I start focusing on the words, I realize this is a written diary of my recovery from the attack. It was written during the time that I was recovering here at the penthouse. I can see that this was written by Glenda. I read on. It describes how I was doing. How many times Harrison came into the room with me. It describes conversations she overheard. It even describes what Harrison was wearing and how long we were alone, without Glenda in the room.

My palms are getting sweaty and my heart is beating faster with each turn of the page. Why in the hell would Glenda keep those kinds of notes? I can understand making brief observations for the doctors, but this is creepy. These are not the normal nurse-type of notes. I skip forward to where the handwriting changes. I can tell that the voice of the writer changes dramatically. As I read into the second paragraph, I realize this is the writing of Alicia. It describes how hot she finds Harrison and how she wishes she was me, with all of my money and opportunity. I skip a couple pages and the most terrifying thing pops off the pages at me. It says she will begin tainting my food now that she has gained the trust of the rest of the staff. A little farther down the page it says that she is gaining the eye of Harrison, and she feels it won't be long before she is able to seduce him. After that, there is a page of doodles like one does while talking on the phone. I skip ahead to the last entry.

'Tonight, I finally got somewhere. He is all mine now. The bitchy wife might be on to me, so I have to be careful. Wasn't able to do anything with food today. Big news though. The moron is re-marrying her on New Years in his hometown. Not if we can stop it.'

My stomach does a complete flip-flop. I feel sick now from having read the musings of an immature nut job who is living under the same roof as me.

I begin to walk out of the room, when I realize that I still have her book in my hand. I am not sure what to do with it. The contents are incriminating, but the ramifications are overwhelming. What does this mean? Are the writings for herself or for someone else? Why would Glenda have been making notes about my recovery and then Alicia making notes about our life here. I couldn't read the part about her standing outside our bedroom door listening to us having sex. Dear God, I don't even want to know what she wrote. She is sick and she is leaving. Today.

I peer out to the hallway, and Albert is still standing there, leaning against the wall with his ear bud in his ear. I wonder what show has him so engrossed this time. No matter, I have more pressing issues. "Albert!"

"Oui?"

"Can you get a box out of the storage closet by the elevator? I am packing up Alicia's things.

"Madame?"

He steps aside, and there is Alicia standing behind him with the bag of groceries from Zupans in one hand and the dry cleaning in the other.

"Guess I got back just in time." She says far too smugly.

I am still standing in her room with her journal in my hand and the pieces of paper in the drawer. Now is as good as any time to confront her. "Care to explain this?"

She drops her parcels to the floor and breezes into the room. She tries to snatch the book from my hand, but I am taller and hold the book up in the air. "Will you let me explain?"

“Yes, while you pack your things. Albert?”

“*Oui Madame*, I will get the box.”

Alicia takes his absence as an opportunity to attempt to seize the book again. I am holding her off with my free arm, while I shout “Albert! Albert!” I hear his feet pounding on the tiles as he returns to the room.

“Sure, call your body guard to protect you against the poor little housekeeper.”

“I read what you wrote in here. You need to pack your things and get the hell out before I have you thrown out!” I am shouting at the top of my lungs. “I am no longer putting up with your insubordinate husband-lusting ass.”

“Danielle?”

I whirl around to see my husband standing there, taking in the whole scene.

“Just what is going on here?” He demands.

Alicia bursts into tears and collapses to the floor pointing at me, “Your wife broke into my room and rifled through my things and now she is attacking me!”

I am dumbstruck that she is actually accusing me of attacking her. The simpering idiot is trying to convince my husband to take her side.

“Danielle! Care to explain?” He leans down to help her up off the floor, then to my astonishment, he swipes his fingers across her face to wipe away her tears. That is it!

“Harrison! Can’t you see she is manipulating you? She took the pieces of the letter Bradley wrote, that I ripped up, from our room last night. Look.” I point into the drawer. He peers in.

“She put those in there. I never went into your room last night. She is trying to make me look bad and I can’t figure out why. I really need this job!” She then turns and wraps her arms around Harrison’s middle, much to his surprise. He looks at me with accusing eyes.

“Is that true, Danielle?”

“What? Of course it’s not true! I sent her to the store, so I could access her room after I saw a piece of the torn envelope at her feet in the kitchen. Oh hell! Why am I explaining myself to you? Here, maybe you would like to read some excerpts from this and then tell me what you think!”

I thrust the book at him and start to leave the room, but decide to stay, as I did not want to give Alicia the opportunity to manipulate the situation further. I am beginning to wonder what the hell is going in here that my husband is seemingly taking the housekeepers word over his own wife’s. I pray marrying him so hastily isn’t back firing on me. All of the sudden, I feel my utopia is getting worm holes in it.

He opens the book, as he gently pushes Alicia and her fake sobs away. He scans over the copy without any emotion registering on his face. He walks over to chair at the little desk and sits down. I keep my stance, standing tall with folded arms. After he reads a fair amount of the journal, he shuts the book and in a quiet voice, “Pack your things, and I will get your final check.”

“But! I didn’t do anything. It is an invasion of privacy and breaking and entering into my personal belongings. I’ll report you to the Bureau of Labor and anyone else who will listen!”

Harrison stands. “You will do no such thing, you want to know why?” In this book you have threatened my wife’s life and admitted that you were going to use sex to coerce me for money. Now, in exchange for my not pressing charges against you, I expect you to tell me for whom you are working.”

She spats at him, “Go to hell, asshole. I will do no such thing. The money trail doesn’t stop here!” Albert has moved to block her from Harrison and me and oversees her packing her things. I walk into the living room, shaking from head to toe.

When Harrison walks in, I can see he is no better than I am.

He sits next to me and takes my hand in his. “I saw what she wrote about me being interested in her. I didn’t do anything inappropriate, Danielle. Honestly, I didn’t touch her or even look at her in any way other than professionally.”

Looking into his cool blue eyes, I know for certain that he is telling the truth. “I know, Harrison. “ I lean up and kiss him on the cheek.

He chuckles softly, “Besides, she is not my type. I like a lot more sophistication!” He pokes me in the rib. “Now, take you for example, I could really go for a woman like you. Even when you are wearing these fluffy sweats you look sexy.” He plucks at the material on my sleeve. I lean over and kiss him quickly on the lips.

“You know just how to smooth talk me don’t you, Mr. Towers?”

He smirks, “Is it working?” I swat at his hand as he starts moving it toward my crotch.

A few minutes later, Albert appears and motions for Harrison to join him. Once Harrison returns, he tells me that he gave Albert a check for Alicia’s final pay and that Albert escorted her off the premises.

“What is your plan? Are you going to go after her?”

“I am not sure what I want to do about her. I will have to consult with my human resources guy after the weekend to find out what else needs to be done.”

“No Harrison, I don’t mean in regard to her employment. I mean her criminal activity.”

“Well, I kept the book, so I suppose I can give it to the detective to add to the mountain of useless evidence stacked against Marion, but none of it proves a damned thing. I am still shocked that nobody can ID your attacker. The park was filled with witnesses, but they were all after the fact. Not a single person actually saw the attack.” He stops talking abruptly and looks at me as my face has gone pale. I know it is because I felt the blood rush from it.”

“So sorry *mi amore!* Let’s talk about the trip to Montreal and our wedding instead.”

I perk up a little, but talk of my attack takes me to such a dark place that I sometimes wonder if I will always be vexed by the dark images that haunt me when I sleep.

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Chapter Fifteen

It's the morning of our trip to New York. We are going shopping for my wedding dress. My mother and Simone are joining me, along with Albert and a new security guy, Lance. With this short of notice, I will be lucky to find a dress. We are going to Maxwell's, which is one of the largest wedding dress stores in the country. Our plan is to find the dress the first day and then have them complete any alterations while we are still there in the city. Once we do a final fitting, they are going to ship the dress directly to Montreal. Simone has been primarily in charge of this process. She planned this trip with less than a week's notice. Harrison has never been one to allow for large timeframes, so I guess this should be no exception. His mother is planning the reception for us and is handling the invitations.. We are keeping the ceremony to immediate family and a few close friends. We want it to be intimate, like our original wedding in the Caymans. The reception will be a large gala, due in part to it being New Years Eve.

Harrison has made arrangements with the staff in the New York penthouse to be ready for our arrival. He just informed me last night that he was able to book us on the Virgin Airways first class. I have been so spoiled. I never flew first class before I met Harrison. That was a luxury my ex never would have allowed. My mother is beyond excited about the trip. Is has been some time since she has been in New York City. She and my dad used to go there at least once a year on buying trips for their antique store. Now they just have an art gallery, having sold the antique business. I know my mother will drag us into some of her usual haunts, if we have time.

I'm in my room finishing the packing and Harrison has run next door to HQ to take care of a few things before I leave for the airport. I hear someone talking down the hall and the excited voices just got louder. Ah, Clarke must have just gotten here.

“Danners! Aren’t you packed yet? What is the matter with you? We are going to New York City for four days and this is all you have. She is looking in my suitcase with her mouth agape. Oh, you make me crazy. Get out of my way; I am taking over this suitcase. You just sit there and look pretty.”

I laugh, “How about if I get my toiletries together?”

“Yes, on second thought, go make yourself useful. Don’t we have to leave soon? Is your mom here?”

“No, she is meeting us at the airport.” I yell over my shoulder as I go into the bathroom. I gather up all my cosmetics and travel toiletries into my bag. I join Clarke in the closet to help her select my clothes for the trip. I glance at the clock on my phone. Shit! We need to go, Clarke.

“Yes, you do *mi amore!*”

I about jump through the ceiling. I did not expect Harrison back so soon. He looks past me to my preoccupied wardrobe stylist and back to me. “I’d like to see you for a moment”

Gulp. I wonder what this is about.

I follow him over to the seating area by the fireplace. He motions for me to sit down. “We don’t have much time, so I want to lay out some ground rules.” Oh, how annoying. I nod, but now is hardly the time to be covering his ‘rules’ while I should be packing.

“First, I want you to get whatever dress you desire. Money is no object, but don’t go crazy. I may have the means to buy whatever your heart desires, but I would rather spend the money on things that will last, like sapphire and diamond necklaces. He smiles, giving me a knowing nod. I remember the moment he originally gave that necklace to me in Hood River. Little did I know that I would eventually be wearing that on our wedding day.

“Well, I plan to wear that sapphire necklace in Montreal, so whatever I buy will have to compliment that.” I smile at him shyly. I don’t like discussing money; although, I do admire that he doesn’t throw it around carelessly. I have never struggled, but I know so many who have and, it feels like a waste to blow money on extravagance. When Harrison spends money, he makes it count.

So, on to my second item of business. As for the New York shopping, I have a card here for you to use as you see fit. I want you to treat your mother and Simone to a week of dining and pampering. Why don’t you ladies get some spa time at the Four Seasons?”

I jump up and wrap myself around him. “Oh Harrison, that is so sweet and generous of you!”

“Well, you didn’t get all the traditional trappings of the engagement, bridal showers, and shopping for your trousseau. Think of it as all wrapped into one week.” He Stands. “Now, the other stipulation, is that you keep Albert and Lance with you ladies at all times. I know that I am repeating myself, but it bares the importance. I will keep repeating myself, if it keeps you safe. We are not sure if there is a threat still lurking out there, and as long as there is a possibility, we have to be cautious. I am not taking any chances where you are concerned.” I tilt my head up to his and stand on my toes to kiss the tip of his nose. He responds by kissing my forehead, and then he works his way down to my lips. He seals his lips over mine and gives me a sensuous, longing kiss. My body melts into his and we linger in our embrace.

“Ahem! Okay hate to break up you lovebirds, but we need to fly this coop, if we are going to make our plane, Dani!” I roll my eyes at her. Oh how cheesy!

Harrison hands me the magic *carte blanche* credit card. It makes me a bit nervous; I have never had a high ceiling budget. I am so excited to treat my mother and best girlfriend to some fun in the big city.

Clarke is standing next to my luggage, with her hands on her hips, obnoxiously tapping her foot on the travertine floor. Harrison and I make our final goodbyes.

In my ear, he whispers, “*Vous voir bientôt mon amour*, see you soon my love.” Oh, I love it when he talks to me like that. I don’t care what he has just said. The way it sounds rolling off his tongue makes me weak. Yes, it makes me very weak.

“See you soon. I love you and thank you so much for this.” I hold up the card.

He smiles, “Okay, now don’t lose that!”

Harrison follows Simone and I down to the lobby and out to the waiting town car. Our new house-man, Hans, follows with my luggage. Philippe has returned to Montreal for a while to handle personal matters and spend the holidays at home. Harrison hired Hans from an agency this time instead of on a recommendation. He is just starting this morning, as I am leaving. It will be a quiet week for Hans to get acquainted with our household.

Once inside the car, I start to feel a little homesick for Harrison, but it does not last long, as Clarke will not stop talking. She is more than a little excited about our week in New York.

After an uneventful flight, we arrive at the Upper Eastside penthouse mid-evening. Eleanor, the housekeeper, greets me with an enormous hug and full of congratulations for me. “I just knew when he brought you here in August that you were something special to him. I am so glad he has found happiness. He wasn’t always so nice to be around back when...well, never mind. I am so thrilled for you both!”

Eleanor shows my mother and Simone to their rooms, as well as Albert and Lance to the one they are sharing. I showed myself to the master bedroom. It seems odd to be here without Harrison. This really is where the romance started, and now I am already married to him, buying a dress to seal our commitment to one another. Fate is an interesting force, and, one I

should not give too much time in thought. I just might paralyze myself with all of the ‘what if’s’ that process would bring about.

Instead, I wander over to the grand windows and peer out at the tree top canopy of Central Park. There is a sprinkling of snow covering the tops in patches. A chill runs through my body as I contemplate Montreal in late December.

I hear my phone vibrating in my purse, and I rush to grab it, hoping it is Harrison. Sure enough, it is!

“Hello?!”

“Ah, there she is, *Mi Amore.*”

Oh, his voice is so sexy and comforting.

“Oh Harrison, it is so strange being here without you.”

“It is strange being here without *you.*” He responds. “How was the flight and how is old Eleanor?”

“The flight was smooth and on time and Eleanor is just as sweet as ever. I am supposed to be getting ready for dinner, though. I am excited to try that new restaurant out, what did you say the name is again?”

“It’s a celebrity chef restaurant called Benny’s Cupboard.”

“Hmm, kind of an odd name, but I am game. How is everything at home?”

I can hear him sigh through the phone, as he pauses for a moment. ‘Harrison, what’s up?’

“I wanted to wait until you got home to discuss this with you, but I got a strange phone call today from Bradley of all people.”

“Bradley?!” I squeak into the phone.

“Yes, he called me a few hours ago and asked if I would meet him later this week. He has something important to discuss with me.” He grunts, “I can only imagine what he wants to talk with me about.”

“Well, about me no doubt. We are married and I just can’t see why he can’t take steps to move on. It’s like he is totally stunted. Are you going to meet him?”

“At first, I told him to take a hike. But, when I got off the phone I thought it over, and I called him back. I am to meet with him on Thursday.”

“Are you kidding me? That just sounds like trouble. Will you take any security with you?” I can’t believe I’m actually thinking he would cause Harrison harm.

“Yes, I am meeting him at a café outside of town in the Northwest Hills. I will have one of my guys with me just in case he has something unsavory planned.”

“This reminds me of one of those TV dramas. I really don’t like it one bit.”

“Ah, don’t worry about me. Now, you should go get changed and have a nice time with your guests. I will be thinking of you tonight while I lie here in my big lonely bed.”

I sniff, “What will you be thinking about?”

He breathes into the phone, “What it feels like to be buried in you. Now, why don’t you text me when you are in for the evening so I know that you are safe.”

Oh my! He really does know how to ruffle my feathers!

“Ok, I’ll check in with you later. I love you!”

“Mmm, I love you too.”

Super! Now my naughty body is responding to what he just said. I inwardly scold myself. I set about unpacking my bags. In the large walk-in closet, there are plenty of hangers for my garments. I set out my jewelry and shoes on the built-in shelves and then stand back wondering if Adelaide had unpacked her belongings in here too. I should not be thinking this way. It is highly inappropriate on so many different levels. I’ve never really asked Harrison about her. I know it’s a sensitive subject for him. I have no idea how I would begin to broach it. I really should leave it alone.

I hear voices coming my direction, so I peek my head out of the closet door to see Clarke and my mother entering the double doors into the master suite. I step out of the closet into the room. ‘Hi ladies.’

“Oh honey, this is simply exquisite” My mother gushes as she looks around the impressive room.

“I know, wait until you see the rest of it. The terrace view will blow your mind; although, it is quite chilly out there, so you may prefer to admire it from inside.” Clarke is admiring the closet and then tours the bathroom. I look at the clock and note that we should get going.

“Ladies, let’s get freshened up and get a move on to dinner. Harrison made reservations for us at a new hot spot and I don’t want to be late, or we may lose our table. I don’t know about you, but I am starved!” Both my mother and Clarke nod in agreement.

Chapter Sixteen

Several hours later, we return from an amazing evening at a chic new restaurant that was a short cab ride away. We shared several small plates of food and downed a couple bottles of wine and one bottle of champagne. It was really fun to pull out the black credit card Harrison gave me and treat my mother and best friend to a far too expensive meal.

“Honey, do you mind if I go on to bed? It’s been a long day, and I am pooped.” My mom sticks her tongue out as if to emphasize her exhaustion.

“Of course, mom” I turn to Clarke, “In fact, I think I am heading off to bed too. What time is our appointment at the bridal salon?”

“It’s at 10:00 AM but it’s in Chelsea, so we need to give ourselves time to get there.” She yawns, “Yeah, I could go for a good sleep, Garrin has been over every night for the last week.” She winks at me.

“Ok, on that note, I’m hitting the sack. Goodnight girls.” Mom heads down the hall to her room.

I look at Clarke just in time to catch her in another yawn. “Yeah I’m with your mom, night Danners.”

I give her a hug and then head into the enormous master bedroom. I close the doors behind me and plop down on the fluffy bed. After I send my text to Harrison, I hear a soft knock on my door. I hop down off the bed and slowly open the door. It’s Clarke standing there with a small stack of magazines. “Whatcha got there?”

She bounces into my room like Tigger and climbs onto my bed. “I have bridal magazines. You are a bride after all.” She pats the bed beside her and I curl up next to her. We begin to looking through the pages, dog-earring the looks I like. “Are you and Harrison going to have kids?”

“Whoa! Now that *is* random. What makes you ask that?”

“You know me an inquiring mind wants to know! So, have you even discussed it?”

Ah, I think I know where this is coming from.

“Yes, as a matter of fact, we have discussed having kids, among other things. I know you think it was hasty, getting married so soon, which is ironic coming from you. But, Harrison didn’t want to have a long engagement.”

“But Danners, doesn’t that raise a red flag? What’s the rush?”

“There’s no rush, that wasn’t the point. He felt that since he lost Adelaide before they had started their life together, he didn’t want to risk waiting for us to start ours. Besides, he is not a young man who is just starting out in life. He knows what he wants and you know where I am coming from also.”

“I guess that I get it, I just wanted to make sure that you knew what you were getting into. So are you?”

“Am I what?”

“Ugh, Dani! Are you going to have kids?”

“Geeze you don’t give up! Yes, yes, yes, we plan to have kids!”

“Good, your parents will be naturals at being grandparents. Now, let’s find your dress!” She tosses me a magazine and we resume our search for the perfect dress.

The next morning, armed with our magazine pictures, we head into the bridal gallery Maxwell’s. Simone took charge of the appointment and assisted the consultant in the selection of the dresses for me to try. I tried six off the rack dresses and none worked on my figure. I was getting really

frustrated. Then Simone picked a dress that was unlike anything I had expressed an interest in trying on. At first, I refused to try it on, but she practically twisted my arm. Once I got the dress on, it was that teary ‘aha, this is the dress.’ moment. My mom was in tears, and Simone patted herself on her back. In order for the alterations to be ready in time, they whisked me away to the alterations department. They assured me that the dress, with its alterations, would be sent to Harrison’s home in Montreal in plenty of time for the wedding. There will not be enough time for me to try the dress on for a final fitting, so I will hope all is well with the adjustments.

We decide on lunch in the Chelsea neighborhood before we head back to the penthouse to relax before our evening. After we place our orders, we settle in with glasses of wine and engage in light chatter. “Mom, what would you like to wear for the wedding? I have some ideas, and goodness knows Clarke has her opinion, but I’d like for you to speak up.”

“Oh, baby girl, I don’t really know. What did you have in mind? I look at Clarke, she starts to speak, but I cut her off. Since we are getting married on New Years, I thought maybe I would have gold and silver as my colors. I wonder if we should find a gold dress or silk suit? I turn to Clarke to see her reaction.

“I like it. I thought you said you wanted to go with black and white, though. When did you change your mind?”

“I don’t know. It just came to mind. I like the idea of making it opulent, but simple at the same time. I think black and white may be too over-done anyway. I know that Harrison wants the reception to be black tie.”

My mom nods, “Yes, that makes sense, I love your dad in a tuxedo. The last time I think he wore a tux was your last wedding.”

“Oh geeze, mom. When you put it that way, I sound like a serial bride.” We all laugh.

“Speaking of previous marriages, Bradley contacted Harrison and asked to speak with him.”

Clarke snorts, “Well he refused him right? What the hell is the matter with him?”

“What do you suppose he wants to speak to Harry about?”

“Mom, please don’t call him Harry. That nut job Alicia took to calling him that. Can you imagine? Anyway, Harrison doesn’t know, but we can all assume he wishes to discuss me in some way.”

“You didn’t answer me; is Harrison meeting him?”

“Yes, he told him no at first, but changed his mind and is meeting him Thursday. I am nervous, but he says not to worry.”

“I think he should call him back and tell him not in a snowball’s chance in hell would he meet him.” Simone pipes up. My mom and I look at her and she shrugs. “What? He doesn’t deserve your cordiality.”

“That is true, but Harrison will handle it.”

We continue to chatter on about wedding preparations during our lunch of spinach salads and tomato bisque. After a leisurely lunch, we head back to the penthouse to relax for a while before we go for late massages at the Four Seasons Hotel.

Chapter Seventeen

Upon arrival at the penthouse, Eleanor greets us and tells me I that have a delivery. I feel giddy and have a smile from ear to ear, suspecting my love has sent me something.

I enter the bedroom and see a beautiful and fragrant, dozen red roses sitting on the sofa table with an envelope. I excitedly open the envelope and begin to read the enclosure. My throat constricts, as I drop the card and yell for my mom and Clarke.

My mom reaches me first, followed by Clarke and Eleanor.

“Honey what is it?”

I point to the flowers, “Those flowers are not from Harrison, Eleanor please throw them away!” I am shaking as my mother puts her arm around me and walks me to the sofa.

Clarke leans down and picks up the card. She reads aloud:

You may think that you have won, but I have only gotten started.

Eleanor rushes out of the room with the offending flowers, as I sit on the sofa with my mom. I’m not sure if I should cry or scream. I knew her silence was not to be taken lightly.

With the card in her hand , Clarke comes around and sits in the armchair near the sofa. “Dani, who sent this? Is this from the Wine Witch?”

I nod my head. “You mean bitch, and yes, it has to be from her.” My mom flinched when I said “bitch” but I don’t care. That’s what that woman is.

“Honey, I am confused. I thought she had signed an agreement of some sort that restricts her from contacting you?”

“I thought so too, mom, but apparently she doesn’t care. I mean I honestly didn’t think that a piece of paper was going to keep her from coming after me. She is desperate and obsessed”

“So, what now? What are you going to do?” Clarke is pacing in front of the fireplace.

“Well, I guess I will call Harrison and let him handle it. There is not much else I can do.”

My mom gets up from the sofa. “We will give you some privacy. I think I would like some rest before we head out for our massages, that is, if you are still up for it?”

“Yes, of course. I am not going to let this ruin our time here. If I do, it’s as if she is getting a small victory, and I’ll be damned if I am going to let her win anything!”

I shut the door behind them and dig my phone out of my purse.

“Well hello, Mrs. Towers.”

“Hi.”

“How’s my beautiful wife?”

“Well, I was doing great. I found the dress of my dreams, and then when I got home, I had a note from Marion.”

“What?! You had a note from Marion? Where...how?”

“When we got back to the penthouse Eleanor had put a flower delivery in my room. The card attached said that I may think I have won but that she

has only gotten started. Harrison, how does she know I am here? Do you think we were followed?”

He sighs. “Danielle, I have no idea. Have you been keeping Albert and Lance close by?”

“Yes Harrison, the poor man and his cohort had to endure nearly four hours at the bridal gallery today. Then, another hour and half at lunch. We just got home and were going to take a little rest before we head out for late massages at the Four Seasons.”

“Hmm. Maybe you should skip the massages and have dinner in tonight, just to be on the safe side.”

“Harrison that is not fair to my mom and Simone. Besides, it’s not like I am going running on a deserted path in Central Park.”

I can feel him scowling over the phone. “I don’t find your sarcasm amusing, Danielle. This is serious. I had really hoped that we were not going to hear from her. When her father learned of her behavior, he laid into her. He actually sent my father and myself a formal apology on behalf of the whole Devereaux Operations. I need to contact my father. Did you save the card, and do you think it was her handwriting or the flower shop’s?”

I sniff, “How should I know whose writing it is? I do still have the card though.”

“Good. I want you to have Eleanor show you to my office, and I would like you to make a copy of it and fax it to me. I will have to forward that to the detective, and I think I may just have to send this to old Mister Devereaux himself. See if you can find out who delivered the flowers and from what florist.”

“Ok. Harrison?”

“Yes *cheri*?”

“Do you think we should be worried?”

“*Oui* Danielle, I think we should be concerned. If the threat of a lawsuit and possible jail time isn’t stopping her, then I am afraid this could get worse before it gets better. I wish I could tell you different. I really do.”

“Ok, I thought so.”

“I’m going to make my calls and I would like you to take care of those other things, if you could before you leave. Please remember to text me when you are coming and going, so I know you are okay. “

“What, don’t you have Albert checking in with you?”

“Well, yes of course I do, but I like hearing it from you better. I love you, Danielle. Bye.”

“Bye...love you too.”

I look around the room and notice that Clarke has taken the card with her. Out in the hallway, I can hear voices coming from the kitchen. I enter the room to find my mom, Clarke and Eleanor sitting around the island. The hush in the room when I entered was unbearable. “Really ladies, it’s not like I can’t figure out that you are talking about me. Could you be a little less obvious?”

“Oh, honey, it was all good. We were telling Eleanor about your dress and the plans for the wedding.”

I spot the card sitting on the counter by Clarke’s elbow. “Aha! That’s just what I was looking for. Eleanor, Harrison told me to ask you to let me in to his office, so I can send this to him by fax.”

She nods, “Certainly, Mrs. Towers. Follow me.”

I walk with her down the long corridor to a door at the end. She opens the door and it seems a little stuffy. I imagine it’s because it has not been

utilized in quite some time.

“The machine is over there, but don’t ask me how to use it. I only know how to run vacuum cleaners and ovens.” She chuckles.

I had to giggle. “That’s okay, sometimes technology gets the better of me too.”

“I will leave you to it. Let me know if you need anything else. Just lock the door behind you when you are finished.”

“Okay, thank you. Oh, hold on Eleanor. Do you know who delivered the flowers today or who the florist is? Harrison asked me to find out.”

She shakes her head, “I don’t know that, but I think that Mr. O’Shaughnessy, the doorman, might know. I will give him a buzz and let you know.” Before she leaves, “You know, the florist might have their logo or something on the envelope. Let me check that too.”

“Thank you, Eleanor.”

I walk over to the fax machine and realize that I need to make a copy of the card first, as it won’t go through the fax machine otherwise. I look around and spot a small copier in the corner. It is not powered up, so I hit the power button and stand waiting for the machine to come to life. While I wait, I wander around the room, looking at pictures and plaques on the walls. The accomplishments and awards that Harrison has achieved makes my heart warm and fuzzy. I hear a beep, beep, beep come from the machine, which I assume means it is ready for action.

Just as I am about to head over to the copier, a photo album catches my eye. It is odd that I even noticed it, as it is on a dark bookshelf at the very far end. It is a dark, mahogany colored leather bound book. I pull it out and begin looking through. It begins as what I assume is Harrison graduating from college. He has his cap and gown on, and looks really young. He was attractive then, of course, but he has really grown into his looks. So much so that I find the man he is today blows this young man out of the water.

I turn several pages and my eyes fix on a face that I know. It is a picture of Harrison and Marion. They are surrounded by many people and the sign above their heads says 'congratulations!' She too is wearing a gown of the same color and is holding up her left hand to show that there is a ring on it. I quickly turn to the next page, and sure enough, there are several more pictures from the same setting. The next several pictures tell a story of two lovers who just graduated and got engaged. The two lovers are Marion and Harrison. What the hell? He has never told me that they were engaged to be married. Well, aside from the recent fake engagement. Surely, the one in the pictures was real. If I do the math correctly, this would have been around twenty years ago. I wonder if Marion has been harboring resentment all of these years? My stomach is turning more to acid, as I continue to see more pictures of Marion and Harrison and their life together some twenty years ago. I notice something else, as I am about a third of the way to the end of the book. A lovely young woman with blonde hair has started appearing in the pictures, and there seems to be less of Marion. I take a piece of paper from the desk to mark my page and then I turn back several pages to one of the graduation-slash-engagement party pictures. Yes, there she is. The blonde girl was at the party wearing a gown too. It appears that she went to college with them.

I go back to the page I marked and examine the picture more closely. It is of Harrison and Marion at what appears to be a function and they look older by at least three or four years. They have nametags on as well as the blonde girl, who now looks more like a woman. I squint to make out her name. It is too small to see. I turn the page and see a picture of just Marion and the blonde woman. The nametag is slightly more visible. The name starts with an 'A'. My stomach flops. I feel faint, so I sit down on the floor with the album still in my hands. I skip ahead a few more pages. and sure enough, my suspicion is confirmed. The blonde in the picture is Adelaide. I know this because the image is of her holding what appears to be a certificate with her name on it in a frame. The picture is only of her, no Marion. The rest of the album is filled with pictures of only Harrison and Adelaide. The last picture is of Adelaide and Harrison kissing in an embrace, leaning against a car. I get up from the floor and walk back over to the bookshelf. There aren't any other albums. That is puzzling. Why would Harrison have an album of this part of his life, but no others?

I am not sure how to feel about this new information. Part of me feels betrayed in some way. My assumption from what I can take from the story these pictures tell is that Harrison was engaged to Marion. Then, over time, he fell for Adelaide and left Marion behind. There appears to be about a five-year gap in the pictures at least in two places. After he presumably graduated from college and then after he started up with Adelaide. I wonder why he hasn't told me about this. I knew that they had a past, but this is more than just having a history together. At one time, he was planning a future with her.

I put the book back on the shelf and make the copy of the card. I then fax it to the Towers Holdings office. I hear my name being called from down the hallway. Shit! I totally lost track of time. We barely have enough time to get to the massage appointment. I grab the paper off the fax machine and leave the office, locking the door behind me.

“Coming!” I yell, as I hurry down the hallway. I run into my room, leave the card on the mantle, and grab my purse. I had intended to change into something comfy for the appointment, but I have run out of time. I join the ladies, and our body guard, Lance, in the foyer, and we leave for our massages.

Chapter Eighteen

On the town car ride back from the massage, Clarke turns to me, ‘Okay, spill it! What is going on with you?’ ‘What do you mean?’ I play dumb.

‘You have barely said two words in the last couple hours. I know you... is it the flowers today? Say, that is really a theme with that bitch. At least she splurged on roses this time. Those carnations were nasty.’

I couldn’t help but to chuckle. Sometimes Clarke can be so funny. ‘It’s not the flowers, or well, it is but it’s more than that. I am just so tired from all of this. My life has been in a whirlwind ever since I met Harrison. I am madly in love with him, but I can’t even enjoy any of this because of *her*.’

My mom clears her throat. ‘I am just sorry for you kids. It’s not fair what you have been put through. My baby girl finds the man of her dreams and he comes with a crazy woman. I just wish they would have locked her up for stealing the money, since they can’t stick her with the other shenanigans.’

Clarke grunts. ‘Yeah, they just need to throw her in a loony bin and forget where they put the key! Seriously though, what did Harrison say about the flowers?’

‘He didn’t say too much; there’s not much that can be done, really. He is going to forward the copy of the card I sent him to the detective in Portland and to his father. Not that it will do much good with the case back home. All of her moves are well crafted and impossible to track back to her. Nothing she has done so far has been enough to arrest her.’

‘What?! Since when is having someone attacked not enough? You almost died, Danners! How is that not a criminal activity? Can you please explain to me how the police have not been able to find any leads at all? It is unbelievable!’

“Oh, do you have to point that out again? I just can’t stand the constant reminder that I was attacked. My sleep is invaded every night with visions of someone chasing me. I rarely get a good night’s sleep. Believe me, I agree. It has all been very frustrating. Now I also have some new information that there is even more to the story than I knew about before.” I shake my head before anyone can ask.” I can’t discuss it right now. I need to talk to Harrison first.”

My mom and Clarke look at each other. Before Clarke can say anything, my mom pipes up, “Honey, would you rather we stay in for dinner tonight? It has been a nice day, but I am a little tired. I would be perfectly happy to order in.”

Clarke picks up on my mom’s cue, “I agree, I could go for some take out and comfy clothes. Maybe we could find a good chick flick on tonight?”

I am so damned relieved! “Are you two sure you don’t mind if we stay in? Let’s see if we can get something delivered and snuggle in for the night. I have so much going on in my head that I am afraid I wouldn’t be a very fun dinner companion.”

My mom pats my hand. “Of course, dear. Besides, I am really looking forward to the restaurant we have booked for tomorrow night. Your father and I celebrated our thirtieth wedding anniversary there last year.”

Back in the penthouse after we ate, I excuse myself and go to my room to call Harrison.

“*Mi amore!*”

I decide to skip past the pleasantries. “Why didn’t you tell me that you were engaged to Marion before Adelaide?” I demand.

Silence. Complete silence.

“Hello?” I shout into the phone.

“Where did you hear that?” His voice is quiet and controlled.

“I didn’t hear it; I saw it with my own eyes.”

“What do you mean you saw it?”

“When I was faxing the florist card, I looked through a photo album I found on the bookshelf. It was all right there. Did you honestly think I wouldn’t find out about that? Why did you hide it?”

“I hid nothing. I honestly didn’t think that specific detail was relevant.” I growl and start to say something, but his voice overpowers me. “It was over years and years ago. Way before I dated and became engaged to Adelaide. I was dating Marion and Adelaide was her roommate. It’s that simple.”

“Ohhh! But it does have relevance. *That* is part of why she is out to get me. I am the next person to stand in her way. The last being Adelaide. Don’t you understand how this feels to me? I feel as if you deceived me.” I am shouting into the phone.

With his voice raised, “Now, stop right there. I did not deceive you and frankly, I think you are overreacting. I told you that I had a past with Marion. I just didn’t get into great detail because you said you didn’t want to hear it. Which is it Danielle?” Oh, I can hear he is about to spit bullets.

Ugh! This is not going well; although, I couldn’t have honestly thought it was going to go any differently.

“Look, I guess maybe we should agree to disagree on this. I feel like you still should have told me that you were engaged to Marion at some point. I realize that I told you I didn’t want to hear all the details of your past with her. I also understand that you were respecting my wishes. But, you have to agree that sometimes people need to hear things, despite their wishes. Do you get what I am saying?” I have managed to calm my voice down.

He sighs.

“I do understand. It’s like I don’t want to know details of your past with Bradley, but sometimes it does have a bearing on our present and inevitably our future. I just wish you would not fly off the handle at me. It pushes my buttons and infuriates me to where all I can see is red.”

Hmm. I had not thought about Harrison not wanting to hear about Bradley as being the same as my not wanting to hear about his past relationships.

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore. I think we both have some things to learn about communicating and not jumping to conclusions. Agreed?”

“Agreed.” I can hear the smirk in his voice. Phew!

“So, moving forward. I assume you got the fax? Eleanor said that by the time she contacted the doorman there had already been a shift change, so she would follow up in the morning about the florist. I don’t know why we are spinning our wheels on this. Marion sent the flowers; you and I both know that.”

“While we know that, I want the proof to provide for the case we are building against her in Montreal.”

“Oh, I see. So, are you still meeting with Bradley tomorrow?”

“Yes, at 10:00 AM. It should prove interesting.”

“I had better get back out to the living room. The ladies are waiting for me to start the movie. We are watching a chick flick, and we will continue our wedding shopping and planning tomorrow. I will touch base with you in the morning. I miss you!”

“Ah, but I miss you more!”

“Impossible!”

“I love you! Bye!”

“I love you too, Mr. Towers!”

After a late night of watching two movies and eating popcorn, I go to bed exhausted with a tummy ache. I climb into the large bed feeling lonely. I have not had much time with my husband since we returned from our wedding trip. First, I was hospitalized, then recuperating at home. A couple weeks after that, here I am spending almost a week away from him. I sigh to myself. I can't wait to get into a normal routine with Harrison.

I drift into a fitful sleep to be greeted by another horrifying dream. I am running down the white corridor with the shrouded man in black chasing behind me. I turn to look, and once again, he disappears. When I turn back around, expecting him to be in front of me, he is not there either. I think he is gone and feel relieved. My relief dissipates quickly when I realize that the corridor is coming to a dead end with nowhere to run. I turn around to head back the way I came, but to my horror, the shrouded figure reappears and he is heading straight for me with boney hands outreached. I have nowhere to go, so I reach out to block his attack. I open my mouth to scream but nothing comes out. I start kicking and punching my way past him when I feel his hands on my arms. He is yelling ‘Dani, Dani!’ I wake up and there are my mom and Clarke hovering over me.

“Honey, you were having a bad dream. Here have some water.” She hands me a glass.

“Dani, was it the guy in black again?”

“Yes! It was so real! It's as if I know him or something. It's... it's....Ohhh!” I then break into uncontrollable sobs. I have been trying to keep my emotions in check. I have been working hard at being the happy newlywed, but I simply cannot hold it in anymore! I feel my body wracking with pain from the fierce shudders of grief ripping its way through me like a hurricane through a hut. I can hardly breathe as the tears flood my face.

My mom is holding me, petting my head as I continue to allow my release. I can see out of my tear-blurred eyes that Clarke is pacing back in forth beside the bed. I know this is hard for her. She is a jovial girl and this type of display of emotion is foreign to her. I know she cares, though.

I continue to heave, but the tears have subsided to a trickle. My mom is still holding me, and Eleanor has now joined us. She is handing my mom a warm washcloth. My mom accepts the washcloth and dabs at my tear-soaked face. I am so embarrassed for my outburst. Eleanor must think I am a disturbed woman.

Once the heaves have diminished, I turn to the concerned faces. “I am so sorry for waking you guys. It was just such a terrible dream! I look straight at Eleanor. “I don’t normally do this.”

She smiles. “It’s okay. I do understand that you have been under a tremendous amount of stress.” She looks at my mom, “Donna has told me a lot. You are a brave and patient woman. I don’t know that I would have the fortitude to remain as strong as you have.” She pats me on the shoulder, and I feel the tears spilling down my face once more. Without missing a beat, my mom is dabbing at them again with the cloth.”

“Can I interest anyone in some hot tea?”

Clarke practically jumps at the chance to leave the room, “Yes! I’ll come help!”

I watch as Clarke scurries out the room after Eleanor. My mom turns to me, “She spent a lot of time at your bedside when you were in the coma. She was so worried about you. I even caught her coming from the chapel one day with her rosary in her hand. I didn’t think that girl had a religious bone in her body. We all were so uncertain about who you would be once you came out of the coma. Some people experience brain damage, while others lose part of themselves or their personalities change. I think we are lucky that all you came out with is nightmares, as scary as that may seem.”

I guess that was supposed to make me feel better? I smile and wonder if these nightmares would subside if they were able to catch my attacker.

After we all drank our fill of chamomile tea, we said our goodnights once again. I asked my mom to sleep with me in the master bedroom, and she agreed. We curled up in the enormous bed, and I managed nightmare-free sleep for the remainder of the night.

In the morning, I wake to an empty bed. I look around for a minute, wondering if last night was a dream too. I stretch and get out of bed. As I pass by the mirror. I take note that I look like crap. My eyes are puffy, and I look like I ran into a wall and the wall won. I take a long, hot shower, hoping that will help my appearance. Once I finish applying enough eye makeup to cover up the raccoon circles under my eyes, I decide to go find the others. I hear voices coming from the kitchen and walk in, expecting the same hushed welcome I got yesterday. Instead, they continued their chatter and act as if nothing happened last night. Good. That is exactly what I need. After three cups of coffee and a delicious breakfast of Quiche Lorraine and a cinnamon coffee cake, I look at the time.

“Ladies, we should get going if we are to pick out ensembles for you two to wear to my wedding!”

“You are so correct! Time is burning, and I am excited to get my shopping on today! Let’s find our bodyguards and get rolling!” Clarke’s enthusiasm always makes me giggle.

As we head out to go shopping, I think about how Harrison has to meet Bradley in a couple hours. I sure hope it goes well.

“Coming?” Mom asks.

“Yes, right behind you!”

Chapter Nineteen

Back in Portland...

Harrison stands as Bradley enters the small café. Bradley sees Harrison and heads to his table.

Harrison reaches out his hand, Bradley accepts it, and they shake.

“Please sit.” Harrison motions for Bradley to sit, as he takes his own seat.

Harrison and Bradley look at each other for a minute before anyone speaks. Bradley finally begins. “So, thank you for meeting me.”

“Well, as you know I wasn’t going to, but my interest was piqued. I don’t have much time Bradley, why did you ask me here?”

He looks over his shoulder, then back at Harrison. “As you probably suspect, I want to discuss Dani.”

Harrison nods.

Bradley nervously continues. “Well, as you have probably also figured out, I want Dani back.”

Harrison’s eyes narrow and his hands are now in clenched fists. “Ok.”

“I know you are married, and there is no chance for a reconciliation, so you don’t need to punch me out. But, there is more. A lot more. I need to preface this by saying that I never meant Dani any harm. All I wanted was to have a second chance with her. The only way I thought I could get her attention was if she needed me. Things just spiraled out of control and here we are.”

Harrison interjects, “You’re going to have to back up a whole lot here. I don’t understand what you are saying. You might as well start at the beginning.”

Bradley nods, then looks over his shoulder again. He almost jumps when the waitress comes by to fill his coffee and water glass.

“Ok. Here it goes. I have been in coalition with Marion Devereaux to break up or get in the middle of you and Dani.” He lets out a huge sigh.

“What? How the hell do you know Marion Devereaux?”

“I don’t actually know her. I met her once, but the rest of our communication has been by phone.”

“When exactly did this alliance start?”

Bradley taps his finger on the table, while he appears to be thinking it over. “I guess it has been about four months now. She sought me out when I moved back to Portland. I had visited Dani at the ribbon cutting ceremony. I brought her flowers, and hoped that she would give me at least a minute of her time. But, you walked up and stomped on my chances. She hardly even looked at me; she couldn’t keep her eyes off you. I was getting into my car in the parking lot, when Marion approached me. She had obviously done her homework and knew who I was. She also knew where Dani lived. She had her followed and had a guy stake out her condo prior to the opening of your towers.”

“Okay, continue.”

Bradley takes a large sip of water. “Well anyway, Marion told me that she was supposed to marry you, but when you met Dani, you broke it off. She said that you had cold feet and that you would drop Dani and break her heart once you decided to go back to Marion. She offered me money to get Dani away from you. I had some financial setbacks prior to that, so that was appealing to me. Besides, I didn’t want Dani with you, so I would have probably helped her for that alone.”

“What exactly did you do for the money? And for the record, I have not been engaged to Marion Devereaux for almost twenty years.”

Bradley is stalling and Harrison is getting impatient.

“What did you do Bradley?”

He sighs. “A lot. I have done a lot.” He looks away. “I was the one who hired the thug who plastered the pictures in her condo. I spent a lot of time spying on Dani and reporting back to Marion. When Dani stayed with me on the first night, I took her keys to Home Depot, while she slept and got a key duped off. I gave a copy to another one of Marion’s thugs. He is the one who entered her condo the night she moved in with Simone. The plan backfired, she was supposed to stay with me, but like an idiot, I left my phone in my car and didn’t get her call until later.” Harrison is doing everything he can to not climb over the table and start thumping on Bradley.

“Is there anything else?”

Once again, Bradley stalls. He takes several sips of his coffee and then clears his throat. “Um, yes, there is.” Harrison’s eyes narrow again, as he waits for the rest.

“So a while back, I was tired of Marion calling all the shots and told her I was done and that I wanted to handle Dani my way. Well, she began threatening me and telling me she would expose me to Dani and Dani would hate me even more than she already did. I had no choice but to go along with her for fear of being exposed. I knew she was blackmailing you and some other guy. I was then added to the list. And she stopped paying me, saying I owed her now.” He pauses to drink more coffee. “I told her thugs where Simone lives, so they could just scare her. I had no idea that they were going to try to hurt her. I was in the vicinity when the jerk knocked her over while she was jogging, so I showed up to play hero when she got back to the house. The problem is that she doesn’t want anything to do with me. Once again, she shunned me. I was so mad that I called Marion and told her about it. She just laughed at me and told me she couldn’t blame Dani for leaving me and that I was worthless. I was incensed. I managed to

get information out of one of Simone's clients about their trip to Palm Springs. I was about to buy a ticket to go down there, when I learned that you were already there. Even after that trip, I was able to probe enough information here and there that I was keeping Marion satisfied. She also had some guy working from the inside, who seemed to be off way too often. She was growing suspicious of him and was getting ready to blow the whistle on whatever it was that she was blackmailing him with."

Harrison nods his head. All of this is starting to make perfect sense, he's referring to Garrin.

"I didn't want her to do the same to me, so I stayed on top of Simone and pried as much information out of her as I could." I learned of your wedding the same way as everyone else though; it was plastered all over the media."

"Okay. So, I am glad that you have come to me with this. It still doesn't change anything though. Are you the one who entered her condo all those times and left those flowers?"

"No, I just told Marion when she would be gone, so she could have one of her jerks leave the notes and flowers."

"So you didn't send the bottle of wine to Simone or leave the flowers on the doorstep either? What about the air let out of her tires?"

Shaking his head, "No, none of it. I was only the information guy. I didn't want my fingerprints on anything. I was supposed to be the hero swooping in to save the day. But, apparently you already beat me to the hero role. We had a really hard time keeping up the scare tactics with that huge bodyguard always there."

"So, what about the attack on her in the park?"

Bradley lowers his head and takes a deep breath. "Well, before I finish, I need you to give me your word that when you hear what else I have to say, you will not lay a hand on me."

Harrison's eyebrows are now furrowed. "Well now, that is going to depend on what you else you have to tell me."

Bradley sucks in air and then lets it out in a whoosh, while Harrison is still glaring at him "When Marion learned of your marriage in the Caymans and that her blackmail scheme had fallen apart, she called me and told me that we were to resort to our back up plan."

"Which was what? Come on, just spit it out already!"

"Just so you know, it was not supposed to go down the way it did. Marion told me that she just wanted to scare Danielle really good into thinking if she wasn't with you, all of this wouldn't be happening. It seemed logical at the time, but once I thought it over later, I realized I was just played by Marion. I was so upset about her marrying you that I didn't think any of it through beforehand. Had I been thinking clearly, I could have stopped Marion from physically hurting Dani. I..."

Before Bradley finishes his sentence, Harrison leaps up and lunges across the table at him. To hell with being a gentleman. The gloves are off, and he is taking him down. Harrison knocked Bradley to the floor and falls to the floor on top of him. He begins to punch Bradley in the face, while Bradley struggles to block the blows. The waitress is screaming, and someone is pulling Harrison off of Bradley. Once the two are separated, a man asks Bradley if he is okay. He wipes some blood away from his lip as he nods, not taking his eyes off his attacker.

"Yeah, you're fine aren't you? It's not your life that someone has been fucking with is it?"

"If you hadn't swooped in with all your mother fucking money and glamour, Dani would be mine!!"

"No! She was long gone before she met me! You lost her a long time ago and once she hears about this, she will never forgive you. I doubt you know what love is. You took money in exchange for terrorizing your ex-wife. What kind of man does that?"

Bradley starts to respond, but stops. He looks around the room and realizes the entire establishment is staring at them, hanging onto every word.

“Listen, as much as I would love to stay and receive some more of your verbal abuse, I have something else I need to tell you that is more important than anything else I have said so far.”

Harrison snarls at him, “What else could you possibly have to add to this already charming story, Bradley?”

Bradley looks around the room again and nods toward the door. “Not in here, I think we have overstayed our welcome.” He throws some money on the table that someone has restored to its upright position, then heads toward the door. Harrison follows at a distance.

“Listen, I’ll make this quick. I regret everything I have done. Nobody has ever had more remorse than I have. While I know that she is with you now, I still love her deeply. I allowed my anger at myself and the loss of her love to almost kill her. Marion hired a thug to actually kill her. Dani practically served herself up on a silver platter when she took that run without her bodyguard.”

Harrison grumbles at the thought.

Bradley continues. “When I learned of what she had done, I realized we were no longer just trying to scare Dani. But, Marion’s idea of plan B was murder. When Marion discovered that Dani survived, she came unglued. She hatched a new plan and enlisted me to impersonate you and have the private nurse you hired replaced by someone Marion has on payroll. I hired a family friend, Glenda. Her daughter is Alicia, the girl you hired as a housekeeper. I had not planned on Alicia seeking out her own opportunity; she almost blew the whole cover. For all she knew, she was just supposed to report the daily activities of you and Dani’s progress back to me. Marion was plotting for another accident to happen. But, then you threw her yet another curve ball by planning your wedding on New Year’s Eve.”

“Wait, how the hell do you know about that?” He thinks for a minute, “Alicia? Did she tell you?”

“Yes, she reported to me and I reported to Marion, leaving out the pertinent details about Dani. However, Alicia decided to contact her employer directly and that was how Marion discovered I was not being truthful. By then, it was too late to salvage my alliance with her. I only know the next bit of this because Alicia blabbed to Glenda, who immediately contacted me. In all fairness to Glenda, she had no knowledge of any of this. She is a legit nurse and she thought she was doing me a favor. It was her hooch daughter that screwed my plans to protect Dani from Marion.”

“Not your job, anyway.”

“As I was saying, Glenda told me that Marion has now hired a hit man to take out Dani! That is the reason I was willing to risk being pummeled by you.” He says, as he wipes at the dried blood on the corner of his mouth. “We need to put aside our differences to protect Dani.”

Harrison turns and begins to pace. “Did she make any mention of when she heard she was going to do this? My god, she is in New York right now!! How can I protect her from here? Did Glenda mention any details?”

“No. She just said that when Alicia told her this, it turned her blood cold, and she contacted me immediately after.”

“We need to go to the police with this, and I need to make sure that security is ramped up in New York. Marion sent Danielle flowers today with a threatening note. By the way, I have known for some time that Marion was behind all of the attacks and threats on my wife. For that matter, I had my suspicions about you. I knew you were involved somehow.”

“My guilt is more than I can bear for what has already happened. When Dani was in the coma, I snuck in and promised her that I would make all of

this right. After all that I have put her through, that is the least I can do. I plan to make good on my word.”

“I am going to be blunt.”

“By all means.”

“I don’t like you, I think you are a complete douche bag. I don’t trust you any farther than I can throw you, but I find myself in a position where I have to rely on you to help me get this woman behind bars. Are you really going to help or is that just lip service? I need to know.”

“It’s not just lip service. I have to make this right for Dani. She deserves that from me. I blame myself for all of this and....”

“Enough! You can save your guilt for your shrink. All I want to hear is the sound of you rushing down to speak with Detective Burke and tell him everything you told me. Then, when Danielle is back from her trip, *I* will be the one to tell her *what you* have done. *If* she decides she wants to forgive you someday, I will not stand in her way, but I’ll never ever allow you to see her again. If you make any attempts at contacting her or trying to see her, I will press criminal and civil charges on you that will land you behind bars. Do you understand me?”

Bradley simply nods.

“Good. Now that we are clear on where we stand, thank you for coming to me. The only reason I am not going to press charges is because I know how hard it must have been for you to contact me to tell me all of this. You must have at least an ounce of decency in you and for that, I will allow you to walk away from here, instead of leaving on a stretcher. So, why are you still standing here? Shouldn’t you be running to speak with the detective?”

Bradley turns to walk away, but instead he turns around and puts his hand out. Harrison grabs it and they shake. As he steps back. Bradley smiles and says, “Congratulations you got a great girl!”

Harrison smiles, "I know."

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Chapter Twenty

The penthouse is simply in a state of chaos. There is so much to pack and so much to do before we depart in the morning. We are leaving to Montreal tomorrow, so Clarke is due here any time now to help me pack all of my attire that I will need for the trip. I am nervous beyond belief to meet his family. He keeps reassuring me that they are going to love me. I don't know though; I have never been around people with the breeding this family has. I am a mixed breed, a mutt if you may. While his family is what you would refer to as blue bloods or something like that. Every time I try to discuss this with him, he just gets irritated with me and says that I need to trust him. I am in my master closet when I hear a kafuffle coming from down the hallway. I step out of the closet to hear Clarke ranting and raving all sorts of expletives as she makes her way to my room. Upon entering the room, she continues her tirade.

“Seriously, that man practically strip searched me. He felt me up in places you couldn't hide a weapon!”

I have to giggle, though the reason behind her outburst is anything but funny. After Harrison met with Bradley, he learned that essentially there has been a hit put out by Marion...on me. My love has taken no chances and has stepped up the security here to include armed guards at the entrances, and I have not been able to leave the penthouse. If someone comes here, they go through a metal detector and a pat down.

“Are you exaggerating just a little by any chance? They didn't really feel you up, did they?”

She snorts, “Well no but they might as well have. I know that old bastard was enjoying himself. His nightstick wasn't the only thing that was stiff.”

“Oh enough Clarke! I'm seriously sorry you had to go through that but honestly! You don't need to take it so far. Besides, I am the one whose life

has been threatened on several occasions, and my husband of eight weeks is barely sleeping. Our usually amazing sex life has dropped off the planet. I'm developing a complex! He claims it is just from all the stress we are under, and that once Marion is no longer a threat, he will feel normal again."

"Wow Danners, that sucks. I just can't imagine what you are going through." She walks over and gives me a squeeze. "Oh, before I forget, my mom sent this for you. It's for Harrison to carry in his pocket on the day of your wedding. It is supposed to be for good luck." She rolls her eyes. "Of course, you are already married, so I am not sure how effective it will be. Well anyway, my little Italian mama wanted you to have it." She hands me a funny looking little metal coin. I turn it over in my hand, as Simone exclaims, "It is made of iron; it wards off evils spirits. Maybe you should be the one carrying it!"

"Yeah, maybe I should. Well, please thank your mama for me. That was very sweet of her."

"So, what is the plan here?"

"The plan is to get my suitcases packed up tonight, so I am not a mad woman in the morning." I look up to see her standing with her hands on her hips looking at me with a scowl.

"You know that is not what I meant. I was referring to how are you going to move about knowing that you have that threat hanging over your head? You are a hostage here in this penthouse. How is Harrison getting you to Montreal without walls surrounding you?"

"I know right?! I feel like I am in a fortress here. He bought out the first class section of the plane. He is bringing a security detail that will remain with us throughout the trip." I look at Clarke rolling her eyes. "Yeah, I know, real romantic! Mom and dad are flying with us tomorrow also. Harrison's parents invited them to join in the many festivities that are planned. You are invited too, but you said you had to work." I add that in just as her lower lip started to protrude.

“I know. It’s super lucky, though, that my job is in Jersey, so I will fly up to Montreal from there. I can’t wait to wear my new snow bunny coat! It is a chic little powder blue number that looks great with my hair!”

“Oh brother, always the fashionista. It seems we will have a full house. I’m really excited about seeing this house of his. It is apparently in the most affluent area of Montreal. I have never been up there, so I really don’t know anything about the area. I bought this travel book online to read on the plane, so I can acquaint myself.”

She laughs, “Seriously, Danners? You do realize there are e-readers now? You don’t need actual books nowadays.”

“I know and I like doing that too, but I am also a bit old fashioned and wanted a book that I can tuck into my bag. Yeah. go ahead and roll your eyes at me Miss Woman of the World.”

We spend the rest of the afternoon packing my bags and planning my trousseau. I am able to forget my worries and just be a bride or newlywed for a few hours.

Late that night, well into the wee hours of the morning, I have my nightmare again, but with a twist. It starts as usual, I am running down the stark white corridor with the shrouded black figure following close behind. I turn to see if he is closing in on me. Sure enough, there he is but then he vanishes again. I turn back around and notice he is not there anymore. I am almost to the end of the hall, when I realize it is a dead end and there is nowhere to go. I turn around to go back the direction I just came, when the bony hands reach for my neck. I start to scream, but nothing comes out. Suddenly, I feel a hand on my arm, pulling me into a doorway that has never been there before. Just as I am pulled through the threshold, the shrouded figure appears in the doorway. The black hood falls to reveal Bradley standing there. I am transfixed, staring at his wicked face when I wake myself up screaming. I try to move my arms, but someone is holding me. When I open my eyes, I realize that I am actually awake and Harrison is holding me, stroking my hair.

“You were having that bad dream again weren’t you *mi amore?*”

Nodding quickly, I grab onto him and in between the tears I sob, “Harrison! This time in my dream, I saw him! I finally saw his face! I know who has been chasing me in my dreams!”

“Who, my love, who?”

“Bradley. It’s been him chasing me the whole time.”

“It’s okay, I am here.” He kisses the top of my head, while continuing to stroke my hair. I feel my breathing is still erratic.

“These dreams have been so real that it is hard to distinguish that they *are* dreams and not reality”

“It is interesting how one’s dreams can mirror reality, though. Bradley was actually a threat to you and maybe somewhere in your subconscious, you knew that.”

“Yeah, maybe. These dreams started months and months ago, though.”

“Yes, and so did Bradley’s pursuing you. I am guessing the timeline would be about right. Maybe this will be your final dream, now that your tormentor has been unveiled?” He kisses my forehead. “Can I get you anything?”

I shake my head.

“Good, then let’s get some more sleep before our big day tomorrow.” I snuggle in the crook of his arm and fall into a deep, uneventful sleep.

Feeling rested and ready to tackle our day of travel, I decide to hit the shower before Harrison wakes. After brushing my teeth and putting a mud mask on, I hop in the steaming water. I am enjoying the rain effect of the shower head. I am lathering myself up, when I feel hands grabbing my ass. I giggle as his hands travel around to my front, resting on my pussy. He

turns me around and plants his sexy lips on mine. He tastes of toothpaste. I giggle again. He holds his head back for a minute, and a wide grin covers his face when he notices the green sea algae mud on my face. I tip my face into the water and wash off the mask, while Harrison is making work of washing every inch of my body with his soapy hands. He moves his hand back to my pussy and starts probing it with his fingers, while he suckles my neck just below my ear.

I reach down to find his erect cock ready to spring to action. I run my hand up and down the firm shaft, while gently squeezing my fingers to provide pressure. He moans against my ear. I take his encouragement, and I drop to my knees, inserting his length into my mouth. I suck it hard, while shoving it to the back of my throat. I drag my teeth against it, as I pull it out of my mouth, increasing the pressure with my fingers still encircling the base of his length. After I repeat the pattern a few more times, Harrison braces himself on the glass walls of the shower and yells out as he cums in my mouth. The sheer force of his ejaculation surprises me, and I almost fall backward. I allow the water to cascade down my face for a few seconds, and once he is done with his aftershocks, he leans down to help me up off the shower floor. I give him a full tongue kiss, while I still taste him on my lips. He spanks me on the bottom and smiles big.

“Now we didn’t get you where you needed to go.”

“That’s okay, you can owe me a whopper later!” I lick my lips seductively and then proceed to work on washing my hair. “Besides, we really don’t have much time before we need to leave. You better wash that naughty body, or here let me do it for you.” I take the bath sponge and load it with body wash, working my way down his body. I trace every curve and follow his firm muscles, paying special attention to his loins. I admire his body as I work my way down. I have never been one to appreciate the male anatomy as much as I do now.

I finish washing my hair and step to get out of the shower. Harrison grabs my arm and says softly, “I’m glad I married you.”

I melt. “Not as glad as I am!” I blow him a kiss and wiggle my bottom at him, as I wrap up in a towel.

“Better hurry, Mrs. Towers, we have a flight to catch soon.” I throw my towel at him and walk slowly out of the room. I know for a fact that he enjoyed the view of my naked body leaving the bathroom, as evidenced by the appreciative whistle I received.

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Chapter Twenty-One

Harrison hired a limo to transport all of us from the airport to his estate in Westmount. It took us the better part of the entire day to arrive in Montreal, after a long layover in New York. I was already feeling fatigued by the time we arrived in Canada, and it seemed to take an eternity to get through customs. It is late, so it is difficult to see any scenery out the window. The temperature outside is a cool 28 degrees, and there has been a decent amount of snow, so that it appears to be a winter wonderland.

“What’s got your attention, honey?” I turn my head back toward my mom.

“Oh nothing, I’m just trying to take in what scenery I can see in the dark.”

“I am really looking forward to exploring up here. Your dad and I have some little side trips planned to do some exploring and let you kids have some time to yourselves.”

“Oh, but Donna, my house is big enough that you could go without seeing a person for a couple of days. We will never know you are there, I’d be willing to bet.”

“Well, maybe we are the ones who will need the time to ourselves.” She blushes as the words leave her mouth, and she rolls her eyes. “Well, you know what I mean.”

Harrison chuckles and I just turn back to looking out the window.

It seems like it was longer, but after only twenty minutes of driving, we are pulling into a gated community with an actual security guard in a little brick box type structure. The driver hands the guard something at the same time that Harrison rolls the window down and pokes his head out. The

guard greets him in French, returns to his little house, and opens the gates. We proceed through and drive for another few minutes before we come upon another little guard box. This one is automated, and the driver just swipes a card and the gates begin to open. Two large iron gates with the letter “T” welded in the middle of each, surrounded by a metal circle, allow us passage to the driveway. On each side of the gate is a stone wall, covered in ivy and lighting. We proceed through the gates onto what resembles a country lane, lined with a neatly trimmed tree hedge of some sort.

As we come through the trees to the opening, before us stands a monstrosity of a house. The driver pulls up the circular drive and parks the limousine under the grand portico in front of the steps. The front door opens and two young men come out, followed by three women and another older man. The town car with our security detail pulls up right behind us, and the men, headed up by Albert, get out of their car and head up the stairs. I am ushered into the house along with my parents while all the people who came out to greet us take our luggage and disappearing through a side door off the foyer.

I hear a collective gasp as my mom and dad stand in the middle of the grand foyer with their mouths agape. I am speechless. This home looks like it is a French chateau from the outside, but the inside is quite modern. The foyer has marble floors with stone inlay. The “T” initial set in stonework in the entry just inside the doors. A large circular glass table stands in the middle of the foyer with a multi-tiered chandelier of modern crystal balls hovering above the table. The breathtaking part of this entryway are the two staircases that meet at a landing and then split off again into two separate wings on the next floor. I presume that means there are three floors and at least two wings. I sense that I am being watched, and I turn to see Harrison looking at me intently.

“Well, what do you think? Do you think you can live here?”

I suck in some air, as I realize that I was holding my breath. “From what I have seen so far, I think I could.” I smile at him, and he is positively beaming.

“Come.” He motions, “Let’s get some refreshments, and I will give you the grand tour. After that, you may retire to your rooms to freshen up before dinner.”

We follow Harrison through a grand marble archway into a large room. He turns to us, “This, of course, is the formal living room and dining room.” Our eyes follow the wave of his hand as he gestures toward the dining room. It is a big, austere room with a long glass and metal table that looks seat at least fourteen. These rooms are simply amazing and decorated a lot like his penthouse in Portland. It’s kind of funny that I am essentially the one who decorated the penthouse, but the two are so similar that you would have thought that I had decorated here too. He has a taste for white and chrome and has carried that through the rooms that I have seen here so far. I am sure that I could walk into the fireplace without even hunching down. It is the largest fireplace I have ever seen. It has an ornate carved mantle covered in a white lacquer, a very modern, yet old world piece. I am really enjoying taking in all of the decorating choices, including the white plush sofas and chrome based coffee table holding a glass kidney-bean shaped top. The side chairs are upholstered in an ultra suede gray and have a paisley print pillow perched on each in white and ice blue. At least he remains consistent in his design tastes. We follow him back out to the foyer and head through another archway that leads us into a massive room that must be the family room. As my eyes span the room, I see Harrison’s style once again written all over it.

My parents are hardly saying a word; they are both just taking in all the sights.

“This is the informal living room and then, of course, that it the informal eating room also. The kitchen is through this way. We follow him through yet another archway into a massive kitchen that does look like a true room from the old country, with marble floors and countertops. White cupboards and an eat-in nook with a weathered looking farm table that seats ten. The hanging light fixtures look as if they were converted from gas with chrome fittings and clouded glass globes. In the middle of the kitchen is a large marble slab island. The appliances are all stainless steel top of the line. He turns to the woman standing at the stove and speaks to her in French. She

responds to him in kind and then lowers her eyes and bats her eyelashes. Seriously, is she flirting with him?

Let's go back to the living room, where we can have some refreshments. He leads us back through to the room. There is a warm fire blazing in the fireplace as we take seats on the sofas and chairs. Harrison proceeds to pour each of us a glass of champagne that someone had already opened and had waiting for us in the ice bucket.

After we all had a glass in our hand, "I'd like to propose a toast, to our safe arrival, a wonderful holiday and wedding season!"

We say cheers in unison. I gratefully sip at my bubbly and nibble at the delicious appetizers the cook has set out for us. While we are having a light conversation and eating, my mother stands up and turns to Harrison. "Thank you for the treats, I would love to be shown to our room. I am feeling fatigued and would like to lie down for a little bit." She looks to the rest of us, "You don't mind do you?"

"No, of course not mom, in fact I would love to change out of these clothes and get my things unpacked."

"Oh, you don't have to bother with unpacking, Bernice took care of that." He looks at my mom, "For all of you, if I am not mistaken. Follow me, and I will show you to your rooms."

He leads us to the grand foyer and up the right set of stairs. Looking over his shoulder, "This is the guest wing." My parents look at each other and nod in appreciation.

We walk down the hallway and he shows us into an enormous room with a sleigh bed covered in fluffy white bedding. The room has a seating area by a fireplace and en-suite bathroom. Through a little connecting hall, is a smaller room that is decorated to be a study with another door that leads out to the main hallway. I hear my mom exclaim something in the other room. She is standing in the middle of the walk-in closet. "This is as big as one of

my guest rooms at home! And how nice, our clothes *have* been put away for us!”

“Well, we will leave you to get settled in and rest for a bit. We will have a late dinner downstairs in the informal dining room at eight.”

“Okay, sounds great.” My dad says while stretching. “I could use a little cat nap.”

Out in the hall, Harrison grabs my hand and leads me back down the hall to another side hall. I glance up at his handsome face and realize that I don’t really know this man at all. I am married to him, but he is practically a stranger. I feel a sense of panic all of the sudden. Maybe it is this overwhelming house. It is his home, but since I have never seen it, I feel like it’s a hidden part of him. I shake my thoughts away, when at once, he has swooped me into his arms and enters into the master double doors in a dramatic sweep he has placed me back on my feet. I stand there stunned. The room is not at all what I expected. I thought it would be sleek and modern, like the living spaces downstairs. Instead, while it does still have a modern flare, this room is ornate, decadent, and romantic. A crystal encrusted chandelier hangs low over the high metal canopy style frame, minus the canopy. The bedding is a black and white scroll pattern with dupioni silk black and white pillows dripping with a marabou fringe. It’s the kind of bed you see in a home magazine, the kind that makes you want to take a running jump and nose dive right into the middle of it, with feathers and fringe flying.

There is, of course, a seating area with a low black upholstered sofa and matching loveseat. Black and white scrollwork pillows are neatly perched at the corners of the set. There is a large painted armoire in a white pickling effect that looks to be housing the media to the side of the fireplace. I follow Harrison into the master bathroom. One of his favorite rooms of any house to make love. I feel myself warming at the thought. The room, as I predicted, is ridiculous.

There is a seating area with a low black upholstered sofa and matching loveseat. Black and white scrollwork pillows are neatly perched at the

corners of each of the sofas. To the side of the fireplace, there is a large armoire painted with a white pickling effect that looks to be housing the media. I follow Harrison into the master bathroom. One of his favorite rooms of any house to make love. I feel myself warming at the thought. The room, as I predicted, is ridiculous. As with the rest of the house, the whole room is white marble mottled with gray. A large rectangular tub sits in the middle of the room with a wide set of stairs leading up to the tub surround. It is decadent and reminds me of something from the baths of Babylon. Noticing the shower with all the different shower heads, makes me blush, knowing full well that Harrison will make good use of the glass-enclosed play room. I take one last look at the room before I wander back out to the main part of our bedroom to find Harrison. I am about to call his name when he appears from the terrace door. He motions to me, so I follow him outside. A blast of cold air hits me immediately. It is dark, so I can't make out the scenery, but I do notice that we are on a large terrace. I jab him in the ribs once I realize just why he wanted me out here. His hand travels to my sex and he starts rubbing, while kissing behind my ear, my trigger point. I moan against his touch, while my skin erupts in goose bumps. As good as it feels to have his mouth and hands on me, I can't stand another second out here. "I'm sorry but I have to go back inside, I am freezing my bottom off!" I blurt out.

He puts his naughty hands on my bottom and squeezes, "Hmm, your bottom feels just fine to me. Yes, very fine."

"Ugh! You are incorrigible!"

We step back into the warmth of our room. I can't keep myself from wanting to explore the master suite. I wander into the walk in closet and find it overwhelming; who would ever have enough clothes to fill this space? I notice some garment bags that have not been unpacked. I do not recognize them, either. As if Harrison has read my thoughts, "Those are for you *mi amore*. I enjoy dressing you. Someday we will have this closet filled with beautiful clothing for you. For now, I thought this would be a good start." I advance toward the hanging bags, but he stops me. "Eh eh! We will look at those later. I do believe we should freshen up before joining your parents downstairs for a bite to eat."

Disappointed that I have to wait, I nod in agreement that we need to get a move on. I take a quick shower to rinse off my travels and put on a pair of black leggings and a black and white striped tunic style sweater. I freshen my hair and makeup and squirt on some vanilla body spray. I look for Harrison in the main room, but I do not see him. I hear his voice wafting through a closed door that I had not noticed before. I wait outside the door until I hear that he has hung up. I knock softly on the door and wait for him to open it. When he finally opens the door, he looks stressed.

I advance toward him, “What is it, are you okay?”

He smiles quickly, but I can tell it is forced, “ I’m fine. That was just my father. We don’t need to discuss this now. Come, let’s join your parents downstairs.”

As he exits the room, I stick my head in and see that it is another little sitting room with a small secretary style desk. It is decorated in the same colors and flare of the larger room, to which it is attached.

Once downstairs, we find my parents lounging on the sofas in the great room. My dad stands up and walks over to Harrison. He takes his hand and shakes it, while his other hand is patting his arm. “You really have some place here. I want to thank you for your hospitality.”

“Mel, why don’t you wait to thank me once you have survived two weeks with the Towers.” He laughs and my dad joins him with a chuckle.

“Now, what are you drinking?” Harrison walks over to the bar and proceeds to play bartender. Hmm, I have never seen a sexier barkeep.

While the men mix drinks, I join my mom on the sofa facing the blazing fire. I curl up next to her, and she gives me a goofy smile. “What was that for, Mom?”

“Nothing, honey. I am just happy.”

“That’s good mom, cause I am too!”

Just then, the cook comes in and announces that dinner is ready. We seat ourselves at the family dining room table, as the men deliver our cocktails. The cook serves us a tasty pork roast with roasted potatoes and carrots. She serves it with a crispy tossed salad and a tasty *au jus* sauce. Once dinner is over, I find myself yawning to the point that it seemed obnoxious.

My dad looks at me and chuckles, “Should we be taking that as a hint? You have yawned three times in the last minute.” He glances over at my mom and catches her yawning too.

Harrison speaks up, “Yes Mel, I think the ladies are trying to tell us something. I think I will get my bride to bed.”

With that, we say our goodnights and head up the stairs to our separate wings.

Once in our room, my eyes feel heavy and the yawning will not stop. “Harrison, do you mind if I go straight to bed? I am simply wiped out. All of the traveling and wedding planning has done me in.”

He pouts for a second and then gives me his smirk. “I can let you off the hook tonight. Besides, tomorrow is my birthday, and I know what I want for my present.” He flashes his megawatt smile, and I giggle to myself, knowing what I have planned to do for his birthday.

After I finished preparing for sleep, I join Harrison in our massive bed. I turn to him and love the curve of his body in the covers. I spoon him and whisper, “I love you.” He whispers back, “I love you too.”

Chapter Twenty-Two

“Happy birthday my love!” I pounce on the bed and stand above him. He rolls over, slowly opens his eyes, and quickly shuts them again, moaning in protest for being woken up so early. “Yoo hoo, sleepy head. I have a birthday surprise for you!”

He opens his eyes and this time keeps them open long enough to focus. A smile slowly spreads over his handsome face, as he takes in the sight of me standing on the bed above him. I am wearing nothing but an enormous red bow and red lace g-string panties with a rhinestone heart dangling from the front.

“Well, Mrs. Towers, you sure know how to wrap a gift. Now come here, I want to unwrap you.”

My pussy is wet and waiting for him. I straddle his hips and I feel his hardness against me. He reaches up and plucks at the red bow wrapped around my bust. He loosens the bow enough that it slides down my body and stops at my waist. I lean down to kiss his chest and work my mouth up his neck to his lips, while grinding my sex on his. I rub my bare nipples against his hard chest, and he moans, thrusting his hips to meet with mine. I slide down and kneel at his hips, taking his hard cock into my mouth. I begin to suck. He lets out a deep guttural groan. I pick up my pace and suck harder, while my hand wraps around his balls, gently squeezing. I nibble on the swollen, sensitive tip with my teeth, while flicking my tongue across. His head is thrashing back and forth, as I continue to torture his eager cock.

I can tell his passion is increasing and he is close to cumming. I have other plans for him, so I remove my mouth from his cock. I take the red bow and tie his hands to the metal headboard. I kiss him on the mouth, my tongue seeking his. He looks at me with his limpid pools of desire. I start the sweet torture all over again. I lower myself onto his throbbing hard cock and slowly slide down, impaling myself on his shaft. His eyes grow large,

as I take him as deep into my hot core as far as my body will allow. I slowly rub myself in a circular motion against his pelvis. He groans loudly again. I pull myself up slowly, slowly, until his cock is halfway out of me, and then, with force, I slam back down. I can't help but yell out as I do this. He thrashes his head and jerks his tied hands. I repeat this movement again and again. He is yelling my name over and over again. "Shit Danielle! Fuck it! Fuck it!"

I start sliding up and down his shaft in a rapid fervor, and he continues to pant and groan with each thrust. I put my hands on each side of him on the bed so to brace myself, and I slam myself up and down his cock, so fierce that I startle myself. With his hips meeting mine, I work myself and Harrison into a frenzy. I can feel the fire ignite into a blazing inferno and my sweet spot erupts. Harrison yells, "cum on my balls." As he says this, I can feel his release shoot up into me with a fierce velocity. I collapse on him, and our bodies melt into one. I am too exhausted to move, and the muscles in my legs have turned to jelly. Harrison's hands are still tied to the headboard. When I finally stop feeling the aftershocks, I remove myself from his body and untie the ribbon from his hands. With my hands busy, Harrison takes the opportunity to lick at my tits when they come near his face. He flicks his tongue across the sensitive buds. I look down at him, "Are you trying to get me aroused again? Cause it's working! Now stop or you will have to fuck me again!"

"Well, that's a threat that I would like to take you up on!" He coos at me. "I have completely lost track of our location count. So, I propose we hit the reset button and start fresh, since you are now Mrs. Towers. What do you say?"

I throw the red ribbon at him, "Ok, sure why not. Then let's make this location number one. Although we will lose track again since we have so much sex!" He groans, then moves quickly to flip me onto my back and kisses me passionately. When we finally come up for air, I prop myself up on my arm and look at his amazing face. "Seriously Harrison, happy birthday. I love you!"

We spend another hour luxuriating in the quiet morning, in bed. Once we make our appearance downstairs, we discover that my parents have already eaten their breakfast and are outside taking a walk and checking out the grounds. I get goose bumps just thinking of being outside right now. Even though it is a sunny day, it is freezing out there, and I am not a big fan of being cold. When my parents return, Harrison goes into the office for a few hours. I spend the rest of the day with my parents, getting settled into the impressive mansion. I am nervous about the birthday party this evening and finally meeting my in-laws. It is all so unconventional and the irony is that the Towers are a very traditional family. Everything has happened in a backwards way, yet it feels right.

I get a text from Simone informing me that her big photo shoot gig was postponed until after the first of the year. Apparently, the highly coveted photographer for whom she is working has come down with the flu. So, she is on a plane flying out from Jersey. If there aren't any further delays, she will be here by late afternoon. It will be nice to have my crazy sidekick here tonight. She has a knack for stealing the spotlight and tonight may be one of those times that I am just fine with that.

With my parents and the staff's help, we transform the great room into a stage for a fabulous birthday party. The housekeeper went to the store for us and bought streamers, balloons and a banner. The cook is preparing several delicious dishes. the main course is Chicken Cordon Bleu swimming in a white sauce, served with French Onion Pie and a salad of field greens. For dessert, she made a French silk ice cream cake roll. My mom and I are having a hard time staying out of the kitchen. Neither one of us is accustomed to everything being taken care of.

I feel my phone vibrating in my pocket. I look and see that it is Clarke; she has landed!

I text her back

4:40 PM

Mrs. Towers

Yay! So excited you are here. See you soon!

4:41 PM

Clarke

I love this limo! Arriving in style! See you soon Danners!

I turn around and jump as I see my mom has entered my room. “Oh mom, you scared me!”

“I’m sorry dear. This house is so big I can’t just holler down the hallway! I was wondering what I should lie out to wear tonight for your dad and I?”

I laugh, “Mom you are asking the wrong person!” I hold my phone up, “Besides, I just got confirmation that Clarke is on her way. I am guessing she will be here in less than a half hour.”

“Oh, good then I will just wait to get dressed for the evening. When will the birthday boy be back?”

“I don’t know. That is a good question. He should be back in time for his family to arrive at 7 PM.”

“Okay, well I think I will head back to my room and rest for a bit until it’s time to get ready.”

I nod as she gives me a quick peck and leaves the room.

Just as I predicted, about twenty five minutes later Clarke arrives. Let the games begin.

“Oh my God Dani, this house is just sexy!” She is standing in the middle of the formal living room with her approving eyes darting around, taking it all in. “It’s as if you had decorated this place, wow!”

“Yes, Harrison is consistent in his taste.”

“I do know what I like.”

I whirl around to see Harrison standing behind me in the doorway. My heart skips a beat for a second, while I take in the beautiful man standing before me. Sometimes I can’t believe he is mine.

“Ah, there’s the birthday boy!” Clarke clucks while Harrison walks toward us.

“Welcome Simone. I am glad to see you arrived in tact, a little ahead of schedule, if I’m not mistaken.”

“The photographer got the stomach flu, so the shoot was cancelled. I have to go back in January.”

“I see. Well, bad for the photographer, but good for us. My love, why don’t you show Simone to her room so she can freshen up. I’ll meet you in our room.”

Clarke wiggles her eyebrows at me. I elbow her, “Oh stop!”

I kiss Harrison on the cheek. “Glad you are home birthday boy.”

He grabs me and whispers in my ear, “Meet me in our bed and show me how glad you are.” He smirks and then disappears into the entryway and up the stairs to our wing.

Clarke snorts. “Damn Danners, I am so glad he has a brother!”

I ignore her last comment and proceed up the stairs to her wing. I forgot which room was hers, so I had to open a couple doors to find the one

prepared for her. Once in the room, we notice all of her luggage has been unpacked and her suitcases are already stowed away.

She squeals. “Danners, this is just fucking incredible! I am best friends with the wife of a mogul! Yay for me!!” She twirls around the middle of the room like a five year old with a full skirt on.

I just stand there shaking my head for a second. “You’re such a goof! I’m glad you are here. I am super nervous about meeting his parents tonight!”

“Oh hell, Danners, his parents will love you. Stop worrying about it; otherwise, that is all they will see is this nervous woman, not the person who Harrison fell for.”

I laugh, “Since when are you so insightful?”

“I can pull out some insight from time to time.” She wanders around the pretty room decorated in a traditional French color palette of yellow, blue and white. It is cheery and bright, a perfect match for my effervescent friend.

I look at the clock on the wall above the bedside table lamp and notice that I only have a little over an hour to pull myself together. “I’m going to find Harrison and start getting ready. My mom wanted your input on what to wear. She is down the hall in the last room on the right. Can you go down and help her?”

“Of course, Danners, I will do that after I am done snooping around my digs here. By the way, what is the manner of dress for this party anyway? Casual, formal, or dressy?”

“That’s the trouble. I am not sure. I guess that since Harrison is always so formal about things, we should dress up. So, no jeans.”

“Done. So, what time should I come down and where is a map or floor plan for this place? I am sure that I am going to get lost, so maybe I should

enable the GPS on my phone.”

I laugh. “Just go back down the stairs and through the archway to the right of the large mirror. We are having his party in the great room, or maybe a better way to describe it is the less-formal living room. Be sure to be down there a little before seven when his parents are arriving, oh and Garrin too.”

She squeals. “Can’t wait to see that hunk of a man! Rawr!”

I roll my eyes at her, “Ok, I’m out of here see you in a little bit and don’t forget my mom.”

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Chapter Twenty-Three

I find Harrison lounging on our bed in nothing but a black towel, rather than his customary white towel. God, he is a sight to behold. His body has the remnants of a tan from our trip to the Caymans. He lies across the bed seductively. I walk over to the bed, retrieve a wrapped package from the nightstand, and climb onto the bed next to him. I hand him the brightly colored gift.

He takes it from me. “What’s this?”

“It’s your birthday present, Mr. Towers.”

“Hmm, I thought that my birthday present was you wrapped in that red bow.”

I feel my face turning crimson, “Well, yes that too. Go ahead and open.”

He gets a puzzled look on his face, “Shouldn’t I wait until the party? Or is this something to go with the red bow?”

I feel my body getting warm and wet at the thought of how we spent the beginning of our day. “Go ahead and open now.”

He looks from me to the package before sitting up and tearing into the package. Once he tosses the paper aside, the Ray Ban box is revealed. A wide grin spans Harrison’s face. “Oh, *mi amore*, my favorite glasses!” He says, as he pulls them out of their case and puts them on.

“I wanted to replace the ones you lost on our trip! I found them online. Now, let’s lose this towel and have a little fun with those sunglasses. I know! You can play policeman and frisk me. He is no longer smiling, but licking those lips of his. He flips me onto my back and begins to read me my rights while removing my clothes.

A little over an hour later, we head down to get his party started. I settled on a form-fitting v-neck, emerald green sweater dress with high-heeled black boots. The butterflies in my stomach are wreaking havoc on my nerves. I don't understand why I am so nervous about meeting his family. I almost wonder if it is really that or if something is eating at me. I don't have time to figure it out. As soon as we reached the foyer, the front door opens and his parents enter. "*Bonjour, Bonjour!*" His parents are saying in unison. Harrison heads over to the door, and I follow behind. He gives his parents each kisses on both sides of their faces. His mom stops and stares at me, then turns to her son. "Harrison, she is lovely, just as you said!"

He whirls around, reaches back to grab my hand, and pulls me to stand beside him. "*Mère, Père*, meet my beautiful bride, Danielle."

I step forward and reach out my hand. They both look at my outreached hand and then pull me in for kisses on the cheeks. I am so taken aback, but at the same time I am so relieved. They are warm and genuine people, not at all the scary in-laws that I had imagined.

The maid takes their coats and Harrison ushers us all into the great room. I see my parents and Simone are seated, enjoying some wine and appetizers. They all stand up as we enter the room. Harrison looks around and then looks back to me. He mouths, "thank you". I mouth back, "I love you." He seems to be happy with the decorating efforts.

"Mel and Donna Austen" he motions to my parents then to his, "these are my parents, Julian and Yvonne Towers." Both sets of our parents rush forward to express their greetings. Harrison's mother is about 5'3, medium build, with beautiful white hair cut into a sleek bob, medium blue eyes and an amazing smile, just like Harrison. So, that is where he gets his megawatt grin. His father is very handsome. Mr. Towers has graying hair and is about 6 feet tall with crystal blue eyes. Well, now that I have seen his parents, I can see where his looks come from. What a strikingly handsome couple.

I am pulled back from my musings, when I hear an "ahem" come from behind Harrison.

He smiles and turns to Simone. “I have not forgotten you. *Mère, Père*, this is Danielle’s best friend, Simone Clarke.”

Harrison’s parents pull Simone into another round of cheek kissing. She is used to this, as her big Italian family does the same thing with bear hugs to boot. “I’m pleased to meet you. By the way, you can call me Clarke.” They look at each other and then his mom shrugs her shoulders.

I notice that my mom looks lovely in a navy and cream tweed skirt and a cream cashmere cowl neck sweater. Her hair is neatly styled and her makeup is soft and appropriate. I am proud of the beautiful woman whom I get to call my mom.

As we all head to sit down, we can hear that someone is being let in the front door. It must be Garrin. As he enters the room, I can feel the atmosphere change. Harrison’s mother seems to stiffen a little at the sight of Garrin. I observe that his father seems to not be affected. Well, I suppose this is all going to take some time and getting used to for them. For the rest of us, it’s party time. Clarke is instantly by Garrin’s side, and I don’t believe she will leave it the remainder of the night. Harrison’s father informs us that the other family member who were to join us had something come up and would not be making it. Harrison announces that we will see them soon enough. We all enjoy several rounds of wine. My head begins to feel a bit fuzzy. I am relieved when the cook comes in to announce that dinner is ready.

We take our seats, with Harrison at one end of the table and his father at the other end. I sit to the right of Harrison next to Harrison’s mom. The cook serves up an amazing dinner, and the conversation remains light hearted. Everyone seems to be having a wonderful time.

Harrison turns to me and Clarke. He motions to Garrin, “We thought it would be fun to take you ladies to Mont Tremblant resort for a few days of fun in the snow.”

I turn to look at Clarke just as her eyes grow wide and she squeals with delight. “Oh, I am so glad I packed that snow bunny outfit after all. I almost

left it behind.”

Harrison turns to me, “I know you prefer sand over snow, but it will be fun and worth going. I promise!”

“Anywhere you are, is worth going.” He smiles at me in a way that warms my core. I can’t stop my body from its naughty responses to him.

Harrison’s mother speaks up, “I would like to invite you ladies to a luncheon tomorrow at the country club that I will be hosting. We are doing a toy drive to distribute to local shelters for the holiday. I will send a car around 11:00 to pick you up. It will be a chance to introduce Danielle to some of my friends.”

My mother looks very pleased. “That sounds lovely. Yvonne, we would love to join you.” She says while nodding at me. I smile in agreement. I shoot a look across the table to Clarke to make sure she is agreeing too. She seems to be absorbed in a side conversation with Garrin. I don’t think she even heard.

I decide to take the reins and suggest that we do the cake. As we are about to light the candles, I hear the doorbell ring. I look around the room and nobody else seems to have noticed. Harrison’s father leads us in the traditional birthday song, and Harrison blows out the candles. We are all clapping as the maid enters the room from the foyer with a large package in her hands. She walks over to Harrison and says something in French. He responds to her, and she nods, leaving the room. He sets the package off to the side, and we proceed to eat the delicious ice cream cake roll. After the dishes have been cleared, we all take seats on the sofas in the family room. Harrison sits down and proceeds to open the package that was just delivered. He begins to rip the brown paper wrapping away from what appears to be a large picture frame. Harrison’s face falls into a scowl. “What is it Harrison?” He gets up swiftly from his seat and heads to the foyer with the frame in his hand. I hear him yell something in French before returning to the family room. The maid comes scurrying into the room with a startled look on her old face. She and Harrison have an animated, but tense, conversation by the archway. She leaves the room in a hurry, and

Harrison turns back to face us. He turns the picture around so we can see. The room is filled with silence at first, but the silence is followed by a collective gasp. I feel the blood drain from my face when I realize what I am seeing.

Harrison is holding a picture frame filled with a collage of pictures of him and Marion. I stand up and walk over to the picture for closer inspection, as the others inch closer as well. It appears that the pictures span over the course of several decades, starting in childhood. The large picture in the middle is the one that appeared in the local paper showing them as newly engaged back in September. The picture next to that is the same picture I saw of them in the photo album that I found in the New York penthouse. It's the picture in which she is holding her hand up, with the ring on her finger. There is a piece of paper pasted toward the bottom of the collage. It is hand written and says:

Harrison and Marion, married, December 31, 2011.

I start to feel faint, so I turn away. My mom is instantly by my side with her arm around me.

I hear Clarke blurt out, "What a fucking lunatic!!" Then I see her cover her mouth and blush as soon as she realizes what she had said.

Harrison's father speaks, "Harrison, I will need to take this to the board. I think with everything that has happened in the last few days, we might just have enough to take further action now."

I am alarmed, "What has happened in the last few days?"

"I don't want to discuss this in front of everyone." He nudges my arm and takes me off to the foyer.

Once we are alone, I turn to him. "Just what the hell is going on? Is that photo collage from Marion?"

His face and demeanor is grim. "Yes, that is from Marion."

“Ok. So what else? You need to tell me what is going on, Harrison, don’t keep me in the dark. You owe me an explanation now.”

He sighs, “She has been voicing threats to anyone that will listen, and those threats have been making their way back to myself and my father. We have been hearing that she is planning a big scene that is supposedly going to bring us down. That is all I know, except for one thing. She is still convinced that I am going to marry her once you are out of the way.”

Once again, I feel the blood rushing from my face, and I am suddenly shivering.

“What is she planning to do to me Harrison?”

He shakes his head. I grab his arm and force him to look me in the face.

“What is it?”

“I don’t know what she has planned, but she has made it clear that she intends to remove you from the equation. I am not taking any risks, which is why I have the security in place at all times. When we go to the lodge this week, we will have a team of guys surrounding us. When you go to the luncheon tomorrow, you will be surrounded.”

“Oh, this is just awful. What a shitty way to live, Harrison. Can’t you do something about her with all your money and power? Isn’t there something that can be done?” He reaches over and wipes away the tears streaming down my face.

“It is never like it seems *mi Cherie*. She has money too, and unless we can prove she has threatened you, we have to wait it out. However, the collage she sent tonight is enough to show that she is harassing us. The board will slap her with a lawsuit on Monday. At least, that will send her a message that we are not going to simply sit back and take this.

I feel a new sense of doom setting in. This woman is going to ruin our holidays and our wedding.

“You and I both know that is not going to be enough. She will just keep at this until I am out of the way. What are we going to do?”

“We are going to take *her* down. That is the final word on this. I don’t want you to worry anymore. I will protect you. I promise.” He takes me in his arms, and I feel my body relax.

“Come, let’s go salvage the rest of this party.” He wipes at my face again, and I straighten my shoulders as we re-enter the room. Harrison’s father walks over to us.

He looks directly at me. “Do not worry. You are a Towers now and we take care of our own. This woman will not be free to terrorize much longer. I have already called the Chairman of the board and plans have been put into action. It is only a matter of days until you are free of her.”

“Thank you, Mr. Towers.”

He nods and walks over to join his wife. I look around the room at the familiar faces and up at my husband’s. I feel safe once I realize that I am surrounded by those who only want to rejoice with us, not tear us down.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The next morning, something is tickling my nose. I pry my eyes open and see my handsome husband's face hovering over mine. He has some of my hair in his hand and is running it over the end of my nose, which causes me to sneeze.

“Achoo!”

“Bless you, *mi amore!*”

He traces my lips with his finger, then plants his mouth on mine for an arousing good morning kiss. Lifting the covers, he peeks at my naked body. He looks back at me and then, with a devilish grin, he disappears under the covers. I gasp, as he licks his way from my nipples down to my sweet spot. He slowly runs his tongue up and down my clit. He takes it between his teeth and gently nibbles. His hot breath on my sex feels so good. As he inserts two fingers into my wet pussy, I moan. It sends electric shocks to my core. My breathing is shallow and raspy as he swirls his finger in a circular motion then in and out. His teeth are still nibbling at my clit, while his hot tongue flickers across the overly sensitive tip. I find the stimulation to be almost unbearable. As the pressure builds, I am squirming under his exploration of my pussy. He pushes his fingers as far into me as he can, and he finds that magic spot. He takes his other hand and pushes on my lower tummy. As he does this, he sets my release into motion. He is still ramming his fingers deep in my heat as I feel my core explode into one wave of pleasure after another. I have the luxurious bed sheets clenched in my fists, as I come down off my high. Harrison moves back up to my head and kisses me passionately. I taste myself on his lips.

‘Well, that was some way to say good morning!’

He kisses the tip of my nose, then slides off the bed and says over his shoulder, “Race you to the shower.” I watch him as he runs to the bathroom

stark naked. I enjoy watching his butt as he disappears through the bathroom door. As I make a move to get out of the bed, he peeks his head back out, “Coming?”

“I just did.” I yell after him as I giggle to myself.

While we took our time getting ready to join the others downstairs, my mom and Clarke had Albert and Lance take them to a local toy store. They don’t want to arrive to the luncheon today empty handed, so they picked out an armful of toys to donate to the cause. When I am done with playing with Harrison in the shower, I get serious about transforming myself into someone who looks like a mogul’s wife.

I take the time to put some loose curls in my hair and use the clip-in hair to cover my short hair patch. I carefully apply my makeup to make me look finished, without over doing it. The trick is selecting what I am going to wear. I stand in the middle of the walk-in closet and ponder what to wear. “Danielle! You better hurry! It’s almost time for you to go!” Harrison is hollering at me from the bathroom. I quickly select a magenta jersey wrap dress and a clustered necklace to fill in the neckline. I slip into my black knee boots and grab a black cardigan sweater. I join the ladies in the great room and grab a bunch of grapes sitting on a platter on the coffee table. The limo arrives promptly at 11 AM, just as Harrison’s mother said it would. The three of us pile into the roomy limo and we’re on our way.

“So, Danners, what kept you this morning? We missed you at breakfast.”

I know that my face is turning a few different shades of red. “Oh, just getting some much needed sleep.”

“Ok. I get it.” She winks at me.

We chat about the mansion and the upcoming mountain lodge trip for the 20-minute drive to the country club. The limo pulls up in front, and the driver comes around to let us out while Albert and Lance wait for us at the front entrance. Once inside, we make our way to the banquet room and check in at the table in the lobby. We walk in, and I pause to see if I can

spot my mother-in-law. As I survey the room, my heart literally stops. I have to close my eyes and open them again because at first I think my eyes are deceiving me. Marion Devereaux is standing among a group older, distinguished looking women. The lady to her right bears a strong resemblance to her so, I would wager a guess that woman is Mrs. Devereaux, Marion's mother. I see that Clarke has noticed Marion also. She is busy whispering in my mom's ear.

I feel a tug at my arm and whirl around to see my mother-in-law looking at me with worry in her eyes. "I need to speak with you, privately, if you please." She looks to my mother and Clarke and they both nod. I walk out into the hallway with her. I notice that Lance and Albert are sitting on a bench outside the door. "Danielle, I had no idea that Marion would be coming to this function. I only knew that her mother, Mrs. Devereaux, was coming. I never thought I would have to ask her mother not to bring her."

"I am not sure what Harrison would want me to do. Maybe I should call him?"

"I wish I knew what to do. You probably should call him. I cannot ask them to leave. It would be highly improper."

"Oh, I would never ask you to do that. I think it would be best if we leave. Don't you?"

"Oh, this is awful. I am so embarrassed. Here you are my new daughter in-law and I can't show you off properly." She dabs at her brow with a tissue.

"Honestly, I completely understand. I think we should just leave and try this again another time. Perhaps the four of us can have lunch later in the week?"

"You are a dear. Come, while you are here, I would like you to meet a few friends who will be coming to the wedding. Then, I agree, you should leave." I start to pull my phone out. "Nevermind calling Harrison. You can

leave in a few minutes. I will give you lunch suggestions, and you and your lovely mother and friend should go have a nice lunch.”

“Ok. Sounds good.” I feel like bolting to the door and running to the limo. I don’t want to meet her friends, but how can I refuse?

Harrison’s mother and I re-enter the banquet room. I take a deep breath as I brace myself for the inevitable interaction. To my amazement, Marion is standing next to my mother and Clarke, but they are not speaking to her. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Clarke practically has steam coming out of her ears. I can tell by looking at them that they are very guarded and uncomfortable. Before we join them, Mrs. Towers guides me over to where another group of well-dressed women are standing. She introduces me to each of them as her new daughter in-law and she is positively beaming, but I suspect it is a put on. I can tell from our discussion in the hallway that she is worried about the situation.

She hastily pulls me away from the group of women and nods at a younger woman holding a clipboard. The younger woman asks everyone to take their seats. At that moment, we turn to walk toward the door and Marion steps in my path.

“Well, Miss Austen. Oh, excuse me, Mrs. Towers,” she says through gritted teeth. “Imagine my surprise to see you here today.”

I have no response. I just stand giving her a fake smile. “I was just about to leave. If you will excuse me.”

“Leaving so soon? What a shame. I would like to hear more about your wedding.” You can hear the acid in her voice. “I hear it’s to be on what was supposed to be my wedding day. That’s not very nice, stealing one’s fiancé, you know.”

Mrs. Towers interrupts, “That will be quite enough, Marion. Let’s not make a scene.”

Marion smiles at Mrs. Towers, then starts to walk by me, leans down to my ear, and whispers, “He’s still mine, bitch.”

I gasp, as my spine turns cold. I turn to respond, but she has already walked away. Mrs. Towers is pulling at my arm to lead me out to the hallway. We are followed by Clarke and my mom.

She turns to all of us. “Ladies, if I had known she was going to be here, I would never have invited you. Please accept my apology.”

“It’s fine, Mrs. Towers, don’t give it another thought.” I am trembling in my boots.

She looks toward the banquet door and then says, “I’m sorry, but I have to get in there. I will see you soon, and again, I am so sorry.”

Once we are leaving in the country club in the limo, I turn to my companions, and the tears start spilling out of my eyes. My whole body is shaking. My mom moves over to sit next to me and puts her arm around me, while I continue to sob. She hands me a stack of cocktail napkins that she swipes from the little bar. I blow my nose and try to catch my breath.

Simone starts in, “What the hell was the Wine Witch doing there? Isn’t there a restraining order or something on that bitch yet? You know she is a total Looney Tunes. Seriously, she ...” My mom cuts her off.

“Enough, Clarke. I know where you are coming from, but let’s see if we can get Dani calmed down before we add too much insult to injury. Now, can you get a message to Harrison to let him know what has happened?”

Clarke nods, and she digs her phone out of her purse. She sends Harrison a message, and as I suspected, he is furious. We are home in a fifteen minutes, and I already know what is going to unfold once I walk inside. We will end up rehashing everything she said to me, and Clarke and my mom will add their two cents. This will occupy the remainder of our day.

Once we pull up in the limo, the front door flies open and Harrison comes hauling down the stairs with my father and Garrin in tow. I guess their poker game has been cut short too.

Harrison opens the door to the limo and offers his hand to help us out. Lance and Albert are standing by the car, looking bewildered. They have no idea what happened, all we told them was that we weren't staying.

Once we are inside, Harrison herds us into the great room as if we are sheep. I sit down on the sofa and lean down to remove my boots. As I assumed, we discuss what happened from the minute we arrived at the Country Club to the moment we pulled away in the limo.

"I still can't believe that woman's bravado. She is delusional and fucking dangerous." Simone covers her mouth with her hand and looks at my parents. "Sorry." She makes a face and then continues. "Dani, why did you let her talk to you? Why didn't you just walk past her?"

"I couldn't, Clarke. She blocked my passage to the door, and what was I supposed to do? Snub her in the middle of the luncheon and embarrass Mrs. Towers?"

"No, I suppose not, but I can't believe what she said to you."

Harrison rejoins us after hanging up his phone call. "Well, that was my father. Just more material to add to our case. The restraining order should be issued Monday. We just have to hang tight until then, and besides, we will be an hour and half away in the mountain."

"Oh, I can't wait!" Clarke squeals as she loops her arm through Garrin's.

"Well, since you ladies didn't get to eat, let's see if cook can whip up some lunch." Harrison disappears into the kitchen, and I lay my head down on the sofa.

My mom walks over to me. "Honey, I think Mr. Towers has a good plan. You just have to wait it out until Monday. Hopefully, the restraining order

and the law suit will help her snap out of it. You look exhausted, why don't you go take a nap after you eat?"

My dad pipes in, "I think that sounds like an excellent idea for me too!" He tweaks me on the nose. "I know this is hard on you. Keep the faith honey."

"Thanks guys."

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Chapter Twenty-Five

Monday morning is mayhem at its best.

“Danielle....Simone, are you ladies ready to head out?”

“We will be right down Garrin! Tell Harrison that I found the other snow boot he was looking for!”

“Garrin, don’t forget the wine and champagne! They are probably still in the guest house fridge.”

“Not to worry, Simone, I am pretty certain the alcohol was first to be loaded up. Hurry ladies; the car is waiting.”

Simone and I put the finishing touches on our outfits. Faux fur jackets, tights under knit long sleeve dresses and knee high snow boots. We look hot in our snow bunny outfits. Though, this is more her style than mine.

A little snowy getaway with Harrison. I can only imagine how romantic this will be. Even though Simone and Garrin are coming along, I know those two love birds will be all about each other. There is no doubt in my mind that we will have sufficient alone time in Mont Tremblant.

Simone and I grab the last bit of our luggage, and the boys load it up in the stretch hummer. In total, we have six suitcases, four cases of wine and champagne, skis, snowboarding gear, and two bodyguards piled in with us. All packed up and belted in, and we are off.

The hour and a half drive up to Mont Tremblant is just beautiful. The snow-covered trees and city are magical. I feel as if I am in a winter wonderland. Thank god, we are in a huge stretch SUV in these driving conditions.

Mont Tremblant is a world-class resort city in the Laurentian Mountain's of Quebec, Canada. Harrison has prepared me well for the beauty and adventure that we are going to encounter over the next two days. I am really enjoying Canada. I can now picture myself living between here and Oregon. Honestly, this really is the best of both worlds.

Harrison grabs my hand, and throws his other arm over my shoulder. He holds me close the whole ride. Thing 1 and Thing 2 are riding up front, and they will be our security team on the mountain. Garrin and Simone sitting across from us could not be more fun. She literally drives Garrin insane, in a good way. The banter back and forth, and the sexual tension is so high that it really is just comical.

“Hey H., care if I pop some of this bubbly chilling back here?”

“Of course, please do.”

Garrin hands Simone a glass, and Harrison two glasses.

“Mrs. Towers, care for a glass?” Harrison extends the chilled glass of bubbly to me.

“Why, Mr. Towers, don't mind if I do.” I love the sound of that. Ah, Mrs. Towers. Who would have thought?!

Garrin raises his glass, “To a wonderful trip, amazing friends and family” as he nods to Harrison, “Here's to a new chapter in all our lives.”

About an hour and a half later, we start to make our way into Mont Tremblant.

Harrison whispers into my ear, “*Ma belle fille*, we are here. I almost wish we were alone, so we could go for a round right now.”

He places his hand on my leg and squeezes it firmly as he says that. My lord, when he speaks French to me, I just want to assault his lips immediately. I am starting to get all hot and bothered remembering another time that we rode in a limo together. We sure didn’t do much talking in that Palm Springs limo. That had to be one of the most erotic experiences in the history of transportation. Damn him. A man with an accent is by far one of the sexiest things on earth. Such a turn on. Note to self, I really need to download a translator app.

We pull into the main entrance of Mont Tremblant and head toward the lake in the near distance. Everything is snow capped. Chalets line the streets. People are ice skating, snowshoeing and enjoying the winter wonderland.

“Just wait till we get closer; this place truly has a *je-ne-sais-quoi*, Danielle, that you will never forget.”

I can see in the distance what seems to be colorful buildings, in a hybrid style of traditional Quebecois and European Alpine resort style design.

“Wow, what is that guys?” Simone presses her nose up to the window to get a better look.

“Yah, wow, what is that village, Harrison?”

“That just happens to be where we are staying. This is Mont Tremblant’s pedestrian-only alpine village. The Fairmont, where we are staying, is right up from the colorful buildings.”

“Look! What is that? A ski lift running through the village?”

“Yes, darling. That is the Gondola. The panoramic gondola ride is what connects the lower hotels to the ski lifts.”

“How brilliant, Dani, this is just too much! I can’t wait! I feel like we are in Europe!”

“Ladies, just wait till we get on top of that mountain, the views are amazing. Simone, you and Dani will love the luxury boutiques, cafes and restaurants among the many outdoor activities we plan to try. Tremblant is quite the experience.”

“I am just going to need a big hot tub, after all this skiing,” Garrin says while laughing.

We all break out laughing.

“Garrin, which do you prefer skiing or snowboarding?”

“I’d say snowboarding. I’m not good at skiing. Actually, I have never really gotten off the Bunny Slope on skis.”

Simone just about pees her pants. “Oh gawd, we will *not* be riding the bunny slope all day Garrin. We may really need that hot tub. Your booty is going to be so bruised up after all the boarding we are going to do.”

We all bust up laughing again, as the limo pulls up to the Fairmont Tremblant.

The resort is so grand in stature. The pitched rooftops, old-fashioned chimneys and stucco exterior evoke the architecture of old Québec. This little city really is where old world charm meets modern luxuries.

“So, what do you think my love?”

“I am really excited, especially to be in this enchanting town with you.”

“Me too.” Harrison places an arm around my waist and pulls me into his chest. He whispers in my ear, “I am really excited to get these clothes off of you, Mrs. Towers.”

“Alright, you two love birds, let’s get on it. I am dying to get into that massive outdoor pool over there! How hot is that Dani!?”

“Ladies, hold on hold on. We have a day of skiing ahead of us. Let’s go unpack, freshen up and meet at the lift in an hour. We can visit the outdoor heated pool after. We all know Garrin is looking forward to that, so let’s make it worth his wait.”

We all proceed to check into our rooms. Harrison and I open the door to our suite on the top floor. I drop my purse and jacket as we enter. I walk in slowly and spin around, taking in all that I am seeing.

“Really? Is this really ours?”

I turn to Harrison and he grabs my face with both hands. He kisses me so passionately and intensely.

“I wanted to do this to you the whole limo ride, Mrs. Towers.”

Gah! Yum. He is so damn hot, and he is all mine.

We make out for what seems to be an eternity. He has me pushed up against the entryway wall. His mouth and tongue slide over my neck and make my body tremble with anticipation and pleasure. His hands explore my body. Gripping my ass hard, he pulls his firm body closer to me.

Ah, God, I want him inside me now. “I want you, I want you to be inside me, Harrison.”

He looks at me as he slides his mouth to my finger. He sticks my index finger in his mouth, as he cups my hot sex in his other hand. My pussy pulsates on his fingers, through my tights. His mouth makes its way up and down my finger, as he bypasses my dress and tights and slips another finger inside me.

“Ah, you are so wet for me. Jesus, Danielle.”

I start to remove my jacket, which is zipped up the front.

“No, don’t touch it. Let me undress you.” He throws my hands down and pins them to the wall.

He works his lips over my collarbone. Dragging that skilled tongue from one side to the other. He starts to move lower, unzipping the jacket slowly, teasing me, one inch at a time.

I moan as he devours my breasts, taking each one in his mouth. I place my hands behind his head and pull him closer in between both breasts. Harrison pulls away. He looks at me, smiles, then kisses my lips again. All of the sudden, he has me lifted into the air and wraps my legs around his waist. He kisses me harder. I feel as if that hour and a half limo ride together has unleashed two beasts that have to be tamed by sexual contact. I hope our flame will always burn this bright.

He carries me over to the bed, and places me on my hands and knees.

Harrison drops down to his knees and starts kissing my ass through my clothes. I lean forward into the bed, as he runs his hands over my ass. In one moment, Harrison rips the back of my tights. Holy shit! He pushes me farther down into the bed, so my ass is up high and exposed. God damn, this is hot. So primal and in control. I could never get tired of this. He starts to eat me out through my panties from behind. Taking his sweet tongue and running it over my panties to get my pussy warmed up. I know I am soaking wet by now, I can feel it drenching my panties. He takes one finger and moves my lace panties to the side. He darts his tongue inside me and the pleasure is almost unbearable. He grabs my hips and pushes his face farther, working my wet sex as if he hasn’t had it in a long time.

Then the damn room phone rings. Really? What a way to ruin the mood!

“We better get that, Harrison. As much as I don’t want to, it is probably Simone or Garrin.”

“Hello? Yes guys, we will be down in 10, just freshening up!” I am trying to hurry off the phone.

Harrison looks at me and gives me the most devilish look.

He mouths, “ I am going to take a shower.”

“Okay, Clarke, we will meet you by the lift in the village. Don’t forget your gloves and ski mask.”

I hang up the phone with Simone, and Harrison has already ventured into the shower. I sneak into the bathroom and hop in the shower as well.

“Mr. Towers, you really had me going there.”

He turns, smiles, and grabs my soaking wet body. We resume our making out session. I just want him to make my pussy cum so bad right now. He reaches down and massages my clit, then slides one finger in and out of me.

“You want this don’t you?”

I can barely breath, “Yes. I want your cock inside of me so bad.”

“You need to cum. I want you to look at me when you cum, Danielle.”

Harrison drops to his knees and starts running his tongue over my clit, flicking and sucking on it. I know this will be quick, since I was almost there before the phone rang. He knows how skilled he is to make me cum just when he wants to.

He slides one finger inside me, as I sit on the slate bench in the shower. It is cold, but the warm water trickling over us is so sexy. Our bodies glide against each other. With one finger inside of me, he pushes his tongue into my pussy. Working it so hard and fast, while he pumps his finger slowly inside me. My body is preparing for its final release. I grab onto Harrison’s hair and pull him closer, as I throw my head back against the slate wall

behind me. My body is circling and thrusting up into his face. I can feel his eyes on me. He takes his other hand and presses firmly on my lower abs, holding the pressure. His tongue, hand and finger all going at the same time, throw me into an intense orgasm. He pushes his tongue farther inside me, as I cum over and over on his tongue. We lock eyes as I am in the throes of the orgasm. His gaze alone makes my body pulsate and convulse out of control. I can't stop cuming and it is all over my body. The full body cum I am so accustomed to when he consumes my body. I finally stop shaking, as my body slows. I push his head away from me and the look on his face says it all. My husband is a *Sex God*. He loves this, and he is so good at it. He runs his hands up and down my thighs under the warm water, as my breathing returns to normal.

“Now it is your turn, Mr. Towers.”

“Danielle, it is all about you today. I would love that, really I would; however, we have to be at the ski lift right about now.”

“Oh shit!”

“Don't worry. We will have more opportunities to play later.”

I stand up and lean over to shut the shower off. I whisper to him, “I want that hard cock of yours inside me.”

His thick, hard cock is so tempting. Screw it. I need it now.

I push him up against the wall of the shower, drop to my knees, and grab his length. I take it into my mouth and start working it good. He lets out a long sigh as his head leans back against the slate wall.

“You are something else, Mrs. Towers.”

I look at him, as he does me while he eats me. I keep his gaze the whole time and his cock begs for a release. In a matter of minutes, he explodes all over my chest. That was hot.

We both needed this. But, I am still craving to have him inside me. I stand up and rub myself on him. Just the feeling of his skin touching mine, drives me absolutely insane.

We towel off fast and put on our ski gear.

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Chapter Twenty-Six

We walk as fast as we can in the snow to meet Simone and Garrin.

They are waiting at the bottom of the lift with coffees in hand.

“Okay really, 30 minutes late guys?” Simone pipes up, with a devilish grin.

“Oh, Simone, they are newlyweds! Give them a break!”

“Thanks Garrin. I am sure you all had lots to look at out here. Sorry we were late! We had to stop by the gift shop. Picked up a little gift for Garrin.

“For me?”

“Yeah, this is your initiation Big G,” Harrison laughs.

I tell Garrin to close his eyes. I take out the bunny ear headband and place it on his head.

“What the heck!?”

Garrin opens his eyes and pulls it off of his head. We cannot stop laughing.

“It was Harrison’s idea. All Harrison’s.”

“Sure Dani, I am sure he was the driving force behind this,” Garrin laughs.

“Don’t worry, Garrin, we will hang with you and the bunnies!” I chuckle out loud and everyone joins in.

We all jumped on the gondola and take the ride up the mountain. The scenery is unbelievable. It is just beautiful and so peaceful. The aerial view of the city of Mont Tremblant is exquisite.

“Harrison, so where will the security team be while we are here?”

He looks at me and says, “Okay, hold onto the side railing. Turn around and look back 3 seats behind us.”

I turn slightly and glance back. There are Thing 1 and Thing 2 in the gondola together.

“That is so funny. So do they ski?”

“Of course they ski. They will always be watching us and keeping an eye on things while we are outdoors. Their room is on the same floor as ours. They will be monitoring at night as well. My top priority is to keep you safe, Danielle.”

“I hope one day we will be able to go back living without bodyguards tagging along with us.”

“That is my wish as well, Danielle, and my ultimate goal. I know that one day it will be that way. I will make that happen. However, until we put an end to the madness, we need to be heavily protected.”

Harrison takes my hand in his and brings it to his lips, kissing the top gently.

We make our way to the top of the mountain and take in the views.

We spend the better part of the day having fun on the slopes. Garrin and Simone go off to the bunny hill to take beginner lessons. Harrison and I ride the gondola up higher to take in more of the beauty of the mountain. We must have spent five hours skiing, taking in the scenery and laughing at Garrin and Simone on the bunny hill.

After a fun day of skiing, the sun begins to set. As we head back to the room to change out of our wet ski clothes, I can't help but playback in my head the events of the day. We take a quick shower and get all dolled up for dinner at the Fairmont. We have a very lovely evening with Garrin and Simone. The restaurant has views of the mountain and it overlooks the moonlit spa pool. We didn't have time to hop in that this afternoon, but I fully intend to soak in it after tomorrow's activities.

After a fun dinner, we all head back to our rooms. Ours has a large hot tub on the deck, and boy, is my body craving that right now. After five hours of skiing, a long, hot soak will do my body good, among other things. I am still horny as hell from the sexual denial through which we keep putting ourselves. I just want to rip his clothes off.

We walk through the door to our room and my jaw literally drops to the ground. The room is dark and filled with hundreds of little tea lights. Glittering candles surround the bed and outline the hot tub. There is a huge bouquet of multi-colored roses on the desk table.

“Oh, Harrison! wow! This is....”

“All for you my love, *tout pour vous.*”

I grab his face and pull him close into me, as I slowly kiss his soft, sensual lips. Our bodies touching and his presence next to me still drives me insane. Harrison backs me into the wall, as he slowly begins undressing me. Unbuttoning my silk blouse, as his mouth stimulates every nerve ending in my body. He moves his way down, slowly and seductively kissing every inch of the way. I can see where this is going. Slow, glorious, sensual torture!

He bends down, he pulls my body into his face, swirls his tongue over my belly, and unzips my skirt. He pulls my skirt down. while grabbing my ass and pulling me closer to his mouth. He lets out a loud and long sigh, as he kisses that tender spot between my lower abs and pussy. Working his tongue over it, teasing every inch of me. I unhook my bra and throw it on

the chair next to me. He assertively pushes me into the wall, as his hands slide up and grab both of my full, needing breasts. God this is hot.

Harrison swoops me up, as if he is carrying me over the threshold and carefully places me on the bed. The sensual music clicks on, and the champagne is already running in my veins. There is a fire blazing in front of our bed. The heat from it warms my chilled body, still chilled from being out in the cold all day.

I am wearing nothing but my turquoise lace panties and heels. Harrison's favorite combination.

He climbs on top of me, and pushes my legs apart with his. I unbutton his shirt and pants, and he slides out of them. Ah yes, that perfectly sculpted body looks so damn fine with the light of the fire blazing against us. His shoulders so strong and built, and his muscular arms. I love how powerful he is, and his physical shape is above par. He places both hands on my face as he loops his tongue into my mouth. I carefully bite his bottom lip, as I am more than ready for his cock inside me.

He begins to slide one hand down my chest, massaging each breast. His mouth slides down my neck and over my belly. I already had his tongue all over me today, and I am really craving his hard cock inside me now. The waiting game that we played all day, has me worked up into overdrive. My sex is pulsating with desire and I want to be fucked hard. I know my pussy is wet and ready for it. Harrison moves down and runs his tongue over my panties. His signature move. I have to admit, it is more than hot. It drives me insane. I grab his head and push him in closer. I want his cock, but I want him to fuck me with his tongue too. He pushes through the panties, which is about to make me cum without the stimulation. I really need to feel the wetness of his tongue. I know he is drawing this sex fest out. I can't take it anymore. I move my panties to the side and grab his hair. He looks at me with those 'I am going to devour every last bit of you' eyes and he pushes his tongue into me. I grab both sides of his head and raise my hips up further, while pulling him inside. I have unleashed the beast, and damn, does he know how to work my pussy.

All I want is his cock. The sexual tension of not having him in me is killing me. I grab his head and push him away from my wet sex.

“Come here, I need your cock inside me now.”

No words, he just grins and licks his bottom lip. He subtly bites it, and my God, that turns me on. He takes his tongue and slides it from my pussy, over my belly and up to my neck. He licks and kisses that sweet spot that he knows gets me off while he fucks me. I grab his hard cock and pull it against my opening. I place the throbbing crown in, and he shoves it deep inside me, as he licks and sucks on my ear lobe. Damn, it feels good. His hard, thick length fills me up.

All of a sudden, Harrison pulls out of me and slides off the bed. He turns me and pulls me to the edge of the bed, so I am in perfect position for him to slide into me. I am still wearing my heels, and God, this is so hot. Harrison loves when I leave my sky-high, fuck-me heels on in bed. He slides his hands down my legs and throws them over his shoulders. He takes his cock in his hand and slowly opens me up with it. I let out a scream of passion as he pushes it deeper inside of me. Ah! Yes! This angle gets me every time. He knows how to make me cum good.

He thrusts longer and deeper strokes as he firmly squeezes my breasts. My hands are over my head, gripping the duvet cover, and holding on for dear life. I can feel his cock starting to pulsate and my pussy clenches tightly around it. We are both preparing to cum. I grab the sheets down by my thighs and hold on tightly, I just know he is going to fuck the hell out of me. He takes my cue and holds on to both ankles, as he brings them together. My feet are bound together, as he slams his cock in and out of me. His rhythm picks up and he grabs my ankles tighter.

I can feel the warmth of his cock getting stronger. I know that he is seconds from cumming. That sizzling warmth throws me into the beginning of my orgasm. I scream loud and clench harder onto the sheets. My cumming is setting him off. He yells and groans loudly. It's so animalistic. He continues to thrust in and out. Our eyes lock, now that I am trained to look at him when I cum. This has to be the most erotic thing I have ever

experienced. My orgasm continues to roll. As I cum all over his cock, he slams into me harder. He stills himself as he finishes his release. I am not done. He moves slowly in and out of me, and I am coming down from the sexual high. He knows there is more in me. He drops to his knees and pulls me close, burying his face in my pussy. In a matter of seconds, he sets me off again. Cumming all over his tongue, I have hit my max. I push him away, as I can't take the pleasure anymore. My breathing is hard and fast. His breathing starts to slow.

My skin is hot and flushed. I am fully satisfied, and my emotions are heightened. I feel as if the world has come to a complete stop, and only the two of us exist.

Harrison slides up my body, grabs my face, and kisses me sweetly on the forehead.

“I love you. I love all of you, Danielle.”

“I love you, Harrison.” I kiss him back on the lips.

Harrison walks over to the closet and takes out two super fluffy bathrobes. He places one around me as he puts on the other. I stand up and look at the mirror above the fireplace. I love the way my hair looks after climactic session with him. Hot and tousled. He grabs two glasses and a bottle of vino from the wine bar.

“Come, *mi amour*. You have to see this.”

I follow Harrison out the sliding doors that exit the balcony. It is dark, but I can see the mountain in the distance lit subtly by the half moon. A beautiful night. Harrison leads me to the hot tub on the deck. Now this is sexy! He slides back the top of the hot tub, and we both drop our robes. Lord, it is freezing. I climb into the hot tub as Harrison laughs at my naked reaction to the cold.

“Ah, yes. Here you go my love,” he says as he hands me a glass of red wine.

Harrison hands me his glass of wine and slides into the hot tub beside me. He sits in the corner, and I spoon into this body. This, right here, is perfect. A beautiful ending to the most perfect day.

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Chapter Twenty-Seven

The next morning, we sleep in and once again the hotel phone wakens us. I lean over and grab it. “Hello?”

“Dani, get up you two. This is our last day here! It is 10AM!”

“Oh, wow!”

“Long night, huh?”

“Yah, you could say that.”

“Listen, we haven’t even gone to bed really, Dani! Ha!”

“What!? What the heck were you all.....Ah! Okay gotcha. Bad! Bad, bad, girl!” We both start laughing over the phone.

“Okay, Mrs. Mogul wake up your handsome husband and let’s get rolling! Garrin has snowmobiles rented nearby. He is going to give us a tour of the city.”

“That sounds amazing. Okay, we will be down shortly. We will meet you by the cafe in the village.”

“Great! See you guys soon.”

Harrison and I drag ourselves out of bed. We really don’t even want to leave the hotel room. I would rather just lie in his arms all day.

We get our snow gear on again and head out.

We find Simone and Garrin and walk to the snow mobile rental.

This is so exciting! It has been years since I have been on a snowmobile.

“Garrin, what a great idea! This will be so fun.”

“You ladies are going to love this. Towers is a pro, so he will guide you as well.”

Of course he is; at what does he not excel?

We hop on our snowmobiles and start off slowly. We follow the paths around the city. We drive around for a few hours, getting off here and there to take in the scenery, then head back into the village for an early dinner.

There are so many wonderful cafes and restaurants with indoor and outdoor fireplaces to warm up. We all order a warm hot tottie and a delicious meal. The sun hasn't quite set, and Simone is begging to take one last spin on the snowmobiles before we have to return them. I can spot our bodyguards out the window. They hover around the village, keeping an eye on our whereabouts. It feels good to actually have a team here with us. They don't come with us on the mountain. Harrison feels that Garrin is capable of protecting us on the mountain, and he is always in contact with the bodyguards below.

We head back out as the sun is starting to set. It is glorious. What a wonderful weekend in Tremblant.

I hop on my snowmobile and secure my helmet. Harrison helps me start it up. The machine makes a little grumble, but all seems to be fine. We start to head down the hill to make another loop around before going back to the rental shop. I am picking up speed, with Harrison behind me. All of the sudden, I hear a loud clank and grumbling and my snow mobile seizes up. The engine shuts down without any warning. I scream as it throws me over the handlebars and into the snow with a thud.

I really don't understand what has just transpired. Did my snow mobile just die on me? What the hell just happened? I am simply stunned and speechless.

Garrin, Harrison and Simone come running up to me in a panic.

“Dani, Dani!”

“Omigod Danielle, don’t move. Don’t move at all.”

“Dani, stay still. Harrison is right.” Clarke sputters.

I hear Garrin get on his cell and call the team. Before I know it, security team and medical aid are at my side.

I sit on the ground and start to asses my body. I feel sore and achy. I see blood on the ground.

“Omigod. Harrison, where am I bleeding? Is it my face?”

I take my glove off, getting ready to swipe it over my face.

“Madame, please don’t move. We need to evaluate your injuries and prep them.”

Prep them!?! Harrison, what the hell happened? Tears being to stream down my face, as I have a knot in my stomach that feels as if it keeps growing and growing. Bad feelings start to run through my whole body.

Harrison is sitting by my side, talking to the medical team and describing what happened.

“I am having this snow mobile brought in to see what happened.” Garrin says, having slipped into his official role.

“Thanks Garrin. Please have them give me a full report as soon as possible.”

“How are you feeling, Danielle?”

“I am okay. I am just glad we were on snow, and I didn’t hit ice. I must have hit a softer patch of snow, because I feel okay, but my body feels a little achy.”

“That is to be expected. We need to take it easy tonight.”

“Mrs. Towers, I want you to take it easy. Do you have any pain at all?”

“No, I was just saying I feel achy.”

“You are very lucky. I am glad that you all were riding near fresh snow when this happened. Please take it easy, and if anything worsens or becomes bothersome, please come to the medical office and we will take x-rays.”

“Thank you. I feel okay. Thank you for coming so quickly.”

The medical team heads off, and Garrin conferences with our security team.

“I suggest that we take it low from here on out, until we find out the cause of the accident.”

“Do you think it could be....?”

“We are not sure, but I can assure you we will have answers.” Garrin is sweet to try to reassure us all.

Harrison helps me onto his snowmobile, and we ride slowly back to the hotel.

“Now, don’t move. I will carry you in.”

“Carry me in!? Are you crazy? I can walk Harrison,” I laugh out loud.

“You shall not do anything of the sort. Your body needs to rest.”

Alright, I am not going to win this one. Harrison picks me up, as he did last night. Oh lord, the memories.

“Do you remember this?”

“Oh, Mr. Towers, how could I forget? Everything about you really is unforgettable. You know that right?” He just gives me a big, perfect smile and kisses me on the lips.

“I am glad you are okay *mi amore*. I think what you really need now, is a good massage and a hot tub!”

“That sounds like the perfect ending to our weekend.”

“I love you, Danielle. I will get to the bottom of what happened but let’s enjoy the remainder of our evening and get you rested up.

I nod as I walk into the bathroom to view the damage on my face. “Eek! I look like a hot mess! This is not good! I hope this is gone by the wedding!”

“You will look beautiful no matter what. Now let’s see to your massage.”

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Chapter Twenty-Eight

On our way home from the mountain, Harrison intercoms the driver and asks him to pullover at the tree lot up ahead. I look at him with a puzzled glance.

“We need a tree, don’t we?”

“Oh my gosh, yes, I hadn’t even thought about that. I would love to get a tree. But, wait, are we getting a pre-cut tree? I look over the roadside tree lot we just parked in front of and feel a little disappointed.

“What else did you have in mind?”

Clark takes this as her cue to interject, “Yeah, you don’t expect us to go traipsing through the woods to find that perfect tree and then saw it down like a bunch of lumberjacks do you? Besides, I am not dressed for it.” She lifts her feet clad in pristine white snow boots with tassels and poofy pom poms.

“Well, I guess I am outnumbered. I suppose I should be thankful that you are willing to do this much.” Clarke all but sticks her tongue out at me with the look she is giving me.

“Well, who said I was getting out anyway? I have had enough of this arctic chill to last me a lifetime.” She pouts.

I scoff, “You have...think about me for a second, at least you didn’t do a face plant into a snowdrift!” She looks at my face and turns to hide a giggle.

“Enough Clarke, the marks on my face are not funny. I am going to need some fancy makeup wizardry to cover these nasty scrapes.” Harrison holds up his hand “Okay ladies, I have had enough of your bantering. I just want to get a tree for our first Christmas together. If this is too much for you, then

let's just go." He is growing impatient and the furrow of his brow is deepening.

Clarke sticks out her bottom lip to pout. "You guys go pick out a tree. I want to stay in here where it's warm." She looks at me, "And I am not laughing at you, I am laughing with you, Dani. You have to admit those scrapes on your face make you resemble Raggedy Ann."

"Ohhh, you can be such a brat sometimes, how rude." I scramble to get out of the slippery bench seat as Harrison helps me out. He leans his face back in the car and says something to Clarke that causes her to pout even more and cross her arms. Garrin climbs out of the car too, which sends her over the edge and puts her in the fetal position on her seat. She must not have gotten enough sleep the last few days. She is being very testy, and she is not even the one with new injuries.

We pick out the perfect Balsam Fir tree that stands more than 6'5 tall. We plan to put it in the great room, near the sofas in the corner. The limo driver and guards managed to secure the tree to the top of the limo with rope from the tree lot. My arms are loaded down with containers of fresh maple syrup and hot coffee. I look at Clarke who is fast asleep, still curled in the fetal position on her seat. I was right. Garrin must have kept her up the last few days.

Once we are home, the four of us go inside, while the driver and guards unload our large tree. I giggle to myself at the thought of how we must have looked careening down the road in a fancy limo with a Christmas tree tied to the top. Certainly not what Christmas tree hunting was like back when I was growing up. The tree selection outing consisted of us piling into the family suburban and finding a place to hike through the forest to find the perfect tree to chop down. My parents would inevitable argue, and the yuletide spirit would be left behind. Now that I think about it, I like going to a lot, kicking a few trunks, and paying someone to tie it up and load it for me. None of this breaking saws, getting sap all over our hands and clothes, discovering a bit of the wilderness has come home with you by way of a nest of some kind of insects hatching in the warmth of our living room. Yes, new traditions are being made.

My parents greet us in the foyer. “Oh honey, let me take a look at you. When I got the call from Harrison, I swear I thought my heart was going to stop. My God, is there no way to stop *that* woman?!”

“Donna, I know this is upsetting, but we have already worked through some of this, and I don’t want to get Danielle all riled up. Now, let’s go into the great room, and we will tell you all about our stay at the mountain, minus the snowmobiling.”

My mom nods, and I follow them into the great room where my dad and Garrin are sitting. Simone sleepily wanders in behind me, and finds a comfy chair to curl up on like a cat. She falls back to sleep. My mom covers her with a fluffy throw.

After an hour of giving my parents the full rundown, I am feeling exhausted, so I excuse myself and head upstairs. I strip off my heavy wintery clothes and crawl into bed. I don’t remember my head hitting the pillow as I fall into a deep sleep.

I am awoken by a strange sound. I open my eyes with a start and look around without moving. I am trying to figure out where I am. I turn my head and see that Harrison is beside me in the bed. Glancing at the clock on the table next to me, I see that it is 3:30AM. I have been asleep for almost eleven hours. I slept through dinner and Harrison coming to bed. I lay there for a minute and again hear the sound that woke me up in the first place. I don’t have a clue what it is. It’s almost as if someone has thumped into a piece of furniture. It seems to be coming from the seating area by the balcony. I strain to see in the dimly moonlit room.

I gasp, as I swear I see a dark shadow or maybe a figure moving outside on the balcony. I rub my eyes to clear away the fog. I must have been seeing things. I start to get out of bed to investigate, but instantly chastise myself. What am I thinking? I can’t go check it out by myself! I nudge Harrison and whisper his name, while looking over at the terrace door. I still see a dark figure out there. “Harrison, Harrison!” I am pushing at him. “Harrison! Wake up!” He opens his bloodshot eyes, “What? Are you okay?” He says in a groggy voice.

“No, well yes, but I think someone is out on our terrace, could that be possible?”

He turns his head to look at toward the terrace doors. “I suppose someone can get to it from the from the neighboring balcony, but that it is quite high up. I am sure it was just a shadow from a cloud crossing over the moon.” He pulls me closer to him, and I snuggle into his body, but my eyes are still fixed on the doors. “Now go back to sleep *mi amore*.”

I keep my eyes fixed on the doors until I can't keep them open any longer. I drift back into a deep uninterrupted peaceful sleep. As soon as the sun comes up, I am awoken by the beams of light shooting across my face. I sit up to stretch and look over at my husband's beautiful sleeping face. I slip out of bed and put my soft pink silk robe on. I slide into my Ugg slippers and head over to the terrace. I look out the windows and see that something is lying by the door. I unlock the deadbolt and open the door. To my shock, there is a bouquet of dead roses, reminiscent of those that have been left on many occasions by now. I notice that one of the terrace chairs has been knocked over and some of the furniture is askew. It's as if the person who delivered these was a bumbling idiot. Or, drunk perhaps. But, at this height? I walk over to the railing and look to my left and to my right. Aha, there is the point of access! To the right of this terrace is a balcony that has a roof access ladder. It is a small balcony and one could easily lose his balance and plummet to his death, if he were climbing back to it. I hesitate, but look down to make sure that isn't the case here. Judging by the mess he made of the furniture arrangement, it almost seems strategic. It seems as if the furniture was purposefully scattered.

At any rate, I am rather surprised at my reaction. While I am shocked that I was right that someone *was* in fact prowling around last night, I am not surprised. It was as if I expected it. I decide to let Harrison sleep a bit longer before I show him the latest. Before I shut the door, I notice that the lock appears to have been tampered with. It seems to be jammed with something. I am betting the intruder was trying to leave their present inside, but since they couldn't, they made the noise so we knew that we needed to investigate. How exasperating it must have been for him when we didn't actually come to investigate. I pick up the dead flowers and a note falls out.

Oh, of course, it wouldn't be Marion if she didn't have some cryptic note. Let's see what she has to say this time.

Apparently you haven't gotten the message. You will regret that. If you live.

I laugh to myself. Is that the best she's got? I really don't feel the fear like I have in the past. She is coming unhinged, and I am just going to sit back and watch. I feel like a new woman who has a new lease on life. I dump the crappy flowers in the trash and leave the card on the low dresser.

Later that morning, Harrison tells me to go upstairs and change into something casual for lunch and shopping in Montreal. Garrin is showing Clarke the sights, and they are meeting up with his friends tonight. My mom has a slight cold, so she and my dad are planning to take it easy, considering all the festivities that are coming up this next week.

I find Harrison downstairs in the foyer, and he gives me an approving smile as we head out. I am wearing a slim fitting cigarette pant in dark gray and a fitted black v-neck cashmere sweater with a matching soft scarf wrapped around my neck. I put on a pair of black patent booties and a black leather jacket. Harrison looks just delicious in his Ray Ban Aviator sunglasses that I bought him for his birthday. The light blue fitted long sleeve shirt matches his eyes perfectly. Over the sweater, he is wearing a dark brown bomber jacket paired with dark designer jeans that hug his butt and hips. The best thing he is wearing though, is his smile. In the limo ride, we hold hands and discuss the plans to have the locks changed and the security system updated.

"I am furious that she is so brazen to keep up these antics. We have to hang tight until next week. Can you do that?"

I nod, "I am sick and tired of all this energy spent on her. I have decided that I am turning over a new leaf and going to make every attempt to not let her get to me. This is all providing that something legal is done about her soon. I fear that things are only going to escalate before there is any resolution."

“Once again, we have given her too much thought. Let’s enjoy a Marion-free day from this moment forward.”

I lean up and kiss his cheek, “Sounds like a plan.”

He takes me to a place called Underground City. It is literally a city underground that is full of shopping, restaurants, a subway system, and it connects to attractions above ground without exposing the shopper to frost bite. We have lunch at a little bistro and enjoyed a dish called *poutine*, which is essentially French fries covered in brown gravy and sprinkled with cheese curds. I feel guilty afterward, as if I should take a run through the fifteen miles of underground shopping.

We finish selecting our last minute Christmas gifts and head out to the waiting limo. Once our packages are stowed in the trunk and we are snuggled next to each other in the car, Harrison announces that he has a surprise for me.

“After a long day shopping, I thought this would be a nice way to unwind.”

“What is it? Where are you taking me?” He puts his sunglasses on, though he doesn’t need them with the tinted windows.

“I’m not telling you. It’s a surprise.”

“Ugh! You know how surprises make me antsy!”

He crosses his arms and stares at me through his tinted shades. Disconcerting to say the least.

It is not a long before we are pulling up in front of a grand old hotel called Hotel Le St James. The hotel is a landmark in old Montreal, so I am told by Harrison. “It used to be a merchant’s bank building, now it’s a famous hotel.”

“It’s beautiful, Harrison, but what are we doing here?”

“You’ll see.” He takes my hand and leads me out of the car and up the stairs to the hotel entrance.

Inside the lobby, he leads me over to a set of elevators. Once we are on the elevator and the doors shut, Harrison cups my chin and presses his lips to mine in a quick but passionate kiss. As he pulls away, he looks into my eyes, “I have been wanting to do that for hours.”

Okay, that was yummy. I decide to flirt back. “I have been wanting you to *do* that for hours.” Just as he is about to lean in for more, the elevator comes to a stop and the doors open. We step out into a tranquil spa called, *Le Spa*. How fitting, I guess. The walls are stone; the lights are dim. I hear water rushing down a water wall to the right, reminding me of all the water features at the Towers. Harrison steps forward to the reception desk. He speaks to the lady behind the counter in a hushed tone, as she looks from him to me and then back to Harrison. I notice that she is busy batting her eyelashes at him. I don’t know what she thinks that is going to accomplish. I roll my eyes, walk over to the water feature, and watch the water rush down into the catch basin. I turn around and both of them are looking at me. “What?” I say quietly.

The woman responds. “We are ready for you.”

I turn to Harrison, searching his face for some kind of clue. “Are you going to tell me what we are doing here now?” I say softly so only he can hear.

“We are here to get a couple’s massage.” He smirks.

“Oh?” Hmm, I hope it is a normal massage and not one of those “special” ones where they walk on your back and swing you from the rafters. The last time I had a massage in a foreign country, I felt as if I was in training for Cirque de Soleil.

“You may change into a robe and stow your belongings in here,” says the receptionist, as she points to an open doorway. She turns to Harrison

and points to another room “And you may change in there.” When you are ready, meet me back out here, and I will show you to your treatment room.”

After I change, I lock away my things in a cubby, stashing the key in my robe. I head out to find my husband.

He is already waiting and looks hot as ever, standing there in a white spa robe and matching slippers. I shuffle over to him, wearing the same ensemble. “Okay, if you are ready, follow me.”

We follow the heavy-set, flirtatious gal to the treatment room. She opens the door to an even more dimly lit room. It smells of lavender and mint. There is a pan flute playing in the background and there are flower petals, perhaps roses, scattered about. The massage therapists are waiting for us by each bed. Once we are settled in, we spend the next hour and half relaxing and having our stress and troubles rubbed away.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

It's Christmas Eve and the house is bustling with activity. Harrison and I wrapped the gifts we bought yesterday when we returned from our massages. It was so relaxing at home that we opted to eat leftovers from the refrigerator and skipped going out to eat. After we wrapped everything, we had a sensual lovemaking session in his favorite location, the bathtub. We washed the massage oil residue off each other's bodies while we explored our sensual limits. After that amazing day and night, we both collapsed into bed.

It is another sunny but cold day outside, and I feel inspired to finish decorating the house. "Harrison, shouldn't we finish decorating the house and put up the tree today? Tomorrow is Christmas Day and where is Santa supposed to put his present for you? I stick my lip out in a fake pout.

He grabs me and throws me back onto the bed. "Just put a bow on like you did for my birthday, and we won't need a tree." He growls seductively into my ear. I feel my pussy get wet just from the thought of him unwrapping me like a present again.

I try squirm away from him. "Very funny. Now seriously, can we decorate the tree with my folks and Clarke today?"

He kisses me quickly, letting me out of his grip, "Of course *Cheri*, whatever makes you happy. I will ask Clara to get Samuel to help her get the decorations out of storage."

"Oh, I am so excited!"

After we eat a dinner of roasted herbed chicken and vegetables with a salad of greens, beets and goat cheese, we enjoy a traditional sweet called *Bûche de Noël*. I am told it is simply a sweet cake-like loaf. I notice that it is shaped like a Yule log, hence where it gets its name, I am guessing. With

the cake, we eat a divine creamy cheese, whose name I can't seem to pronounce very well, *Vacherin Mont d'Or*. Once I feel thoroughly stuffed to the point that I am wishing I had on stretchy pants, I suggest we decorate the tree. We manage to get the staff to help us decorate the rest of the room, leaving the tree for this evening.

“Harrison and I would love it if you would all join us in decorating our first Christmas tree together.” My parents are both beaming and Clarke looks to Garrin, who nods in agreement.

“Let's get to it.” Clarke rubs her hands together and heads over to the boxes of ornaments and trimmings. She begins pulling out the decorations and placing them on the floor. All of the baubles are placed so we can assess what we have to work with; we realize there is nothing but different sizes and shapes of balls. There are gold, silver, red, green and even pink balls, so we decide to load the tree down with a ball theme.

It does not take long to finish trimming the tree, and once we were done, we step away to admire our work. I noticed that the three women did the bulk of the work. I am not sure what, if anything, the men contributed. I look at the tree again and notice that the tree topper has not been placed. “Harrison, do you think there is a tree topper somewhere?”

“Yes, there should be. Let me look.” He digs through a couple of the boxes, producing a white box from which he removes a white angel. “And here it is!”

“Great, now can you put it on top for me?”

He pulls over the step stool that we were using and steps up to place the angel atop the tree. He steps down and goes behind the tree to plug in the lights. Voila, our first Christmas is lit.

I turn off the overhead lights, and we all sit down. Harrison cracks open a couple bottles of Barefoot Bubbly Extra Brut Champagne. My favorite. I didn't realize they have it up here. We toast to the tree, Christmas and family. That about covers it.

My parents disappear up the stairs to their room after an hour of laughing at funny Christmas mishaps of the past. Harrison and I are now alone, since Clarke left with Garrin to stay at his place for the night. I pull out a package that I had stowed in a cabinet by the fireplace. I hand it to Harrison. He looks at me and shakes his head. "Shouldn't we wait for tomorrow?"

"No, I want to give this to you when we are alone. I think now is a good time."

"Ok, then stay right here, I want to grab your present." He disappears through the archway. A few minutes later, he reappears with a small box in his hand and a huge smile on his handsome face.

"Okay sit, open mine first."

He picks up the flat package and tears the colorful paper, letting it drop to the floor. He studies it for a moment, runs his hands across the cover of the book, and then he looks at me, locking his crystal blue pools with mine. "This is beautiful." He opens it up to the inside of the cover and reads what I wrote.

Harrison,

To a man who seemingly has everything in life, but someone to share it with. I am humbled that you chose me to be your someone. This is the story of us in pictures, the best gift I could come up with for the man I love.

After he thumbs through the pages, he closes it, and without saying a word, he leans over and kisses me with a tenderness that I had not expected.

He takes my hand in his. "Someday I want to add children to this story, Danielle."

I melt and tingle at the same time. "I do too Harrison, someday. For now, I love it being the story of us!"

I glance down at the book he has placed on the sofa between us. On the front of the black leather-bound book, the words “Our Story” are embroidered in white.

I collected pictures of us off my phone and had them made into a hardbound book. The pictures date back to our trip to New York, when we first became lovers. Then the ribbon cutting ceremony, where we became public, and the gala in Hood River, where I learned of the sensitive and generous man that he is. I think of the time we took a picture of ourselves sitting on the wooden swing at the country house and our night of lovemaking at the Hollywood mogul’s house in Palm Springs. As the book continues, each picture shows a love story that has already weathered many storms and is emerging with a rainbow at the end. The end of this book is of Harrison and I kissing on the beach, just after we said our vows. With any luck and with the passage of a little time, I look forward to the book that says, “Our family.”

“*Mon Amore?*” He laughs. “Did I lose you to your thoughts again?”

“I’m sorry, I was just reflecting.”

‘Good, now open mine; although, I don’t’ know how I can compete with a book dedicated to our story.’

He hands me the little box wrapped in white glossy paper with a bright red satin ribbon tied loosely around it. I look up at him, knowing how he feels about red ribbons. He wiggles his eyebrows at me as if we just shared a thought.

After the ribbon and paper are stripped away, they reveal a white box with the words “Kensington’s Fine Jewelers Since 1975, Georgetown, Caymans” in a script font. I open the hinged box to reveal a beautiful ring to be worn on my right hand. A cocktail ring, of sorts. It is a white gold setting with a shiny black polished stone of some sort, alternating with pave diamonds. Harrison gently takes the box from me and removes the ring from its nesting place. He places it on my right hand on the second finger in

from the pinkie. “This is black coral, found in the Caymans. I had it specially made for you.”

I wrap my arms around his neck and give him a generous kiss. “Thank you, it’s simply gorgeous! When did you have it made? I don’t think we were apart from one another more than a half hour while we were there.”

He chuckles, “I have my ways.”

While still in an embrace, he whispers in my ear, “Merry Christmas *Mon Amore.*”

With my parents tucked away in bed and Simone gone for the night, Harrison and I make love under the mistletoe and the lights of the tree.

Christmas Day is lovely, with church service first thing in the morning, followed by brunch at the home of Harrison’s maternal uncle, or should I say, yet another mansion. I meet so many people of whom I am completely losing track. I cannot keep who is married to whom and whose kids belong where straight for the life of me. I am thoroughly exhausted and we still have the evening dinner at Harrison’s parent’s house. Before we left the house for church this morning, we exchanged gifts with my parents along with Garrin and Simone, who returned early to partake.

In the limo on the way to the Tower’s home, my dad is chatting away with Harrison and us ladies are left to discussing the status of wedding preparations. It is going to be a week full of wedding related activities, mixed in with a little fun. I am excited to get to my wedding day. The last ceremony was for us and no one else. This one is for our families.

The Towers welcome us into their amazing home with open arms. It is the largest mansion I have ever stepped foot into. Not that I have been in many. It is old world charm at its best, situated on a family estate on a body of water with its own private beach. It has a whopping thirty-seven rooms, nine of which are bedrooms and twelve bathrooms. The grand ballroom is where we will hold our wedding reception. After dinner and gifts, we are going get the tour of the ballroom, and then I will try on my dress in one of

the guest rooms. One of my favorite features that I have seen so far in this house is the iron scrollwork railing on the double staircases in the foyer.

We are shown into the large formal dining room and are seated around a large table with Mr. and Mrs. Towers at each end. The table seats eighteen, just like the old table in the manor house. The Christmas dinner is delicious and very French with a Succulent Goose, Ham, *Gratin Jurassien*, which are basically scalloped potatoes, Brussels sprouts in a lemon dill butter sauce, *Green Beans Provencale* with rosemary and shallots. For dessert, we have a variety of sweet cakes, candies and pies. I feel right at home at Harrison's side enjoying a family Christmas. He has been playing footsy with me most of the evening, and I find it to be so sweet and endearing. Mr. and Mrs. Towers suggest that we all move to the living room to sit around the tree and open presents. We all find new places to sit in the massive living room. I would have expected the room to be draft, but instead, it is warm from the fireplace and rather cozy. After we finish opening gifts from the Towers and our gifts to them, some of the family gathers by the grand piano to sing Christmas Carols. The children are excitedly dancing around the room, as Mr. Towers is playing the piano. I notice Harrison watching his family, and I see a look of contentment across his face.

Mrs. Towers motions for me to join her at the entrance to the living room. I walk over to her, she takes me by the arm, "Let's go look at the ballroom while everyone's attention is occupied. Let's get your mother and Miss Clarke to join us." She smiles warmly at me, and I return the gesture. I wander back in to fetch Clarke and my mom. I look over to where Harrison is standing and we lock eyes. He mouths, "I love you." Dear God, when he does that I feel weak each and every time. I am so blessed that this man, who makes me feel this way, is my husband. The man with whom I will be exchanging vows in front of our families in a less than a week. The man who will someday be father to my children. I mouth, "I love you too." He gives me his sexy smile, to which I doubt that I will ever be immune. I think to myself that I can't wait to get him back home, so I can screw his brains out. In the meantime, I need to collect the ladies so we can view the ballroom and look over my dress.

Chapter Thirty

It's Monday morning, and Harrison is heading in to town to meet with his attorney about obtaining a restraining order against Marion. I am trying very hard to not give her much thought. I have resolved that she is just a lunatic, and that Harrison and his family will take care of my safety. At times when I think about it, I no longer feel scared, but sorry for her. She was left at the altar, not once but twice. At least that is how her convoluted mind processes it. I think she needs mental help, a huge slap some on the face, and some time locked up. She needs to be held responsible for the pain and suffering that she has caused me.

Harrison called the security company, and they are coming to the mansion tomorrow to update the system. A locksmith is coming tomorrow to re-key all of the locks. Harrison hired two more guards who will patrol the premises throughout the night. He feels that since we are ignoring her threats, she will likely combust any day now, and he doesn't want to leave any holes in our armor. What is frustrating is that we still do not know if she really has hired someone to do something drastic to me. Thus, I am staying inside as much as possible. Once again, I feel like a prisoner. At least this is an exquisite place to be held up!

When I tried my wedding dress on, I was relieved that it fit fantastic and I couldn't have been happier. I just know that Harrison is going to love it on me! Mrs. Towers suggested that I get a second, less formal, dress to change into during the reception. Since the reception is also a New Years Eve gala, I should change into another dress once the cake has been cut. People will be ready to party. Clarke called around and is having a local dress designer that is jumping at the chance, bring a collection of dresses for me to try on here at the mansion. Harrison and I also haven't met with the minister who is officiating yet, so he is coming by later this afternoon to meet with us.

Mrs. Towers is using her event planner to handle all of the details of the wedding, including the rehearsal dinner. She has run a lot of ideas by me,

and has allowed me to be involved in the decision making. I figure since Harrison is her only child, I will let her take the reins. I also suspect it has enabled her to keep her mind off recent events involving the revelation that Garrin is her husband's son. I am sure that it still stings a bit, even though it was not a big surprise.

It's the morning of the rehearsal and my nerves are beginning to set in. I didn't feel like this when we got married in paradise, but I suspect it was because it was low key and just between us. This wedding has all the usual trappings, which include the rehearsal dinner tonight.

I hear a soft knock at my door and open it to find Clarke standing in front of me with a somber look on her face. I am alarmed, as she is usually so perky.

“What is it Clarke?”

“Is the mogul here?” She peers into the room looking for Harrison.

“No, he said he had some groom things he needs to take care of.” I roll my eyes and shrug my shoulders. “He should be back pretty soon, though. What do you need him for?”

She is shaking her head. “Oh, no I don't need him. I want to talk to you without him around. I finally shook your mom, but I don't know how much time we have before she tracks me down again. Seriously, I love her but she has been clinging to me the last couple days. I think it's her nerves or something.”

I giggle, “Sorry honey! I don't know what's gotten into her. She is making me a little crazy too! Every time a wedding present delivery shows up, she whips out her notepad to make notes of when it arrived and the description. I am not sure what she is doing that for, but it keeps her busy, I guess.”

“So, I heard from Bradley this morning.” She says with her back to me, as she heads over to a seat by the fireplace. I walk over and sit on the sofa

next to her.

“Ok...and?” My stomach does a flip-flop.

“Well, he wanted me to relay a message to you.”

“Is it something that is going to upset me? Why did you agree to speak with him anyway?”

She sighs, “It’s just pathetic actually. He texted me and asked me to wish you luck tomorrow. He said that he is sorry for everything and that he is moving back to Spokane, so you don’t have to worry about seeing him.”

I grunt, “Pfft. You are right! He is pathetic. At least he is smart enough to get the hell out of town. I hope I never see him again. You can relay a message back to him; tell him I said for him to go to hell!”

“Are you sure you want me to do that because I would so love to tell him that myself. I deleted him out of my phone, but he still has my number. I will figure out a way to block him before I send that last message.”

“You know, on second thought, Don’t send that message. Despite the low-life shit he has pulled, he did come forward at the risk of receiving Harrison’s wrath to warn us about Marion and her plans. I guess that counts for something.”

“What? One minute you are sending the guy to play poker with the devil and now you are playing harps and forgiving him. What the fuck, Dani?”

“Just tell him you relayed the message and that, while I appreciate it, he needs to move on with his life. I am gone from his life for good.”

“That sounds too soft, not enough oomph.”

“Ok well, you word it with some impact, but just make sure he understands there is to be zero contact from that point forward.”

With a sly smile, “I know just what to say,” She types on her phone. “Dani accepts your apology, doesn’t ever want to see you again. Now go get a life and leave us all alone.” Then she hits send.

“Well, I guess that takes care of him.” She says smugly. “What time are the ladies showing up from the spa for our pampering?”

“Oh! I completely forgot that we have them coming! I believe they will be here around 2 PM. They are giving us massages, seaweed wraps, and then doing our hair and makeup. We have to be at the church by 5:30 PM for the rehearsal.”

“Oh good, enough time for a nap, as long as your mom leaves me alone. Garrin is the ever ready bunny, he just keeps going all night long!” With that, she leaves the room.

I stand there in her wake. That was probably more information that I needed. Shaking my head, I look at the time. Hmm. maybe a nap is in order for me too. I lay down on my bed, hugging Harrison’s pillow to my chest. The smell of his spice market sent wafts into my nose, making me feel high on love. I drift into a delicious afternoon snooze.

The rehearsal at the old church goes off without any glitches. Now I am just hoping that tomorrow goes as well. We ran through where everyone will stand, what the minister will say to us and the exchange of vows and rings, then the minister will say his prayer and final blessings. It seems a little odd to be doing this all over again, but I know that I will forever be thankful that we did this to include our loved ones.

We all pile into the two black Hummer limos Harrison seems to prefer and head downtown to a swanky hotel that Mrs. Towers selected for this evening. I figure after a few rounds of the free flowing Towers Vineyard Private Reserve at dinner, the wedding party will most likely give slurred toasts revving up for tomorrow’s festivities.

Pulling up to the austere hotel, with international flags from Europe flapping in the chilly wind, I am both excited and nervous for the evening.

My nerves are simply on edge, I just don't feel right. I forget about my uneasiness the instant the door opens to the limo and I am hit with an arctic breeze. The wedding party and the ample bodyguards pile out of the limos, We are greeted by a man who introduces himself as the Hotel General Manager. He is welcoming us, while showing us into the warm, ornate lobby.

A staff of waiters are waiting with trays of champagne. I gratefully take several sips of the tasty bubbles, as we are ushered through the lobby. We escape the stares of other guests into a beautiful private dining room off to the side of the steak house. Our coats are taken and we are seated at three round tables, each seating eight people. I look around the room and notice that the bodyguards are nowhere to be seen. I lean to Harrison, "Where are the guards?"

"They are stationed outside this room. We should be secure in here." He leans over and kisses my forehead.

I look around the opulent room lit up by flickering candles on each table and chandeliers dripping with crystals. Everyone looks amazing in this lighting. I love how the stylists did my hair and makeup. We used this as a trial run for my hair and makeup tomorrow; though, I will wear my hair a little differently for the wedding and reception than tonight. I have my hair pulled back into a loose clip at the back of my head with soft waves throughout. They used a soft brown palette on my eyes, making the green pop, and a nude lined lip with a glossy center. They lined my eyes more than I am used to, but the results are very sultry. I chose to wear a long black, silky jersey knit dress that has a plunging v-neckline and a gold clustered necklace. It is a three quarter sleeve, so I wore a chunky gold cuff bracelet, and I topped it off with a set of large twisted gold hoop earrings. I feel very sexy tonight, and Harrison can hardly keep his eyes off me. But, of course, I can hardly keep my eyes off him either. He is wearing his slate blue, modern fitted suit that has the black piping around the lapel. He has a white button up shirt underneath with a black slim tie and Italian loafers. He smells like a freshly showered man, and I could just devour him now! I look down at his neatly manicured hands and love how the simple platinum ring looks on his finger. I reach down and trace my finger over the metal, feeling

how warm it is against his skin. He looks at me intently, leans over, and kisses my neck, sending chills down my spine.

“I wonder if anyone would miss us if we snuck into the coat room?” I whisper in his ear.

“Don’t tempt me. By the way, you look ravishing tonight. Too bad we are in separate quarters; otherwise, I would take you in any way I could. I want to rip that dress right off of you and do unspeakable things.” I can hardly hear what he is saying, as he is speaking in a hushed tone. But, I heard enough to feel my sex get wet as hell and my face and chest feel like they are on fire.

“Honey, are you okay? You look flushed?” Oh mom, now is not the time.

“Oh Donna, can’t you see the lovebirds need to get a room?” My dad blurts out. Whoa, maybe he should lay off the wine. I think it has already gone to his head.

I look over at Clarke, who clearly has her own intimate conversation in progress with Garrin. Just as the salads are being delivered, she looks up and catches me looking at her. She fans herself with her hand and then gives her attention back to Garrin.

The room is buzzing with conversation as smooth jazz music plays softly in the background. At one point, Harrison grabs my hand and kisses it. When I look up, I see Mrs. Towers watching us. I give her a tentative smile, and she gives me the same megawatt smile that Harrison hooked me with. She lifts her glass to me, I do the same to her, and we both take a drink, together, from across the room.

We are served the main course, consisting of steak and lobster with garlic and ginger mashed potatoes, mushrooms sautéed in a brandy sauce and a vegetable medley of carrots, green beans and pearl onions. The food is delicious, but my stomach has too many butterflies for me to eat. Despite my scarce appetite, I am having a lively conversation with Harrison’s cousin’s wife, Amelia. She is married to the cousin who was married to

Marion several years ago. Awkward, to say the very least. I try not to grill her about the Wine Witch, but my thoughts do keep returning to the thought that we are both with men who have Marion as their ex. The irony does not escape me, and I'm sure if we compared notes, it probably occurred to her as well. I found out that she has been married to Harrison's cousin for just over a year, and are already expecting their second child. A little too fast for my liking.

Once the dinner dishes are removed, the wait staff begins to serve a dessert of cherries jubilee, Harrison's favorite dessert. They wheel three carts out, one at each table. Set atop the cart is what appears to be a copper domed lid. When the lid is opened, it reveals the cherries in a flambé pan. They each light their pans and the flames shoot up in a dramatic blaze. Once the liquor burns off, they spoon the delicious cherries over house made vanilla bean ice cream.

Mr. Towers raises out of his seat and clinks his glass with a spoon, as the excited cheers and applause from the dessert show die down. He picks up his champagne glass and looks around the room. "Does everyone have a fresh glass? I'd like to propose a toast, if everyone could raise their glasses..." He is cut off by a voice coming from behind him.

"I Don't have a glass, would a bottle suffice?" The voice is clearly slurring. Mr. Towers turns around quickly, as he steps away from the table to reveal Marion, dressed in a wedding gown and chugging wine straight from the bottle.

You could probably hear a pin drop at this precise moment. The entire room is silent, I think everyone is holding their breath. I know I am. Harrison makes a move to get up, but Marion yells, "Stay there, or I will do something crazy."

"Shit, like you aren't already!" Clarke blurts out. Garrin is now on his feet along with men from other tables. Marion takes another swig of her wine, and then looks straight at me and points. Her face is askew, "You! Because of you, my life is ruined! Harrison belongs to me not you. **YOU STOLD HIM FROM ME AND I WANT HIM RETURNED.....NOW!!!**

She is screaming this at the top of her lungs, with veins sticking out in her forehead and neck. As she throws her head back and takes another swig of her wine, I hone in on the dress she is wearing. I cannot believe my eyes, it's MY dress.

As if Clarke and I had a mind meld, she seemed to notice it at the same time. "Hey wait! That woman is wearing your dress, Dani!"

"That's right and I plan to walk down the aisle with it on tomorrow at MY wedding." She grabs a stray steak knife from the table near Mrs. Towers. I hear several gasps as she shouts, "I said stay back!" Once again, her veins are popping out of her forehead, and she is waving the steak knife around as if to underline her command.

I am standing next to Harrison. I can feel that he is about ready to pounce, but he holds back, as she is standing way too close to his mother for all of our comfort with that knife.

"What do you want Marion?"

She laughs in a hideous cackle, "Isn't it obvious? I want you my darling. It's not fair that you married that tramp after all that I have done for you. Don't you remember when we were kids you promised you would marry me when we grew up?"

"Come on Marion, we were kids. If you remember, I was also going to run for Prime Minister. Now, put the knife down and let's talk like civilized *adults*." Just as he said that, Lance comes barging into the room, which sends Marion into a tizzy.

"Get him out of here, or so help me I will use this!" She is now holding the knife to the side of Mrs. Towers' neck."

In a calm and soothing voice, Harrison holds his hand out, "You don't want to do that Marion. Your mother would be very cross with you if you hurt her best friend."

Marion spats at the floor, and then with a crazed look in her eye, “Fuck my mother. I could care less what she thinks. Besides, I didn’t come for sweet Yvonne, I came for that slut.” She points the knife right at me. She then lowers the knife and starts to cut at the dress with the serrated edge.

I steal a quick glance over at Clarke and Garrin. He is slowly moving toward the Towers’ table when she looks up from the shreds. “Stay put Garrin. You think this family is going to accept the handsome bastard son? Think again! You will never measure up, so don’t bother trying to be the hero.” She cackles.

Mr. Towers turns quickly to grab the knife out of Marion’s hand when she jabs at him and cuts his finger. He yells out in pain, but keeps grabbing for the knife. “Stop Mr. Towers, this does not concern you. You better back off, or I will hurt your precious wife and the slut your stupid son married.”

While I am transfixed on this crazed madwoman, it occurs to me so is everyone else. Nobody can do anything. It is as if we have to let this play itself out. My mother looks as if she might pass out. My dad is strategizing on how to get to her. I am surprised that the guards haven’t storm trooped the room from the other entries. I am guessing they are ready to pounce once they can do it without one of us being harmed.

Marion turns back to our table and fixes her sights on her ex-husband and Amelia. “Oh, look another slut who has wormed her way into the Towers family. Did you get yourself knocked up to trap him? He was a lousy lay and not as ambitious as my man anyway. You can have him.” She turns her attention back to Harrison, giving him a drunken lick of her lips. My God, this woman *does* deserve to be locked up. She shakes herself and then looks at me.

“Stand up, skank. Who would have thought we would wear the same size in a dress. I have to thank you, I burned my last dress, but this will serve as a fine replacement. Imagine my delight when the old key I used to enter through the servants entrance at the old Towers estate allowed me access to this wedding finery. Now, all I need is my groom, and I will be on my way.”

“Enough, Marion. We have allowed you to ruin our evening far too long. What the hell do you think you are doing wearing my wife’s wedding dress and coming here drunk, wielding a knife at my mother. Do you think after all that I will want you?”

She stops picking at the crystals on the bodice and looks up at Harrison, who has managed to take a few steps away from our table without her noticing.

“Do you? Do you want me now that you see what a beautiful bride I make? See. I can be the demure bride too.” She takes her hands and cups them under her chin while batting her eyelashes.

I hear Clarke hiss from the other side of our table, “She is bat shit crazy! Why is everyone just sitting here doing nothing? She is one damned person, and there are twenty four of us! Get her!” She points to Marion as the entire room starts to roar. Marion realizes that she is outnumbered. As she waves the knife through the air clearing a path to our table, I feel Harrison moving to shield me.

I have had enough. This woman is going down. I am sick of being her victim and the dark cloud that she has put over my head for the last six months. I will not take this anymore, she had me marked for dead, and I will not let her take anymore of my life away from me.

I push past Harrison, and with a burst of adrenalin, I lunge forward and snatch the steak knife out of her hand. The collective gasp was palpable and it urged me on.

“You have had your say. Now is your turn to listen to me!”

She spats at me and screams. “Like hell I will, you home wrecking tramp! You wouldn’t even be here if that damned asshole had finished the job in the woods.” She laughs, “I mean what a complete idiot, all he had to do was give you one more blow to the head and your pretty little face would be six feet under by now!” She continues to confess her atrocities toward me in a sickening ramble, but I stop listening.

At that point, all the commotion behind me has become a blur and everything is now in slow motion. I feel as if I am in a horror movie. All I can focus on is this wicked sicko standing before me. I am ready to unleash.

I take the knife and hold it up to her. She stops; everyone stops.

I hear people hollering my name and the sounds of sirens getting close, but it all becomes silent as the only thing I can hear is my heartbeat in my ears.

With my face less than a foot away from hers, “You are wrong Marion, I did win, Harrison is mine. Now back off bitch!”

I step back and lower the knife. Just as I do, she dumps the rest of the red wine from the bottle she was holding all over the front of *my* wedding dress.

She cackles in my face. I gasp. And then I **slap** her hard.

The doors throw open and police storm the room, putting her in handcuffs and taking her out, while she continues spewing all kinds of venom.

I look up at Harrison as he slowly takes the knife from my hand and sets it on the table.

“Is it over? Is she gone, are they hauling her away?”

He has his arms around me now, and I feel safe in his embrace. I finally feel *safe*.

Chapter Thirty-One

The clock says midnight, and I can't sleep. It's the night before our family ceremony, and you would think that I wouldn't have butterflies, since we are already married. What an adventure the last few months have been! I grab a glass of water from the bathroom. Oh, Shit! I completely forgot to give Harrison the coin from Simone's mother to carry in his pocket tomorrow for good luck. I am just dying not being able to sleep with Harrison, or even lay next to him the night before our wedding. We are already married; it is odd not having him by my side. I really will not get a restful night of sleep alone.

Oh, brilliant! What a perfect excuse to see him! I grab my bathrobe and secure the satin tie. Wait, I have a better idea. I remove my nightgown and panties, put on my sexy heels, and then put the bathrobe around me and tie it up. I grab the piece of metal and slip it in my pocket. Yes! He is going to love this little midnight treat! I am craving my husband so bad; I hope I don't get caught sneaking out.

I open the door and tip toe down the stairs. I glance to make sure that the security system is armed. I go to the panel and punch in the code. I walk through the great room to the glass doors, unlock one of the doors, and walk quickly to the guesthouse.

I knock on the door and wait. Nothing! I knock again, gently so not to wake anyone else up.

"Good God, Harrison, it's freezing out here. Open the door please!"

"Danielle, what is"

I push the door open and throw my hands around his neck.

"Shhh, don't say a word," I put my finger up to his lips.

Damn, he looks fine. He is wearing nothing but his boxer briefs on that chiseled body of his. I swear I can almost cum just from looking at him.

Harrison swings the door closed with his hand, and I push him back up against the wall. This evening made me so tense, and I really need to shake this pent up energy.

With his back to the wall, I attack his luscious lips. Biting at his lower lip drives him insane. Our bodies pressed against each other, I can feel his hard cock through his briefs. He smells good enough to devour. Something about a man that wears cologne and nothing else makes my body start craving sex. Harrison spins me around and slams me up against the wall. He can't take it, and neither can I. His hands grip my hips and he pulls me closer, as his tongue explores every inch of my mouth, then travels to my neck. My head slams back against the wall when he works his tongue over my neck. His hands slide up and down my silk robe. He unties my robe, allowing it to flow loosely from my shoulders. Harrison Gasps!

“Jesus, you are beautiful. Your body is just made for me, Danielle.”

“Harrison, I need you inside me.”

He grabs both of my wrists and throws my hands above my head. He starts running his tongue down my neck as he squeezes my breasts and takes one at a time in his mouth. He reaches down, and his hands glide up and down my thighs, as he kisses me violently. His hand moves to my soaking pussy as he starts to rub on the outside.

“Fuck, Danielle, I want you so bad.”

He slips one finger deep inside me and pulls out. He repeats that move a number of times, and I can't take the teasing any more.

He lifts me up and places me on the entry table, with my back against the mirror on the wall. He gives me that I-am-going-to-fuck-your-brains-out, look.

Down he drops to his knees, grabs my ass hard, and pushes my hips into his face, fucking me with that skilled tongue of his. This is hot. My body is tingling with pleasure as he has me almost on the verge of cumming.

“I want to ride your cock, Harrison. I need to fuck the hell out of your hard cock.”

He peeks up to look at me. I smile at him, his tongue still in me.

I push his head away from my pussy. I slide off the table. I turn around and lean over, sticking my ass in his direction. I peek around and catch the smile on his face. That look alone is enough for me to know what he is thinking. He grabs my hips from behind and leans into my ear, “You naughty, naughty girl. You want to be fucked hard tonight don’t you?”

Yes please! God you have no idea, just give it to me hard.

I smile and lean harder into the table, bracing myself. I love how my high heels give me an extra bit of height to stretch from which to stretch downward. The perfect angle. Harrison holds me tight with one hand, as he guides his length into me with the other. Slowly, he opens up my pussy and gently guides his cock inside. Ahhhh, I let out a throaty moan. Having the mirror in front of me, makes it even hotter because we can look at each other. It adds to the erotic mood that I am in tonight. He fucks me slow and long. Deep strokes that fill me up. I bite my bottom lip, as I drop down to my chest and hold on tight. He picks up speed. I look in the mirror and we lock eyes. He bites his lip, which sends my body into spasms. He sweeps my hair into a low ponytail with his hand and pulls on it. The roughness of him fucking me, and the control he has on my hair, is so erotic. Just take me now. Harder. Faster. Fuck me good. I scream out in pleasure, and now I am ready to cum again. Harrison pulls out.

“I want you to finish on top of me. I want you to fuck *me*, Danielle.”

Oh, yes! Just what I need! I need to ride his cock till he can’t breathe anymore. I push him back onto the chair behind him. I climb on top, while pushing my breasts in his face. He works them by grabbing both and

placing them in between his face and then he takes one at a time into his mouth. I drop down and grab his hard length. I begin swirling the head on the outside of my wet lips. Teasing his cock and getting him ready. I swear, after all that has happened tonight, I need a massive release. I slide the rest of him inside of me as I grip onto his shoulders. Harrison lets out a rough groan as he grabs my ass tightly. I ride his cock hard and fast, as my breasts bounce out of control. He squeezes them tight, as he feels my body tensing up. I am so ready to cum, but I just want to fuck him longer. I try to hold my orgasm back, but this is too erotic. I bring him close to my chest and lean into his ear, “I need to cum Harrison, I want to cum all over you.”

Harrison grabs my hips harder, and he starts ramming his cock into me, his hips now meeting mine.

“Jesus, Harrison. Fuck me just like that. Yes!”

I can feel him preparing to cum as well. That warm feeling and electric vibe fill my entire pussy. I can feel myself clench around him, preparing for his release. I begin to cum, as my body sends electric waves of pleasure all over my body. I throw my head back and scream with pleasure. I yell out his name and ride him harder. Harrison shudders and drives deeper into me, releasing his load. He lets out a low moan that hits me to the core. We are trembling in each other’s arms, riding out the aftershocks.

I jump out of my sleep and look at the clock. It is 4:30AM! Shit! We must have crashed out after that amazing fuck session. I feel amazing, that release was exactly what I needed. I know this is silly, but I should head back to my bed before everyone wakes up. Oh, yes! The Italian good luck coin!

I roll out of Harrison’s embrace and grab my robe. I fetch the piece of metal and place it on the nightstand.

I lean on the bed and kiss Harrison on the lips.

He awakes right away. “Where are you going *mon amore?*”

“Harrison its 4:30AM; I have to get back into my room before everyone is awake.”

“That is a good plan. I am so glad we were together all night, Mrs. Towers. I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way. I love you.”

“I love you Harrison. Now get some sleep.” He grabs my hand and pulls me into him again. He kisses me long and passionately, as though he never wants to let me go.”

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Chapter Thirty-Two

I actually feel as if I need one of those barf bags they have on airplanes. I am so nervous. I would not have thought that I would be this worked up. It is so different from our wedding in the Caymans. There, it was so relaxed and low-key. This wedding is turning out to be nothing of the sort.

We pull up to the old church at exactly 5:45 PM. I see that people are already here, and still arriving. The white stretch limo pulls up to the side entrance, so I can slip in to the bridal staging room. I am ready to go, and I just need to slip into my dress and walk down the aisle. My dad is riding in the men's stretch Hummer limo. My mom and Simone exit the limo first, and then Mrs. Towers and I make our way out. We head into the side door, and I notice security everywhere. My nerves get the better of me, and I feel as if I am going to be sick. I run into the building, then into the bridal suite. I find the toilet and slam the door behind me. I throw up everything in my stomach, and then some. Shit! Now I have to re-do my makeup and brush my teeth. Oh, Lordy!

After I regain my composure and clean myself up, I find the ladies standing in the middle of the room with bewildered looks on their faces.

“Don't worry, ladies, I am fine; my nerves are just wreaking havoc on my stomach. One look at the security detail and I panicked! Ok, let's fix this, “I wave my hand around my face. “Then let's get this show on the road!”

With everyone's help, I step into my gown. It is not the dress in which I wanted to marry Harrison. Marion made certain to leave a lasting mark on this wedding. I pull the new dress up and Simone zips, fastens and laces me into my dress. I turn around to show the others and they all start in with the tears. Good, I was hoping this dress would have some kind of impact. The dress I am wearing is the one that I selected from the local bridal designer, who came to the house this past week. This dress was originally to be my

second dress for the reception, now it is my wedding dress. Luckily, I also have a cocktail dress to change into later for the New Years Eve bash.

“Oh, Dani, I just love that dress on you.” Clarke gushes and my mom simply nods with tears in her eyes.

The dress is a pale silver silk. It’s, strapless with a ruched bodice. The bottom part is trumpet style, which hugs all my curves in the right places. A cluster of flowers in the same fabric sits at my hip. The back of the dress is a corset lace-up style. The entire dress is encrusted with hand-sewn crystal, making me look like an ice princess. I am wearing a sheer, lightweight veil that goes to my waist. The dress goes to the floor, but has small hitches to pull up the front revealing my Valentino open toe pumps in white satin, with crystal stones. I have on a simple bling bracelet and matching necklace. I am also wearing the earrings Harrison gave me in the Caymans. I have not taken the earrings off since he gave them to me! To finish the look, I add the clip that belonged to Harrison’s grandmother to my hair. It is swept back into a loose side swept chignon. The veil covers the clip now, but when I take the veil off, it will be visible.

Mrs. Towers is unzipping a small black cloth garment bag. She takes out a white stole, “Danielle, I want you to borrow this tonight. I wore this over my dress at my wedding, and I would be thrilled if you would wear this.”

I take it from her, “I would be honored to wear this.” She helps me into the stole and I feel as if I look like a million bucks. “Thank you so much for all you have done for me. I am so blessed to be welcomed into your family.”

She grabs me into a brief, but heartfelt, hug. “Now, let’s not keep my son waiting, shall we?”

“Mom, before I forget, thank you so much too for all of your support and help. I love you.”

“Oh honey, your father and I are so proud of you.” She starts to cry, and without missing a beat, Clarke hands her the tissue box.

I start to say something to Clarke, but she puts her hand up. “Stop, before you say anything, I know. I love you too. Now, let’s get you re-hitched!”

I eye her in the short gold stretch satin dress. It is sleeveless with an asymmetrical neckline. She is one hot little red head! I swat her little butt, as she leads us out of the room. She wiggles her hind end in response.

We step out into the hallway one minute after six. ‘Well done’ I think to myself, finally on time for something.

I notice the security detail, and it makes my stomach flip. I know she is behind bars, but as she was being hauled out last night, she was still spewing threats. I pray that this day can be free of Marion’s antics and that someday we will be able to live our lives without a team of security following our every move.

I take a deep breath as we stand at the doorway, waiting to receive our cue. My father comes to stand beside me, as Garrin escorts the mothers down the aisle. Even though the amount of security we have is overwhelming, I decide to ignore it. In life, there are always risks and threats to one’s safety or happiness. The only thing we can do is decide if we are going to let those threats, seen or unseen, real or imagined, paralyze us. Or, if we are going to forge ahead to stake our claim on happiness. That is what I choose to do. Even with Marion behind bars, she may be able to pose a threat, but if I don’t embrace the man I love and the future we have promised each other, then she wins. I won’t have it.

The music is cued, the guests stand, and I step forward with my father at my side, to marry the man of my dreams.

Chapter Thirty-Three

“Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to announce, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Giles Towers. Can we have a round of applause for the happy couple?” The exuberant MC announces as we entered the ballroom.

I hear a very loud voice from behind, which I instantly recognized as belonging to Clarke. I feel a little trepidation as she screeches, “It’s time to partaaaay!!” Look at this place, Danners, my gosh this is amazing! Wow, you really did well marrying into this family!” She must have had three glasses of champagne in the limo ride here. I will ask Harrison to see that Garrin handles pacing her alcohol consumption.

She is right though, the ballroom and all of its opulence is amazing. I look around the room and realize that this winter-wonderland themed reception is much, much more than I could have imagined. Mrs. Towers told me of her plans and we discussed the details; however, this is far exceeds everything I imagined. The walls are draped with panels of sheer white and silver organza. The chandeliers have white branches laced through them, with crystals hanging in varying lengths. The tables are set with white linen tablecloths and sheer silver organza table scarves. Mirrors run through the middle of the tables with fairy lights twinkling in little mercury glass holders. Scattered about the tables are small mercury glass bud holders, filled with white roses that have been hand-painted with silver leaf around the edges. Subtle, matte gold accents, like finely ground gold leaf, are scattered on the mirrors. The centerpieces are simple, but high-impact with tall clear vases set in the middle of the mirror runners. Silver-painted branches dripping with gems and crystals jut out high above the tables. White roses of various varieties sit in the center of the branches. Silver chargers with glittery silver place cards complete the look. Scattered throughout the room are crystal gem trees in silver and gold along with white floral topiaries in gilded urns. The small round cake table is draped with a simple silver tablecloth and sparkling gems scattered about. The

white three-tiered cake is decorated with the initial T on the side in silver and hand-painted silver leaf on white roses wrap around the luscious layers

“Oh Harrison, this is just breathtaking!”

“Not as breathtaking as you are! My love, you take my breath away!” He licks his lips.

I lean up and kiss him on those beautiful lips. “Mmm, a hint of what’s to come later?”

“After this long day, I wish we could escape now! It’s a shame that I have another five hours until I can take that dress off you, unless you would care to sneak off now?!”

“You, Mr. Towers, are a scoundrel!”

He smirks, “Yes and what’s your point? I’m pretty sure you wouldn’t have it any other way *mi amore*.”

We make our way through the crowds of people shaking hands, kissing both cheeks, and I never take my eyes off my loving husband.

The exuberant MC announces that it is time for us to take our seats and that dinner will be served momentarily. Harrison and I sit at a small table at the front of the room. Behind us is the bank of windows overlooking the water. Outside, the wrap-around terrace is lit up with candles and lanterns, creating a romantic background to our wedding dinner.

The waiters bring out the first course of salads. I am not hungry from all the excitement, but I manage to eat a few bites while watching everyone at their tables. It strikes me that I feel like the queen of the ball tonight. I am still wearing my wedding dress, such that it is. However, as soon as that cake is cut, I will slip into a little party number, so I can dance the night away with my love.

Our main course of beef wellington is served with roasted potatoes covered in brown sauce, and braised asparagus with a lemon caper sauce. I pick at my food, but eat enough so as to not raise Harrison's eyebrow. Once dessert is served, of little chocolate soufflés with blood orange sauce, I begin growing restless. I feel isolated sitting here at the table. I can hear Clarke happily chattering away with the lady sitting next to her. I giggle to myself; goodness knows what that poor woman is having to endure.

Harrison refills our wine glasses and helps me up to mingle with our guests. I can tell the band is about to start playing. I am told that a DJ will be heading up the New Year's dance party soon. I find it odd that nobody gave any speeches or toasts during dinner. They must come later.

While we work our way through the crowds of people, I find my mom and dad.

"Ah good, hey, Dani, can I steal your husband for a minute?" My dad looks so handsome in his tuxedo and my mom is a vision of elegance.

"Of course, dad, but don't keep him too long!" Harrison bends down, kisses my forehead, and they wander off to a corner. I turn back to my mom, who is beaming.

"So honey, we did it, we got you married and though the road to getting here had a lot of dips and curves, you made it! I am so proud of you honey. I want nothing but happiness for you and lots of grandbabies...soon!"

"Yes, well, I have a feeling that will come sooner than you think." I wink at her.

"Are you saying what I think you are saying?"

"NO! Cool your jets...that's not what I was getting at, I just think that if Harrison gets his way, we will be starting a family soon." I smile, "You will make a fantastic Nana when the time does come. Now, let me enjoy being a newlywed and no more talk of adding more to my plate just yet." We hug

and then I feel a tap at my shoulder. I turn around and see an excited and tipsy Clarke.

“When are you going to cut the cake?”

“Soon I think, why? Are you hungry for cake?” I am puzzled.

“No silly bride, I thought you were changing into your party dress to get this place rockin’!” Oh no, she’s had one too many already.

“Mom, can you take Simone over to the beverage table and see if we can get her something to sober her up?”

“Whaaat?? I don’t need to sober up, I’m just getting started.” She does a little wiggle, which I assume was an attempt at a dance move. Her heel catches and she would have slid on her butt, if my husband didn’t have impeccable timing. He caught her just as she was about to go. She is clearly embarrassed. Turning to my mom, she says, “maybe I will take you up on that coffee.” Then, turning to me, “This is your night, and I certainly don’t want to ruin it. I’ll pace myself better.”

“Hey Prince Gallant, thanks for the save.” She pats Harrison on the shoulder as she walks with my mom to seek out some caffeine.

Laughing, we grab each other’s hands and walk over to where his parents are sitting. On our way, I inquire about the conversation he had with my father. “Listen, we can talk later about that. I don’t want to darken our evening.” I look at him with my eyebrows arched. “Ok, he just wanted to make certain we had things covered for the rest of the night in terms of safety. And...he wanted to welcome me into the family officially and told me to call him Dad from now on.”

With excitement and happiness coursing through my veins, I wrap my arms around Harrison and give him a squeeze. This has been the most magical day so far, and it only seems to get better. It is amazing to me how far we have come. When I first met this man, he was aloof, cold, and controlling. My attraction to him and the chemistry between us was

undeniable, but I could never have fathomed that in less than six months, I would be sharing his bed and his name.

“What are you thinking about *mi amore?*”

I feel a warm blush rushing down my face and neck. I pull him away from his parents’ table, to the corner where the band is setting up. “I was just thinking about how fate has put us together, but maybe it’s simply our destiny. All of this was meant to happen. You were meant to happen...”

Before I finish, he takes my face into his hands and kisses me passionately, as if we are the only two people on the planet.

“Ahem. I hate to interrupt, but perhaps we should have you cut the cake now? I think people are ready to dance.” A little agitated by the interruption, we both look over to see his sweet mother.

I instantly melt, she is such a lovely person, and I feel so blessed that his family has welcomed me into their fold.

“Sounds great!” We follow her to the cake table and the MC announces that we are cutting the cake.

We feed each other little morsels of the delicious sweet cream cake with lemon and raspberry filling. I look around the room, and Clarke catches my attention. She waves for me to join her. It’s time to change into my party dress and dance the night away with my husband.

“Be right back, lover.”

He licks his lips as I turn to follow Clarke. Gah. Wish I could just shove him in a coat closet and do dirty things to him right now!

I follow Clarke up a set of back stairs to the room that was prepared for me to use as a dressing room. She loosens the corset laces on the back of my dress, and I let it fall to the ground. I shimmy into a short little number that has a one-shoulder neckline. It has a jersey nude underlay and sexy

beading in gold and silver ombre, with a fringe-beaded skirt. I twirl around in the mirror and love how the beads flow around my legs.

“You are not done just yet; here, let me help you.” Clarke pulls some of the pins out of my hair and it tumbles down my back. She re-situates the clip from Harrison’s grandmother. We both touch up our lips and check out our appearances. “Sizzling hot!” She swats me on my butt on her way out, “Coming?” I nod and grab the fur stole that Mrs. Towers lent me for the evening.

Back in the ballroom, I can tell the band is finishing their set. I think it is about time that Harrison and I have our first dance to kick off the rest of the night. The younger people are ready for dance music. The band was playing waltzes and other old-fashioned pieces to which the rest of us just don’t know how to move.

I walk into the ballroom, looking for my husband. I spot him amongst a group of men and women chatting animatedly. He looks at me and then does a double take. I see him excuse himself. He saunters over to where I am standing. He grabs me, twirls me around, and then holds me in an embrace while planting a kiss on me that makes me weak in the knees. “My God, Mrs. Towers, you get more beautiful by the minute. I could devour you right here on the dance floor!”

As usual, I think I may swoon; instead, I look over at my new mother-in-law who is watching us intently. I nod to her, and she goes over to the DJ, who announces our first dance. The room parts, clearing the center of the dance floor for us. The DJ plays the perfect song, “Everything” by Michael Buble. We hold each other close, he spins me around and even dips me a couple times. The crowd roars when he picks me up at the end and we kiss. It is simply perfection. I have never been so happy in my life, and I don’t want this moment to end.

“Okay, everyone join the happy couple on the dance floor and show us your moves!” That DJ should be a radio announcer with his animated, baritone voice.

I feel Clarke's hands on my shoulders, and I can already tell she is ready to let it roll. The DJ runs us through the typical dance fare, from Beyonce's 'Single Ladies' to the 'Electric Slide.' I toss the bouquet, and much to Clarke's disappointment, some tween catches it. We opt not to do the garter toss; I find that ritual gauche. I see Clarke break out some moves that I had no idea she possessed. I half expect her to plunk down on the floor and do the worm. To my relief, she did not. We dance with aunts, uncles, my parents, and Harrison's parents. My feet are throbbing in my Valentino pumps, and I am dying of thirst.

The DJ is announces that the fireworks show is about to begin.

Harrison walks up to me with a gleam in his eye. "I am ready for some alone time. Come with me."

I slip back into the fur stole that Mrs. Towers lent me and follow Harrison up a small set of stairs, and down a long, dimly lit corridor. Up and away from the revelers. I look back over my shoulder, wondering if anyone saw us leave the party.

We duck into a velvet-draped doorway. He unlatches a lock and throws open the pained-glass doors to reveal a Juliet balcony with a metal balustrade. The arctic blast of air whips my hair around my head and flutters the beads on my skirt. Harrison and his perfectly messy hair doesn't seem affected by the breeze. He hands me a champagne glass and fills it from the bottle of bubbly he had tucked under his arm as we left the ballroom.

With our glasses full and the bottle on the floor, we stand in the doorway to watch the impressive fireworks show over the lake. As the music wafts up from the ballroom, it seems to be in time with the fireworks show. The display becomes more massive as the music becomes more intense. I wager that the New Year is but moments away. Standing in front of Harrison, with his arms circling around me, and feeling his heart beating against my back, I feel that our hearts are in sync as one. I turn to look at him. His handsome face is lit up by the exploding lights in the sky, my life is complete. He fills the empty part of me and makes me whole.

I am overcome with emotion as I lift my face to his and look deeply into his soul. What I see in his eyes, is my future, my soul melding with his. We set our glasses down as I hear distant voices cheering and whistling as the New Year nears.

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3...2...1...HAPPY NEW YEAR! Then we hear the party goers break into the usual New Years song.

“Happy 2012 *mi amore*.”

I smile and feel tingly, “Happy New Year my love.”

He leans down, and we ring in the brand new year and new life together, with a passionate kiss.

When we finally break away and the fireworks have faded, he takes my hand in his, looks deep into my eyes and whispers, “Danielle, my love, I surrender to you.”

La Fin.