



undercover
OBSESSION
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Chapter One

Switzerland

“Happy birthday!”

Eighteen year old Piper Winters grinned at her roommate, Kathy, who was sitting cross legged on her bed, a gaily wrapped package in her hand and a wide smile on her face. “Thanks, Kathy.” Eyeing the package and her best friend, Piper felt her pulse accelerate as she wondered what surprise Kathy had for them this time. For close to a year now, ever since being paired together in their dorm for their senior year at St. Francis of Assisi’s private, all-girls school in Switzerland, Kathy had made it her mission in life to educate Piper in all the areas she felt her new roommate was lacking. And most of those areas were in the category of sex. Crossing the room to her own bed, she started to sit down when Kathy stopped her with a shake of her blonde head and the quick removal of her tee shirt.

Raising a dark brow, Piper glanced at Kathy’s naked breasts, her nipples already puckered into stiff, excited peaks and inquired dryly, “You have to be topless for me to open my gift?”

Laughing, Kathy shimmied out of her jeans without getting off the bed, saying, “No, dork, we have to be naked before you open it because I got one for me too, so hurry up and catch up.”

It had taken some cajoling and coaxing on Kathy’s part to get Piper relaxed enough to parade around their room naked in front of her, but after the first few times, Piper had discovered how liberating shucking her more reserved nature was and had quickly grown to enjoy both the freedom and the sensuality being so open gave her. Prior to their senior year, all the students at St. Francis were housed in dorm rooms holding five bunk beds and took turns using a communal hall bathroom, which made given a private room and bath with just one roommate their senior year something to really look forward to.

Piper felt her pussy moisten as she stripped off her top and jeans and settled on her own bed. “You know we’ll be expelled if we’re caught watching porn again,” she warned her friend as she reached up and lightly ran her finger over her soft nipple, enjoying the way it puckered within seconds, the tingle of pleasure she gave herself causing even more cream to fill her pussy.

Kathy tossed the gift across to Piper then laid back against her propped up pillows, spread her thighs and casually cupped her pussy. “It’s not porn, but we’d probably get expelled if we’re caught using our gifts, so we’ll need to be quiet when we come.”

Piper couldn’t help it, she giggled like a kid as she tore into her package, wishing she was as comfortable with her body as Kathy was with hers. Maybe if she was five foot seven and weighed barely one ten instead of five foot three and was topping one fifty she would be as easy about exposing herself as Kathy was. Being short, it was easier to put on the pounds and it didn’t help that she ate almost constantly when she was upset, stressed or unhappy, and lately, her adoptive father’s evasiveness about allowing her to attend college in the states so she could be closer to him hadn’t done anything to keep her from raiding the vending machines nonstop.

Opening her present to find a thick, eight inch, real as life dildo had her quickly shoving all thoughts of Charles and her overweight body aside. “Holy shit, Kath, will it fit?”

Laughing, Kathy grabbed her own gift to herself from under her pillow. “Of course it will, silly. We’ve both seen how easily those large cocks fit in the movies we watched before they were confiscated.”

“Those women had had sex plenty of times and were stretched to accommodate them! We’re not!” Even though there were coed dances as well as sports activities throughout the year, the students had very little chance or opportunity to be alone with the opposite sex, one of the reasons most of them were at this exclusive, expensive school. For Piper, it was a common sense solution when Charles Sandoval suddenly found himself the sole guardian of her following her mother’s sudden death in an accident when she was eight. Even though Christine Winters and Charles weren’t married, her mother didn’t have any other family and he had agreed to the stipulation in her will.

“So we’ll have to take it slow. What’s your hurry as long as you get to come?”

She had a point, Piper thought. “Okay, but if it hurts, I’m going back to using my fingers.”

“Eventually, we’ll be able to combine our fingers with the dildo. Now, get to work. First one to achieve full penetration and orgasm gets the shower first.” Which they both knew meant only lukewarm water for the one unlucky enough to lose.

The two of them had been openly exploring their bodies for months now, so neither was embarrassed about masturbating together, but Piper had always secretly gotten off at knowing someone was watching. She didn't know if that was a normal response or if she was just weird, so she kept that little fact to herself. Since there was no way she'd expose her overweight body to a man, let alone if someone else was in the room just to watch, she enjoyed the added pleasure having an audience gave her now.

Piper mimicked Kathy, propped her pillows up and leaned back, preparing to ignore her unsightly overly round body and simply bask in how it made her feel. Her breasts were as large as the rest of her, but her nipples were so sensitive she always spent time with them first. Using her palms, she rotated her hands over the erect buds, the constant circular motion eliciting sharp spasms of pleasure that sped directly to her already aching sheath. Closing her eyes, she pretended it was a man touching her, hard fingers grasping her nipples and pinching them to the point of discomfort. Moaning, she twisted her nipples slightly then pulled tautly before releasing them with a plop. Opening her eyes, she saw both nipples were red and swollen, throbbing in pleasure. Again she took them between her fingers, only this time she watched as she alternated between light pressure and harder twists until her vagina was spasming in neglected complaint. She kept telling herself she was going to take her time and see if she could orgasm from nipple stimulation alone, but she was always too impatient to complete that experiment. When she felt her slick juices seeping from her pussy, she picked up the dildo and lowered it between her spread legs, the feel of the smoothly rounded head so different from her smaller, narrower fingers. When it slid easily between her swollen lips, she gasped in startlement.

“Are you getting anywhere?” Kathy asked in obvious frustration.

Piper looked over to see her friend red faced as she held just the head of her dildo at the entrance of her vagina, still unable to slip it in. “I took some time with the girls before I went straight for the pleasure button.” When Kathy stuck her tongue out, she countered dryly, “I'll let you know after this experiment if you're my type.”

Laughing, Kathy quipped, “You do that,” before taking her advice and giving some attention to her nipples.

As wet as Piper was, she was still struggling to get the fat dildo much further, so she rooted out her clit and proceeded to work up more moisture

by rubbing the rounded head against her swollen bud. “Oh, God,” she moaned as the immediate pleasure swamped her. Fighting the urge to just let go, wanting to save that pleasure for when she was fully penetrated for the first time, she slowly pushed the dildo in another inch. Releasing her clit, using both hands at the base of the phallus, she shuddered under the onslaught of pleasure at experiencing the full possession of her pussy for the first time. She would be forever grateful to Kathy for this birthday gift as knowing what to feel and expect might be the encouragement she needed when the time came to experience this with a real cock.

Ignoring the discomfort of being stretched and filled deeper than she could have ever imagined, eager now for the full meal deal, she slowly pulled back on the dildo with one hand while rooting out her clit again with the other. Making sure to rasp the hard ridges of the stalk along her protruding clit, she stopped when once again the smoother head was the only part embedded in her. The glistening dampness on the length of the dildo excited her as much as the feel of it still in her. In the six months she had been masturbating, she had never been so turned on, so excited and anxious for climax. Her nipples were so tight they ached and her pussy so wet the dildo made a slurping sound as she penetrated it fully once again. That sound had her perspiring in expected pleasure, her breathing speeding up as she fucked herself faster and deeper, the discomfort of her first full penetration giving way to pulsing pleasure as she felt her slick walls close around the phallus.

Dimly she heard Kathy moaning in pleasure, but her only desire right now was to feel herself spasming around the hard ridges of the dildo as she fantasized about a man taking her with just as deep, just as hard strokes. Her hips lifted automatically with each plunge, her buttocks tightening as she gyrated in time with her strokes until she was lost in a swirl of bright lights and exploding colors. Trying to hold back her cries, she pressed down hard on her clit as she now rammed the dildo in and out of her spasming sheath with unerring rapidity. The pleasure filling her shaking, undulating body left no room for anything except ecstasy. By the time she came down from the high, her body was reduced to a quivering mass of sated pleasure, her bent knees simply plopping outward, her hands falling to her sides as her pussy continued to ripple softly around the dildo.

“You gonna leave that thing in there all night?” Kathy asked with a grin when she glanced over to the other bed and saw the bemused, satisfied look

on Piper's flushed face. Damn if she didn't feel the way Piper looked, she thought on a pleased sigh.

"I might, that way it'll already be where I want it when I get my breath back and go for round two."

Chuckling, Kathy grabbed her slick dildo and bounced off the bed. "Go right ahead. I'm showering. Suddenly I'm starving."

Piper gazed out the window, never tiring of the view of the snowcapped Alps. Even though signs of spring were already giving way to the full bloom of summer, the mountains kept their hold on winter throughout the year, making the small country an ideal vacation destination for a variety of reasons. But after living here for ten years, she was more than ready to go home to the states despite her fondness for her adoptive country. She had been only eight when her mother had died in a car accident and Charles had whisked her out of the country and enrolled her in the private boarding school. Piper loved her adoptive father more than anyone or anything else in the world, but she couldn't help resenting her enforced separation from the only home she had ever known and his refusal to allow her to return to the states in the years since her mother had been gone.

Charles Sandoval had always been an enigma to his young ward, a bigger than life persona who was a total mystery to her. The few memories Piper retained of her life in Missouri with her mother were how much Christine had adored Charles, how happy she was when he was there with them and how sad she was each time he left. By the time Piper was a teenager, she had suspected that he had another family, a family that knew nothing of her and her mother. When she had finally gotten up the nerve to confront him about it, he had shocked her by telling her she wasn't his biological daughter, that she had been one year old when he met her mother. Piper had been so upset by the revelation Charles had stayed over an extra day to reassure her about how much he cared and that, despite there being no blood relation between them, he would always be there for her.

"There has never been nor will there ever be anyone for me but your mother," he had told her in his deep, no nonsense manner. "You and Christine were all that ever mattered to me, Piper, and I will do what I feel is best for you, what I think Christine would want me to do."

For ten years the only explanation Piper had ever gotten for being isolated in Switzerland had been it was for her own good, but now that she was eighteen, that explanation wasn't good enough anymore. Charles would

be here for her high school graduation this weekend and he had told her he had a surprise for her. The only thing she wanted more than to see him and be part of his life for more than one weekend a month was to go to college back in the states, to return to Missouri, visit her mother's grave and start on a career as a clothing designer. She figured her passion for clothes, especially for sexy, sensual and risqué lingerie, stemmed from having a limited wardrobe consisting of girl's uniforms and jeans for so long because she sure as hell didn't have the body to parade around in anything but basic white cotton underthings and loose jeans and sweatshirts that helped disguise her overweight, short body.

As always, days before Charles's scheduled visit found her so excited she could barely sleep or concentrate on her school work, and this time her anticipation and excitement was even higher because she was certain her surprise was going to be returning to the states with him and finally being able to be a part of his life on a regular basis. He was a kind, doting guardian, generous to a fault when it came to money and seeing she had everything she needed. When he visited her he gave of himself one hundred percent, spent every moment of those monthly visits with her, taking her out, traveling with her throughout Europe in his private plane and lavishing her with his love and attention. She was always so glad to see him, so grateful for whatever time he would give her, she didn't even resent the hard eyed, hard edged body guard employee who always accompanied him. She knew he was a rich man and probably had enemies who coveted his wealth and position, but other than that she knew nothing of what he did to earn his wealth. Whenever she asked, he would reply evasively that he ran a multifaceted company whose financial risks required his undivided attention.

But Piper wanted more from the man who had raised her than those few weekends. She wanted the one thing he had always withheld from both her and her mother, to be a family. Now that she was an adult and able to make her own decisions, she was going to insist on more from him than a monthly visit and a monthly deposit into her account.

Four Years Later

Piper checked the time again and saw that only five minutes had passed since the last time she had glanced at the clock. She couldn't help it, she

thought as she looked out the front window of her apartment hoping to see Charles pull up. The past three months, he had to cancel his monthly trips to Geneva to see her, his disappointment evident even over the phone. His excuse of being unable to get away, however, fell flat and did nothing but raise her suspicions even more about what he had been keeping from her all these years. If there was one thing that had given her comfort since he had exiled her overseas it was that he seemed to need and enjoy their monthly weekends together as much as she did.

When Charles Sandoval had arrived for her high school graduation four years ago and doused her hopes of returning to the states, she had thought nothing he could have done would hurt her more. Until he had started cancelling his trips to see her. When no amount of pleading had changed his mind about allowing Piper to attend college in the states, she had resorted to threats, stating she was an adult and could and would go where she pleased now. She would never forget how his face had paled and his dark eyes clouded with anger and worry when she had defied him for the first time. But her disappointment had been so acute, her pain at his denial so sharp, she had no trouble sticking to her threat, not even when he announced he had secured entrance into Geneva's Art Institute for her.

Getting a degree in Fashion Design and Sewing had been a goal of hers since childhood and attending such a prestigious institute would have been a dream come true if it hadn't come at the expense of returning to her homeland and being closer to the man she had always considered her father. When dangling that carrot in front of her hadn't made her back down, he threatened to cut her off, and from the cold look that had taken over his usual loving, doting countenance, she knew he meant it. The threat had been delivered with absolute resolve, but the desperation in his tone and on his face when he added she wouldn't see him again couldn't be missed, and it was that desperation, not the financial threat that had gotten through to her. While having no income, no job prospects and nowhere to go would scare any eighteen year old, not seeing or hearing from Charles again scared her more, and if there was one thing he had always made sure she knew about him for sure was how much he cared about her. For him to say he'd cut all ties with her told her there had to be a good reason he wanted to keep her here in Switzerland, keep her life separate from his for yet another extended period of time.

So they had gone on the past four years as they had the ten years prior and she had been somewhat content if not happy, until he started missing their monthly visits. In their last phone conversation, he had promised he'd be here if he could, told her how proud he was of her and there wasn't anywhere else he'd rather be. The complications with his business that he said were making travel difficult lately and keeping him from seeing her were slowly getting resolved.

He should be here any time, Piper thought as she looked at the time again, her anticipation rising with each minute that passed. Of course, she was honest enough to admit to herself that a good portion of her heightened anxiety was due to the added anticipation of seeing Brody again, her guardian's new bodyguard. It had been almost a year since Brody had replaced Karl in accompanying Charles on his visitations. Karl had always made her uncomfortable, his cold eyes looking through her as if she meant nothing, his looks dismissive but his attention to their surroundings whenever they went somewhere alert and, at times menacing. Brody on the other hand, looked at her out of warm grey eyes, his smile friendly and his attitude much more genial, the occasional wink he gave her when Charles wasn't looking warming her more than her adoptive dad's hearty embrace.

That genial attitude, however, didn't mean he wasn't just as diligent in his job at staying by Charles's side and, apparently, making sure there were no threats to either him or her. Piper had suspected years ago that whatever Charles's business was, it involved potential threats to him, and possibly her. A quick on-line search had only revealed that Charles Sandoval owned one of the largest, most profitable casino/resorts in Atlantic City, New Jersey. When Charles had first introduced Brody to her all those months ago as his assistant, she had simply raised her brow at him, the only indication she gave both men that she was old enough and smart enough to know he was much more than an assistant. Gambling, even legal gambling, she was sure came with risks.

"I'm a careful man with my wealth, Piper, and you are my greatest treasure," Charles had said and then dropped the subject.

Long used to his evasiveness, Piper had let the matter of Brody's employment drop, more interested in indulging in secret fantasies about her dad's new bodyguard. Almost a foot taller than her, with a thickly muscled body she thought could only be found in the imaginations of romance authors, Piper's own imagination worked overtime in conjuring fantasies

about getting naked with him, fantasies she knew didn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of ever being played out.

Being set up in her own apartment near the Art Institute's campus, Piper had enjoyed the freedom of college life, and that had included indulging in a long term affair during her sophomore and junior years. Ted had been a year older than her, ten inches taller and thirty pounds lighter. They were two peas in a pod, both of them geeks in their own ways, both of them felt they lacked the physical appeal most young people were drawn to and both of them were virgins. They met at the library one evening, became friends then lovers and she had enjoyed their fumbling attempts at sex as much as she had enjoyed his friendship. While they eventually learned to please each other physically, there was nothing earth shattering about their nights together, and after Ted graduated last year and took a job in France, Piper found she missed his friendship more than she did the sex.

Glancing out the window again, Piper saw a familiar sleek sedan pull into the parking lot, park in front of her building and then watched as Brody unfolded his tall, mouthwatering frame from the driver's seat. Just seeing him from her third story window was enough to have her pussy swelling and dampening with arousal, her breasts aching for attention as she imagined those lips suckling her sensitive tips, fantasized about how that body would feel thrusting inside of hers. Without a doubt she knew sex with a man like Brody wouldn't be anything like what she had enjoyed but never craved with Ted.

Piper's erotic daydreaming came to an abrupt halt when Brody headed inside her building alone instead of opening the back door of the car for her father. When she opened her door to his soft knock, it wasn't fantasies of how his dark goatee emphasized his sensual mouth, or how those lips would feel against hers in a deep, tongue probing kiss or moving slowly down her body that dominated her thoughts. Instead, she felt her expectations as well as her heart plummet at the look of compassion in those grey eyes.

Tightening her trembling lips, she demanded, "What excuse did he give this time?"

Brody Pearce did not want to be here and the main reason wasn't because he was away from his undercover position as Charles Sandoval's right hand man. It wasn't his first undercover assignment, and, at just over eighteen months into it, it wasn't his longest, but ever since he had met Sandoval's ward nine months ago, it had become his most trying and

challenging. Piper Winters was a sweet kid with bright, starry green eyes that revealed her every thought and emotion, eyes that were blinded by rose colored glasses when it came to the man she so obviously adored. After getting so close to Sandoval this past year and accompanying him six times to Geneva to visit his ward, he had no doubt about his love for Piper or hers for him. Unfortunately, that love was based on lies and deceit and if his mission is successful, those glasses are going to come flying off and shatter her delusions soon. And she would blame him as much as Charles when that happened.

It had been easy to befriend her at first. She had such an endearing mix of naïve youthfulness and slowly awakening sensuality. While he wouldn't call her short, plump figure sexy, his cock had no trouble rising to thoughts of sinking between those cushy, round thighs and riding that soft body hard for several hours. Those shy looks of attraction, curiosity and longing she thought he didn't notice were all his libido needed, it seemed, to get riled up. Those glances, however, always seemed to be shoved aside quickly and replaced with a look of resignation and a sigh of acceptance, as if she knew any type of sexual relationship between the two of them wasn't going to happen. Unfortunately, she was right, but not for the reason she thought.

Bracing his forearm on the door frame, Brody looked down at her pretty face and watched those bright eyes dim with his reply. "I'm sorry, darlin'. He tried, he really did, but there are circumstances beyond his control that are keeping him close to home right now."

A home she had never been invited to, a home she obviously wasn't welcome in, Piper thought sourly as she felt her need and determination to move on with her life without him gather strength with this latest defection. "So why are you here? He usually gives me his regrets over the phone." She knew she sounded like a cold hearted bitch, but she couldn't seem to dredge up enough regret to care. He was, after all, only doing her father's bidding, what he paid him for.

"I insisted on coming," Brody lied to her without compunction. He didn't know where the need to shelter her for as long as possible came from, but he refused to watch her delusions shatter any sooner than they had to. "And Charles was grateful. He didn't want you to graduate without having anyone there for you. He's really proud of his little girl." At least that part was true, Brody thought. Whenever they were alone, Charles spoke freely of Piper and her accomplishments with so much admiration

and devotion it almost made him regret the part he and his partner, Ian, were playing in using him and his alleged money laundering connection with Antony Pasquino to bring down the East coast drug and gun trafficker.

“Just not proud enough to be here. No.” She stopped his denial with a lift of her hand. “Actions speak louder than words. Whatever his reasons or excuses, I don’t want to hear them. I appreciate you coming all this way, but..”

“But nothing. I’m staying until Sunday, so you’re stuck with a friend for the next day and a half. I’m here, Piper, and I want to be here.”

Piper could see nothing but honesty on his face and if she was honest, she really was glad he was here. At least she’d have someone clapping for her as she accepted her diplomas tomorrow, even if he was paid to be here. And Brody encouraged friendship and inspired lustful thoughts. If someone had to be foisted on her for the weekend, she couldn’t think of anyone she would rather have than him. Of course, having him around for the weekend without Charles here to distract her from fantasizing about getting naked with him was going to be difficult, especially since she wasn’t dumb enough to believe he would welcome an invitation to her bed. But she was so tired of being alone. She had missed Brody and Charles’s visits these past three months and the comfort she always drew from seeing the only person she considered family again.

“I’ll go get a room and pick you up early tomorrow. We’ll get brunch somewhere before your commencement.”

“I’m going to order a pizza. Do you want to join me?” she blurted out impulsively. She didn’t want to spend another Friday night alone, especially now that she knew she wasn’t going to be seeing Charles again.

Brody was relieved at the invitation for more reasons than not wanting to spend the evening alone thinking about sad green eyes and a soft, enticing body that was completely off limits. Charles’s recent decision to go legit not only threw a very heavy wrench in their investigation, but had him veering on the side of caution when it came to severing ties with Pasquino. Piper’s guardian was smart enough to know you didn’t simply walk away from doing business for a man as ruthless as Pasquino, which was why he was keeping a low profile lately and staying stateside. Thus far, there had been no indication that Pasquino knew about Piper. Sandoval had taken great pains to keep her existence a well buried secret, but when Karl got himself knifed in a bar fight, he apparently took the opportunity of losing

one of only two men in his employ he thought knew of the illegal dealings his casino fronted for to begin turning over a new leaf. Brody and Ian had both secured security positions in the casino and earned his trust the six months prior to Karl's death, Brody being the lucky one to have gotten the newly vacant position. Unfortunately, he had maneuvered into the exact spot he needed to gather the information they were seeking on Pasquino just in time for Sandoval's change of heart. After having come this far, however, it was agreed upon by him, Ian and their superiors that they wait it out for the time being.

Spending this evening eating pizza was a perk he wasn't willing to deny himself after all the disappointments this assignment had wrought. He didn't know if he wanted to befriend her to ease his conscience or because he wanted to see what those expressive eyes looked like as he fucked her, but if he could make her weekend special by spending as much time with her as possible before he returned to Sandoval and hopefully garnered enough evidence from an arranged meet with Pasquino next weekend to put an end to his assignment, then it would be worth the torture of being in such close quarters with a woman who was off limits to him sexually, and not just because of his job. Though he harbored a fondness for his assignment's ward, she was too young and too naïve for his tastes.

"That sounds much better than ordering room service and spending the evening in a hotel room. Thanks."

Damn it, he swore silently as he followed her inside and his eyes were automatically drawn to her ass. He was here as a friend, not as her fuck buddy he repeatedly told himself, even if he couldn't help but noticing that her baggy jeans couldn't hide the soft roundness of her buttocks or keep him from imagining her draped over his lap, her cheeks bouncing with each slap he administered, her skin warming under his hand. He knew his good deed of traveling here this weekend wasn't going to be enough to ease his conscience once she learned Charles's fate and the hand he had in delivering him to it just as he knew he wasn't going to be spending any time between those soft, round thighs. With the exception of attending the private parties Charles gave for some of his high rolling gambling clients, parties catered by an escort service owned by Sandoval, he never fucked while on the job and his relationships in between assignments were based on nothing more than mutual sexual attraction and were always short lived, sexual indulgences Piper wasn't cut out for. Hopefully, he wouldn't see her

again after this weekend, wouldn't have to face her looking at him with the same disappointment and disillusionment she had shown when he had arrived without Charles.

"What the hell was I thinking?" Piper muttered three hours later as she loaded the few dishes into the dishwasher while Brody went out to the car to bring in his bag. For the life of her she couldn't figure out what had possessed her to offer him a place to crash on her large sectional couch instead of watching him leave for the night to seek out a hotel room. Just because she hadn't enjoyed herself with a man or anyone else as much as she had with Brody the past few hours, wasn't any reason to take leave of her senses and torment herself by having the image of that tall, muscle hardened body sprawled half naked only a few feet from her bedroom in her head as she tried to sleep. "Damn it, just thinking about him is going to be enough to keep me awake," she grumbled. "Did I have to go and make it worse?"

"Problem, darlin'?" Brody leaned his shoulder against the wall as he crossed his arms and grinned at the way she yelped and jumped. Her muttering drew him to the kitchen when he had returned with his bag. She obviously had been so intent on grumbling about having trouble sleeping she hadn't heard him return.

Piper felt her toes curl and her pussy weep in response to hearing him call her darlin' in that slow, deep drawl of his, her usual response to that endearment that she knew good and well meant nothing to him. "Damn it, Brody, you startled me!" Slamming the dishwasher shut, she turned to face him, irritated more with herself than with him. "And no, there's no problem. I'll get you a pillow and blanket. I already set out clean towels in the bathroom."

"I don't need you to wait on me, Piper. And I hope you know you can trust me."

Unfortunately, she thought sourly. Sighing, she replied, "Charles trusts you, so I see no reason why I shouldn't."

On impulse, he walked over to her and gave her a brotherly kiss on her forehead, hoping his gesture would get her to relax. "Go to bed. I'll lock up," he offered gruffly, the fact that she really shouldn't trust him not sitting well with him.

Chapter Two

“You look quite pleased with yourself, darlin’,” Brody commented as he refilled her wine glass. “And you should be. Keeping a four-point-zero GPA in two majors is something to be proud of.”

“Thank you, Brody.” Piper sipped her wine as she leaned back in her chair and basked in his undivided attention. “Actually, I am very pleased with myself. Thank you for bringing me here.” They had just finished dinner at Bistrot du Boeuf Rouge in downtown Geneva, an expensive, posh French restaurant that was popular among the residents as well as with tourists. Piper had never been here, had chosen to save every cent of her five thousand dollar monthly allowance from Charles to invest in her future. She was waiting on a call from him today as to which direction her future was going to take now. This time, she was under no delusions that he was ready to bring her back to the states and welcome her into his life with open arms.

“You’re welcome. I was proud of you today, Piper, and I know Charles regrets not being able to attend your graduation.” That, at least, was true. Charles’s determination to sever ties with Pasquino so he could live a more normal life could put Piper’s life in the crosshairs if her existence was unearthed. His anger and disappointment when Brody had discovered they were being tailed everywhere they went three months ago, made Charles stop his visits to Geneva, stating it would be worth a temporary separation from Piper if the end result was eventually giving her more freedom as well as keeping her safe.

Taking another swallow of her wine, Piper stated emphatically, “I don’t want to talk about him.”

“Fair enough. What would you like to do now?”

Oh, shit, Piper thought as she tried to keep her thoughts from showing on her face. That was a loaded question if she ever heard one. What she wanted was to spend the rest of the night having hot, hard sex with the man sitting across from her looking indulgently at her out of grey eyes. She had come out of her bedroom this morning just in time to see Brody emerge from the bathroom wearing nothing but a pair of black, silk boxers. His body was even bigger, harder than she had imagined, the dark, curly hair on his chest which tapered down to disappear into his shorts made her nipples tingle as she imagined what those springy curls would feel like as his hard

chest covered hers, his thick thighs spreading hers right before he thrust into her in one deep stroke. Ted's thinner, hairless chest had certainly never inspired such a fast, pussy creaming response.

"First, I'd like another glass of wine," she answered him as she held her glass up for a fourth refill.

Raising one black, brow, Brody filled her glass again, indulging her. "I was going to ask you if there was someplace I could take you dancing, but I'm afraid you're going to be doing good just to get out to the car. I take it you haven't spent a good portion of your college weekends getting wild and crazy with your friends?"

"Yeah, right," she snorted inelegantly. Piper had spent the past four years working hard to get through school and just as hard at trying to please Charles enough that he would want her to come back home with him when she graduated. But she was tired of being a good girl, tired of trying to get more from the man who had been the only parental influence in her life since the age of eight than one weekend a month, tired of not having any control over her life. Tired of simply existing instead of living. Tonight she wanted to be bad, tonight she wanted what she knew she couldn't have, tonight she wanted to pretend, just for a little while, that Brody wanted her as much as she wanted him. The wine had gone to her head, made her forget she was the overweight, pathetic ward of his employer, giving her the courage she never would have had if she had been clear headed.

"Take me home, Brody. Let's curl up on my couch again, drink more wine and watch sappy movies." And hopefully end up in her bed together, she thought as she finished off her wine in one swallow.

Brody grinned at her thinking she made a cute drunk. "I don't like sappy movies," he teased her as he came around and helped her from her chair. Even with three inch heels on, she was a head shorter than him and he couldn't help but drape his arm around her and tuck her next to his side. He wasn't an idiot. At thirty-two, he knew when a woman wanted him and Piper had starry eyed lust written all over her. Combine her youthful infatuation with probably her first over indulgence with alcohol, and he had a potential problem in his arms. As much as he fantasized about riding her soft body for hours, he wasn't about to risk this operation or add to what was soon going to be truth revealing grief for her. But he didn't want to ruin her big day any more than Charles's absence had, so he would have to find a way to keep her happy without hurting her feelings.

“Tough. I sat through two Die Hard’s last night. Tonight, it’s your turn to watch my choice.”

“We’ll see.”

An hour later, Bruce Willis was in the middle of trying to save New York while Brody was waging his own battle trying to gently keep Piper’s hand from exploring any further south than his chest. “Piper,” he warned for the third time as those soft fingers finally succeeded in nimbly unbuttoning the top two buttons of his shirt and slipping inside. “I’m trying real hard to be good here, darlin’. Why don’t you do the same?”

“Because I’m tired of being good. “ Other than Ted, Piper had never been so close to a man and lying on her couch, curled up next to Brody with her head on his wide, hard chest, wearing a silk pajama set she had made herself, she decided she never wanted to move. Since she was wider than her former boyfriend, who, admittedly was as skinny as a beanpole, it was a novel and arousing experience for her to feel small surrounded by so much hard, male flesh, but the courage the wine had given her to attempt to explore more of the man who had her more aroused than she had ever been before was ebbing with each rejection from Brody. She had known he wasn’t attracted to her sexually, few men were she had long ago accepted, but she had been hoping he would behave in typical male fashion and let his dick rule. The large erection pressing against his zipper for the past thirty minutes was proof his body didn’t care if she was the overweight, relatively inexperienced ward of his employer.

Clasping her wrist, Brody pulled her hand from beneath his shirt, mentally telling his cock to knock it off, it wasn’t happening. “Charles would have my hide if I took you up on your enticing offer. Come on, let’s watch Bruce finish kicking ass then I’ll tuck you in.”

Piper turned her head up and looked into his determined face. Those lips that she had spent hours fantasizing about were tightly compressed, the only outward indication he gave other than his erection that he was affected by her. The encouraging, tantalizing sight of that hard, unrelenting bulge just inches from her had been enough incentive to override her normally reserved nature, but the sight of that mouth held so rigidly doused any hope she had of persuading him to ignore his reluctance to end this night the way she had been hoping.

“Fine,” she grumbled irritably. “But since you got your way with the movie, you have to at least kiss me good night when you tuck me in.”

“I can do that.” The question was, could he stop there? It had been difficult enough fighting off the urge to fill his hand with her thick black hair and press her head down until he felt those full lips surrounding his cock, kissing her was just going to make it that much harder to keep from showing her just how much he did want her.

The sound of her phone drew both of their attention and reluctantly Piper shifted away from Brody and answered the call from Charles she had been anticipating and dreading. “Hi dad.”

Brody watched the pleasure on her face dim as the tone of her conversation with Charles shifted when Piper mentioned she wanted to look for a job in the states. Obviously, he had once again refused to allow her to leave Europe, giving her no explanation. Even though Brody wasn't supposed to know about Charles's money laundering, he had repeatedly urged Charles to come clean with Piper if there was a specific reason for exiling her overseas, warning him she was an adult and would eventually do as she pleased with or without his permission. But Charles had refused to budge on the matter, refused to tell her anything except he was looking out for her best interests. The disappointment on Piper's face, as well as the anger betrayed in her voice as she bid Charles good-bye, made Brody wish this damn assignment was over. One more week, he thought, and hopefully they'd get enough from what Sandoval thought was his last meet with Pasquino to have both of them in custody.

“Thanks for today, Brody,” Piper said woodenly as she rose from the couch. As much as she wanted to continue to try to coax Brody into her bed, she didn't think she could take another rejection tonight. Even though she had known, deep down, that Charles was going to try to keep her here, away from him, it had still hurt to hear him once again refusing to even consider moving her back to the states.

Unable to stand the look of sadness on her face, Brody rose and took her hand. “I promised to tuck you in, didn't I?” Stifling the surge of pure lust that shook him when her soft, unbound breasts shifted beneath the green silk pajama top, he moved in front of her and pulled her behind him down the hall so he wouldn't have to watch the way the silk clung to the soft round globes of her ass, adding to his discomfort.

“And to kiss me good-night,” she reminded him as she let him lead her to her bedroom.

Brody flipped the covers back on her bed before cupping her face in his hands. "One kiss, Piper. That's it."

Before she could say anything, he made a year-long fantasy come true by pulling her up against him and taking her mouth in a deep, no-holds-barred kiss. Piper grabbed on to his forearms to keep steady as he plundered her mouth with open carnality. She had been expecting a soft, rather chaste kiss considering his reluctance, not one that had her senses reeling out of control more than at any time with Ted when he was plundering her pussy. Unable to suppress a moan of pure lust, she molded against his larger, harder frame and kissed him back with hopeful enthusiasm. The feel of his teeth nipping her bottom lip had her aching to feel those teeth biting at her nipples and when his tongue delved past her lips, dueled with her tongue then shifted to explore every recess of her mouth, his lips never ceasing their movement against hers, he had her longing to feel that tongue exploring her vagina, that mouth kissing her lower lips with just as much carnal enthusiasm. The feel of the hard ridge of his cock pressing against her silk covered mound had her nipples peaking and her pussy gushing in anticipation of taking that hard flesh inside her.

The lingering effects of the wine overrode her fear of his rejection and gave her just enough nerve to cup one hand over his straining cock while using the other to loosen his belt, but her bravado and anticipation was short lived when his larger hand grabbed both of hers and his mouth released her lips.

"Go to bed, Piper." Brody wanted nothing more than to feel her bare breasts against his chest, feel his tongue on her hard nipples, feel the cream seeping from her pussy coating his cock. But, with the exception of maintaining their cover when attending one of Charles's private parties, neither he nor his partner, Ian, had ever fucked on the job and he wasn't about to start with someone who was so young and vulnerable, someone he had a fondness for and who was going to soon be hurt bad enough without him adding to that pain. As much as Piper loved her surrogate father, finding out she had slept with the man who played a huge role in sending him to prison would cause her additional grief he refused to be responsible for.

Piper pulled her hands from his, the implacable look on his face telling her more than his words. His cock might be willing, but obviously that was the only part of him that was. As she crawled between her sheets, her

double bed seemed bigger than normal and she suddenly couldn't stand the thought of spending the night alone in it. "Lay with me, Brody, please. Just until I fall asleep," she asked him, hoping he wouldn't hear the pathetic plea in her tone.

"Scoot over," he instructed brusquely as Brody cursed himself for being a fool for a pair of sad green eyes as he stripped down to his shorts. What harm could it do to lie down with her until she fell asleep, he asked himself as he slipped in next to her and pulled her soft body next to his.

"Thank you," Piper sighed right before she drifted asleep with the feel of that hard chest under her cheek.

The harm, he thought now, was an aching cock, blue balls and a frustration that wasn't going to be relieved anytime soon. Despite those discomforts, he didn't have any trouble nodding off, the feel of her silk covered soft body draped across him a comforting weight.

It was after two a.m. when Piper woke, reached up to scratch her nose, wondering what was making it itch. The soft, steady heartbeat under her ear reminded her she wasn't alone in her bed. Shifting her head, she moved just enough to keep Brody's chest hairs from tickling her nose again and her eyes time to adjust to the dark room. Usually she left the hall bathroom light on, but apparently Brody was more comfortable with complete darkness than she was. The feel of his much larger, much harder body beneath her was both comforting and arousing, and as she lay there savoring the lovely hum of her body's response, she found the dark worked to enhance both her senses and her bravado. Here in the dark, she could pretend Brody wanted her as much as she wanted him, pretend she was skinny and attractive and that she was someone other than his employer's adopted ward.

Praying he was a deep sleeper, Piper lightly explored his chest, sifting her fingers through his crisp, springy chest hair as she marveled at the sheer breadth of his shoulders, the thick muscles of his arms and chest and the way his small nipple puckered when her finger grazed it. When his cock stirred against her thigh, she replaced her finger with her mouth, rasping her tongue back and forth before taking the taut bud between her lips and suckling until it tightened even more while moving her hand down to explore his growing erection more intimately.

Worried he would wake and end her fun, Piper released his nipple and twisted her body until her head was at his crotch, the covers cocooning her as she struggled to shove his shorts down far enough to free his cock. She

found him in the pitch blackness with her mouth, her lips exploring the smooth, round head of his cock, her tongue tasting his seeping fluid and her hand wrapping around his length with surprising ease. It took all her willpower to stifle the moan threatening to escape her throat as she slowly explored the mushroom crown with her tongue and lips. Moving her fist up and down in a tight grip, she marveled at his size, her pussy clenching in need as she tried to imagine what it would feel like to be fucked by a man with his proportions. She wasn't even sure she could take all of him, but she'd give anything to try. When Brody's deep moan echoed in the dark and his hand fisted in her hair, she tightened her hand even more before enveloping the head of his cock in her mouth.

Brody had been hoping he was dreaming, but when he felt Piper's warm, wet mouth close over his cockhead, he knew he wasn't. No dream could be this fucking good. But, damn it, he couldn't allow her to do this, couldn't let this go any further. She didn't understand what was at stake, didn't know the true reason he worked for Charles, didn't know how long and how hard both he and Ian had been planning for the meeting next week that would bring down the man she loved so much.

"Enough, Piper. Come up here and behave yourself if you want me to spend the rest of the night in your bed."

If he hadn't been so hard, if the seepage from his slit wasn't coating her tongue and sliding down her throat, then she would relent. But his body wanted her, and right now, here where she couldn't see the pity and rejection on his face, that was enough. Ignoring the painful tugs on her head as he tried to urge her back up, she opened her mouth and slid down his rigid length, taking as much of him as she could as deep as she could. When she reached her limit at just over halfway, she used her hand to work the rest of him and set up a fast rhythm between her mouth and fist that stimulated his entire penis, her own body softening and dampening in pleasure.

Cursing, Brody felt his good intentions giving way under the onslaught of her mouth and hand. With no light, all his senses were centered on his cock and the feel of her tongue stroking him, her lips clinging as she moved them up and down in tandem with her hand around his base. Before Piper, before tonight, he had never had trouble controlling his dick and the fact that he was having so much trouble now when it was so important only

irritated him. Releasing her hair, he shifted his hand to her ass which was turned toward him and quite handy for showing her who was boss.

“Stop now or face the consequences, Piper.” His hand slid easily past the elastic band at her waist and cupped a soft cheek in warning.

This time, Piper was unable to hold back a moan of pleasure from escaping her throat even though she didn't release his cock from her mouth. His hand on her ass felt decadently wonderful, exciting in a way she had never imagined. Ted had spent a lot of time with her breasts in foreplay, but had never shown an interest in her ass and she had never considered her butt good for anything except filling out her clothes. Ignoring his warning, anxious now to see how much pleasure she could get from ass play, she continued to work his cock, loving the feel and taste of him.

Her anticipation was given a rude jolt when Brody tossed the covers off of them, jerked her bottoms down and smacked her ass with a sharp, loud snap. Pure startlement had her releasing his cock and pure lust had her pussy swelling in anticipation of feeling another erotic sharp sting. When the next one came, she whimpered his name and shifted her hips before taking him deep again, her mouth, tongue and hand working even harder to give him pleasure, the shock of the pain induced pleasure she was getting from those slaps quickly dealt with in order to see where this new experience would lead her.

“Son of a bitch,” Brody swore when she not only accepted those first few slaps, but eagerly embraced them. How the hell was he supposed to resist her now? His partner, Ian, would tell him to give up and get it done and when Piper's small hand cupped his sac and her mouth moved to roll one of his balls around with her tongue, he knew he was going to do just that. He could barely make out the shape of their bodies, but he had no trouble finding the exact spot to land his next blow.

The pain was sharper, the slowly building warmth hotter and the pleasure higher with each stroke he delivered. The harder he swatted her, the harder she sucked on his shaft, the faster his hand landed the faster her head bobbed up and down until it took a herculean effort to concentrate on his cock and not give in completely to the climax she felt building. Each smack built a volcano of sensations inside her, sensations she had never experienced before and which were threatening to sear her with their eruption.

By the time her buttocks felt hot and swollen, a throbbing heated pleasure that was reciprocated between the swollen folds of her labia, Piper was desperate for relief from the aching pain in both her ass and her pussy. Hoping she was good enough at fellatio to have driven him to the point of no return, she released him and pleaded desperately against his damp, hard flesh, "Please, Brody, don't turn me away," before crawling up his body and seeking his mouth.

Brody could still feel her soft flesh warming under his hand, smell the heady aroma of her arousal, still hear her soft moans of pleasure and was unable to suppress the clawing need that swept through his senses. His cock ached, his balls ached and his conscience was going to ache because he knew there was no way he was turning away from her again. But that didn't mean he had to be happy about it.

Before her lips could latch on to his, he flipped her onto her back and stripped her bottoms off of her. "You damn well better have protection," he snarled as he prodded her slick swollen folds but stopping just short of slipping between them.

"I'm on the pill," she answered him breathlessly, shifting her hips to entice him to fully penetrate her.

"Piper," he warned, his cockhead dampening from her seeping juices, urging him to press forward. "You better not be lying just to get your way."

"I'm not, I wouldn't. I have irregular periods. Brody, I'd never..." She stopped on a gasp as he filled her in one deep plunge. Despite how wet she was, his cock stretched her and filled her as tight as she thought he would, but the slight discomfort was nothing compared to the pleasure of his possession.

"Remember, darlin', I tried to talk you out of this," his rough voice whispered in her ear. "Wrap your legs around me." The feel of her warm, soft walls closing around him almost signaled an end to this, and it was only by sheer willpower that he was able to hold back. When he felt her cushy thighs clamp around him, he almost smiled as she barely got her feet to touch across his back. She was such a little thing, he thought fondly, but with a luscious full figure that he was finding a pleasure to fuck.

Surrounded by his big body, her softness enveloped by his hardness, his harsh voice an intoxicating echo in her ear, Piper lost herself in the thrill of his rough possession. He fucked her hard, his hips jackhammering against hers as she met him thrust for vigorous thrust, the pleasure building with

each hard slap of their bodies. She whimpered as he drove her higher than she had ever been, her mouth biting down where his shoulder met his thick neck to stifle her cries as the slap of their sweat slickened bodies and their harsh breathing filled the silence in the darkness of her room.

When one hard calloused hand reached under her jerking hips and grabbed a still sore buttock and the other fisted in her hair, angling her head for his descending mouth, she lost herself in his kiss and the explosion of her orgasm. The pleasure ripped through her, consuming her from head to toe, had her grinding up against his still pistoning hips as his cock jerked with his ejaculation.

Brody was surrounded by softness, her plush body undulating under his, her hips in perfect rhythm with his, her soft cries against his throat, the warm clutching walls of her pussy soaking his dick as she milked him dry. By the time his head cleared and he managed to come down from the height of ecstasy she had driven him to, Piper was curled trustingly against him, her eyes closed, her heavy breathing slowed to more even sleep filled breaths. Grabbing the covers, he flipped them back over them. Unlike her, he was unable to slip back to sleep so easily, the struggle with his conscience once again rearing its ugly head. That struggle only got worse when the sound of an incoming text vibrated from his phone. Leaning over the bed, he fumbled in the dark until he found the phone in his pants pocket then had to bite back a curse after reading Ian's message.

Piper pretended to be asleep as Brody slipped out of bed, then strained to hear his side of the conversation when he stepped out into the hall to make a call.

“What the hell is Sandoval thinking? Unfortunately, that's a good point, but if something goes wrong, we're fucked. I guess it's a risk we'll have to take. No, she doesn't suspect anything.”

Piper quickly closed her eyes when he ended the call and came back into the bedroom. Instead of joining her again, she heard him rummage in his bag for clothes then leave again. Suspicions, anger and disappointment warred for supremacy as she struggled not to jump out of bed and confront him about what she heard. When she heard the start of the shower and the draw of the curtain from her bathroom, her anger won out and she slipped from the bed to search for his phone and some answers. The last text he received simply stated, 'Party at casino before meet'. Piper knew Charles lived in Atlantic City and she knew both his cell and residence phone

numbers, which was all she needed, she thought with a surge of determination, to start taking control of her own life.

The sound of the shower turning off had her hastily picking up her pajama bottoms and slipping them back on. The ache in her pussy as well as the sticky residue of their climaxes were telltale reminders of how hard Brody had fucked her just a few hours ago and how hard she had come. Her ass was still sore also and when she palmed her left cheek, she felt the slight warmth that remained from her first spanking. Funny, she thought as she padded into the kitchen to put on coffee, she had never considered she would be into anything kinky when it came to sex. After hooking up with Ted, she had just been glad to be getting laid regularly. But the two years of regular sex with her ex didn't compare to her one time encounter with Brody. Her climax last night had been off the charts, an experience she would have denied was possible if anyone had been able to vocalize it. No one would have been able to explain let alone convince her that the pain and humiliation of a bare assed spanking could induce such a powerful orgasm. Just recalling that awesome pleasure was enough to get her pussy wet again, make her empty sheath ache for another round of rough, deep thrusts and make her buttocks clench tightly in anticipation of a stinging slap.

Unfortunately, she knew before she had overheard Brody on the phone that last night was a one-time encounter, one she had initiated and practically forced on him. That fact was reinforced when Brody entered the kitchen fully dressed, his bag packed and ready to go. Apparently, knowing he was keeping things from her concerning Charles and that he only fucked her last night because she had driven him to a point where any man would have caved wasn't enough humiliation to keep her body from wanting him. Her eyes locked on his mouth and watched those sensuous lips tighten as she recalled how they felt against hers, how the erotic scratch of his bristles from his goatee rubbing against her cheeks and chin had added to the pleasure of his kiss. The memory made her nipples tighten and when those pewter eyes took notice, her pussy wept for more of what she knew she would never have again.

"I have to go." Brody winced at the hoarseness of his voice, but walking into the kitchen and seeing her standing there looking so vulnerable was nearly his undoing. Of course, seeing her still clad in those emerald green silk pajamas that he found sexy as hell, her hard nipples as obvious as the

look on her face, had his cock twitching to get between her legs again. He wasn't about to compound his error or her life, though, by making that mistake again. "I'm sure Charles will be in touch and get over here as soon as he can." What was another lie among so many?

Ignoring that comment, Piper simply asked, "Do you have time for breakfast?"

"No, I'm sorry." Truth was he didn't have to leave for the airport for several hours, but there was no way he could stay around here now without tossing her down and fucking her again, this time taking it slower, revealing those awesome breasts to his hands and mouth, taking the time to taste that sweet, tight pussy. He sure as hell didn't need more memories to eat at his conscience.

As difficult as it was, Piper went to him and gave him a friendly, grateful embrace, hoping he couldn't read her reluctance. She didn't want him to become suspicious, maybe think she was too eager for him to leave, which she was. "Thanks for the weekend, Brody. I know you only came because dad told you to, but I'm glad you did."

Brody hugged her back before raising her chin with one finger. "I came because I wanted to, Piper. Everything I did this weekend was because I wanted to. Remember that for me, okay?" Dropping a kiss on her small nose, he said far more casually than he felt, "Bye, darlin'."

He walked out without a backward glance, but Piper knew she would see him again soon, as well as Charles. Because she had every intention of attending that party on Saturday.

Chapter Three
Atlantic City, New Jersey

Brody slipped his hand inside the loose halter top the young woman sitting on his lap was wearing. Filling his hand with her bare breast, he racked his brain for the name she had given him thirty minutes ago when Charles had introduced her to both him and Ian. Unfortunately, his mind was no more on her and her barely clothed body now than it had been when this party got underway over an hour ago. The thirty-fifth floor of the Empire Casino/Hotel owned by Charles Sandoval was reserved for Charles's personal use, which included throwing parties such as this one for some of his wealthier friends and regular patrons in the casino, patrons who spent, and lost an obscene amount of money. Indulging them at these parties by providing women from an escort service also owned by Sandoval was an enticing lure to keep these particular friends coming back.

He had tried for the past five days to get Charles to cancel this get-together but he had adamantly refused, despite the fact the three of them were supposed to meet Pasquino in a few hours. Sandoval had been very careful this past year both in dealing with Pasquino and in keeping their business under wraps, so careful neither he nor Ian had been able to get enough proof of his money laundering for the drug lord to use as leverage to get him to turn on his employer. All Charles had told them about the meeting tonight was that he was severing ties with a questionable businessman and that he wanted both Brody and Ian there for security purposes. Ian and he were hoping to finally get some evidence they could use against either man to end their role in this assignment. But instead of worrying about pissing off a ruthless man like Pasquino, Charles was indulging himself and some of his very wealthy friends with one of their decadent parties. The women he employed were chosen for their willingness to indulge in just about anything, such as this woman allowing him to strip her top off here in front of a crowd of about thirty people instead of insisting on using one of five private rooms down the hall.

A soft moan escaped her red painted lips when he rolled her right nipple between his thumb and forefinger then pinched the hardened bud until it stiffened even more. "Like that, do you?" he murmured as she pushed her breast against his hand. If she was faking her response, she was doing a damn fine job of it.

Shifting on his lap, her ass moving enticingly back and forth on his hard cock, she replied, “Yes, so feel free to do it again.”

Why was it, he thought irritably, that he was sitting here with a lapful of willing female flesh in a posh room filled with people indulging in a variety of decadent sexual activities such as the man bending a woman over the arm of a chair in front of them and sinking his cock into her ass and all he could think about was waking up to a soft mouth sucking his dick, of feeling an even softer ass warm under his hand, the innocent, exciting response to those smacks, the feel of a soft body writhing under his? It had been so cliché fucking Piper in the dark, in the missionary position, and yet he hadn’t been able to think clearly in the five days since. Now, here he was with a woman who would do anything, indulge any kink, hours from an important meet that could finally end his role in this assignment and all he could think about was fucking the adopted daughter of a criminal, a woman much too young and innocent for him to have touched.

“Yeah, Brody, do it again.”

Brody looked up into his partner’s amused face. “Enjoying yourself, Ian?”

Ian shrugged, raised a brow as two women seated on either side of one man, leaned over his lap and began some open mouth kissing as both their hands worked at freeing his cock. Turning his attention back to Brody, his eyes went to where Brody’s fingers had resumed torturing her obviously responsive nipples. “I do believe I am. You may as well also. You don’t know when you’ll get the chance again.” In other words, this was probably the last opportunity they’d have to attend one of these parties and be able to indulge some of their kinkier preferences on Uncle Sam’s time.

Brody supposed Ian had a point. Charles was ensconced in one of the private rooms where he usually stayed during these gatherings and there wasn’t anything they could do between now and when they had to set out for the meeting with Pasquino in a few hours. Shoving aside the image of a younger, much more innocent woman, Brody slid his hand under his escort’s short skirt to encounter bare, soft skin.

“Take his cock out and into your mouth, darlin’,” he instructed her, knowing she’d have no qualms about obeying. Spreading her baby soft labia, he slid two fingers inside her pussy as she did his bidding, her hips arching against his invading hand as she took hold of Ian’s cock at the base and lowered her mouth to engulf the rest of him.

“Son of a bitch,” Ian swore as his eyes practically rolled back in his head with the first exploring swipe of her tongue. Fisting his hands in her blond hair, he took over by holding her head still and plundering her mouth with controlled thrusts.

Brody watched her suck his friend’s cock, saw how her tongue curled around his girth when he pulled back, how her cheeks tightened as she suckled, and was once again remembering his last experience at receiving head. Cursing, he quickly shoved that memory aside and concentrated on finger fucking her tight pussy, stopping short of allowing her to climax.

“Very nice,” he murmured as he nipped at her neck where it met her shoulder. Her pussy clenched around his fingers, her cream increasing every time he coasted over her clit. This time when she moaned around Ian’s cock, it was a groan of frustration as he moved too quickly away from that small bundle of nerves. Ian’s low curse and clenched jaw indicated his impending release, and she had no trouble swallowing his come like the pro she was.

Brody wasted no time releasing his cock as Ian tucked his away. They had shared bed partners in the past, both of them enjoying the occasional ménage, but since they were working, they always made sure one of them was unoccupied at these parties despite the fact their prime target wasn’t involved. “Straddle me,” he ordered the woman whom he still couldn’t pin a name on, his need to ease his lust and pent up frustration over this assignment making him brusquely impatient to put an end to both.

“Ooh, you feel so good, sugar,” she crooned in his ear as she sank down onto him, her pussy folding around his latex covered erection with practiced ease, her body lifting up and down, riding him with all the finesse of a well tutored and experienced prostitute.

Brody didn’t know why that irritated him, why his mind preferred the naïve, innocent moves of an inexperienced, off limits young girl and the unobstructed feel of taking her bareback, even though his cock was having no trouble enjoying the practiced moves and warm, clutching walls surrounding it. Holding her short skirt up with one hand, Brody slapped her left cheek hard as he took a taut nipple into his mouth.

Unfortunately, his attempt to divert his thoughts by spicing up their fucking backfired as her response, “Yes, baby, spank me,” followed by a startled cry of feigned pleasure when he did just that, was a complete turnoff. Her ass warmed quickly as he slapped her several more times, her

body jerking as she rode him faster, harder, but her pussy didn't gush over his cock with increased moisture, a sure indication she didn't get off on that little bite of pain.

Brody shifted his hand to her pussy, rooted out her clit, and made sure he thrust hard against it as his balls drew up tautly, preparing for the climax he felt about to erupt, ensuring she received just as much pleasure. This time he did feel that release of added juices as well as the small contractions of her slick walls around him, his cue it was time to let go.

Piper shifted her crouched position where she sat hidden behind a wide plant on a second floor balcony that overlooked the large, spacious room below, trying to resist the strong urge to loosen her jeans and slip her hand inside to ease the ache watching the activities below had built. It had been somewhat mortifying the way she ended up here spying on the private party taking place. Dipping into her savings for the first time, she had packed a few changes of clothes and booked a flight to New Jersey a few days after Brody left. An inquiry at her hotel led her to the Empire Casino, owned and operated by Charles Sandoval. She had no home address for him nor was there one listed in the directory, so today she had decided to track him down at the Empire.

Having never patronized a casino before, she was star struck by its sheer magnitude and opulence. She had spent the first two hours simply walking around, hoping to catch sight of Charles as she took in all the activities going on at once. Several times she stopped to watch the play at a table or slot while trying not to gasp at the amount of money people were willing to wager and lose. Hunger and nerves had finally driven her into one of the five restaurants listed in the directory, but she had been so overwhelmed by her surroundings and her increasing disappointment in not locating Charles, she had trouble swallowing despite her hunger.

Finally she had to admit searching for one man in this place was as futile as finding a needle in a haystack and she decided to bite the bullet and simply ask for him. She started out by asking to speak with the owner, but wasn't surprised when that request was answered by the woman at the information desk simply handing her a comment card. Unable to avoid it any longer, she had told the woman to tell Mr. Sandoval her name, emphasizing that he would want to see her. When that didn't work, she threw out the 'daughter' word which got her an introduction to security.

Piper cringed when she recalled the derisive looks on both men's faces and the way they had looked at her in disbelief. When she insisted they at least inform Mr. Sandoval that she was here, they conferred quietly before turning back to her with shit eating grins on their faces.

"Come on then," the taller one stated, taking her elbow, both of them smirking as they led her to a service elevator that was reserved for employees. It was obvious they didn't believe she was any relation to their boss, but it wasn't until the elevator stopped and let her out directly into this small sitting area in between two restrooms located in a loft area above the main room that she saw why they thought bringing someone like her here was so funny.

Her initial shock at the erotic couplings taking place below was quickly followed by relief that Charles wasn't among the people indulging in displays of kinky acts she had never imagined taking place, at least not so publicly. Dashing into the women's bathroom, she noted the assorted bags and clothing strewn around while splashing cold water on her heated face and contemplated what to do. Obviously this was a private party and those security men thought it would teach her a lesson by escorting her up here. Well, she thought, straightening her backbone, she may as well get an education and an eyeful before admitting defeat and heading back downstairs.

Not wanting to get caught, Piper had taken up her current position, obscured by the large plant and told herself she would only stay a few minutes, just long enough to give her some fantasies to replace the ones Brody had left her with. But when she spotted Brody among the partiers, a very attractive, slender blond on his lap, she stayed rooted in place. Her initial reaction at seeing him again had been pleasure and arousal as memories of a week ago rushed to the surface. That response was quickly replaced with irrational jealousy, a reaction that didn't do a damn thing to keep her body from reacting to the sight of him baring that woman's breasts and taking one berry red nipple into his mouth.

Lust, body enveloping arousal soon replaced the envy. Her own nipples responded when he sucked and pinched the other woman's nipples, even though she had to use her imagination at how his lips would feel on her breasts since he hadn't touched her there last week. She wondered if the scratchiness from his goatee would arouse her more, tickle or irritate. From

the other woman's response, she thought it would be more of an added, pleasurable benefit than an annoying distraction.

Piper's breath caught on a quiet gasp when another man walked up to them. As tall as Brody, he was devastatingly attractive, his dark, mahogany hair glinting with auburn highlights, his eyes dark and observant as they conversed. The activities of the other people ceased to matter as she watched the woman seated on Brody's lap reach over and release the other man's cock before leaning over and taking him in her mouth, obviously comfortable performing such an act in public. It was when Brody slipped his hand under the woman's skirt, her thighs widening to give him easier access, that she felt the urge to cup her own drenched pussy. Her panties had dampened enough to stick to her folds, her pussy pulsing with arousal, aching to be stimulated. She hadn't so much as touched herself this past week, instinctively knowing she would be disappointed with the results after achieving the heights Brody had brought her to.

Piper settled for cupping herself over her jeans as she wished she was the one now straddling Brody's lap, she was the one riding his cock, it was her ass receiving those slaps. It still appalled, amazed and excited her how those slaps had heightened her pleasure, how the slight pain had increased her arousal to such an extreme high, how much she wanted to feel them again.

Several women were coming up the stairs by the time Brody was lifting the woman off of his lap and she was planning on heading to the elevator. Staying hidden, she decided to wait it out until the three of them returned downstairs. It would simply be too mortifying to get caught, especially if Brody were to discover her presence.

Charles Sandoval disentangled himself from the two naked women wrapped around him and slipped out of the bed. Padding into the bathroom, he looked at himself in the mirror wondering when he had gotten so old. He supposed nowadays, sixty-three wasn't all that old and he still had good health and a decent body. At least, he thought wryly, he could still keep two women satisfied for a number of hours with the help of a little blue pill. But if his meeting with Pasquino later tonight didn't go well, if he hadn't done a good enough job this past year of slowly cutting back on his business with the drug lord while keeping his nose clean with the cops in order to let him

know he was and wouldn't be a threat to him, then this could very well be his last hoorah between the sheets.

Twelve years ago, his casino, along with all the others, had fallen on hard times due to the recession. Faced with mounting debts, he had foolishly taken the carrot Pasquino had dangled in front of him, telling himself it would only be for a year or two until the economy turned around. When the economy improved, as well as his business, he was enjoying reaping the high rewards for very little work or risk to give up his little sideline.

But the look on Piper's face when he refused to relocate her stateside after her high school graduation worked as an eye opener for him. It wasn't until that moment that he realized just how much his ward had come to mean to him, how much she filled the gap in his life left from her mother, Christina's passing.

Christina had come to work in the Empire as a server at the age of twenty, working part-time while attending college and struggling to raise her infant daughter and Charles had fallen fast and hard. Used to limiting his liaisons to sex with the women he employed as escorts, her shy demeanor drew him like a moth to a flame. By the time he had wooed her into bed, he was stunned and pleasantly surprised at how much he enjoyed tutoring her in new ways to please both him and herself. They had been together over a year when she had announced she wanted to return to her home state of Missouri and raise her daughter with small town values. By then, Charles had been irrevocably in love with Christina and had argued and cajoled for weeks trying to get her to change her mind.

Eventually he caved. Christina had never asked him for anything. She kept her own apartment, ignoring the money he deposited regularly into her account to pay for it. She never mentioned marriage, never asked for more of his time, never even asked for fidelity, which he gave her anyway. As much as she loved him despite their twenty year age difference, as hard as he tried to show and tell her he felt the same, he knew she thought theirs was a temporary relationship. So when she asked him for help in relocating to Missouri, he, of course, gave her what she asked for and had never regretted it.

It was harder to maintain a long distance relationship, but they did it for six years until her untimely death in a car accident. Suddenly faced with having sole guardianship of a parentless eight year old while neck deep

running a business enterprise that was neither a conducive nor safe environment to raise a child, he did what he thought best and settled Piper in Switzerland. He had never intended to practically force her to remain overseas after she graduated from high school, but by then he realized his biggest mistake in working for Pasquino was not only the threat of the drug dealer learning of her existence, something he had taken great pains to prevent, but the need for her continued exile. That devastating, hurt, betrayed look in her eyes, eyes she inherited from her mother, had brought home to him just how wrong it was to keep her where she so obviously didn't want to be. It also made him admit how much he had grown to love the girl.

Karl's untimely murder in a barroom fight last year had turned out to work for his benefit. Pasquino was the one who had insisted he hire Karl when they had started doing business together. At the time, Charles had been glad for the protection as he was smart enough to realize he was getting into bed with a man who had enemies and was very protective of his illegal activities. Karl was also the only person besides Pasquino that knew of their association. When he hired Brody Pearce to take his place, he started cutting back on how much and how many times he ran Pasquino's money through his casino, giving him different excuses each time. The dealings he had this past year had been conducted without his body guard's knowledge or presence, making it necessary for him to come up with even more excuses for Brody's absence.

Three months ago he had put Pasquino off again and that was when Brody noticed periodic tails when they were away from the casino and when he knew he wasn't going to sever his ties with the man quite yet. But after missing Piper's college graduation, after hearing the hurt, anger and disillusionment in her voice, he realized there was nothing that could stop her from doing as she pleased now. He had spent the past fourteen years mourning Christine and doing his best by Piper and because her mother's memory still meant so much to him, as did she, he would continue to do what was best for her. Tonight, he intended to break off with Pasquino, had asked both Brody and Ian to accompany him armed, telling them only that he had a meeting that could get ugly. His only hope, and it was a slim one, is that he convinces Pasquino he is ready to retire, showing him the false medical report Doc, his closest friend for over fifty years, had written for him showing he was in the early stages of cancer that was curable with

treatment, long term treatments that would require a slower, less stressful lifestyle.

Charles returned to the bedroom and smiled when he saw the women spooned in a sixty-nine position, their mouths working each other's pussies. Walking over, he slapped the redhead with her ass turned towards him, saying, "Break it up. I need to get out there and end this party." He had always enjoyed hosting these parties for his patrons, the ones who liked to drop a butt load of cash in his casino, but he kept his sexual involvements private. Despite his proclivities, he had never been comfortable with fucking in front of others. Leaving the bedroom a few minutes later, a girl on each arm, he walked down the hall, the quieter sounds indicating the gathering was winding down on its own.

Piper waited a few minutes after two of the women had returned downstairs to see if the third would be doing the same. Anxious now to get out of here before she was discovered, especially since the party was winding down rapidly and there were only about half the people left as when she first arrived, she decided to chance slipping into the elevator without waiting for the third woman to leave the restroom and return downstairs. As luck would have it, she exited the bathroom just as Piper rose from her crouched position, dressed now in jeans, tee shirt and running shoes instead of the see through camisole and thong she had come upstairs in. Holding her breath, praying she didn't look her way, Piper waited for her to move to the stairs. Much to her chagrin, the woman took a position in the corner of the rail, standing there looking down as if she was seeking out someone.

Cursing, Piper was about to crouch down again when she saw Charles enter the room with two women as scantily dressed as the rest of the women in the room. Surprise, shock, despair and anger warred together as the implications of seeing him here, flanked by such young, barely clad women as he greeted the other guests as their host, became crystal clear. She had spent the past week trying not to take it so personally that he had been unable to attend her graduation, telling herself he wouldn't have missed it if at all possible. Betrayal sliced through her like a knife, the pain cutting deep as she realized he'd rather be partying at his casino with women less than half his age than be with her on her important day, wondered if this party was the type of business that had kept him from visiting her the past three

months. Even though there was no blood relation between them, he knew, had to know, she not only thought of him as her father but that he was the only connection to her mother, the only real family she had ever had.

Tears blinding her, she turned to escape into the elevator but stopped abruptly when she spotted the woman standing at the rail aiming a gun at someone below. Her startled, abrupt shout of No! when she saw the gun was pointing toward Charles was followed swiftly by a soft pop from the silencer, an ensuing blossoming red stain on Charles's chest and utter chaos. Women screamed as Charles fell, and faster than Piper could blink, both Brody and Ian pulled guns and fired at the woman before she had a chance to turn let alone flee. Piper felt hysteria bubble up as the woman toppled silently over the rail to land in a sprawl on the floor below, blood covering her torso. Concern for Charles had her swallowing her resentment, fear and hysteria as she headed to the stairs to go to him.

Brody heard a woman yell no a split second before he heard the telltale release of a silenced report, Sandoval's gasp as he clutched his chest confirming the shot. Ian was already rising from the fallen body of the female assassin and shaking his head when he saw Piper at the head of the stairs, now realizing why that soft cry had pierced his gut even before Charles fell. He didn't have time to wonder what the hell she was doing here or even how she had gotten here. Right now he needed to do damage control, especially as he realized this case had just been shot to hell.

"Stop her," he told Ian, pointing to Piper descending the stairs before turning his attention to Charles. The rest of the people weren't wasting any time scattering, none of them wanting to be here when the cops arrived. Doc, a longtime friend as well as a medical doctor, was assisting Charles up and Brody grabbed him from the other side and helped get him back to the room he had just left. "Help's on the way," he told both of them as they laid Charles on the bed.

Charles still couldn't believe he had been so wrong in thinking he could get away from Pasquino. Just as he couldn't believe he had just seen Piper here, that it had been her shout that had thrown off the assassin's aim just enough to give him a fighting chance, slim as he knew it was, especially by the looks on both Doc's and Brody's faces. Desperation had him clutching Brody's shirt and making his voice hoarse as he demanded, "Promise me, Brody, promise me you'll look out for her, keep her safe."

“I promise, just hang on, Charles. Ian’s taking care of Piper, you just worry about hanging in there until help arrives.”

“Go to her now,” Charles demanded implacably. “Get her out of here. I know you care for her, you see to it she’s okay after...I’m all she’s had for a long time. Go now, I need to know she’s in your care.”

Brody didn’t know how Charles knew he had grown fond of Piper, and right now it didn’t matter. If it would set his mind at ease until the paramedics arrived, he’d leave him in Doc’s care and go start damage control. “I’ll bring the paramedics back. Shouldn’t be but a few more minutes.”

“I don’t care who you are, I want to see dad,” Piper demanded again but to no avail. The man who had been with Brody and that woman earlier had stopped her flight down the stairs and hauled her right back up where he was keeping her from finding Charles. There had been so much blood, his face sheet white when Brody and another man had led him back down the hall, but not before Charles had looked up at her. She’d never forget the appalling look on his face when he saw her or the fear and despair that had quickly replaced it.

“Damn it, Piper, what the hell are you doing here?” Brody demanded as worry for her made him lash out when he reached the top of the stairs. He was well aware her rose colored glasses had just been torn from her eyes in a brutal way.

“I want to see him,” she pleaded, ignoring his question. “I’m his daughter, I have every right...” she stumbled to a stop when he simply raised a brow. She really didn’t have any right as she realized he knew Charles was not a blood relation nor had he ever been married to her mother. He had been her legal guardian until she turned eighteen, but now she had no legal claims to fall back on.

“Listen closely, Piper. I know you’ve had a shock and I’ll explain more later. Right now, take the key to my room and wait for me there.” Pulling out his key, he looked at Ian, a look that let him know he was about to break protocol, but, damn it, he wasn’t going to let her continue floundering in the dark when it came to Charles. When Ian nodded, he breathed a sigh of relief that he had his support. When she refused to take the key, he took her cold hand and folded her fingers around it just as police and paramedics were entering the suite below.

“I’ll go down,” Ian said and rushed to show them where Charles was.

“Look Piper, both Ian and I are FBI, working at the casino undercover. That’s over now for reasons I’ll explain later, I just want you to know you can trust me, we’re the good guys in this. Go to my room and wait for me. It’ll take me a while, but we’ll iron this out then.”

Another lie revealed, Piper thought numbly as she took the key. Obviously both Brody and Ian had worked their way into Charles’s employ under false pretenses and for the FBI to do that it had to mean they were investigating Charles for something illegal. Numb with worry and shock, she let Brody key her into the service elevator then watched the door close on his concerned face. Leaving his key at the front desk, saying she found it on the floor, she left the casino and went to check out of her hotel.

Four hours later, Brody and Ian dragged themselves back to his room only to find that Charles wasn’t the only one to have pulled a vanishing act that night. Somehow, returning to the room he had taken Charles, he hadn’t been surprised to find both him and Doc gone, a thorough search revealing a hidden exit in the closet that led directly to the parking garage and Charles’s reserved parking space. That answered one question as to why Charles always used that room during parties. After getting hold of their superior and spending time explaining the dead woman and their case with the local cops, it was almost five a.m. and they were both exhausted. Brody hadn’t been looking forward to shattering the rest of Piper’s night.

“Well, hell. Could this night get any more fucked up?” he swore when they entered his suite to find it empty.

“If it could, I don’t know how. Not much we can do now except start over tomorrow with a search for both of them.” Sprawling face down on one of the beds, Ian mumbled, “But not for at least five hours.”

Resigned to the wait, Brody crashed on the other bed and fell asleep to the image of green eyes staring at him in shocked confusion then in somber resignation.

Chapter Four
Missouri-Five Years Later

“Piper Winters is missing.”

That statement had been playing like a mantra over and over in his head for the past two days, and now, as Brody and Ian pulled up to Piper’s cabin home nestled in the Missouri Ozarks, and parked behind a bright blue jeep, Brody felt a combination of worry and anger threatening his control once again. Piper had proven to be very resourceful following her vanishing act from the Empire five years ago, having left without a trace until, six months later, his diligence had paid off and he discovered she was living in Hope, Missouri, a small touristy town about twenty miles from Branson. Brody had no intention of involving himself in the life she had made for herself here, no intention of looking her up or seeing her again despite the way he had never been able to forget her, that he still dreamt about their one night together and had nightmares about the look on her face when he had last seen her.

After Charles Sandoval’s disappearance, their case against both him and Pasquino had stumbled to a halt. Rumor had it that Pasquino had sent the assassin after Sandoval and rumor also had it that Sandoval was dead. Brody and Ian had agreed it would have been difficult, if not impossible for Charles to have survived what looked to have been massive blood loss, but his good friend, Doc Sorensen, was a highly skilled surgeon and if anyone could have pulled him through, it would have been Doc. Not only did he have the medical skills and access to a private clinic, he and Charles were as close as only two people could be who had fifty years of friendship behind them.

Brody, Ian and their superiors found themselves frustrated at the turn of events, especially since they didn’t have enough evidence that Charles was money laundering for Pasquino, and therefore no way to justify spending the time and money trying to find him, and it was decided to try once again to infiltrate Pasquino’s lair, something that had failed in the past. But their efforts had finally paid off, and six months ago another operative had managed to get hired on with the drug lord. Ian and Brody had been assigned other cases in the meantime and Piper had been all but forgotten by everyone but them. In those first few months after Brody had discovered her whereabouts, their office, including Brody had kept tabs on her by

contacting Gary Norton, the county sheriff, to enlist his help in watching to see if Charles got in touch with her in any way. A year later, his boss said she was a dead end, but Brody wasn't willing to abandon her completely given her connection to Charles and the chance that the assassin didn't complete her contract, that her adoptive father still lived.

Brody had kept in touch with Gary, which was why Gary had called him personally with the news that Piper's friend and business partner, Haley Parsons, had reported her missing after she didn't show for a planned meet and she couldn't reach her by phone. The sheriff had driven out to her isolated home and found no sign of foul play, but also no sign of Piper. Enlisting Ian's help, they had left Virginia immediately.

The cabin was eerily silent as they got out of his car, the surrounding woods rustled with the soft sound of leaves waving in the breeze, the scamper of squirrels and the musical melody of birds. The muted echo of waves rolling onto the shore from Lake Table Rock could be heard but not seen indicating it was a short walk away.

"Somehow, I didn't picture her as the outdoorsy type," Ian remarked as they walked up the gravel path and stepped onto the front porch. Flower boxes lined the rail, the brightly colored annuals looking well-tended.

Brody too was having trouble imagining the young girl who he remembered as being soft both inside and out with the rugged surroundings, trouble picturing her behind the wheel of the four-wheel drive Wrangler or tending the large garden on the side of the house. The door was unlocked, and even though the sheriff told them it would be since that was the way he found it and he didn't have a key, both men pulled their guns and entered cautiously.

"Piper," Brody called out loud enough to be heard down the hall and up to the loft, but only silence greeted him. With one sweeping glance they could see the great room, dining area and kitchen were empty. The casual, lived in look surprised Brody as he remembered her small apartment as being meticulously clean, not a thing out of place. Here, in these rooms, magazines and books were strewn on the low round coffee table, brightly colored pillows in a mishmash of patterns and sizes were tossed haphazardly on the cream leather sofa and two matching recliners, a pair of flip flops lay under the dining table that was covered with sketches of women's lingerie, a pair of gym shorts were draped on a chair and dishes,

both clean and dirty cluttered brick red stone countertops as if she didn't have time or simply didn't care to put them away or in the dishwasher.

Picking up a sketch, Ian let out a low whistle. "I wouldn't mind seeing this number in red satin on a certain brunette. Wonder what she does with the drawings."

"I wonder where the hell she is. Let's check down the hall before we go upstairs." Brody led the way, both of them still being cautious even though it didn't look like there was anyone there. The first door on the left was a bathroom, the second door answered the question about the sketches. Grinning, Brody fingered the white lace teddy displayed on one of three torsos. "I'd rather see this on Piper," he said before taking in the chaos of the rest of the room. Material of every shade and texture lay strewn or piled, two sewing machines sat in front of a wide window overlooking a well-tended small lawn and the woods beyond and shipping boxes, some packaged and sealed and others empty were stacked along one wall. A desk and computer sat in the great room and he wondered if she did a mail order business.

"No offense to you or the girl, but I don't remember her being the type to wear something like that." Ian's memory was vague and his acquaintance with Piper after Sandoval's shooting had been brief and tense, but he did recall an attractive face dominated by expressive, black lashed green eyes and a short, decidedly round body.

To counter Ian's remark, Brody would have to reveal he had intimate knowledge of Piper's lush body, and while he was well aware some men wouldn't find her sexy dressed in the teddy, he sure as hell would. Of course the soft spot he had developed for her might have something to do with his opinion. "Let's finish this and start looking for clues outside."

The last room was a guest bedroom so they returned to the great room and were headed to the stairs when a soft, distressed moan carried down from the loft. Heart in his throat, Brody raced up with Ian on his heels. The upper level was an open loft and they spotted the bed against the far wall and the body in it as soon as they reached the top.

"Piper?" Brody moved cautiously towards the bed, his eyes on the small figure buried under a light blue sheet. The only part of her visible was one slender, well-toned leg and the back of her black, curly haired head. The closer he got, the more he thought the woman in the bed couldn't be Piper. Even though most of her was covered, the light cotton sheet couldn't

disguise the small, slender body under it, a body that couldn't weigh more than a hundred pounds. As another moan escaped the woman in the bed and she restlessly turned over, the sheet slipped down to her waist and both men gaped at the lush sight of full breasts that looked sexy as hell encased in plain white cotton. Make that a hundred and five, Brody thought as his gaze moved up to stare in surprise at the face of the only woman he hadn't been able to put out of his mind after sex.

Piper's body was on fire, her nipples pulsed achingly, her pussy felt swollen and so empty, the need to be filled, stroked, fucked over and over a throbbing litany encompassing her whole body. She had dreams before where she awoke aroused, aching to be fucked, but nothing like this, and never had she been unable to wake when her arousal was beating so strongly. Deep male voices caught her attention, momentarily diverting her misery away from the pain of unfulfilled lust. She struggled to open her eyes even as one hand cupped her pussy in an attempt to ease the ache. Concerned grey eyes looked down at her out of a face she had dreamed of often.

"I should've known you'd show up," she muttered. Didn't he always put in an appearance in her dreams and then leave her aroused and unsated? "Damn it, not this time, Brody. This time I hurt too bad."

Brody grabbed Piper's hands as she reached for him, the way her green irises were almost completely covered by the dilation of her black pupils giving him cause to worry. "Piper, darlin', wake up." He tried giving her a small shake, but she managed to pull her right hand free of his grip and hastily cupped her palm between her legs again, her struggles having dislodged the sheet completely, leaving her slim body clad in nothing but a plain white bra and panties bare to them.

"Damn, you, Brody," Piper swore in frustration. "You're supposed to want me in my dreams. Quit being difficult and fuck me already."

"She's out of it," Ian stated quietly from where he stood on the other side of the bed.

"No shit. The girl I remember never would have done drugs, but it's obvious she's on something."

"I don't think it's drugs, though," Ian said when Piper slipped her hand inside her panties with a whimper, her hips thrusting up against her palm.

Brody wanted to pull her to him, force her to wake up and explain what was going on, but by the desperate way she was touching herself, the

stiffness of her nipples that was glaringly obvious even through her bra, as was the dampness of her panties and the glazed, unfocused look in her eyes, she was in the throes of a powerful aphrodisiac.

“What the hell’s going on?” Brody asked Ian roughly as both men tried to keep their own lust under control. Despite the shock of finding her here and in such a state, Brody was struggling with the physical changes five years had made. The soft roundness of her thighs and waist was gone, replaced with well-toned muscles, making her legs look longer than possible for her five foot three height and her waist small enough he was tempted to see if he could span it with his hands. In contrast, her breasts were full, definitely soft and right now, her nipples were threatening to bore holes through her bra they were so stiff.

“The sheriff said he checked here twice yesterday and there was no sign of her, and once again this morning,” Ian said. “She had to have returned in the last five hours.”

“Or was returned.”

“Brody, please,” Piper begged. She couldn’t figure out why he wasn’t touching her, why he wasn’t relieving this painful arousal she was sure he was responsible for. In every other dream she had where he was involved, he always wanted her as much as she did him, always gave her everything she wanted, everything she had craved for the past five years. “Why aren’t you helping me?”

“You’re going to have to do something.”

Brody glared at Ian across the bed. “I am not fucking a woman who doesn’t know what she’s doing,” he stated harshly despite the raging hard on pressing painfully against his zipper.

“Then don’t, but give her some relief so she can sleep the rest off.” Ian strode from the loft, his own cock demanding a release he too refused to give in to under the circumstances.

He was right, Brody thought with no pleasure. Piper was suffering, the effects of whatever she had been given more painful than pleasurable at this point and he couldn’t let her suffer for who knew how long until it wore off.

“Yes,” Piper moaned when Brody freed her aching breasts from her bra, the rush of cool air over her heated skin a soothing balm for about two seconds before the desperate ache returned.

“Easy, darlin’,” he crooned as she lifted her hips jerkily for him to divest her of her panties. “Ah, fuck, what have you gone and done?” The sight of

the bare flesh of her labia had him sweating bullets, his cock demanding its own release and his anger building. Did she shave her pubic hair or did whoever is responsible for her disappearance and current state do it?

Finally, Piper thought when Brody's mouth closed over her right nipple as his fingers worked to ease the ache in her left. He never took so long to get her off in her dreams before, then again her arousal had never been so high, her ache for release never so acute and the pain of waiting so hurtful. His lips suckling her nipple only seemed to add fuel to the fire already raging out of control in her body, especially in her pussy where her clit felt hot and swollen. Moaning, she struggled to get closer to him, her hips jerking against his denim covered thigh, making her pause a moment to wonder why he was dressed, before her need for an orgasm once again took precedence. Clutching his shoulders, she turned into him, loving the feel of his hard body against hers even though she felt cloth instead of bare skin. With her skin itching for release, her body hot and her mind clouded to everything except the need to fuck, she reached between them to palm his cock over rough denim.

"Fuck!" Brody exclaimed, the feel of that small hand squeezing him threatening to toss his good intentions out the window.

"Yes, that's what I want," Piper demanded. "Fuck me, Brody, now." Her voice ended in desperation as she ground her hips against his.

Brody slapped her ass hard then realized his mistake when she simply groaned and rubbed against him harder.

"More," Piper demanded, the sting from that slap feeling real, the pain just as pleasurable and awesome as she remembered feeling from that night so long ago.

Remembering too late how she had responded the last time he had swatted her ass, Brody quickly insinuated his hand between them, his fingers sliding smoothly between those plump, smooth folds to encounter heated, wet flesh tightening around him. The faster he got her off a few times, the faster she'll fall asleep, he hoped as he used his teeth on her nipple. The first glide of his thumb over her clit set her off, had her screaming and writhing against him making it damn hard to keep his mouth and fingers where they needed to be.

The force of her climax shook her as it simply exploded without any build up or warning, the heated pleasure sweeping her from head to toe as she rode through it for what seemed like hours only to still feel the

pulsating ache of arousal when it finally abated. “Oh, God, Brody, help me,” she pleaded dazedly, the dousing pleasure of her climax having done nothing to lessen the fire consuming her.

Cursing whoever did this to her, Brody pushed her onto her back, grabbed her hands and placed them on her breasts then moved down between her thighs. He tried to slow her down, tried to soothe her with soft kisses and strokes of his tongue over the saturated flesh of her folds, giving her time to let the first climax work to ease her pain, but she wasn't having any of it. Pushing against his face, she practically shoved her pussy into his mouth, her constant pleas and whimpers never abating. Using his thumbs, he spread her folds and dove in with lips, tongue and teeth. Once again, as soon as he latched onto her clit and suckled that swollen bud, she was thrashing against him in orgasm, this time filling his mouth instead of coating his fingers with her come. For his safety, he had to grab hold of her buttocks to still her hips so he could work at bringing her as much pleasure as possible.

If the pain of these climaxes wasn't so powerful, Piper thought this would be the best dream she had of Brody in five years. It was almost, but not quite, as good as the real thing. Another climax was ripped from her, the ecstasy so bright not even her fingers pinching her nipples to the point of pain could dim it, yet, once again, when the tremors lessened and the pleasure eased, she was still consumed with the need for more.

Brody rose above her and looked down into eyes still too dilated, eyes filled with desperation and confusion that tore at him. Knowing he had no choice, he turned his head and called out, “Ian, get up here!”

“Why won't you fuck me, Brody? You always fuck me in my dreams, you always want me as much as I want you, and damn it, this is my dream and I say you have to fuck me.” She simply couldn't figure out why he wasn't complying, why he wasn't simply doing what she wanted like usual. She was sure once she felt his cock filling her, this ache and this dream would be over, and right now, she wanted an end to this suffering more than anything.

Brody didn't dare answer her as, for the time being, he thought it was probably best if she continued believing she was dreaming. Reality was going to wake her up soon enough.

“Can't you handle one small woman?” Ian asked as he walked over to the bed, his eyes taking in Piper's nudity and the obvious signs of her still

chemically induced arousal. Stiff, berry red nipples pointed straight up and were begging to be suckled even though there was damp evidence that they had already been in Brody's mouth. Brody was lightly stroking his fingers over her enticingly bare pussy, a sheen of moisture coated her folds and a telltale dampness seeped from her slit, all proof she was teetering on the edge of climax.

"I've gotten her off three times and she's still hurting. Get over here and help me."

"But we're not fucking her, right?" Ian asked as he lay down on her other side, sandwiching her between the two of them.

"Right," Brody growled in frustration. He had no doubt Ian's scruples wouldn't allow him to take advantage of Piper's condition, no matter how much she begged, but that didn't mean he was any happier about the situation than Brody was.

Piper heard another man's voice but it didn't register until she felt another, fully clothed hard body behind her. Turning her head, she looked into a vaguely familiar face, a very handsome, very vaguely familiar face she quickly amended. "Who're you?"

"Ian."

"Did I invite you into my dream, Ian?" She didn't remember inviting another man, but then again, she never remembered inviting Brody either. He just showed up, much like this man. Cool, she thought giddily as her body reacted pleasantly to the possibility of having two men.

"No. Would you like me to leave?" Ian ignored Brody's scowl figuring the girl was too desperate to ask him to go.

"Why the hell would I want that? Do I look stupid?" she demanded. "But if one of you doesn't fuck me in the next thirty seconds I'm kicking both of you out and replacing you with a man who knows how to take his clothes off."

Looking at Ian, Brody drawled, "Then we better make sure that doesn't happen." Slipping his hand under her hair, he cupped her nape and brought her mouth to his, his lips latching on to hers, his kiss hard and demanding, his tongue ruthless in its exploration of her mouth.

God, Piper thought, this kiss couldn't be better if it were real. And when four hands started touching her at once, she figured there was no way reality could improve this experience. She was disappointed when Brody released her mouth but when he rolled her to her back and both men latched

on to her nipples, she decided she'd be content to keep all her sexual encounters to dreams because there was no way a real encounter could cap this. Even though her nipples were sore, she welcomed their mouths and the pleasure of having both of those tender buds stimulated simultaneously. The fire that had been simmering in her veins heated up, making her body bow with the pleasure and the frustration. When Brody grabbed her restless hands and wrapped her fingers around the head rails of her brass bed, she breathed a sigh of relief at having a way to anchor herself.

Closing her eyes, Piper wallowed in the pleasure, not wanting to know who was doing what, only wanting the release she felt coiling inside her. Hands spread her legs even wider, grabbing her thighs and draping them over their much bigger, much harder thighs, opening her completely. If she were awake, Piper thought, she'd be embarrassed by the decadent position, but not even the cool air caressing her gaping flesh could cool her down or make her want to close her legs in shame. When fingers parted her flesh even more and slid easily into her sheath, she arched up against the hands invading her, welcoming them as well as urging them on.

Her head swiveling side to side in painful frustration, she set up a litany of please, please, please, even though another climax was already rolling through her. Their lips never let up on her nipples, their fingers never left her pussy as the orgasms came fast and furious, one after another until she couldn't tell when one stopped and another began, leaving her body steeped in pleasure, her mind numb with it. When fingers slid down to her anus, caressed, probed then slipped past her tight sphincter, she literally screamed, nerve endings she never knew she had exploding and combining with those in her pussy.

Piper had no idea how long the dream lasted, how long she allowed them to work her, bringing her to orgasm over and over, until she was a sweat slick mass of confusion, her body rendered to a boneless, sated lump by the time they left her bed. She needed to wake up, needed to figure out what this dream meant, if anything, but there was no way her eyes were opening right now. Blessed darkness replaced the exploding lights of pleasure, her body finally able to rest.

"We deserve a Bronze Star or Purple Heart for our fucking sacrifice," Brody grumbled, finding it difficult to navigate the stairs with his cock so hard he ached. It was late afternoon and Piper had finally become sated enough to fall into a deep sleep, allowing them to head back downstairs.

“Yeah, but we both know our blue balls are the only colorful recognition we’re going to get.” Ian was having just as much trouble moving comfortably and now that Piper was calmed, relieving his own frustrated lust was next on his agenda. “Where’re you going?” he asked when Brody marched to the front door.

“To find the lake,” Brody snapped, his cock so fucking hard he was worried he was going to have to cut his jeans off to free himself.

“I’ll be in the shower then.”

Thirty minutes later Brody pulled his jeans back on over his wet body, his cock now happy enough to allow him to zip up easily. June in Missouri made skinny dipping in the lake pleasant and an easy way to jack off his frustration. Slipping his shirt on, he left it open as he picked up his shoes and started back towards Piper’s cabin which he had discovered was less than a block from the lake. He wondered if the dock and small row boat belonged to her, but picturing the girl he had last seen five years ago maneuvering that craft out on the water was as difficult as trying to figure out what was going on with her now. Gary Norton wouldn’t have called him, worried about her and her absence, if he hadn’t suspected something was wrong. According to the sheriff they had trusted to keep an eye on Piper all this time in the slim chance Charles would contact her, she never went more than a day or two without coming to town and always contacted her friend, Haley, if she was going to be late or not make it.

Brody and Ian had driven straight through to Missouri from Virginia where they both kept apartments, and hadn’t bothered to drive into Hope and check in with Gary before coming here. Brody shocked himself by how worried and obsessed he had been after getting Gary’s call. The level of his concern seemed out of proportion considering his limited involvement with her so many years ago, but it is what it is, he told himself. Right now, the important thing was to find out if Piper’s absence had been willing or not, and if not, what was the purpose? These were questions, he knew, were going to have to wait until she awoke, which, given the state of her exhaustion, probably wouldn’t be until tomorrow morning.

He heard Ian cursing from the kitchen as soon as he stepped through the door. Tossing his shoes down, Brody padded barefoot in his direction to see what had him riled up. “Didn’t you take care of that frustration in the shower?” he asked his friend and partner when another curse was followed by the slamming of the refrigerator door.

“Yes, which just made me even hungrier. Look at this.” Turning, he reopened the fridge door and pointed, his face a picture of bafflement and disgust. “What kind of person has nothing but health food crap and beer?”

Peering inside, Brody saw fresh vegetables, organic juice and milk, yogurt, as well as a few items he had never seen or heard of and had no interest in. Below these, on the bottom shelf, sat three six packs. “Maybe the beer’s for a boyfriend.” Brody recalled the way a few glasses of wine had made her tipsy, so he doubted the brews were for her. “Anything in the freezer?” He sure as hell hoped so, because he was with Ian on needing something substantial to eat, especially since they missed lunch.

“Fish,” Ian sneered. “Damn it, I need meat, red meat cooked rare. We passed a greasy burger joint about a mile up the road. I’ll drive over and pick up some burgers.”

“Get me two, and fries. Meanwhile, I’ll let the sheriff’s office know Piper’s back.”

“Is that all you’re telling them?”

“Yeah, for now. Until we talk to Piper, we won’t know what’s going on.”

“Have you considered she was taken to lure Charles out, that Pasquino doesn’t believe he’s dead any more than we do?” Ian asked, knowing they had to consider all angles.

“And they returned her when whoever’s here watching for Charles to show up either saw or heard we were coming instead? Yeah, I’ve thought of that, but I think they would’ve stuck around longer, or kept her longer, just in case. Either way, I’m sticking for a while. You in?”

“Rescuing a damsel in trouble is my favorite thing to do when not catching bad guys. Besides, I’m just as curious about what’s going on as you. But if we’re hanging, we’re shopping for real food, including meat.”

At the thought of nothing but vegetables, yogurt and fish, Brody said, “Make that three burgers.”

Catalina Island, Caribbean

“She’s safe, at least for now. Both agents Pearce and MacGregor arrived today.”

Charles Sandoval closed his eyes in relief as Doc gave him the news he had been hoping for, the guilt and worry plaguing him this past week easing somewhat. “They’re with her, at her cabin?”

“Yes. They arrived yesterday and seem determined to help her, thank God.”

These past few days had been the longest in his life and at finally hearing Piper was safe, he now knew there wasn't anything he wouldn't do to keep her that way. “You know how much I appreciate everything you've done.” Doc and Charles have been friends since they met when they were twelve years old. Neither had ever married, both of them too intensely driven with their careers to take the time or the interest. If Christine hadn't died so unexpectedly, he knew he would still be with her, whether they eventually made it legal or not, but he had never even come close to feeling for another woman what he had felt for her, and he still mourned her loss. And thanks to Doc's quick thinking when he got shot, he was able to get away from the casino before the feds or Pasquino could stop him. Piper's startled cry had given him the split second warning he needed to throw himself sideways, allowing both bullets to cut cleanly through his left shoulder. Immediately seeing he was in no danger of dying, Doc managed to smear his blood, making it look like he had been hit in the chest and worse than it was.

“Let's just hope this all works out, Charles. I'll bet Pasquino's planning on buying the Empire if you're declared dead in two years. He really has it in for you and this latest threat just proves he's not giving up.”

“He won't get the Empire, and he won't get to Piper now. Thanks again, Doc. Keep me informed, okay?” Charles hung up and leaned back in his chair, his gaze moving to the stunning azure view of the Caribbean Sea that he had from his veranda. Fleeing Pasquino five years ago, he had opted to lay low on Catalina, an island in the Caribbean that he had brought Christina to and fell in love with and one that wasn't owned by the United States.

He had been pissed when he discovered that two of his employees were undercover feds, but he hadn't been surprised. He'd been questioned more than once about his limited association with the man the feds had been after for years and had been very careful about keeping all records of their business hidden. Now his life was a mess and he had no one to blame but himself. He knew all about Antony Pasquino's drug dealings before Antony had approached him with his lucrative offer, but Charles had been so desperate for cash to keep the Empire afloat during the recession he had jumped at the chance to save it. The casino had always meant everything to

him, until Christina nothing was as important as his business. After her death, once again nothing was more important than that building, not until he saw Piper's face when she witnessed the attempt on his life. He had loved Piper since she was a toddler, but it took that life altering moment to realize how much Christina's daughter had come to mean to him, that his love for her was as strong as that of any parent for a child despite the fact she wasn't biologically his and he would use whatever means necessary, even morally questionable ones, to see that she was kept safe from his mistakes. He had spent the first fourteen years after her mother's death seeing that she got an excellent education and made sure she didn't feel abandoned by diligently visiting her every month and he had naively thought that was enough for a young girl. He could only hope now that he wasn't too late to make it up to her.

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Chapter Five

Warmth from the early morning sun shining on her face woke Piper. Rolling over with a groan, she struggled to untangle herself from the twisted sheet while keeping her eyes shut against the glare. “Why the hell didn’t I close the blinds?” she grumbled as she finally managed to free herself and slid out of bed. Since her bedroom window faced east, she always made sure to close the blinds, especially if she had been up late the night before and would want to sleep in. The first step towards her bathroom elicited another groan as her entire body zinged with soreness, a full body encompassing ache the likes of which she hadn’t felt since those first weeks of making her daily two mile trek into Hope. Shuffling into the small bathroom, she struggled to remember what she had done differently yesterday to have caused such a reaction, but for the life of her she couldn’t remember anything. She had met Haley for dinner at the diner, talked about some of her new designs she was anxious to show her then promised to get some of them finished and to her today. Then they had walked down to have a beer at Rowdy’s, Hope’s only bar. The last thing she remembered was Crack, the gruff, tattooed, grey-haired ponytailed owner of the bar, insisting on driving her home because it had gotten dark.

Stepping under the shower, she tried to remember how much sewing she had gotten done last night, which items she had completed and were ready to display in Haley’s shop, but couldn’t seem to recall anything past leaving the bar. That totally blank slate had her worried as did the aches and pains making themselves known. Running soapy hands down her neck and over her breasts, she winced as that light touch proved her soreness wasn’t limited to her muscles. With a vagueness that seem surreal, she recalled her dream, the hazy image of Brody Pearce’s face hovering above her, the even hazier recollection of his hands and mouth feasting on her flesh, of endless orgasms, another hard, male body, more hands, another mouth bringing her to climax after climax.

“Hell of a dream,” she muttered, wishing she could remember more and that the images and sensations weren’t so vague. But when she cupped her palm between her legs, the soreness in her pussy, and, God help her, the ache in her rectum couldn’t be denied. She had masturbated more times than she could count to the fantasy of having Brody back in her bed, but neither her fingers nor her vibrator had ever made her sore and she had

never even thought about breaching her anus, had never even imagined pleasure could come from that orifice.

Worry and an inkling of fear slowly took hold as she quickly finished her shower, determined to get answers, her eyes now wide open and focused enough to note small bruises on her breasts and the insides of her thighs as she dried off. Fear now took precedence over worry. Grabbing a pair of comfortable gym shorts and tee shirt, her daily attire in the summer, she started to reach for her phone on the bed stand when the sound of male voices carried upstairs. The second floor of her cabin was an open loft and the only door up here was on the bathroom, where she headed after grabbing her phone. The distinct sound of Brody's name followed by a voice she recognized as his had her swiftly switching gears, her steps taking her to the railing that overlooked the great room below, her temper spiking just as fast when she spotted him in her kitchen searching out pans and food as if he owned the place. Despite her soreness, she flew downstairs to confront the son of a bitch she had naively fallen for and had never managed to forget.

Ignoring the presence of the other man who looked familiar, her bare feet not making a sound even though she stomped across the room, she fisted her hands on her hips and demanded angrily, "Brody Pearce, what the fuck are you doing in my house?"

Brody turned, staring in surprise at Piper who stood glaring at him out of black fringed, snapping green eyes, their color no longer hidden by dilated pupils, her face pale with the exception of twin splotches of color on her cheekbones. Her damp, black hair fell in disarray to her shoulders, the inky color emphasizing her paleness. From her outburst and the look of confused mistrust she was aiming at him, it was obvious she didn't remember last night.

Brody set the pan he was holding down and moved towards her, his arms extended to embrace her, but she quickly sidestepped him. "Piper, why don't you sit down, I'll fix us something to eat and we'll talk."

"Why don't you keep your hands to yourself, talk then leave." She didn't know who she was more pissed at, him for unexpectedly showing back up in her life, or her for her reaction to seeing him again, a reaction that was just as strong, if not stronger than when she had been a gullible college kid and had allowed her infatuation to blind her to so much.

“That’s not what you were saying last night,” Ian said as he leaned against the counter, folded his arms across his chest and prepared for the fireworks he saw brewing between the two. Suddenly this gig looked like it could be quite entertaining.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Piper took the time to look more closely at the other man and finally remembered where she had seen him before. He was Brody’s FBI partner, the other man who had been in her father’s employ under false pretenses, pretenses she had wondered had anything to do with his death.

“You couldn’t be a little more subtle? It’s obvious she doesn’t remember what happened last night.” Brody glared at his friend before turning his attention back to Piper who was now watching both of them in confused irritation. “What’s the last thing you remember?”

Getting more confused by the minute, Piper frowned as she thought back, but, other than the barely there images of her erotic dream, the last thing she could recall with any clarity was having a beer with Haley yesterday. “I had dinner with my friend, Haley, last night. We ate at the diner and then went to Crack’s place for a beer. It was dark by the time I was ready to head back here, so he offered to give me a ride. But.... I don’t remember getting back home. Why? What’s happened?”

“Piper,” Brody said gently, hating to add to her confusion and the growing trepidation he saw on her face, “that was three days ago. Today is Friday.”

This time Piper did sit, practically falling onto one of the stools at the counter. “How can that be?” she whispered in confusion as the thought of those missing days upset her more than seeing Brody again did. She didn’t stay seated long as another thought occurred to her. “I have to call Haley, she’s going to be frantic. I was supposed to have some designs to her on Wednesday.”

“Sit back down,” Brody snapped, then realized quickly that wasn’t the way to handle her. The Piper he knew all those years ago would have obeyed him immediately and then looked at him out of adoring eyes. The changes in her, he was discovering, weren’t all physical and she glared at him with a look that said plain and clear, ‘fuck off’.

“I don’t know what you’re doing here, either of you,” she added with a scathing glance towards Ian’s slouching figure and smirking face, “but I need to get hold of Haley now.”

“She’s the one who reported you missing to Sheriff Norton, who called us. When we arrived yesterday afternoon, you were here, in your bed, relatively safe. We let them know, so now the only question remains is where were you for two and a half days.”

Relieved that Haley wasn’t worrying herself sick over her disappearance, Piper sat back down, but not because Brody ordered her to. Frankly, she was shaking so hard from the inside out she didn’t want to risk falling in a heap at his feet. She might be tempted to stay there, especially if she was face level, or rather mouth level with his crotch. Unbelievable, she thought as she simply shut her eyes against the image of her going down on him right here in her kitchen, and when she factored in Ian’s presence, it was even more disconcerting to discover her simmering arousal ratcheting up. There had to be something seriously wrong with her to want him so much, after all this time, after learning of his betrayal of Charles and after she had forged a whole new life for herself far away from what happened in Atlantic City. But her response couldn’t be denied, it pulsed strongly between her legs, the lingering ache and soreness only fueling the fire stewing.

“Why would Gary call you?” she finally asked after she managed to delegate her lust to the back burner, at least for now. Looking him square in the eye, she questioned coolly, “How is he aware of our connection? Because I sure as hell didn’t tell him.”

Brody looked at Ian who simply shrugged. If he knew him, and he did, Ian would tell him to come clean now, and Brody would have to agree. Piper needed answers, and so did they. “We, the FBI, asked him to keep an eye on you, at first to make sure your identity was still a secret from the man who had hired the assassin that night and second to let us know if Charles showed up. I’m sure you know he hasn’t been seen since that night.”

“Charles is dead,” Piper returned flatly before shutting off any thoughts of the man she had thought of, and loved, as a father.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Ian said, making sure she got the whole picture. Brody had a soft spot for the woman, always had. He had thought he had gotten over it, but Brody’s reaction to her disappearance and since said otherwise. Poor sap, Ian thought cynically. “Without a body, there’s no proof.”

“I don’t need a body. There’s no way Charles would go this long without getting in touch with me, without at least finding a way to let me know he was still alive. I know what you, the FBI think, that he was working for some drug lord, but you’re wrong, you couldn’t be more wrong. Now, I don’t want to talk about him, or what you think he did or didn’t do. I want you gone.” Her demand would have been more convincing if it hadn’t come out in a desperate plea, because the truth was, those lost days had her scared, and them being here was the only thing keeping her from freaking out.

Brody heard the underlying panic in her voice, saw it on her face, and had to admire her bravado despite it. Didn’t mean he was going to leave, he thought, just that he admired her gumption in the face of adversity, something she had been lacking when dealing with Charles.

“Have you considered that your disappearance might have been a ruse to draw him out, get him to show his face again, so his enemy can take him out for sure?” he asked her.

“Then he wasted his time, didn’t he, because the only one to ride to my rescue was you, and, as you can see, I don’t need rescuing. Like I said, Charles is dead.” Piper hopped off the stool and strode over to the refrigerator, jerking it open. Shoving aside misplaced lust, worry, fear and uncertainty, she was going to pick up where she left off a few days ago as if nothing happened. “I feel like I haven’t eaten in days, hell, maybe I haven’t,” she mumbled as she started to pull out eggs, vegetables and cheese.

Setting her ingredients on the counter next to where Brody was still standing, she looked up into grey eyes watching her intensely and felt the instant response of her body, the painful stiffening of her nipples, the soothing gush of moisture from her pussy, and cursed herself for every kind of fool. “I’m fixing omelets. Do you want one?”

“Hell yes,” Ian said quickly. “After raiding your refrigerator, I don’t need to ask if we’re having bacon or sausage with it.”

“No, you don’t. The only meat I eat is the fish I catch myself. Deal with it. Afterwards, you’re going to tell me what happened last night. Now, get out of my kitchen until I call you.”

“So, who’s Crack?” Brody asked around a mouthful of the best omelet he’d ever had. Watching her whip brown eggs that she assured them were healthier for you than filling them with fresh spinach, feta and onions, they

had both had their doubts about the concoction, but the first bite had both he and Ian groaning in satisfaction.

“An ex biker gang member who owns Rowdy’s, the only bar in town. It’s a favorite hangout and Crack lends a good ear when I need one.” If Piper had been open to anyone filling the void Charles’s absence had left in her life, Crack would have been more than willing. Somewhere in his early sixties, even though his hard life made him look older, he was old enough and over protective enough to be her father. Nobody crossed him, and nobody harassed, insulted or threatened his girls, as he often called her and Haley, without consequences. As much as she appreciated his kind, gruff manor, her determination to maintain the independence she had worked so hard to achieve didn’t allow for her to rely on anyone for anything other than friendship. She had learned the hard way not to let her feelings and emotions blind her to reality again.

“If that’s your jeep out front, how’d it get here if he brought you back from town?” Ian asked as he slathered butter on a piece of toast made from homemade bread then simply closed his eyes in appreciation as he bit into it.

Piper rose from the counter where she had sat between the two of them, very vague images of being sandwiched between them in her bed causing her to sit uncomfortably in damp panties. She didn’t care for the questions or these hazy thoughts that had her wondering if they were really remnants of a dream. “I only take the jeep when I need to go into Branson. Otherwise, I walk everywhere.” Putting her plate in the sink, she turned to face them in time to see surprise at her statement reflected on both their faces. “What?”

“How far is Hope from here?”

“I don’t know for sure since I cut through the woods. About two miles.” Looking at Ian, she decided it was time she asked the questions. “You said something about last night, something I said. What were you talking about?” The two men exchanged a look she couldn’t decipher then Brody gave a very minute shake of his head before turning to her.

“We’ll discuss the condition we found you in later. Right now, you need to tell us your routine, where you go and when so we make sure one of us is with you. There’ll be no more trekking through the woods alone until we find out what’s going on.” Brody knew he had phrased that badly when sparks practically flew at him out of angry green eyes.

“Think again Brody Pearce. I’ve gotten along just fine for five years without you around, and I’ll continue to do so. I’m sure as hell not going to have one of you dodging my heels every time I need to go somewhere.” Piper didn’t know what angered, or scared her more, the thought of how attracted and vulnerable she still was to this man or why it was necessary for him to make such an outrageous statement. She wasn’t stupid, something had happened to cause her to forget over two days, but since she was unharmed, the fear of what had occurred during that lost time wasn’t enough to give up her hard earned independence and wasn’t as strong as the urge to give in to her lust again, setting herself up for another rejection. Of course, now she was also no longer fifty pounds overweight and was no longer a potential risk to whatever investigation he had been undercover for, so maybe he wouldn’t be so quick to reject her.

“This ought to be good,” Ian stated with a smile as he rose and took his plate to the sink. Bending down, he kissed her cheek, grinned at the startled, wary look she gave him then turned to Brody. “I’m going to scout around while you two hash this out.”

After Ian went out the kitchen door, Brody glared at Piper, wondering where the quiet, malleable young woman he had left in Geneva had gone. “You’ve changed, Piper.” His eyes took a leisurely slow look of her body from her black, silky head to her small, bare feet and then just as slowly back up again. He had touched every inch of that body last night, felt her arch against his hands and mouth as she came apart over and over, her soft, sweat-slick skin enough to drive him crazy. His cock stirred at the memory and his mouth practically watered with the need to feel those nipples hardening on his tongue, feel the soft, bare flesh of her pussy under his fingers, her juices dampening them, easing his way in.

His look had her nipples peaking, her pussy swelling, dampening even more. Cynically Piper raised her brow, recognizing that look. “And now that I’ve changed, as you so succinctly put it, you want me.”

“I always wanted you.”

“Yeah right,” she snorted. “I had to practically force myself on you, go down on you until, being a guy, I got you to the point you didn’t care what I looked like or who I was.”

Brody came around the counter so fast Piper didn’t have time to do anything but back up and face the storm she saw brewing in those pewter eyes. When he braced his arms on either side of her, she couldn’t help but

notice, and react to the strength in those arms, the corded muscles bulging tautly as he leaned down into her face so close it took every ounce of willpower she possessed not to pull herself up against him and urge his head down far enough for her to feel those soft lips ravaging hers again. Despite the satisfying sex she had with Cole whenever his job as a wilderness guide brought him to Hope, she had never achieved the heights she had that one time with Brody and had never forgotten the feel of him, the taste of him. Which just pissed her off more.

“If you’ll recall,” Brody said in a deceptively soft voice, “I was hard long before I got into bed with you, long before I woke to feel that incredible mouth around my dick and I have never, ever, been controlled by my cock. I could have said no to you, turned you down, if I had wanted to. I didn’t. Remember that before you accuse me again of wanting you now simply because you’ve lost weight.” Brody grabbed her and hauled her against him, lifting her until her mouth was level with his, her startled eyes on his as he swallowed her gasp with his mouth.

Just that quickly, Piper was sunk. The feel of his mouth taking hers was both familiar and new, just as carnally arousing as she remembered, yet it was as if she had never been this close to him before. She opened willingly for his tongue, matched him stroke for stroke, invited him to explore her teeth, gums, lips, anywhere he wanted as long as those lips were on hers. Their mouths never parted as he lifted her onto the counter, spread her thighs and settled between them, never let up contact when he pushed her shirt up and closed those large, hard hands over her bare breasts. Piper couldn’t help the whimper of pleasure that escaped her throat when he grasped her nipples, didn’t try to suppress the moan he drew from her when he rolled those taut buds between his fingers then pinched them just to the point of pain. Upon his release, blood rushed back into the tortured peaks, making her lightheaded with the pleasure, aching for more, craving that which only he seemed to be able to give her. When she remembered Ian, when she was able to process the possibility that he could return at any moment and see Brody kneading her bare breasts, her arousal rose even higher, shocking and exciting her at the same time.

When Brody pulled his mouth from hers, she bemoaned the loss then, when he closed those same lips over a turgid tip and suckled, she embraced it. Even though her nipples were still sore and she had no idea what from, the discomfort only seemed to enhance her pleasure. Her hands clasped his

dark head, her fingers sinking into his thick hair as the bristles from his beard scraped her sensitive flesh, the added pleasure from that sensation just as good as she remembered. Her imagination conjured up the image of both men's heads bent over her breasts, of feeling both their mouths suckling her nipples, the dual sensations sending her to an unbelievable height of ecstasy. When Brody switched to her other nipple and drew it into his mouth with deep suction, she could no longer hold back a plea for more. "Brody, please."

Her soft voice pleading with him worked as effectively as a douse of ice water. Five years ago she had pleaded with him in just that tone, softly vulnerable as well as huskily aroused, and he had been unable, or rather, unwilling to ignore it. But he refused to do that to her again, take her only to leave with the intention of imprisoning the one person in her life she considered family. She had been hurt enough by both Charles and him. She didn't deserve to go through that again. If they discovered Charles was alive, and the odds were he was, she was going to have enough betrayal to deal with. Believing he was dead was a self-defense mechanism she was using to spare herself from being hurt anymore by the man she thought of as her father. She may have had her rose colored glasses yanked off at that party five years ago, but, despite her independence from Charles now, she didn't seem to have any trouble slipping them back on when she needed to.

"I can't do this again," Brody said as he reluctantly released her breast. Very softly, he ran his tongue in a caress meant to be soothing instead of arousing over each reddened tip before raising his head to her flushed face and large, pleading eyes. "Damn it, Piper, I am not going to fuck you again only to turn around and leave to betray you. If Charles is still alive, it's my job to find him and bring him in. He's a material witness against the man we really want and that hasn't changed."

Piper yanked down her shirt and was grateful he stepped back and allowed her the dignity of hopping off the counter unaided. "When will I learn," she muttered as she turned away from him.

"What was that?" Brody asked as he tried to ignore the way her ass moved under those loose gym shorts even while he was vividly recalling the feel of that soft ass under his hands last night, how those globes, firmer than they were five years ago, were still plump and round, still soft enough to have him fantasizing about reddening them before sinking his cock

between them, riding her crack until his white come splashed over the redness.

Piper turned her head and glared at him. “Charles is dead. There’s nothing you can say to convince me otherwise. I have work to do. If you’re going to insist on hanging around here, clean up after yourselves.”

Brody watched her walk down the hall, winced when she slammed the door to her workroom then breathed a sigh of relief that she wasn’t arguing about them sticking around for a while. At least she was smart enough to know she had a problem and they were here to help solve it and protect her if need be. He could only hope they figured out what was going on soon, because if he had to be in such close proximity to her for any extended period of time, he didn’t stand a snowball’s chance in hell of keeping out of her bed, even if he knew it would be better for her if he did.

Piper adjusted her back pack on her shoulders again as her angry stride through the oak hickory and pine tree filled woods kept making it slip off her shoulders. She didn’t know who she was madder at, herself for falling so easily for him again, or Brody, for making her fall so easily for him again. Okay, that wasn’t fair, but who cared about being fair at a time like this? She had tried repeatedly over the past five years to rid herself of Brody’s memory, to shove aside his betrayal of Charles and to forget the pleasure he had shown her she had unknowingly been missing out on. But nothing she had done, not even the satisfying sex she had with Cole, had been able to erase that man from her memory. Not even during those first months, when she had worried obsessively about Charles’s fate as she struggled to take control of her life by moving back to Missouri, using the money she had hoarded from Charles’s generous monthly allowance all those years to buy her cabin and jeep and, for the first time in her life, working to support herself.

Now here she was again, as if no time had passed at all, as if she hadn’t witnessed the brutal attempt on Charles’s life followed by the revelation that Brody had been working to send the man she loved so dearly to prison and he had only befriended her as part of that job. “I’m a fucking idiot,” she berated herself, still smarting over the way she had succumbed so easily, the way she had once again pleaded with him to take her only to be turned down. Her nipples still throbbed from the deep suckling of his mouth, her pussy still wept with unfulfilled frustration and she still ached from head to toe for some inexplicable reason. “Bastard.”

It was a struggle to blame him for rejecting her since his reason, this time, was honorable, but she was determined to do so nonetheless because she simply would not believe Charles was alive, that he would keep her in the dark, make her suffer his abrupt absence from her life, unless he was dead. It was the only explanation. To this day she wasn't sure what the FBI had been investigating him for, she only had a few facts from first Ian, and then Brody, delivered quickly and in Reader's Digest format that night. She still didn't believe Charles would do business with a drug lord, refused to believe the man who was no blood relation to her, or even a relation by marriage, who had nonetheless saw to her upbringing and had been generous with his money as well as his visits would embroil himself with such a nefarious person as this Pasquino was reputed to be.

Piper waved to the elderly couple who had been her closest neighbors since she bought her cabin as she passed theirs. She imagined both Brody and Ian were going to be royally pissed when they found her sewing room empty, but she needed to let them know up front she wasn't about to allow them, or anybody else dictate her life again. She freely acknowledged, and worried, that she had a problem on her hands, which was why she hadn't insisted they leave again. Having them there was a comfortable safety net, one she wasn't above using, but she knew these woods and this well hiked trail into town like the back of her hand and there were enough cabins and friendly faces on the way to ensure her safety. If those jerks had bothered asking her, she could have have told them that, reassured them, but she was piqued enough and perverse enough to let them suffer and stew as to her whereabouts until she got back from delivering these items to Haley's shop. It had been surprisingly easy to slip out the window and enter the woods without them catching her, but maybe this little lesson would show both of them she wasn't a meek college kid any longer and she wouldn't be dictated to. She valued her freedom and independence and she wasn't going to give them up unless her safety absolutely demanded it.

The trail came out at the small marina at the edge of town and it was just a short walk up Main Street to Haley's small boutique. Piper had met Haley when she applied for the part-time position in her shop. It only took a few weeks for them to become close, both of them recognizing a kindred spirit, and when she had shown Haley some of her sketches and told her about starting up a mail order business, Haley had quickly begged to carry some of her items in her shop. Even though Piper's business had grown and

become successful enough that she no longer had the time to help out in Haley's shop, they still saw each other several times a week. Picking up her stride, Piper hoped Haley hadn't been too stressed over her no show the other day, she had enough emotional trauma to deal with on a daily basis, she didn't need Piper adding any more.

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Chapter Six

The bell over the door tinkled when Piper walked into Haley's small boutique that carried a wide range of women's clothing, including a lingerie section Haley had added after seeing some of Piper's designs. Displaying and selling some of her items in the small shop had proven profitable for both of them as Hope was only a short distance from Branson and benefitted from a steady stream of tourist income almost year round.

"Better late than never," Piper beamed when Haley saw her, squealed and ran over to greet her with a hug.

"Damn you, Piper. I was worried sick. What happened to you?"

Her friends' blue eyes were swimming with unshed tears and Piper felt bad for worrying her even though she hadn't done it on purpose. "Hell if I know. Here, let's get these hung while we talk. I have a feeling I don't have much time."

There were only two customers browsing, so Haley led the way to the far corner that was reserved for Piper's garments. She had only been in Hope a year before Piper walked into her shop and they hit it off almost immediately. Her friendship had come at a time when Haley had sorely needed that bond with another person. Her own past had enabled her to recognize right off another woman who was as determined as she had been to start over, to leave a painful past behind. "What do you mean you don't have much time? I haven't seen or spoken to you in three days and since I know you'd never take off without letting me know, I've been plagued by horrible scenarios of what might have happened. You owe me lunch at least. Oh," she breathed when she picked up a light blue teddy with matching thong, "I love this."

"It's yours," Piper offered even though she knew Haley wouldn't take it.

"It'd be wasted on me and you know it."

"Hey, I've offered to share Cole with you." Piper had no emotional attachment to Cole, her part-time lover, and she knew he would be more than willing to end Haley's long drought from sex, but she also knew it wasn't going to happen. Suddenly, she was besieged by a memory of being sandwiched between two hard bodies, harsh breathing filling her ears, hands and mouths leaving no part of her untouched.

"Piper, you okay?"

“Yeah, yeah, sorry.” Those erotic images that had been so dreamlike this morning when she first awoke were becoming clearer instead of vaguer and Piper was beginning to wonder what exactly did happen when Brody and Ian had arrived at her cabin yesterday. A quick glance up and down Main Street from the front window showed no sign of Brody or Ian yet, but Piper didn’t think they’d waste time tracking her down once they discovered she had slipped out.

“If you don’t want that, why don’t we put it on the mannequin? It’s subtle enough to display in the window. Some of these others should probably be more discreetly displayed. Like this one.” With a cheeky grin she held up a white lace bra with cutouts for the nipples, a small red bow placed to sit right above a rosy tip, drawing ones attention. The matching crotchless panties had a similar bow set to rest right above an exposed pussy.

“Those are positively decadent.”

“They’ll make some guy happy.” While they worked together, Piper quickly told Haley what she knew, which wasn’t much.

“So, this Brody is the same guy you spent one really hot night with five years ago and out of the blue he shows up because the sheriff and I thought you were in trouble? The man must be obsessed.” Haley folded the bikini panties and thongs in neon silk and arranged them on a shelf as she tried to suppress the memories of her obsessed husband and how easily he had duped her.

Piper finished hanging the last silk nightie before turning to her friend. She knew about Haley’s crazed ex, how he had tormented her until she had finally decided anything was better than living in constant fear, how, even though the bastard was currently serving year six of a fifteen year attempted murder sentence, it was still a constant battle to keep fear from ruling her life.

“He’s obsessed with his job, not with me,” Piper retorted. No matter how much she had daydreamed about having a man like Brody want her when she was an overweight, dumb as nails young woman and despite her apparent lust for the man who had betrayed Charles, and in turn, her, she would never believe she meant anything more to him than a means to an end, that end being finishing the job he and Ian had set out to do five years ago. From the closed, implacable look on Brody’s face when she had denied any possibility that Charles might have survived his injuries from that

assassination attempt, she knew he'd never believe that until he had proof or possibly until he and Ian succeeded in bringing this other man, Pasquino, to justice. "But he doesn't mean me any harm, Haley, I'm sure of that." At least not physically, Piper thought morosely. Emotionally might be another matter. She had been crushed when she had fled Atlantic City, not only because of Charles's loss but because of the painful revelation of Brody's efforts to hurt the one person in the world who meant anything to her after she had humiliated herself by practically forcing him into having sex with her.

"Good, because I have to admit, I'm glad you've got someone so capable and willing to look out for you until you find out what happened. I'm sure you'll rest easier knowing they're there also."

"Yeah, I will, but not enough to totally give up my independence again to another man. Like you, I learned the hard way to stand on my own two feet, but I'm willing to accept a helping hand when needed. Right now, though, I think I'll head back home before they show up to drag me there. That," she muttered darkly, "wouldn't be a pretty sight."

"You still owe me lunch," Haley told her as she followed her through racks of summer wear to the front of the shop. "Tomorrow?"

"See you then."

Brody found a parking spot in front of the Post Office on what appeared to be Hope's main street, aptly named 'Main Street', still fuming over the way Piper had so blatantly disregarded their order not to take off by herself. It had never dawned on him that she wouldn't simply comply with his dictate. The woman he used to know would have meekly agreed and that would have been the end of it, but Piper had changed in more ways than just physically, something that he realized rather forcibly when he knocked on her workroom door and got no answer. His second surprise had come when he opened the door and saw she had crawled out the window and slipped right by them. He now realized he had made a mistake by telling her how things were going to be instead of asking, but that didn't negate her impulsive foolishness which he was hoping hadn't landed her in trouble again.

"Relax," Ian said, "she's smart enough to be careful. Those missing days had her shook. She'll be careful."

"She's still going to learn to listen to us, whether she thinks she can handle this on her own or not." Getting out, Brody looked up and down the

quaint brick sidewalks, noted all the small shops with flower boxes on the window sills, tree shaded benches and the laid back atmosphere as well as attitude of the few people milling about.

“It’s fucking Mayberry,” Ian complained as he too looked up and down the street.

“I like it.”

“You would,” he replied, his lip curled in disdain.

Grinning, Brody pointed to the corner shop. “You check there, I’ll head down to the bar and question the bartender who took her home the other night. Hopefully one of us will run into her.”

“And when we do?”

“Then I plan to show her what happens when she’s so careless with her safety, especially after I specifically told her not to go anywhere alone.”

“She’s made a life for herself here, Brody, independent of Sandoval. She’s not going to turn the reins over to you without a fight,” Ian warned him.

“Then she’s going to have trouble sitting down the next few days until we find out what’s going on.” And damned if he wasn’t looking forward to meting out those consequences, Brody thought as he pictured her draped over his lap, her ass bare and wiggling. The easy part would be administering her punishment, the hard part would be controlling his reaction to the feel of her ass warming under his hand, to the sight of that soft white skin turning redder with each swat, especially if she took to that painful pleasure as lustfully as she had the last time. Still, it would be worth the frustration of putting aside his own lustful reaction to make sure she didn’t pull this stunt again.

“Can I watch?” Ian’s grin was knowing and contagious.

“Of course, but we’re not fucking her. It wouldn’t be right under the circumstances.”

“While I agree with your reason, if she turns those needy green eyes on me after you turn her down, don’t expect me to be so chivalrous.”

“Call me if you find her,” Brody responded tersely then grew irritated with himself when Ian smiled knowingly before heading up the street. He had developed a fondness for Piper the first time he met her in Geneva, a fondness that had not, apparently, diminished over time and abstinence. But his obsessive attraction would have to be put on the back burner for now. Until something broke on the case they had been building against Pasquino

and, indirectly, Sandoval, sorting out his personal feelings where Piper was concerned would have to wait.

Brody spotted the man named Crack as soon as he stepped into Rowdy's. With tattoos visible on every inch of exposed skin, long grey hair pulled back in a ponytail and sporting a pierced ear, he had the weathered look of a man who had lived a hard life as well as biker gang member written all over him and Brody suspected the Harley parked out front belonged to him. The bar looked like a million others with tables and booths taking up most of the space, leaving room for a small dance floor, an even smaller stage that looked like it might be used for Karaoke, and a long, mirror backed bar which the bartender was currently standing behind, eyeing him.

"You Crack?" he asked the gruff looking man as he took a seat on a stool in front of him.

"You FBI?" Crack asked even though he knew he was. The sheriff had let him know as soon as he heard they were on their way, setting Crack's mind at ease. That girl needed someone out there with her since she insisted on living outside of town.

"I go by Brody, and yes, my partner, Ian and I are with the bureau. You heard Piper's back safe?"

"Yeah, Gary made sure we all knew." At his raised brow, Crack added, "Hope's a small community. We look out for our own. That girl had a lot of us worried. Can I get you a beer?"

"Not today, thanks. That girl is why I'm here. Have you seen her?"

A grin split Crack's lined face. "Gave you the slip, did she? I'm not surprised. She's always been fiercely independent. Nope, she hasn't been in today."

Brody checked his anger and his worry and hoped Ian had better luck. He rose, started to leave, then he turned back to ask, "You took her home Tuesday night?"

"Sure did. She and Haley hung around a little later than usual and it was getting dark by the time they started out. I saw Haley to her apartment above her shop then drove Piper to her cabin, waited until she went in. She was fine when I left."

"She wasn't drunk, or even tipsy?" he asked remembering how only a few glasses of wine had affected her.

Crack laughed outright at the suggestion. “That girl could drink me under the table. She does love her beer, but no, she only had two and she went home completely in control.” Sobering, he looked Brody in the eye, stating, “You watch out for her, you hear.”

“I’ll do my best,” Brody said. That is, he thought irritably, if he could find her.

Ian held the door open for two women exiting the small store then cursed Brody a blue streak when he entered. To his right were racks of women’s clothing, to his left a sales counter which held an assortment of aromatic products women liked to wear and men liked to smell. It was the kind of shop he wouldn’t normally step foot in and was determined to step right back out of as soon as he talked to the woman standing behind the counter staring at him out of wide, frightened blue eyes. He had championed enough victims to recognize one and this woman was silently screaming victim. He could have told her it wasn’t wise to advertise the fact, then again, fear rarely allowed for rational thinking.

“The way you’re shifting your eyes, looking for a way to escape, tells me you’re here alone. Suck it up and look me in the eye,” he ordered her gruffly. Her backbone stiffened and anger overrode the fear, which was what he wanted. “That’s better. It’s okay to be afraid, just don’t advertise it. All that will do is give a potential assailant more power over you, which is what he wants. Your hands are shaking. Put them down, behind the counter where they can’t be seen,” he said as he approached the counter slowly, his eyes never leaving her very attractive face.

“Who are you?” Haley managed to ask with some semblance of outward calm. Men rarely came into her store and she knew the ones who were locals and came and shopped for their wives or girlfriends. When tourists came to Hope, the women browsed the stores and the men went fishing or sat in Rowdy’s waiting for their women. This man was a stranger, a very tall, very big stranger with dark brown hair and eyes and a hard, chiseled face. While one part of her, the biggest, most controlling part, instantly feared being alone with such a man, another, much smaller, definitely much more insignificant part of her was responding as any normal, red blooded woman would. And that shocked the hell out of her since she hadn’t felt any inkling of sexual interest in anyone in over six years.

“Ian MacGregor. I’m looking for your friend, Piper. She seems to have slipped away from us.” Ian smiled at her, a smile that had drawn more than

his share of women, but wasn't surprised when she didn't take the bait. He was a good eight inches taller than her, which put her at about five six, yet she managed to keep her eyes on his. She was a slender, small boned woman and he had trouble controlling his anger as he wondered what, and who, had been responsible for her fear. At least she had stopped shaking, he thought ruefully.

"Oh. You're one of the agents Sheriff Nolan called to help look for her when she went missing. Sorry, you just missed her. She's headed back home." At his frown, she instinctively took a step back even though her fear had subsided when she realized they were Piper's guests.

"Damn it, I'm not going to hurt you," Ian snapped even though he knew he shouldn't. Whatever happened to make her so skittish, it wasn't his problem, even though nothing pissed him off faster than the abuse of women or children. "Was she going home through the woods?" he asked in a calmer, softer tone.

"Yes." Her gaze went to the door when the bell rang. Another tall, large man walked in, this one with hair as black as Piper's, piercing grey eyes and a goatee framing a mouth Piper claimed was to die for. Brody Pearce was exactly as her friend described. Even though Haley knew she was in no danger of physical harm from either man, she still had trouble swallowing past the large wad of fear stuck in her throat, still couldn't steady her erratic pulse and she found herself desperate to have them leave. "You're looking for Piper too? I just told Agent MacGregor she just left."

Brody was as good at reading people and body language as Ian and he had no trouble spotting a woman with an abusive past. At least, he hoped it was in the past. Remaining by the door, he visibly relaxed at hearing Piper had been here and was already headed back to her cabin, but his anger and worry over her continued obstinence still simmered.

"Thank you," he told her before turning his gaze to Ian. "I'll drive back if you'll take the woods." Brody recognized Ian's anger on behalf of Piper's friend, knew he was itching for physical release, and hoped the walk would cool him down.

"Can you give me directions?" Ian asked her tersely.

Haley quickly gave them directions and breathed a sigh of relief when they left. Piper hadn't seemed to mind having both men living in such close quarters with her for the time being, and Haley wished she could be that open and easy going around men again. For the first time in six years, her

body had seemed interested in the opposite sex. Now if only her mind could get on board.

Brody pulled in front of Piper's cabin and quickly noted she hadn't returned yet. Leaning against his car, he folded his arms across his chest and kept his eye on the path where she would exit the woods into her yard. He was coolly composed having gotten his anger under control by ceding that he shouldn't have dictated to Piper the way he did. That concession didn't mean there wouldn't be consequences for her foolish rebuttal. Consequences he was itching to deliver despite knowing he was going to have a demanding cock aching for release by the time he was done. When Piper emerged from the woods a few minutes later, her startled eyes met the intent in his.

"What're you doing?" Piper asked him warily as Brody pushed away from a bright red vintage car that looked to be in mint condition and slowly stalked toward her. She had high-tailed it back here as fast as possible, but obviously hadn't been quick enough.

"Did I or did I not tell you not to take off by yourself?" he asked silkily, smiling slightly when she retreated a step before clenching her jaw in determination.

"I don't answer to you. Where's Ian?" Damn it, Brody had a gleam in his eyes that had her nipples puckering and her pussy dampening and she didn't know whether to be pleased or pissed off. Only he had been able to arouse her so quickly and it was only him she had trouble resisting. Unfortunately, he had proven he didn't suffer the same affliction when it came to resisting her.

"He should be along shortly, depending on how much of a head start you had. And, I'm afraid you're very much mistaken, darlin'. Until we find out who was behind your disappearing act, you are very much answerable to me." Brody grabbed her hand and pulled her over to the small garden bench in front of her porch.

As soon as he sat down and tugged her arm, throwing her off balance so she landed sprawled across his lap, Piper knew what he intended. Her body responded almost instantly to the memory of the last time he had spanked her, of how that heated pain had increased her arousal, but her mind was shying away from the humiliating, vulnerable position as well as the fear of losing control. When he pulled her backpack off and easily shoved her

elastic waist shorts down to her knees, her mind's resistance took precedence.

Struggling to get off his lap, she demanded, "Let me go, Brody. You're not doing this."

Clamping one arm across her lower back, he pinned her kicking legs with his leg and brought his other hand down in a resounding smack on her right, wriggling buttock. "It looks like I am," he stated calmly even though the sight of that lush ass clenching tightly had his dick thickening painfully already. Another smack landed on her left cheek followed by one right in the middle. "Be still or this'll take longer. Although, I know Ian won't mind watching our little scene."

At the mention of the other man, Piper stilled, but not out of worry about being seen. Her traitorous body seemed to like the idea of having an audience, of having other eyes on her ass as Brody continued to slap her with sharp, steady strokes. It took only moments for her pussy to pulse achingly for release, for the pain he was building to feed the burning ache until it was out of control, fueled even further by the thought of Ian catching them. "Brody, please," she pleaded as she shifted her hips on his hard as rock thighs, the feel of his denim covered rigid cock against her side just egging her on.

"Please, what, darlin'?" He struck on the under curve of her right cheek. "Please forgive you for being foolish enough to risk your safety to prove your independence?" Another slap on the under curve of her left cheek was swiftly followed by a sharp blow across both buttocks again. "Please stop, or," he ran one finger down her crack, a light glide over her puckered anus down to her damp slit, "please don't stop," then followed up swiftly with two sharp blows on each buttock.

Piper cried out with those last two, the smacks harder, the pain sharper, the pleasure keener. God help her, she didn't know what she was pleading for. She was so turned on, so excited she couldn't think straight, the mix of mortification, anger and ecstasy warring together until the need to climax overruled everything. She wanted to beg him to continue, but she also wanted to feel that finger caressing her aching flesh again, stimulating her over the precipice his swats were keeping her teetering on. The outdoor exposure, warm summer air wafting over her exposed, throbbing flesh, all added to her escalating arousal.

Need finally won out over pride and, turning watery green eyes up to him, she begged unashamedly, “Touch me again, Brody, make me come.”

For the first time in five years, Brody was grateful for the darkness that had cloaked them the one time they had sex. If he had been able to see those drenched, needy eyes, he would’ve fucked her well into the next morning, compounding his mistake. As it was, there was no way he could keep to his resolve not to take her under these circumstances if she was squirming in orgasm across his lap, if he could feel her tight, little pussy clutching his fingers as her come soaked his hand. With an abruptness that he knew startled her, he lifted her off his lap and jerked up her shorts, the sight of her reddened ass and her damp slit making his cock jerk against his zipper in a painful protest.

Piper whirled on him in frustrated anger. “Why won’t you fuck me?” She meant to sound demanding, but she knew she sounded desperate which only increased her anger as well as her mortification. Once again he was rejecting her.

“You never used to talk that way,” Brody said in an attempt to change the subject before he listened to his little head instead of his big head again.

Clenching her hands into fists, she glared up at him through eyes swimming with unshed tears. “I’m not that pathetic young girl anymore,” she bit out.

“You were never pathetic. You were sweet.” Endearingly so. “And young and naïve.” Achingly so. “But you were never pathetic.”

“Are you going to fuck me or not?”

“Go inside, Piper.” Brody reached for her hand then dropped his arm when she gasped and ran inside without another word. Looking across the yard, he saw Ian leaning against a tree, his own heavy erection evident in the tight bulge between his legs.

“She was wet,” Ian said as he walked slowly up to him.

“As wet as she was last night. And the only aphrodisiac she had today was my hand.”

“What more could you ask for?” Ian wanted to know.

“An end to this fucking case,” Brody snapped before striding back down to the lake to relieve himself. Again.

Piper leaned back against the tiled wall of her shower and let the hot water run over her body in the hopes it would soothe her tense nerves just as she hoped getting herself off would ease the burning ache inside her. She

had thought briefly that Brody's rejection had doused the fire he had built inside her, but after spotting Ian her spontaneous reaction had been like throwing kerosene on that fire, raising a scalding heat she didn't think anything short of orgasm could put out.

Cupping her pussy, she savored the feel of nothing but soft, bare skin under her hand, relished the added pleasure she received from having no barriers to stifle her pleasure. After one particular night of overindulging in both pizza and beer, Piper had drunkenly admitted to Haley that Cole had been pestering her to shave her pubic hair. Haley wasted no time talking her into it then demanding a very detailed account the next time Cole came through town and they hooked up. Even though Piper's sex life was limited to Cole's occasional visits and Haley's lack of a sex life was solely by choice, Haley still wanted to hear details of Piper's encounters.

In the eighteen months since she had started shaving, she had never regretted it. In fact, once she experienced the added sensations of having all those hidden, sensitive nerve endings exposed and caressed, she had never gone back. Running her fingers over her plump, damp flesh before slipping her middle finger past her folds, she moaned as her sheath clamped around the digit, and she once again relished the pleasure of an impending climax. With her free hand, she lifted one weighty breast wishing she had the dexterity to bring her nipple to her mouth. They were puckered so tightly they hurt and she would love to have them suckled to ease that discomfort. An image flashed in her mind of two dark heads bent over her breasts, two mouths sucking voraciously on her tits and the image as well as the sensations of the dual stimulation was so vivid, so real, her pussy spasmed and gushed as if it was a real memory instead of a memory of an erotic dream.

Thrusting her pelvis against her palm, she concentrated on the here and now instead of what she was beginning to suspect was indeed a real happening. The warm burn Brody had built on her ass still lingered, still fed the fire in her pussy and when she pinched her nipple to see if a slight pain on her taut bud would do the same, she practically shrieked at the pleasure it evoked. Unable to hold back any longer, she added two more fingers, thrusting hard and deep as she used her thumb on her clit. Despite the building climax and the pleasure filling her from her nipples to her crotch, she couldn't help but wish it was Brody fucking her, his big cock filling and stretching her as she remembered. When she factored in Ian watching or

participating, she exploded around her fingers, the grip of her vaginal walls tight and forceful, the ecstasy spreading throughout her convulsing body mind numbing.

It took several moments for her mind to clear, for her body to calm and for her to slow her fingers from deep, hard thrusts to softer, slower strokes. Her pussy was warm, very wet and soft and she enjoyed the feel of simply stroking herself now that the storm of her release had subsided. By the time Piper had washed up and was drying off in the small, steam filled bathroom, she had come to two conclusions. The first was to find out if her suspicions that her erotic dream last night was indeed a reality and the second was that, despite the evidence that Brody wanted her, had been as aroused by her spanking as she had been, he had rejected her one time too many and she wasn't going to plead with him again to fuck her. From the brief glimpse she had gotten of Ian, he too had been turned on by their display and from the heated look in his eyes, he too wanted her. Even though Brody seemed to still hold a special place in her heart, she had no intentions of passing up a pleasurable, sexual encounter with Ian if one presented itself.

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Chapter Seven

Ignoring Ian who was pacing with his phone to his ear when she came downstairs, Piper retrieved enough fish from her freezer for the three of them then grabbed a beer and slipped back outside. Late afternoons were her favorite time of day and she loved sitting on her garden bench with a cold brew, but as she sat and felt the lingering effects of her spanking, she thought that seat would be a constant reminder of that intense, exciting sexual experience. As erotic and arousing as her first taste of Brody slapping her ass was, it didn't compare with what happened this afternoon. Not only had this spanking been administered in the bright light of day instead of under the cloak of darkness, her ass completely bared to not only Brody's gaze, but Ian's also, but the feel of Brody's hard thighs under her, his hard arm and leg pinning her down, stifling her struggles had seemed to only increase her arousal even more. Taking a long pull of her beer, she visibly shuddered as that memory had her pussy creaming again and her body craving to experience the whole thing again.

The sight of Brody emerging from the woods a few minutes later, shirtless, his upper body still damp from a dip in the lake, had her practically drooling. It still irritated her that she hadn't lost her infatuation with this man over the past five years. It wasn't as if she had sat around pining for him, wishing things had been different. After losing Charles, she had vowed to never allow anyone to dictate her life, no matter how much she cared about them. She had worked hard establishing herself here, building her small business, meeting friends and taking care of her first home. When she had met Cole at Rowdy's on one of his wilderness treks that brought him through Hope, the attraction had been swift and mutual. Neither of them was interested in a relationship, but they enjoyed each other's company both in and out of bed whenever his job brought him through this way. She had been happy, quite content with the way her life was going until now.

Now, watching Brody walk towards her, feeling that same, quick fluttering of both her pussy and her heart at the sight of him that she had felt each and every time he had arrived in Geneva with Charles to visit so long ago, she cursed herself for being a wimpy fool where this man was concerned. Still, she thought as she took in his six foot three height, that wide, muscled chest with its sprinkling of curly black hair that tapered

down his six pack abs to disappear into his jeans, those pewter eyes focused intently solely on her, who the hell could blame her?

“You okay?” Brody asked her as he sat next to her, his mind also reliving having her draped over his lap, his cock still itching to finish that little scene inside her sweet pussy instead of with his hand.

“Just fine all things considered. It wasn’t a dream, was it?” she asked him abruptly, her eyes swinging up to his. “Last night, the three of us. It was real?”

“Yes. When we got here you were in bed wearing nothing but your underwear and suffering from, we suspect, being drugged with some kind of powerful aphrodisiac. You really left us no choice.”

Piper couldn’t help returning his rueful smile. From what she was slowly remembering with more clarity, he was right, she hadn’t given them much choice. The fact that they both refrained from taking her under those conditions made her admire their integrity even if she couldn’t help but wish they hadn’t been so noble, especially given the fact Brody was still turning her down today.

“Why would someone drug me then leave me alone?”

Brody saw the fear in her eyes as she realized how vulnerable she had been and it made him even more determined to find out what had happened to her those two days and, more importantly, why. “That’s the million dollar question, darlin’, and that’s what we’re here to find out.”

Piper found herself wistfully wishing he was here just for her, that he had asked Sheriff Nolan to watch out for her because he cared, not because his case was still open, which just irritated her anew. She readily admitted she was in lust with the man, but she refused to allow herself to be drawn back into her girlish desire to be a part of a man’s life again. Finishing her beer in one last swallow, she rose just as Ian came out with a scowl on his face.

“Please tell me we’re having something *with* the fish for dinner.”

“Spinach salad and baked potatoes. If that’s not to your liking, feel free to go eat elsewhere.”

Both men watched her as she stalked into the house but it was Ian who said with a grin, “By the way she’s twitching that cute ass, you’d think she owned the place.”

“She does and she can twitch that cute ass anytime she wants.”

“No argument here. My only beef with the woman is the lack of beef in her kitchen.”

Laughing, Brody slapped him on the back. “You’ll live.”

To her surprise, both men followed her inside and offered to help and to her amusement, they both looked relieved when she turned them down. Piper worried she would be tense with embarrassment over dinner, but much to her relief both Brody and Ian kept up a light banter that vacillated between sports, politics and work. It soon became apparent that they had been both friends and partners for a long time and that they were studiously avoiding any mention of women or their current case, for which she was grateful. She had come to terms with Charles’s death a long time ago and she didn’t relish any reminders of that loss.

Piper knew she had been barely a year old when Charles had met her mother, and she couldn’t remember a time when he hadn’t been in their life. He had never corrected her when she called him dad, and it wasn’t until years after her mother’s untimely death that she discovered he was no relation to her or that he and Christine weren’t married. After the grief and upheaval of being sent to Switzerland, she had drawn comfort from his regular visits and the undivided attention he had given her during them. It would be a crushing blow, even after all this time, if he were to be found alive and she discovered she had never been anything to him except an obligation.

“Okay, I’ll be man enough to admit it,” Ian said gruffly as he pushed back from the counter. “That was very good, Piper.” Taking his plate to the sink, he rinsed it and put it in the dishwasher before turning back to her and ruining the moment by saying succinctly, “But tomorrow I’m going to go find real meat.”

Smiling, Piper gathered both hers and Brody’s dishes, telling Ian, “Fish is better for you. I have work to do tonight, so you’re on your own.”

“Piper,” Brody called to her as she headed down the hall. “If you want to go out, do it by the front door and with one of us.”

And just that quickly, Piper found her ire up over this situation. Turning from him without comment, she shut herself inside her workroom and refused to think about either man for the rest of the night.

“You sure know how to get her dander up.”

Brody sent Ian a look that matched the one Piper had just given him. “She’ll adjust. It’s only temporary.” Piling the dishes she had left on the

counter into the dishwasher, Brody resigned himself to another long, frustrating night under her roof.

After staying up late finishing up some online orders, Piper woke early to get them boxed up and to the Post Office in time for their only pick up today at ten. The spare bedroom door was closed and the shower was running in the bathroom when she came downstairs. Settling for a granola bar for breakfast, she loaded the six mail orders into her jeep then went back inside to tell the guys she was leaving. Unfortunately, her timing sucked because she spotted Brody heading into the woods and assumed it was now Ian in the shower as the bedroom door was open to reveal it was empty. Frustrated at the delay, she paced and muttered until she stopped in midstride as she realized that once again she was catering to a man's dictates, putting her needs and wants on hold for theirs, just like she had done for years for Charles.

"Damn it," she growled under her breath as she made a concession and pulled out a note pad. "I cannot miss that pickup." The orders should have gone out two days ago, but due to the fact she had gone missing, she thought sarcastically, she was going to have some disgruntled customers as it was. Missing the pickup this morning would mean waiting until Monday, which was unacceptable. She justified her leaving without one of them by telling them she was in a hurry and would be fine on the short ten minute drive on a main road into Hope. God knows, Main Street on a Saturday would be busy and no one would dare accost her in broad daylight on a busy street.

Piper pulled up in front of the Post Office just in time to stamp and hand over her packages then watch them go right into the truck. "Cutting it close today, missy," Fred, the postmaster teased her. "Frankly, I didn't think I'd see you this week. You sure had us worried. You okay?"

"I'm fine, Fred, thank you." Everybody knowing every one's business was both the charm and the curse of small town living. Piper loved it.

"Good, and I'm sure those agents are going to get to the bottom of what happened. Don't you worry none."

One of them definitely got to her bottom, she thought with a smile as she left the Post Office and walked down to visit with Haley until she could break for lunch. Entering Haley's boutique, she was surprised to find her friend in tears, the shop in disarray and Sheriff Nolan scowling at the mess. "Haley, what on earth happened?"

“Oh, Piper, I’m so sorry.” Haley tried to stop the fresh flow of tears, but couldn’t seem to help herself. Not only did she feel violated in a way all too similar to how she felt the first time her husband had backhanded her, but she felt awful that the worst of the vandalism had been the total ruination of Piper’s new additions. “I didn’t hear a thing until it was too late.”

“I’m glad you’re here, Piper, saves me a trip out to your place,” Gary Nolan said. Crime was rare in this small town, and when it was aimed at one of theirs everyone took it personally. “Where’re Agents Pearce and MacGregor?”

“I’m sure they’ll be along soon,” Piper told him. In his mid-fifties, the sheriff was a stocky man with greying hair and friendly blue eyes. He had been both kind and supportive of her when she had first moved to Hope, as over protective of his young new citizen as he was of the older, long-time residents.

“I want both of you to start being more diligent until I catch whoever is causing this trouble. You,” he pointed at Haley, “call my office if you hear or see anything suspicious and wait for one of us to get here. And you,” he turned that finger and stern look on Piper. “Don’t go anywhere without someone with you. Got it?”

That’s just what she needed, Piper thought sourly, another damn body guard. “Yes sir.” She reluctantly agreed because, as she walked over to the corner where her designs lay in tattered shreds, it looked like someone did indeed have something against her.

“I’m sorry,” Haley said again. “There’s nothing salvageable, I already looked. I came downstairs as soon as I heard something, thinking it was someone just wanting me to open early. But I had taken a sleeping pill last night and you know how those knock me out and leave me a little slow the next morning. If had awoken sooner, maybe....”

“Maybe nothing,” Piper snapped at her, concern for her friend overruling any worry for the loss of business. “These can be replaced, you can’t.”

“In case you haven’t noticed, Piper, this place was tossed, but only your items were shredded with viciousness,” Gary pointed out just in time for Brody and Ian to hear as they entered.

Brody’s irritation with Piper had only increased when he had gotten a lecture from the elderly postmaster on taking better care of ‘their girl’ and now it escalated to anger when he saw the sheriff and heard his comment.

One quick look and it was obvious the little shop had been tossed with the intent of making as much of a destructive mess as possible, but it was when he spotted the torn remnants of Piper's work that it took a turn towards deliberate evil intentions.

Ignoring Piper, he asked the sheriff, "Care to fill us in?"

"Haley came downstairs this morning to find this mess. From the looks of it, someone jimmied the lock on the back door, which wasn't hard to do since it's a piece of crap." Gary leveled an accusatory look at Haley, a silent reminder that he had mentioned its inadequacy before. "The door leads to the back alley, so no one would have seen anything in the dark. A lot of ransacking but the deliberate destruction seems to be focused on Piper's inventory."

All three men looked from the cut up bits of satin and lace to her, and for the first time since she started sewing lingerie, Piper felt herself blushing. It was obvious they would much rather have seen the garments on someone rather than piles of scraps. "You don't know this was aimed at me," she said defensively, waving her arm at the room in general. "It could've been..."

"Did I or did I not tell you not to leave this morning without one of us going with you?" Brody interrupted her in a deceptively soft voice. This incident just reinforced the need for her to do as they said, whether she liked it or not.

Piper's own anger was fueled by the worry over the potential harm that could have befallen Haley last night as well as the need to give up her independence until they caught whoever was harassing her. Stalking over to Brody, she poked her finger at his rock hard chest while glaring up at him. "And I told you I had to get to town before ten. Neither of you were ready, so I left, and I am perfectly fine."

Brody ignored Ian's smirk as he glared down at the minx jabbing him with her finger. If he wasn't so pissed, he would be amused that a woman who was a foot shorter and a hundred and twenty pounds lighter than him had the gall to lecture and berate him, especially when he was here to look out for her. Torn between the urge to either grab that finger and haul her up until their mouths were fused together or tossing her over his lap again, he took a step back in a visible effort to refrain from acting on either impulse. He was quickly discovering that his attraction to the new, feisty, independent Piper was just as strong, if not stronger, than his attraction to

the shier, meeker young woman he had walked away from five years earlier. Unfortunately, nothing had changed in the ensuing years and he was just as fated now to walk away to go after Charles as he was back then.

“Remember what happened yesterday when you defied us, Piper,” he warned.

Piper remembered all too clearly the unfulfilled arousal he had left her with and his rejection of her. Was that why she had deliberately taunted him by defying him again today? There was no denying she wanted him. Her pussy literally ached with the desire to feel him filling her again, fucking her with such ruthless intensity that nothing mattered except reaching that pinnacle that she had only been able to achieve that one time with him. But she wasn't that pathetic, needy girl anymore, striving for the attention and caring she had fought for and lost in seeking the love of a substitute father.

Suppressing the arousal his presence had wrought, she turned from his knowing, hard eyed gaze. “I'll help you get cleaned up, Haley.”

“We'll all help out, then I'm getting a big, fat barbequed beef sandwich I saw advertised down at the diner,” Ian stated, sending a look to Piper as if daring her to say something.

Piper smiled, liking the way she could get his goat over her eating habits. “They're your arteries.”

Haley turned from them wishing she could banter with a man like that. Correct that, she thought as she righted a toppled over rack of blouses, she wished she could be that teasing with that man. Why Ian was the first man in almost six years to get her interest, to have her dried up libido suddenly springing back to life was beyond her. He was polar opposite from the men she used to be attracted to, from the man she had married at twenty-two and finally rid herself of two years later. She had met Tim when she clerked in his law office her senior year of college and had fallen instantly for his smooth manner and suave demeanor. He had courted her with candle lit dinners, flowers and flattery until she agreed to marry him just two short months after they had met. Tim's true colors had emerged so slowly, that the first time he slapped her, she had been so shocked she had accepted his explanation of dealing with a stressful case and his apology without thought. By the time their second anniversary was approaching, his verbal abuse was being met more and more often with a slap across the face or a bruising of her arms from his tight grip. Each incident was followed with flowers and excuses and apologies until she had finally had enough.

Hanging the tops back on the rack, Haley tried to forget what happened when she had told him she had filed for divorce, had tried over the past six years to bury the memory of how his fists felt as they pummeled her face, the excruciating pain from his foot kicking her, snapping her ribs, the sound of his leering, taunting voice telling her she was never going to leave him. Now, looking at the shambles of the shop that had been not only her lifeline, but her pride and joy, she felt violated all over again. Even knowing this time the attack wasn't aimed at her, she still couldn't stop the fear of losing everything again to someone stronger and meaner.

Lost in her thoughts, she didn't notice Ian next to her, handing her some blouses he had put back on hangers. His hand barely touched her arm, but she was so startled she couldn't stop a small gasp from escaping, her body automatically taking a step away from him, a move in direct contrast to the image in her mind of the two of them naked together. "Sorry, I wasn't paying attention."

Ian's brows lowered in a frown, anger churning through him as her wide blue eyes stared up at him warily. Reining in the urge to snap at her, he managed to drawl, "Try to remember we're the good guys, would you? I'm going to pick up lunch. What do you want?"

He was big, hard and abrupt and damn, but if that combination didn't have her aching from her nipples down to her long neglected pussy, she thought with a combination of pleasure and bafflement. "I'll have the barbeque, same as you."

"Thank God," Ian sighed. "I don't think I could take dealing with two women who didn't know the pleasures of good old fashioned red meat. Be right back." Ian quickly left the shop, as eager for what he considered real food as he was to escape the combined look of fear and determination on Haley's face. He wasn't a fucking white knight here to slay her demons, he thought irritably, and he sure as hell wasn't here for a brief fling with the local shopkeeper, no matter how much his cock was aiming in that direction. "Suck it up buddy," he told his semi-aroused appendage. "It's the hand or nothing until we get home."

"Are you going to attempt to put the fear of Agent Pearce into her again?" Ian asked Brody as they followed Piper back to her cabin an hour later.

"I doubt if another round over my lap will do anything except turn us both on again," Brody answered derisively. The more they cleaned up

Haley's shop, the longer he thought about someone bent on causing Piper harm, the madder Brody got until he knew the erotic punishment he was itching to give her was no longer an option. Even though he was confident of his ability to control himself, he had never touched a woman in anger and wasn't about to start now. Besides, he'd probably end up fucking her instead of punishing her and that was still not an option he was willing to choose at this time.

"Then you better think of something to get through to her," Ian said as they turned into her drive, "because I doubt if she's going to just roll over and let us take over regardless of the scare I think today gave her."

It was the reminder of the fear and uncertainty clouding Piper's green eyes all afternoon that hardened Brody's resolve to deal with her in the best way he saw fit. She got off on him spanking her, got turned on and responded to that erotic stimulation in a way any man with a penchant for spanking would love to exploit. But it might be an altogether different matter and response if it was delivered by someone else.

"She'd enjoy retribution from me too much, but she might not be so amendable if you gave her a lesson."

"Well, hell," Ian grumbled as they parked behind her jeep and he opened his door. "You sure don't ask for much, do you?"

"Good luck. I'm going to scout around," was all he told him before walking right past Piper without a word or backward glance as he strode off towards the wooded path across her yard.

Piper's body betrayed her yet again as she felt the disappointment of Brody shunning her. All afternoon and on the drive home she had fought against the excitement filling her as she anticipated another session over Brody's lap, an excitement that had her panties clinging damply to her folds, her nipples so tightly puckered they were practically poking holes in her bra. Her eyes went from his retreating back to slide over the garden bench, her breath releasing on a frustrated, resigned sigh of disappointment.

Her look spoke volumes, making it easier for Ian to give in to Brody's suggestion. Not that he didn't enjoy delivering a sound spanking to a willing partner, he just never indulged in that kink without following up with a long bout of sweaty sex. Because he understood and agreed with Brody's reasoning there, he would honor his decision. But it sure as hell wasn't going to be easy, especially given the semi erect state his cock had been determined to maintain throughout the afternoon, all over another

woman who was also off the table for sex. He simply refused to go there with Piper's friend despite what he suspected was a growing mutual attraction.

"Don't worry, Piper," Ian said as he grabbed her hand and pulled her over to the bench. "Brody's not the only one who can teach you we mean business."

Before she knew it, Piper found herself facedown over another pair of hard, muscled thighs, her hips wiggling in a futile attempt to dislodge herself. With a swiftness and expertise that spoke of a lot of practice, Ian had her completely stripped of her shorts and panties and was peppering her ass with short, sharp slaps, slaps that were landing fast and furious over her buttocks. Shocked arousal speared through her senses, the heat and pain he was building wasting no time spiraling to her already soaked pussy. Mortified by her reaction, a reaction she had mistakenly thought was because of her attraction to the man more than the act, she struggled anew to get away from both the humiliation and the building lust Ian was responsible for.

"Let me go, Ian. Damn it, I don't want to do this." Her demand came out as a desperate plea, her mind refusing to accept what her body so blatantly did.

"Tough, you should have thought of that before worrying us, again, with your foolishness. Be still," he ordered as he smacked the top of her thigh to keep her from kicking out. If it wasn't for the obvious damp arousal seeping from her pussy to coat her thighs, he would stop, but the proof of her arousal couldn't be denied, proof that Brody's plan of causing her grief instead of giving her pleasure by having Ian administer this spanking was backfiring big time.

Two things made Piper give in. The first was she simply couldn't fight against the pleasure she was getting from Ian spanking her, pleasure that was building with each painful smack. The second was the mention of the worry she had caused them, worry, she suspected was felt more by Brody than Ian since she and Brody had a history. Unable to stifle a cry when he landed a particularly hard blow on the sensitive flesh of the under curve of her right buttock, Piper gave in to the pleasure, sank into the bliss of a building orgasm she knew was going to be off the charts.

Burying her face in her folded arms, she didn't even try to keep her hips from automatically lifting for his next swat, didn't try to stop from rubbing

her mound against the rough denim covering his rock hard thigh or stop the way her body shuddered over him. Her ass was a mass of throbbing heat, her buttocks clenching with her gyrations as her pussy swelled and dampened even more as her vaginal muscles contracted spasmodically in anticipation of climaxing.

Just as she reached the precipice, prepared herself mentally and physically to let go, Ian stopped smacking her then tantalized and tormented her with a slow stroke of one finger over the seam of her pussy, leaving a damp trail as he slowly glided up over her anus. Forgetting her frustration for a moment, she lifted against that finger, wanting to feel more against that sensitive spot, wanting to feel the penetration she remembered from the other night that had sent her careening over that edge once again.

As much as he'd like to delve into that tight orifice, Ian reluctantly left that treasure and soothed his palm over her reddened ass. There was no way in hell Brody was going to keep from taking her again, and there was no way in hell he was doing this again without the option of seeing it through to his satisfaction. But right now, he had no intention of sending her inside to get herself off in private. He wouldn't fuck her, but he would give her this, even though Brody glared at him from across the yard as he flipped her over and sat her up on his lap, holding her in place with an arm around her shoulders and her legs.

Piper's frustration and disappointment was so acute, she wanted nothing more than to escape Ian's knowing eyes as he held her tightly until she quit struggling. "Let me go. You've done what you set out to do, now leave me alone."

She masked it well, Ian thought, but beyond the embarrassment and sexual frustration, he could still see the mortification and disappointment of what she thought of as another rejection. It wasn't his place to try to explain, but he could give her something. "I'm not Brody." Spreading her thighs, he took her hand and drew it down to her gaping pussy. "Show me what you like. Come for me, Piper, and in doing so we'll both give Brody a little payback. No, don't turn around," he stopped her by grasping her chin, keeping her face turned towards him. "Don't think of anything except getting off. Here, I'll even help."

With unerring efficiency, Ian had her top whisked off over her head and the front clasp of her bra undone before she could grasp his meaning. Knowing Brody was watching, and hopefully suffering, gave her the

incentive she needed to get over her initial reluctance to perform such a private act in front of Ian, a man she barely knew. Then again, she had no trouble getting aroused by an over the knee, bare assed spanking from this virtual stranger, which only told her Brody had fucked her up.

Liking the fact she could pin her woes on him as well as liking the way Ian had drawn her right nipple into his mouth and his tongue was curling around her taut bud, she gave in to the pleasure, the growing, consuming need to simply let go and enjoy the moment and the man. Her middle finger slid easily between her folds, and the soft, wet sound of her penetration would have been embarrassing if her vagina hadn't clamped around that digit in a vice of silky steel, if the small tremors that had been so abruptly stopped didn't pick up right where they left off, if she didn't automatically jerk her hips against her hand and set her climax loose with a single stroke over her clit. Ian's mouth and hand never let up on her breasts, his teeth nibbling, his fingers pinching, the slight sting adding to the pleasure sweeping through her with the speed and fury of a tempest.

Throwing her head back, her cry echoed in the yard, the warmth of the sun shining down on her adding to the heat exploding throughout her body.

Brody had to visibly force himself to stay rooted at the edge of the woods instead of crossing her small yard and joining them like his cock was demanding he do. He hadn't been prepared for the possessiveness that had filled him when he had set eyes on Piper draped bare assed over Ian's lap even though he knew what to expect when he returned from walking off his irritation and anger. Spanking a willing woman was only one of the kinks he and Ian shared a liking for and it wasn't the first time they had both indulged in that pleasure with the same woman. In attending the parties Charles held, they had indulged in their penchant for sharing and ménages more than once as well as in their private lives, but he had never felt this gut wrenching urge to plant his fist in his best friend's face over any woman before. He hadn't been jealous when Ian had joined him in helping Piper through the effects of whatever aphrodisiac she had been unwillingly given the other night. Then again, he had been there with them, joining in the pleasure of bringing her to orgasm over and over.

Watching them now, he had to grudgingly admit that she had completely turned the tables on them with her willing response to Ian's hand reddening her ass, an ass he was dying to get his hands on again. The automatic lifting of her hips, her soft cries of both pain and pleasure and the telltale

dampness seeping from her pussy was all the proof he needed that, if she had fought against having a man she didn't know intimately performing such an act, it wasn't for very long.

"Son of a bitch," he cursed when Ian flipped her over and then didn't release her to finish getting herself off in private. Brody knew what he was doing, knew Ian was trying to torment him because of his refusal to let either of them fuck Piper, and damned if it wasn't working. Could there be a worse torment than watching a woman you wanted more than your next breath touching herself, watching her come apart under her own hands? He wanted to stride over and join Ian at her breasts, feel her hard little nipple stabbing him, join his fingers with hers and feel her come on them just like she did the other night.

Her cry of release had his cock seeping enough to dampen his jeans and crumble his good intentions. After Ian righted her clothes and sent her inside with a friendly swat on her ass, Brody's only consolation for the past twenty minutes of pure torture Ian had put him through was that, from the stiff way he was rising, Ian was suffering the same painful effects as Brody was.

Ian walked over to Brody, eyed the bulge that had to be as uncomfortable as his and stated, "If she pushes us again, don't ask for my help unless we're going to go all the way with her. This is bullshit."

"But I think it's for the right reason and you know it."

"You would," he sighed, "which makes you a hell of a better man than me. It's my turn to walk off a little frustration."

"A cold dip in the lake works wonders too," Brody called after him before heading inside and setting the ground rules, again.

Piper was coming back downstairs when Brody entered the cabin and glared up at her. "Problem?" she asked innocently, relishing both the hard on he was sporting and the frustration he couldn't hide. It was good to know he was suffering right along with her.

Brody met her at the foot of the stairs and with her two steps up, they were almost eye level. "The next time you take off alone, it won't be a hand you feel on those soft cheeks, darlin', but my belt. From what I'm told, there's a distinct difference in a hand slap and the taste of leather. You might want to consider that before you defy us again."

Piper's eyes shifted to the thick, black belt at his waist and she couldn't stop a shudder from going through her. The problem was, she wasn't sure if

it was a reaction of fear or of longing, because, God help her, she was suddenly curious about how that belt would feel stroking the soft globes of her buttocks. Shying away from that revelation, she managed to look coolly into his eyes and say, "Or I could tell you to leave." As soon as the words left her mouth she knew she didn't mean them. She wanted them here, she needed them here. Despite her reluctance to adhere so rigidly to their demands, she was afraid of the recent events, afraid of what they meant, afraid she did have someone who, for whatever reason, had it in for her. And she was smart enough to know she couldn't handle finding the person behind these incidents without help. As if that wasn't reason enough to let them stay, there was also the undeniable fact that she wanted Brody as much now as she had five years ago and she wasn't willing to let him go until she got him out of her system once and for all.

"Are you telling us to leave, Piper?" Of course, he wouldn't go whether she told him to or not. If he had to camp just outside her property line to keep her safe, he would do it until he found who was harassing her and put a stop to it. If these incidents were meant to worry Charles and draw him out and he took him into custody, he'd deal with the consequences of that later.

"No. You know I want....need you here." She couldn't bring herself to tell him how much she appreciated his help. Because she needed it didn't mean she wanted it.

"Then we're staying."

Chapter Eight

By late afternoon the next day Piper was edgy and disgruntled, again. Shortly after moving to Hope and becoming friends with Haley, Haley had talked her into attending Sunday services with her. Much to Piper's surprise, she not only enjoyed the service, but the social gathering afterward. A good majority of the town attended that church and over the small town ritual of coffee and donuts afterward she had come to know her neighbors and had been welcomed into their community with open arms. She soon discovered she wasn't the only one who had ended up in Hope because of a painful past. Hans and Greta Borg who ran the local grocery had spent years in the witness protection program after testifying against a notorious gang leader in Chicago who had robbed and beaten them, giving up their family grocery store, their friends and relatives to put him away for life. It was only recently that the man had been killed in jail and the elderly couple felt safe enough to let their friends know what happened to them. Mary and Clem owned the diner and had moved to Hope ten years ago from Branson, leaving the home they had raised their only child in because of the memories his death in Iraq had left. Haley too had found a safe haven in the small, close knit community and, Piper suspected Crack, who had opened Rowdy's shortly after she had moved here, had a past he wanted to leave behind.

But this morning she had opted to stay home instead of visiting with her friends as usual. As well-meaning as they all were, she wasn't up to answering questions about the incidents she had no answers to. And she definitely didn't want to answer questions about Brody and Ian even though she suspected word had already made it around about who they were and why they were here.

Last night the three of them had seemed to call a truce. Ian didn't grumble over the vegetable casserole and homemade bread, however he did take off shortly after and returned with several hamburgers for both he and Brody from the greasy burger joint down the road. Rolling her eyes, Piper hadn't said anything as they ate them as if they hadn't just eaten a plateful of food. Then, much to her surprise and pleasure, Brody suggested watching a movie together. After raiding her rather impressive collection, they each chose one. She sat through Ian's war movie and through Brody's medical thriller, but when it came time to put in her chick flick, she,

unbelievably, fell asleep. She woke this morning in her bed, wearing her tee shirt and panties, remembering how Brody had carried her up and how she, in her half-awake state, had clung to his neck as he lowered her onto the mattress and asked him to lay with her.

“I’ll be good, I promise.” With mortification, she remembered saying those words to him as well as the way he had simply stated, “Not tonight, darlin’,” and walked out.

Having not only Brody, but Ian living in such close quarters with her was proving to be more trying than she had imagined, her attraction to Brody and her lust for apparently both men a constant reminder of what she desperately wanted and couldn’t have. Those two erotic spankings as well as her memories of what had taken place between the three of them when they had first arrived had reawakened needs in her she was just now realizing hadn’t been met with Cole, even though the sex with him had always been more than satisfying. And she was resenting the hell out of both men for taunting her with what she had been missing then refusing to give it to her.

Looking out the window in her sewing room where she had been holed up all afternoon, she saw Ian pacing, his phone to his ear and a scowl on his face. She had seen Brody head into the woods a few minutes ago, probably scouting around again. It seemed one of them was always taking off to scout. And here she sat, pining for the one man she shouldn’t have any residue feelings for and lusting after two men who teased and tormented her only to reject her over and over.

Sitting on the floor, she was surrounded with swatches of silk and satin, lace and chiffon, designing and sewing lingerie items that, at one time, she would never have dreamed of wearing herself. Now, well now she’d look good in her creations, no, she thought cynically, she’d look *damn* good in any one of her designs. Yet here she sat wearing another pair of comfortable gym shorts and a tank top, her underwear plain white cotton. She had always gone for comfort over style and, even though her body had changed and her attitude had undergone a much needed adjustment, who she was hadn’t changed.

So why the hell was she hiding in here instead of doing what she normally did? She never worked on Sundays, that day was hers to do as she pleased. If Haley was free they’d spend it together, take a trip to Branson and shop and get dinner or make a picnic lunch and hike some of the trails.

If Haley couldn't get away from the shop, Piper had no problem entertaining herself, doing those things alone and enjoying them almost as much as if she had a friend with her. Yet she was moping in here, hiding from her embarrassment over her actions last night when Brody took her upstairs, hiding from the frustration that having those two around was causing while constantly trying to reign in not only her sexual cravings, but her emotional ones, hiding from the hurt of their rejections. Just like five years ago. Despite knowing why they refused to have sex with her, she couldn't help but revert to that insecure girl she used to be, the one who strove so hard to gain first Charles attention and approval then Brody's only to have both of them leave her.

"The hell with that," she muttered as she jumped up and stormed upstairs to get her bathing suit. One of her favorite past times was taking her little rowboat out and spending a few lazy hours with a pole in the water and a book in her lap followed by a dip to cool off. But just as she was pulling her suit out of her dresser, an idea came to mind that would go a long way towards improving her mood. Maybe, just maybe, it was time to get a little payback on the two men responsible for all her current woes.

"Where're you off to?" Ian asked her when she walked by him carrying a towel and a book.

"I'm going fishing. You'll be able to see me easily from the bank so I don't need you glued to my side."

Brody returned in time to hear her and watched her walk saucily down the path that led to the lake. "I don't trust that grin."

"I don't know her as well as you and I don't trust that grin."

With a resigned sigh, Brody grumbled, "I guess we better go see what she's planning."

"You go see. I'm going to raid her movie collection again. Just remember, the next time you want me to take her in hand, I'm not stopping with the punishment if she's willing to be rewarded."

Brody knew just how his friend would reward her, by fucking her so hard, so deep she'd come over and over, just like she had the other night. While he had no problem imagining Piper's small body sandwiched between the two of them, their cocks taking her pussy and ass with alternating thrusts that would drive all three of them wild, he was having a distinct problem picturing Ian with Piper alone. This possessive streak he seemed to have developed for her was new to him and something he was

going to have to get control of. He had a job to do, a job he wanted to do, that very well might include imprisoning the man she loved like a father. He wouldn't be content until Pasquino and his organization was shut down, he had worked too long and hard to see that happen, had put too much time into seeing that happen to drop the ball now.

Carlos Rodman, the agent that had managed in get in undercover with Pasquino, had relayed that they were spending a lot of time at the Empire, Charles's casino, and in the past year Pasquino had managed to become a favored patron, one who was catered to hand and foot. It was just another indication that Pasquino had proof or suspected Sandoval was alive and was baiting him to show himself. Which made it all the more imperative that they find out whether the incidents against Piper were coming from Pasquino in another effort to make Sandoval show his face, or if she had a different problem altogether.

Frustrated at the stalemate, Brody took the path that led down to the lake and saw that Piper had already managed to row herself several yards away from the dock and plant her pole. With a floppy hat shielding her face, she waved at him before turning back to the book in her hands. She looked so small and defenseless out there, but he knew she was tougher than she looked. She had received a hard knock when she had witnessed Charles's shooting and learned about Brody's undercover job, but she didn't let it keep her down. On the contrary, she had picked herself up, dusted herself off and taken responsibility for her life in a way he couldn't help but admire. It had taken guts and determination for her to walk away that night, and even more guts and determination to accomplish what she has ever since.

But as strong and as independent as she was now, he could occasionally catch a glimpse of that shy, insecure young woman he had first been drawn to and he knew behind her newly toned body and tough bravado that much of that softer woman still existed. After thirty minutes, Brody got bored just standing there and decided she was safe where she was for a few minutes. He could use one of those beers she liked so much as well as a sandwich, that is, he thought ruefully, if he could find something appealing to make one with. While not as opposed as Ian to Piper's healthier way of eating, he was starting to crave a big, juicy steak cooked medium rare.

"Did you get me one?" Brody asked hopefully when Ian got out of his car holding a large bag from the hamburger joint they were patronizing

almost daily.

“No, I got you two. You owe me, again.”

“When we get back home, a steak dinner’s on me.”

Good timing, Piper thought when she spotted both men coming back down the path to the lake, stuffing their faces with greasy hamburgers that made her shudder. She’d been putting off her swim until she saw them again, and now she wasted no time stripping and diving in, prepared to torture them a little. The water was cool on her sunbaked skin and felt decadently soothing as she swam underwater for a few seconds. Her nipples beaded instantly from the shock of the cold water, but her pussy stayed warm, pulsed with an ever present desire to be filled again. Thankfully, Cole was due to come through Hope again soon and she would be able to relieve some of this tense filled arousal.

She didn’t dare look over to the dock as she surfaced even though it was tempting to see both men’s reactions to her skinny dipping. Smiling to herself, she dove under again, making sure her ass rose all the way out of the water before disappearing underneath. When she came up again it was straight up until not only her head cleared the surface, but her bare breasts also, their fullness bouncing with the surge before floating on top of the softly lapping water, her nipples prominent pinpoints aimed in their direction. Slicking her hair back, she smiled and waved to where Brody and Ian were standing on the dock. From what she could see from this distance, they weren’t too happy with her. Oh well, that was their problem. She on the other hand, was quite pleased with herself.

Brody’s first reaction when spotting the empty rowboat had been panic, but when he caught a flash of bare leg followed by the enticing sight of Piper’s white buttocks, that was quickly replaced with lust masked as irritation. “What the hell does she think she’s doing?”

“That’s pretty obvious,” Ian drawled crossing his arms over his chest as he enjoyed the show. “I think she’s decided to tease us with what we keep turning down.”

Brody’s irritation slowly slipped away the longer he watched her antics, reluctantly smiling at the way she flipped around like a fish in the water, not a self-conscious bone in her body as she made sure she flashed them enticing views of her hard tipped breasts and the rosy cheeks of her ass. When she rolled over onto her back a few minutes later to float, her chest heaving from her exertions, her arms and legs scissoring slowly back and

forth, her bare pubis barely discernible, his cock was once again demanding release, begging for freedom and that pussy as if he hadn't had an orgasm in weeks instead of just yesterday.

"I think she's amusing," he finally said. "Amusing and irritating."

"You would." Ian turned from the too tempting sight of Piper's undulating nude body and slapped Brody on the back. "I'm going into town for something stronger than a beer. You're on your own till I get back."

Brody waited until Piper pulled herself back into her boat, admiring the ease and agility with which she did so as well as the sight of her standing unabashedly naked, the sun glinting off her black, wet hair, drying the water running down her torso and legs. As soon as she dressed, sat down and started rowing back to shore, he had had enough torture. Turning, he swiftly returned to her cabin intent on reining in his urge to throw her to the sandy bank and fuck her until she cried uncle.

Piper shivered a little as she entered the cool interior of her cabin trying really hard to ignore the guilt poking at her. So what if they're frustrated by her little display. They can just get themselves off like she had to after they had fired up her senses past the point of no return. That was the problem with attending a religious, all-girls school, she thought with a resigned sigh. By the time you left they had managed to play the guilt card so often that emotion tended to pop up even when you didn't agree with it or want it to.

Padding down the hall, she noticed the bedroom door wasn't shut and, intent on throwing them a peace offering by suggesting they go to the diner for prime rib night, she simply pushed it open and stepped inside. She had only taken one step when the sight of Brody sitting on the side of the bed naked, leaning back on one arm while he stroked his cock with his other hand stopped her cold. Anger and painful rejection replaced guilt with the swiftness of a lightning bolt, making her snap, "Next time shut the damn door."

Brody simply raised a dark brow at her and calmly kept his eyes on her snapping green ones as he slowly coasted his hand up his rigid length, his palm over his straining head, allowing his seepage to coat it before reversing his movement. "Why should I?"

He was baiting her and it was working. Piper couldn't keep her eyes from straying to his cock, the sight of him slowly caressing the thick length of him was such a turn on she wanted desperately to slip her hand into her shorts and give herself the same pleasure she knew he was feeling. Damn it,

this wasn't supposed to be how it went. He was the one who was supposed to be suffering, not her. She should've known he'd do what he probably did after both her spankings, take matters into his own hands without regret for what he was turning down. That he'd rather jack off than fuck her hurt, but the blatant proof that she could arouse him to that state by her skinny dipping helped ease the pain.

"Do something with that before you come out," she snapped as she turned to leave.

"You caused it, you do something about it," Brody taunted her, not sure why he felt the need to keep her here. He caught the flash of hurt on her face, knew she thought of his masturbating as a rejection of her, and he needed to find a way to let her know how much he really did want her. She hadn't moved but she hadn't turned back around either, her hand still poised on the door knob. "Please, Piper. I've never forgotten how your mouth felt on me. I've dreamed of that night more times than I can count." When she remained quiet he tried a different tactic. "Maybe my dreams are wrong, come to think of it. Maybe it wasn't as good as I like to think it was. You were, after all, relatively inexperienced."

That did it. Piper swung around and moved to stand between his spread knees. She would show him just how experienced she was, and then she'd leave him high and dry just like he had her. "You're probably right," she said softly as she sank to her knees in front of him. "I was a naïve, green girl back then and I had no clue what I was doing." Shoving his hand aside, she replaced it with her own.

Brody started to deny that but the feel of those lips closing over him took his breath. Her mouth was made for sin and sucking, those lips just as soft as he remembered. Her small hand barely reached around his girth, but it still managed to do the trick as she tightened her fingers and stroked him, her warm, wet mouth concentrating on his head. He had a feeling he was the one who was going to come out on the short end of this scene and there wasn't a damn thing he could do about it because he sure as hell wasn't going to stop her now. His good intentions didn't stretch that far.

Piper had gotten quite a bit of experience giving head to Cole. He loved it when she went down on him and wasn't shy about giving her pointers on what he liked. She figured anything Cole liked, any man would like so she took her time suckling the smooth bulbous head of his cock as she slowly fisted his shaft. As if she had all the time in the world, she licked around the

crown, under the ridged edge, up over the seeping slit then did it all over again. When his cock jerked in her hand and his deep voice let out a guttural moan, she knew she was getting him close. So she backed off.

Releasing his cockhead with a plop, she smiled up at him as she continued to stroke oh so slowly up and down his length. With her eyes on his, she slowly licked over his slit, cleaning the ever present fluid then swallowed audibly with an exaggerated groan. “You taste good, Brody, just like I remember.”

“If I remember correctly, I never got a chance to taste you that night. Let me taste you, Piper.” He didn’t know if she remembered him going down on her the other night, but he did.

She surprised the hell out of him by taking her free hand and slipping it into her shorts then pulling out two glistening fingers, all the while keeping up the slow, tight fisted strokes of his cock. The glint in her eyes as she brought her fingers to his mouth told him she knew he had expected her to join him on the bed in mutual, oral play. Grabbing her hand, he sucked those two tempting digits into his mouth, savoring the taste of her just as he had the other night. It was just enough of a temptation to have him vowing to someday bury his face between her legs and feast on the full meal deal again.

Piper almost lost her rhythm when he pulled strongly on her fingers with his mouth, his tongue licking every drop of her juices until there was nothing left, the soft wet strokes making her pussy quickly replace the cream she had just removed. Her pussy contracted in need, making her ache to feel those lips on her bare folds, that tongue delving deep, those teeth nibbling on her clit. Cursing him silently for trying to turn the tables on her, she pulled her hand from his mouth and cupped his balls with it, wiping his saliva over his sac as she rolled each ball in her palm. As she lowered her head to take him in her mouth again, she glided one finger over the sensitive area under his balls.

“Fuck!” Brody gasped as she touched a sensitive spot with just enough pressure to have him seeing stars. When she engulfed him in her mouth again and slowly took him deep, he knew he wasn’t going to last much longer, no matter how much he wanted to drag this out. She couldn’t get all of him in her mouth, but what didn’t fit was stroked by her hand. Her head bobs started slow, tortuously slow, her lips clinging to his flesh, her tongue constantly stroking, swirling, licking him from head to base. And all the

while her clever other hand was caressing his balls, that one finger venturing lower every now and then for a breath stealing stroke over a spot he wondered how she knew about.

He finally caved, had enough of her slow, erotic torture and rested his hand on her head as he practically demanded, “Faster, darlin’, and harder now. I’m about to explode here.”

Perfect, Piper thought as she released him abruptly and stood up. “You were doing such a good job when I came in I think I’ll let you finish it. Tonight’s prime rib night at the diner. If you want to go, let me know.” Piper sailed out of the room without looking back, her own arousal at a feverish pitch, but from the black scowl on his face, it was worth it.

Brody couldn’t help it. Grabbing his cock, he jacked off quickly, his come spewing with enough force to land on his chest, the pleasure enough to have him seeing those stars again and then some, all the while smiling at the way the little minx had gotten even.

Sheriff Norton was seated at the bar visiting with the bartender when Ian entered Rowdy’s. Gary waved him over with all the friendliness of hometown hospitality, which just made Ian grit his teeth. A man could only take so much of the laid back nonchalance of small town people, he thought as he took a seat on the stool next to the sheriff. He’d take the bustling, rude activity of big city life over this small town congeniality any day. At least in Richmond, where both he and Brody lived when they weren’t on assignment, there was always something to do that stirred his senses and aroused his adrenaline. Like sex, whenever he wanted with his choice of several different women who liked it kinky and rough and didn’t demand anything except an orgasm or two from him.

“Whiskey, straight, please,” he told the bartender, hoping the fiery burn of liquor would mellow his frustration, frustration he knew was due to having to rein in his lust every time they dealt with Piper, having to put on the brakes because Brody had a damn chivalrous streak a mile wide where that girl was concerned. He could get on board with his reasoning if there was someone else he could turn to for a little relief between the sheets, but the only woman who had caught his eye, and his cock’s attention was Haley Parsons, and that woman was the last one he’d be able to let go with for a few days until they cleared things up here. The obvious fact that she had been victimized in the past sure as hell didn’t keep him from thinking about spending some time between those long slender legs though, which just

proved he needed to get out of town or get Brody to relent as soon as possible.

“How’re things with Piper?” Gary asked as he sipped his beer. “Anything new I need to know?”

“No. It’s been quiet. Brody and I check the perimeters around her place twice a day and haven’t seen any untoward signs. Basically, we have nothing to go on yet. You get anywhere on the break in?”

“Same as you, but we’re all keeping our eye out.”

“Little hard to spot a stranger bent on harassment in the middle of tourist season,” Crack stated. Holding out his hand, he greeted Ian. “People call me Crack. You must be MacGregor.”

Ian shook the hippy bikers hand thinking this was his kind of guy. “Why Crack?”

“I may have been known to crack a few heads when things got out of hand at a bar I used to own,” he drawled.

“If there’s any head cracking to do around here, I’ll do it,” Gary said. “At least until the end of summer.”

“Fine with me. At my age, I’m more than ready to spend my time more peaceably. You’ll like retirement Gary,” Crack told the sheriff before asking Ian, “How’s Piper?”

Ian couldn’t help grinning, thinking of the way she had teased them from the water. “She’s a feisty little thing and keeps us on our toes, that’s for sure.”

“Just make sure you keep our girl safe,” Crack warned, “or your heads will be the ones getting cracked together.”

“Does she have this whole fucking town wrapped around her finger?”

“We’re protective of our own, but more so with both Haley and Piper. Speaking of Haley.” Gary waved her over just as he had Ian, a friendly grin splitting his weathered face when she entered the bar. “What pulls you away from your shop this afternoon?”

Ian’s irritation spiked when she avoided eye contact with him and made sure she didn’t stand too close. What the hell was it going to take to get the damn woman to realize he wasn’t going to hurt her? Her continued wariness made him want to show her exactly what he could do to her, and the pleasure she would get from it. He knew she was attracted to him even though she went to great pains not to let him know, but he couldn’t picture

her acting on that attraction for one or two nights of sex with a virtual stranger.

“I picked up that new lock you recommended and since you’re not on duty, thought I’d take you up on your offer to install it. That is when you have time.”

“I’ll do it,” Ian said before the sheriff could answer. He didn’t know what prompted him to offer, but some perverse part of him wanted to get under her skin, and under her skirt. Unfortunately the latter wasn’t going to happen, but from the scowl on her face, he knew he had struck home with the first.

“Oh, thanks, but Sheriff...”

“Go ahead with MacGregor, honey,” Gary encouraged her. It would do her good to spend some time around a man who obviously made her uncomfortable. “Maybe he’ll spot something me or the boys missed when we went over your shop.”

Not likely, Ian thought as he finished his drink, dropped a few bills on the counter and rose to take her elbow. But he appreciated the push from him nonetheless. “Come on, it won’t take long and you’ll sleep easier knowing that door’s secured.”

Haley let Ian lead her out of the bar, wishing she hadn’t spotted the sheriff going in there from the hardware store. She had figured he was either on break or off duty today if he was patronizing Rowdy’s and it would be a good time to take him up on his offer to install a new lock on her back door, but she hadn’t known Ian was in there. If she had, she would’ve let the lock wait. She didn’t know what it was about him that kept her on edge. Even though it wasn’t a comfortable feeling, it at least wasn’t fear. That emotion she knew only too well and was one she hadn’t felt since their first meeting. She still wasn’t comfortable around him but that hadn’t kept her from touching herself last night for the first time since she had divorced her husband, of stroking her surprisingly wet pussy as she thought of him.

Haley repressed a shudder of awareness and gently removed her arm from his hand. “Thanks for the offer. Your partner’s with Piper, isn’t he?” she asked, suddenly worried that Piper might have lost her two body guards again.

“Yeah, she’s cooperating for now.” Wanting to both shock her and see her reaction, he added, “After both Brody and I punished her the old

fashioned way, she saw the errors of her ways.” Not strictly true, but Ian would go with what worked and by the look of surprised shock slowly dawning on her face, he knew she understood his meaning.

“You didn’t...really, you didn’t spank her, did you?” Haley couldn’t imagine Piper going for such heavy handed tactics, yet picturing herself draped over Ian’s lap, her skirt tossed up, her panties lowered, baring her ass for him to do with as he pleased, turned out to make more of an erotic picture than a debasing one.

“Yeah, we really did.” Ian smiled widely at her. “She loved it, all but the part where we refused to fuck her afterwards.”

Knowing how Piper felt about Brody, she could imagine her friend’s reaction to that rejection. What she couldn’t imagine was getting pleasure from pain. That simply didn’t compute with her. “That was rather...heavy handed of you. I’m surprised she didn’t kick you out of her cabin,” she said as they arrived at her shop and she fished out her keys to unlock the front door.

Ian let her move away from him, waited until she flipped the closed sign to open and turned the lights on before saying quietly, “We didn’t abuse her, Haley. A spanking, if administered properly, can be a very erotic experience for a woman. Sometimes, a little pain can lead to a lot of pleasure.”

Even though that concept was beyond her understanding, she was surprised and shocked to find her pussy creaming at the image of her in that position again, her nipples beading as she imagined what her ass would feel like, and look like, when he got through slapping it. Not understanding her own response, let alone this man who had succeeded in such a short time to draw her interest, she turned from his knowing look and led the way to the back storeroom where the door that led out back was.

“I think you’ll find whatever tools you need in here. If you need anything else, let me know,” she said, turning after opening the door to the storeroom only to find him right behind her. She gasped at the sudden impact with his hard body, instinct making her shrink back automatically even though the brief feel of him had added to her simmering arousal.

That split second of fearful rejection pissed Ian off, more because of what she had gone through than what his nearness was making her remember. Between his sexual frustration and the desire that shone through the wariness in her blue eyes, he found his patience waning. Backing her

against the wall, he braced his hands behind her, caging her in but not touching her. “The only way to conquer your fear is to face it head on.”

“I don’t fear you,” Haley retorted, which was true despite her reactions to the contrary.

Chuckling, Ian leaned down and said right above her mouth, “You fear your reaction to me, don’t you Haley?” Not waiting for her to answer, he closed his mouth over hers and kissed her the way she needed to be kissed.

Haley couldn’t help it. She felt herself drifting, falling against him, her hands grasping his waist as her breasts came into contact with his much harder chest. His lips took hers with ruthless aggression, molding to her lips with a demand that she return the favor. When she was too slow to comply, he bit her lower lip, making her open her mouth on a gasp, the slight sting sending shards of pleasure to her nipples and down to her pussy. She hadn’t missed this, hadn’t craved this intimacy with another man until Ian walked into her shop and demanded she buckle up and face him. When his large hands slid down her back and cupped her buttocks, his mouth never letting up from its slow exploration of hers, she moaned deep in her throat at the pleasure building inside her.

He must be fucking insane, Ian thought as he reluctantly released those soft lips and trailed his mouth down her arched neck. He didn’t need this added frustration, didn’t need to get another woman off just to walk away with his cock pounding for release. Her ass felt soft, her small cheeks round and pliable and he’d give his right nut to fuck her against this wall right now.

“Are you imagining what it’d feel like Haley? Imagining what my hand smacking these cheeks would feel like, the sting, the heat, the pleasure?”

She was, God help her. Haley suppressed a moan as the feel of his hands kneading her ass, even over her clothes, felt so good, so erotic, she didn’t want him to stop. But the sound of the bell over the front door ringing as someone came in was as effective as a bucket of ice water thrown in her face. Shaken by her uncharacteristic response after such a long spell of feeling nothing, she shoved him back, surprised and grateful that he released her quickly and moved away from her.

“I have a customer. I have to go. I...”

“Go to work, Haley,” Ian said with no inflection. “I’ll get this done for you.”

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Chapter Nine

Piper was coming down from her loft fifteen minutes after she had turned her back on Brody and his erection to see him coming down the hall completely dressed and tossing his keys in the air with an easy smile on his face. "I'm ready for that prime rib. I've texted Ian and we'll be lucky if he hasn't already devoured his by the time we get there." Taking her hand, he pulled her outside to his car fighting the urge to laugh outright at the surprised and wary look on her face. Obviously she had expected him to be angry over teasing him so mercilessly only to leave him hanging, but on the contrary, he found himself amused and energized by her continued taunting. As much as he had liked and had been drawn to her when she was much younger and meeker, he found himself completely enamored with the mature, feisty woman she had become. So taken with her, he knew he was going to have a hard time walking away when this case was finally settled. Of course, if his case ended with finding Charles alive and him being responsible for getting the information they needed to put him in jail, he was sure Piper would leave him no choice but to walk away.

Piper settled into the black leather passenger seat of Brody's refurbished 1970 bright red Chevelle, Brody's easy smile and nonchalant attitude taking her by surprise. She had expected him to be angry with her, or at least a tad put out, but instead he acted like nothing had happened, like she hadn't had his cock in her mouth thirty minutes ago and her pussy soaked fingers in his mouth. She was beginning to think her little plot of revenge had backfired on her, leaving her more frustrated than him.

"Worked up an appetite, did you?" she asked sarcastically.

"Thanks to your help, yes. Aren't you hungry?" Her piqued mood amused him, especially since he suspected she hadn't gotten off like he had this afternoon. Not that his hand job had done much to lessen his desire to fuck her again, but it did take the edge off enough to help him keep to his resolve not to take her again until he was no longer involved with bringing Charles in.

Starving, Piper thought, but not for food. Refusing to give him the satisfaction of knowing how much she still wanted him again, she simply replied, "Yes, and to answer your unspoken question, I always get their prime rib when it's on special." When he simply raised an inquiring brow as

he pulled out onto the highway, she smiled widely. “Contrary to Ian’s belief, I do occasionally indulge, just not often.”

Chuckling, Brody answered, “We’ll keep that our little secret. It’s fun to watch him stew over what you’re going to put in front of him.”

“He gripes, but he eats every bite.”

The feel of the powerful engine purring under her, relaxed Piper despite the unfulfilled arousal still plaguing her. If she didn’t get herself under control, the guys were going to have to listen to the purr of her vibrator tonight, but that would be their problem and one that didn’t concern her. On the contrary, she found herself turned on even more imagining them sitting downstairs listening and suffering as she got herself off with her favorite toy.

“What’s that little grin for?” Brody asked suspiciously as he parked in front of the Main Street Diner and cut the engine. He’s learned not to trust that look.

“Oh good, Haley’s going to join us.” Ignoring his question, Piper’s attention focused on the bemused look on her friend’s face as she looked at Ian. While she would be the first to applaud and encourage her best friend’s interest in a man, she knew the trauma of Haley’s past, which made her protective of her and Ian was definitely not the man for Haley to end her six year celibacy with.

“Piper! Thank God you’re all right.” A woman in her mid-forties hugged Piper before leading them to a table for four. “You had us scared to death. What happened?” Handing them each a menu, she set her arms akimbo on her hips and glared down at Piper out of concerned brown eyes, yet her look was that of a worried parent.

“I don’t know yet, Mary, but that’s why agents Pearce and MacGregor are here, to help me find out.”

Mary was joined at their table by a man a few years older than her, a stained white apron wrapped around his small paunch, his eyes just as worried and filled with caring as Mary’s. “Are you taking care of our girl?” he asked both Ian and Brody point blank as he rested a large hand on Piper’s shoulder and squeezed.

“Ian, Brody, this is Clem and Mary Donaldson. They own the diner.” Piper introduced the couple who had suffered every parent’s worst nightmare when their only child had been killed in Iraq ten years ago.

Brody exchanged a look with Ian that conveyed both annoyance and amused tolerance as yet another towns person was hell bent on making sure they were looking out for Piper's well-being. "It's nice to meet you and yes, we're looking out for Piper, trying to discover what happened the two days she went missing. Now that she's being a good girl, it's much easier keeping an eye on her." When Piper glared at his smug look, he simply squeezed her thigh under the table, keeping his easy smile in place.

"I don't know about them," Ian put in as he set his menu aside, "but I want the largest cut of prime rib you've got, with the works."

"On the house for all of you," Clem generously offered then turned and headed back to the kitchen before they could argue.

"You two know it does no good to argue with him," Mary said to Haley and Piper. "Eat your dinner all gone and I have lemon pie."

"I think they've adopted you," Ian commented, his look going from Haley to Piper.

"They lost their son in Iraq and tend to mother anyone younger than them," Haley said as she tried to ignore the way Ian's hard thigh was pressing against hers, that simple contact sending shards of pleasure through her.

Ian wanted to grin at her flustered look and the way she was fiddling with her silverware and avoiding looking at him. Damn he mused, if a simple kiss could do that to her, he wondered what her reaction would be if he spent a few hours fucking her. Quelling that thought before it could develop into a full-fledged fantasy, he turned his attention to the large basket of hot rolls and a salad that looked like a meal in itself being set in front of him, sternly reminding himself that she was not for dallying with.

"That's about as rough as it gets," Ian said, his eyes filled with sympathy as he looked over at Mary bustling around their small restaurant. The tables were decked out with red and white checked table cloths, framed black and white pictures of Hope from the forties and fifties adorned the walls, a jukebox was playing an old Elvis Presley tune popular from the late fifties and homemade pies were temptingly displayed in the glass case at the checkout counter. Every time an order was up, Clem rang a bell from the open window separating the counter from the kitchen. The wholesome look and atmosphere of the place had Ian itching to stomp down the street to Rowdy's, and if it wasn't for the plate size cut of medium rare prime rib being set in front of him, he would. "Fucking A that looks good." Ignoring

the grins of the others, he dove in and didn't plan to come up for air until he had taken his last bite.

Piper grinned at Haley across the table. "I guess it's true that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. I haven't seen him that happy since he got here."

"You can get there through sex too," Ian said around a mouthful of food, "but since Brody's taken that off the table, food it is, at least for now."

"We're on the job," Brody bit out, reminding his partner of why they were here. "This is great, Mary," he told the owner, quickly changing the subject when she returned at that moment to see to refilling their iced tea herself.

Piper tried not to let Brody's reiteration of his no sex rule get to her, but she couldn't help but be disappointed. By the time they finished pie and were ready to head back to her cabin, she was more than ready to torment them with the sound of her vibrator, not that she thought it would do any good to get Brody to change his mind about fucking her again. She had a feeling it would just give her even more erotic dreams to wake to.

"She's doing it again," Ian groaned two hours later when the soft but distinct buzzing of a vibrator echoed downstairs from the open loft. "I'd recognize that sound anywhere."

So would he, Brody groaned as his dick thickened from nothing but that sound stimulating it. "Ian," he warned, his voice as frustrated as Ian's but his will stronger due to his growing emotional attachment to Piper. "It wouldn't be..."

"I swear to God, if you say it wouldn't be right one more time, I'm punching you," Ian threatened with a dark, frustrated look over at him. Seated on the couch, both of them had just gotten engrossed in an action movie that was completely unrealistic but great kick ass entertainment when that cock hardening sound coming from upstairs caught both their attention.

Brody sighed, knowing Ian had a point. Piper was more than willing, then again, she had been more than willing five years ago and he had been haunted by the lost look on her face when he left her back then as well as the look of betrayal followed swiftly by resignation she couldn't hide in those expressive green eyes a week later when reality had so rudely smacked her in the face. Brody was actually hoping Charles had indeed died from his injuries, leaving the path clear for him to pursue his growing

desire for Piper as soon as Pasquino was brought in. Even if the little evidence they had against Charles wasn't enough to convict him, it could be enough to persuade him to testify against Pasquino, in which case he'd have no choice but to go into witness protection if he wanted to live. Either way, Brody would be responsible.

"Fine, fuck her if you both want, just do it when I'm not around," Brody snapped out even though his gut clenched as he pictured the two of them doing just that. A soft cry wafted down to them and the image of Piper's face when she climaxed filled his vision as he rose and went outside to take another cooling dip in the lake, a habit he was getting damn tired of even if it was his own conscience leading him there.

"Take all the fun out of it, why don't you?" Ian muttered as he watched his friend's stiff back as he slammed out of the cabin before turning off the television and heading into the shower to relieve his own tension, another cry, this one louder and longer, following him until he shut the door.

Piper woke at five a.m. from erotic dreams filled with two men touching her everywhere followed by Brody following through with his threat to use his belt on her next time she didn't abide by their rules. As she didn't have any personal experience with how that would feel, her imagination filled in for her and wouldn't leave her alone as she fixed coffee, ate a bagel and then shut herself in her workroom. The door to the spare bedroom was closed, much to her relief. She barely heard the slamming of the front door last night as she was writhing on her bed in the throes of climax, but it was enough to let her know she had gotten to them again. Her satisfaction with that success had been short lived, however, since she had spent the remainder of the night in sleepless agitation over her dreams.

She now remembered everything from their first night here, vividly recalled the feel of their hands and mouths on her naked body, the press of their denim covered, hard as rock cocks against her sensitive flesh and how she had craved them in her, how she had begged over and over for them to fuck her. Her dreams switched from that night to the spankings they had given her, the pain induced pleasure that had her wondering if she would have the same reaction from the harsher pain from Brody's belt. How bad would it hurt? Would he stop if she couldn't take it? And, most importantly, how hard would she come from that stronger erotic pain?

Piper put in the final stitch on the black lace suspender teddy and held it up for her inspection. Some woman was going to set some man back on his

heels with this one, which made her wonder how it would look on her. Her imagination, fueled by her dreams and simmering lust, made it easy for her to do what she never did and try it on. Forgoing the black sheer hose, she stripped and slipped the black satin thong on first, the obvious bare exposure of her ass adding to her escalating arousal. She knew she'd have to keep the thong for herself since they were already so wet the slick material was clinging to her bare folds. Next she attached the wide lace suspenders to the black lace garters around her upper thighs and pulled them up over her breasts, the width just wide enough to cover her nipples before she crisscrossed them behind her neck and drew them around her sides, just below her naval where they came together and attached with small eye hooks.

Facing the tall mirror, she gaped at her reflection, the way her nipples could barely be seen through the lace suspenders, the obvious dampness of the thong, the way the garters seemed to make her legs look longer. Looking at her design, she was contemplating different names for the outfit other than labeling it a teddy when a knock on her door followed by Brody opening it and peeking his head in had her standing rooted in place, both excitement and embarrassment filling her as his grey eyes widened in surprised appreciation.

“Sorry, darlin’,” he drawled when he could get his tongue unstuck from the roof of his dry mouth. “Haley’s here, needs to talk to you. She says you haven’t been answering your phone.”

Piper looked around and realized she left her phone upstairs. “Okay, thanks. Tell her to come back.”

Brody turned from the most erotic sight he had seen in a long time, took a deep fortifying breath, berated his cock and then returned to the great room and sent Haley back. Holy shit, the sight of Piper’s ass showcased in garters and a thong had greeted him like a welcome wet dream when he opened the door and when he managed to raise his eyes above that enticing view and saw her soft full breasts free except for her lace covered nipples and her damply covered mound in the mirror, it was all he could do to keep from marching in there and taking her amidst all the frills of her profession. The woman packed a wallop naked, but when that nakedness was showcased so erotically, she knocked a guy off his feet. If they didn’t get some fucking clue as to who was after her soon, he knew his good

intentions weren't going to be worth shit. A man could only take so much after all.

Brody's frustration only increased when Piper and Haley came out of her workroom, Piper dressed in a short denim skirt and a sleeveless white blouse, and announced they needed to drive into Branson to pick up a large backorder for Haley's shop and do some shopping. It wasn't the trip that irritated and worried him however, it was the fact they had to drive separately because neither his car nor her jeep would hold the four of them as well as Haley's large order.

"This is going to be another day from hell," Ian grumbled as they followed Piper out to the highway.

"How bad can it be? They'll pick up Haley's order, we can sit in a bar while they shop, then we'll head home."

"You mean you're not going to insist we follow them around the stores like pathetic puppies?" Ian's look and tone were infused with sarcasm even though he was grinning.

"As long as they're together out in public, I'm sure they'll be fine. Did you give Haley the key chain?" Key chains with attached very loud warning alarms, mace and small jackknives, all easily accessed with the press of a button, could be bought at any cop shop, but they usually carried a few with them and would come in handy if either woman was ever accosted.

"Yeah. She seemed reluctant, but took it." From the look on her face, Ian suspected Haley had owned one before and possibly used it. Unfortunately, her past victimization did nothing to rein in his desire for her.

Branson was a bustling town of non-stop activity, tourists crowding the streets, shows, restaurants and shops for over nine months out of the year. Brody found himself actually preferring the quieter, less populated town of Hope, especially as the traffic was bumper to bumper as they followed Piper and Haley to a public parking lot and sought out an empty place for each of them. Both women seemed to love maneuvering through the crowded street on the four block walk down to Branson's Landing where they swore the best shopping was.

Specialty shops and restaurants lined the waterfront of Lake Taneycomo, and Brody was relieved when Piper led them to the Paddlewheel Pub, a restaurant that had outdoor patio seating that afforded them a good view of the shops up and down the waterfront.

“Now you two can wipe those scowls off your faces.” Piper had thought of teasing them by telling them they wanted Brody and Ian with them while they shopped, but she knew Brody wouldn’t believe her. “They have long, fat old fashioned hot dogs here as well as the best fries around. We’ll meet you here when we’re done.”

“Two hours, Piper,” Brody told her as he took a seat. “Then we’re headed back whether you’re done or not.”

Piper just rolled her eyes, grabbed Haley and took off before she let her mouth get her in trouble. Her frustration with Brody as well as her need to feel him fucking her long and hard was already raging out of control, she didn’t need to add pissing him off into the mix. But two hours later, when she and Haley were making their way back down to the pub, their arms laden with packages, Piper still found herself chafing under his restrictions and her constant, unfulfilled arousal. The mellow look on both men’s faces did nothing to ease her discontent, on the contrary seeing them so relaxed and Brody so seemingly unaffected by her sexily displayed body this morning while she was still fighting her pussy gushing, instant response to the look on his face made her itch to do something, anything, to irritate both of them out of their complacency.

As they loaded their packages into her jeep, the guys filling the back end with the pickup from the post office for Haley’s shop, a sudden impulse hit her on how to have a little fun at their expense. Jumping into the jeep, she waited until Haley settled on the passenger side before leaning out the window, calling to Brody and Ian as they were getting in their car. “First one to Hope has to unload the jeep!” Without waiting for their response, Piper peeled out of the parking lot, laughing at the surprise and anger on both men’s faces.

“Are you nuts?” Haley asked as Piper expertly maneuvered through the heavy traffic. “There’s no way we can beat that car back to town.” But Haley was grinning at the fun of trying to best those two.

“We can if we take Tucker’s Pass, which they don’t know about.” Cutting through the bumpy, unpaved, two lane road through a densely wooded area that only the locals knew about would get them back to Hope at least ten minutes before the highway route and Piper couldn’t wait to see their expressions when they were parked in front of the shop idly waiting for them.

Haley laughed at Piper's gall, wishing she had the nerve and constitution to simply let go around a man, especially Ian. While she wasn't interested in a relationship, she was beginning to think she was ready to end her long drought of celibacy and that Ian might be the one to get wet with again. "I admire your nerve, Piper, but Ian told me what they did when you defied them before. Are you sure you want to risk that humiliation again?"

Piper hadn't blushed in a long time, but she did then as she wondered what Haley thought of her now. But when she had turned over a new leaf upon leaving Geneva and then Atlantic City, she swore she'd never go back to being that insecure girl who suppressed her desires to please others and she wasn't going to start now. "Maybe being spanked turned me on so much that I *want* one of them to retaliate that way again." Admitting that out loud made her wonder if that wasn't what she had been aiming for, hoping for by pulling this little stunt. Spurred on by her obsession with Brody's belt threat, she couldn't deny that she would welcome another 'painful' encounter.

Instead of being shocked by Piper's revelation, Haley found herself intrigued. "Right now, concentrate on your driving. Later, preferably over some strong marguerita's, you can give me more details."

Smiling over at her, Piper replied, "It's a date."

Twenty minutes later, a blowout from her right rear tire had Piper struggling to slow the jeep on the dirt road, a feat made even more difficult because she was speeding in an effort to get back to Hope long before Brody and Ian. "Crap," she muttered as she finally managed to slow enough to pull over and cut the engine. "We are in so much trouble." Getting out, she walked to the back of her jeep and winced as she saw the tire was completely flat and she would be lucky if the rim wasn't ruined in her struggle to stop.

"Speak for yourself," Haley stated as she looked at the ruined tire. "This stunt was your idea and I'm not the one someone seems to have it in for." Looking up and down the relatively deserted stretch of back road, Haley bit her lip in worry. "This isn't good, Piper."

"I know, damn it." Piper was smart enough to worry about being stranded at any time, but with those mysterious missing two days still plaguing her and the vandalism at Haley's shop still unresolved, her palms grew sweaty with the potential risk she had put herself in. Pulling out her phone, she quickly dialed Brody's number, hoping he was close enough to

the cutoff to Tucker's Pass that it wouldn't take them long to backtrack and get here. They could change the tire themselves, but the spare was buried under the big boxes from the post office and it would take them twice as long as the guys, time she didn't want to spend alone out here. "Hi Brody," she said when he answered. "Uh, we could use a little help."

Ten minutes later, her ears were still ringing from Brody's curses and threats, but her relief was palpable when she saw his bright red hot rod spewing dust as he approached them. She knew she was in for a tongue lashing, something her guilty conscience really didn't need, but that she deserved, and when Haley had noticed the left rear tire slowly going flat while they waited, she added fear to her worry and guilt. A flat wasn't a sign of foul play, a blowout followed by another flat hinted at tampering.

"Easy, partner," Ian cautioned Brody when he roared to a stop behind the jeep, his anger and curses stronger than when Piper had taken off in Branson, leaving them behind.

"No, I'm done being easy with her. She agreed to our help and our rules. She's going to damn well abide by them." Beneath the anger beating at him was worry and fear and as he saw both tires, the worry and fear out passed the anger.

"Brody, I'm..."

"Be. Quiet," he told her with quiet, steely emphasis.

Piper thought now would be a good time to heed his order and stepped back while they checked the damage. Within minutes, they found nails embedded in both tires, long, thick nails guaranteed to cause a flat in a short amount of time.

"You thinking what I am?" Brody asked Ian as they stood up from inspecting the tires.

"That anyone could have stuck these in during the two hours we left it unattended in the parking lot? Yep."

"I'll call the sheriff to get someone out here to tow it in. We'll have to retrieve their packages later."

Piper and Haley simply stood by while they waited for one of Sheriff Norton's deputies to show up and agree to wait for the tow truck which was on the way. The glares Brody aimed her way, when he chose to look at her, were filled with anger and reprisal, a reprisal Piper would be looking forward to if she wasn't feeling so bad about her reckless behavior being responsible for her current predicament. The drive back to Hope in Brody's

car was made in tense silence and Piper was relieved when they finally pulled in front of Haley's shop.

"I'm going to go have a talk with Gary, give him these nails, not that it'll do any good," Ian said. "I'll walk back to the cabin."

Brody just nodded at him, turned to look at Piper over the hood of his car and stated with tightly controlled anger, "Get in, Piper."

"I know you're angry," Piper said as they pulled out, "and I know I shouldn't have issued that dare. I'm sorry, I didn't think..."

"No," he interrupted her coldly, "you didn't think. It's bad enough you didn't give any thought to your own predicament, but you had your best friend with you today. What's your excuse for putting her at risk?"

"I don't have one," she snapped back, hating that she had to answer to him, hating losing control over her life and most importantly, hating that he was right. If anyone had hurt Haley because of her, she knew she'd never forgive herself. "Damn it," she muttered, facing out the window so she didn't have to see if he was gloating. Piper settled in sulky silence and was glad Brody didn't pursue it. She was going to grab a beer and head out to work in her garden before it got dark. She was always able to relax and clear her head of cobwebs when she had her hands buried in dirt, tending to her vegetables and flowers.

Piper's muttering was always a telltale sign of her frustration or stress, but Brody had a better way of dealing with her. Pulling to a stop in front of her cabin, he had come to the conclusion he needed to act on his threat of using his belt this time, and God help him if she responded to the sharper pain of leather the way she did his hand, because the way he was feeling, his cock already thick and hard at picturing her ass striped red, he didn't know if he was going to be able to walk away this time. His fear for her overrode his anger, his good intentions and his common sense, leaving him to wonder if he was fighting a losing battle in keeping himself emotionally, as well as physically apart from her.

When she flounced by him, her head high, her eyes glittering, he simply reacted. Grabbing her hand, he hauled her to the hood of his car and bent her over the top, his taller, stronger body braced against her back to keep her from fleeing.

"I warned you, didn't I?" he whispered silkily in her ear, the feel of her soft ass against his hard cock egging him on. "Remember what I said would happen the next time you defied me?"

Piper stilled her struggles as she felt not only his cock rubbing her ass, but the hard metal of his belt buckle. Just that quickly, her juices flooded her pussy, her buttocks clenched in anticipation of feeling that delicious fiery burn again and her nipples grew achingly taut.

“Answer me, Piper,” he demanded lowly as he let her feel his hand move between their bodies, let her hear him release his buckle and let her feel him pull the thick leather from his waist.

“You said you were going to spank me with your belt. Oh God, Brody,” she whimpered breathlessly, “I don’t think I can take it.”

“You won’t know until you try, but regardless, you’re going to get at least one stroke. If it’s too much, say so and I’ll switch to my hand. Brace yourself on your elbows and pull your hips back. Now.”

The quiet emphasis in that order demanded her surrender, her actions demanded she take her punishment and her pussy was demanding she give him what he wanted in the hope that he would reciprocate generously. Birds were tweeting from the woods, in the distance the sound of the lake splashing onto shore echoed faintly and there was enough of a breeze to rustle tree leaves, but all she was aware of was the erotic exposure of her ass when he pulled her skirt up, draped it over her back and pulled her panties down to her knees. She widened her legs automatically to keep them from dropping to her feet. She liked the picture she imagined they made stretched between her legs, liked the way her ass and thighs were showcased between her panties and her raised skirt, emphasizing and limiting the area to be spanked.

Brody doubled the belt, stood to her side and knew by the way she was cooperating that she was going to respond as heatedly to the pain of leather as she did to the pain of his palm. Confident she’d let him know if she wanted him to stop, he gave her one quick warning before snapping the leather across the middle of both buttocks. “Brace yourself, darlin’.”

The stroke came so fast after his warning Piper didn’t have time to do as he said, and she couldn’t prevent a startled cry from peeling out. This time she heard the swoosh of leather right before it struck, braced herself for the impact and the slash of pain then whimpered as that red hot sting fed the arousal pulsing in her pussy, set her inner flesh on fire.

After the third stroke, Brody paused and ran his hand over the three red stripes across her ass and smiled when her buttocks clenched tightly. Even though he could see the moisture coating her labia, physical evidence of her

arousal, he needed that verbal confirmation before he continued. “Piper, are you with me?”

“Yes, yes, Brody. Please, don’t stop.” Not even her mortification over her response to this abasement could keep her from pleading for more. If he turned her down, turned away from her now, she knew she’d ask him to leave her alone despite the mounting threats against her. She’d rather face those alone than another rejection from him.

Snapping the belt on the under curve of her cheeks, he asked, “Are you going to stop taking off by yourself?”

Technically, she wasn’t by herself, Haley was with her, but she wasn’t about to belabor the point. “Yes, I promise.” She released her breath on a whoosh as he struck her across the top of her thighs then, without pause, landed a blow on her ass again.

Brody lowered his arm and cupped one reddened cheek in his hand, the heat warm on his palm. Her hips shifted as she tried to widen her stance but was brought up short by the panties still stretched between her legs. She made an awesome sight bent over his bright red car, her equally hot red ass displayed for him and anyone else who might come by her place, and if he was free to indulge in a no holds barred relationship, she would be the first one he’d be willing to do so with.

“Two more, then I’ll stop,” he told her as he withdrew his hand from her burning flesh as quickly as he withdrew from a fantasy he knew he couldn’t indulge in.

Piper took the next two strokes stoically even though her buttocks throbbed from the abuse he heaped on them. The sting from the belt was sharply breathtaking for only a few seconds, but as it eased and spread to her pussy, the lingering ache worked to keep her arousal high, her need on edge and she knew by the time he applied that last, hard swat, she was going to beg him again to fuck her.

She turned willingly into his arms when he lifted her upright, threw her arms around his shoulders and raised on her toes to bury her face in his neck, whispering over and over, “Please Brody, please, don’t turn me away. Please.”

Brody caved, his body overriding his conscience, her pleas leaving him no choice. “Tell me you’re still on the pill,” he rasped as he straightened her with a tight grip on her shoulders. He knew Ian kept condoms in his pocket,

but Brody had kept his in the spare bedroom as another deterrent to giving in to her on the spot.

“I’m still on the pill.”

He didn’t question her this time like he did in Geneva and Piper took that as a sign he was as aroused, eager and needy as she was. His hands moved to her waist and lifted her easily onto the hood of his car, making her wince when her sore buttocks plopped onto the warm metal. The quick move took her by surprise and she had to throw her arms behind her to brace herself.

“Don’t move,” Brody instructed hoarsely as he stripped her panties and sandals off before lifting the front of her skirt and tucking it into the waist, baring her from the waist down. “I want to look at you.”

Piper thought he meant the picture she made posed semi-nude on the hood of his car, but as he lifted her legs and braced her feet far apart then took those big hands and spread her bent knees even wider, she realized what he meant. His grey gaze zeroed in on her pussy, the wide position of her legs unfurling her thick, damp folds to reveal the pink recesses of her vagina.

“You’re so pretty here, darlin’.” Using one finger, they both watched as he sank it slowly into her until he was buried up to his knuckle. “God, you feel good. Tight, wet, and so damn fucking hot.”

His words aroused her as much as his finger slowly exploring her pussy. Taking his time, his eyes never lifting from her crotch, he simply felt her all over, learned the shape of her, traced over her slick walls, coasted over her clit, his slow, meticulous moves driving her to the edge until she knew she’d explode with just a little bit harder, longer touch on her clit. Needing that more than she needed her pride, she whispered, “Brody, please, touch me.”

Brody lifted smiling eyes up to her red face and teased, “I am touching you. Do you remember us touching you last week when you were out of your head with lust?”

“Yes, I think I recall most of it.”

“You’re just as swollen, just as warm and wet now as you were then, and we don’t have any drugs to blame this time.”

“No, I don’t need drugs, I just need...sex.” She was about to say you, but she couldn’t bring herself to give him that much power over her, even if it was true.

Brody didn't like her answer, then again, he had no right to ask for more. Slowly pulling out of her snug channel, he watched her closely as he stroked his damp finger over her puckered back hole, wetting it before slowly breaching that tight orifice. "Remember when we did this, how you came apart with a scream that could probably be heard in town?" He stopped at the first knuckle as she accustomed herself to the rude intrusion.

All Piper remembered was when fingers stroked her where no one had gone before, the pleasure had been so intense everything had gone black for a split second before erupting in the brightest, most overwhelming sensation she had ever experienced. "I just remember an orgasm that rivaled anything I've ever felt before."

"Let's see if we can match it or at least get close. Open your blouse and show me those awesome breasts."

Piper loved the way he took control, loved the way he told her explicitly what he wanted, leaving no room for doubts. Using just one hand while she remained braced on the other, she quickly unbuttoned her blouse and unhooked the front clasp of her bra, spreading both garments wide enough to free her breasts. Between the outdoor breeze wafting over her puckered nipples and his heated gaze as he blatantly looked his fill, her lust inched up yet another notch, making her wonder how much higher it could go before she simply splintered apart. She felt decadently exposed, which only added to the overwhelming arousal coursing through her veins, and when he inched his finger deeper into her ass, then brought his other hand to her pussy and thrust two fingers inside her in one deep plunge, she got her answer on how much she could take before exploding.

The orgasm punched through her, lifted her hips up as she unconsciously sought more from those marauding fingers, the pleasure a sharp jab of intensity as it rendered her incoherent for its duration. Five years ago, this man had left her with an appetite for sex that had remained unsated until now, and she practically wept at the pleasure filling her.

Brody could no more keep from plunging his cock into her spasming pussy than he could deny she meant more to him than any other woman ever had. Pulling from her still grasping sheath, he released his cock, grabbed her still warm buttocks and lifted her hips for his rough possession. When she collapsed on her back, wrapped her legs around his hips and grabbed at her bouncing breasts, he felt her climax again, her slick walls gripping his dick instead of his fingers, milking his own orgasm from him

with strong pulls on his rigid length. Her scream echoed in the yard and had Ian stopping at the edge of the path, his brow rising in question when their eyes met.

He couldn't answer his friend right now, wasn't sure he had an answer for him about his actions. He was too busy watching his cock spear those bare, swollen folds and reaping the rewards of having Piper's pussy snugly wrapped around him again, her juices coating him, making it easy to take her harder, deeper until his balls pulled up and his orgasm erupted with blinding speed and ecstasy. With his hands filled with the soft flesh of her ass, his cock surrounded by the soft flesh of her vagina and her strong legs clasped around his hips, anchoring him to her, he slammed into her over and over as pleasure racked his body from head to toe, pleasure so intense, nothing else mattered except this blinding all-consuming ecstasy.

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Chapter Ten

Piper was on cloud nine the rest of the evening, her pussy sore from the way Brody had fucked her so deep and hard, her nipples aching from where she had pinched them and her anus softly throbbing from just the stroke of his finger in that sensitive hole. When she had turned her head and spotted Ian at the edge of the clearing, she blushed in embarrassment, but when she came inside, imagining the picture they made with Brody keeping her hips elevated and immobile with his hard hands gripping her ass, her legs locked tightly around his hips as he pounded into her over and over, she decided the embarrassment was worth the excitement of knowing he was watching.

Since they had a late lunch, she tossed together a salad while Brody and Ian were talking outside. She couldn't wait until they went to bed, was dying to feel Brody's naked body against hers, already anticipating the deep plunges of his cock fucking her again. Not even the vandalism to her beloved jeep could put a damper on her mood. She refused to think about when they left, about their warnings that Charles might still be alive and their responsibility to arrest him for money laundering some drug lord's profits. She knew in her heart Charles didn't, couldn't have survived that assassination attempt, just as she knew there was no future for her and Brody, never had been. Despite her physical and attitude changes, she was still the same person he had rejected so long ago until she practically forced him to fuck her.

If their past wasn't enough to keep her grounded where he was concerned, the present certainly was. Her home was here, and she loved it. She had no intentions of leaving all that she had worked so hard for, especially for a man who had trouble deciding if he wanted her or not. His life was in Virginia and with his job. But they had now, and she was more than willing to take advantage of his capitulation, indulging in a sexual relationship until they caught whoever was tormenting her.

At the sound of the front door opening, she turned from the counter holding the large bowl of salad. "I know we ate a big late lunch, but I thought this might tide you over until morning."

The wide smile on Piper's face made his gut clench, and Brody knew she was expecting him to carry on with her now that they'd had sex. As if it wasn't bad enough he had his conscience berating him, he had to listen to Ian read him the riot act about toying with her. The problem was, he wasn't

toying with her, he simply wasn't free at this time to pursue a relationship and wouldn't be until Charles was found. And if they managed to either put him away or use him as a witness against Pasquino and then put him in witness protection? Well, then he'd see just how big a heart Piper had, how forgiving she could be.

With her juices still coating his cock and the remembered feel of her spasming around him as she climaxed, he knew it was going to be a long evening. "That does look good, darlin'." Taking a seat at the counter, he looked inside the bowl. "What all's in there?"

"You're not going to try to feed us tofu or anything else that I'm allergic to, are you?" Ian asked suspiciously as he took a seat.

Piper giggled, something she hadn't done since high school, but she couldn't seem to help it. She was in such a good mood. Awesome sex will do that to you and having two hot guys sitting at her table, shit eating grins on their faces, well, it just didn't get any better.

"You are not allergic to anything and trust me, you'll like everything in there."

"Did she just say, trust me?" Ian asked Brody with a smirk.

Winking at her, Brody answered dryly, "Yeah, but I don't. What's in this salad?"

"Just eat it and shut up. If you really want to know, the ingredients all came from my garden and everything is labeled out there. Check it out yourself." Piper was relieved the mood had lightened considerably since they returned from Branson and she hoped Brody's good humor was because the car sex was as good for him as it was for her.

Piper got her first clue that Brody wasn't thinking along the same lines as she was when he sat in her leather armchair instead of next to her on the sofa when they moved into the great room after dinner. Her second clue was when he simply bade her good night after their movie and walked down the hall to the guest bedroom like he had done each night since they got here, as if the mind numbing sex they had a few hours ago meant nothing. Heading upstairs alone, she tried not to let her disappointment and disillusionment show, refusing to give him the satisfaction of knowing he had hurt her once again.

Self-directed anger quickly replaced her hurt feelings as she showered, especially when she soaped up her still sensitive nipples and pussy. The light strokes of her sudsy hands were enough to have her aching for more,

but she refused to give in to the urge to get herself off. Masturbating again to thoughts of what she wanted and what Brody refused to give her wasn't going to happen. When she had fled Atlantic City with her emotions in shambles, she swore she wouldn't let another man have a hold on her again, no matter how much she wanted him. She never wanted to experience loss again like she had when Charles had been assassinated and never wanted to feel betrayed and unwanted again like she had when Brody revealed his true self. It was her fault that she kept throwing herself at a man who had made it clear he only wanted friendship and her fault she kept getting hurt when he rejected her.

"Fuck him," she muttered as she rinsed and stepped out of the shower. "He's not the only fish in the sea." Cole would be in town in a few days, in time for the big Fourth of July celebration on Thursday. She could wait two days for him and then she planned on camping out with him until his tour was ready to move on to the next leg of their wilderness trek. If Brody felt she wasn't safe enough with Cole, then he could damn well watch. As a matter of fact, she decided as she drifted to sleep, having him watch her with another man appealed greatly, especially as she imagined all the things she could do to and with Cole that would drive any man crazy with lust, even one who was hell bent on turning her away at every opportunity.

Because of her erotic dreams of Brody watching her with Cole, Brody pulling her away from Cole in a fit of jealousy, Brody joining her with Cole then followed by her, Brody and Ian in a naked tangle together, Piper awoke wanting the damn man more than ever, her pussy soaked with need and painful arousal she refused to acknowledge or give in to. Cursing all men in general, she dressed in her usual gym shorts and tank top, omitting underwear in her eagerness to escape out to her garden before either of the guys got up. After downing a glass of juice and grabbing a bagel, she slammed outside, hoping toiling in her garden helped calm her roiling emotions and anger.

"She's muttering again," Ian said without turning from watching Piper out the kitchen door when he heard Brody enter the kitchen.

"She does that more when she's upset or pissed. I'm guessing she's both this morning." Brody looked at Piper kneeling in her garden, a sight he could never have imagined before now. Her shiny, black hair was pulled up into a ponytail and swung around her neck and shoulders as she jerked weeds from around the vegetable plants. On her knees, her soft shorts clung

to the rounded globes of her ass and he felt his cock shifting, hardening as he remembered vividly the feel of that ass under his hand.

He hadn't slept well last night, the image of Piper's face as she went upstairs alone haunting him. He had been tempted to say to hell with his good intentions, his desire to erase the hurt reflected in those expressive green eyes and let her know how much he did want her almost enough to override his common sense. Despite the relatively short time they had known each other, he could read her like a book, but right now, he wished he couldn't because there wasn't anything he was willing to do, at this point, to convince her of how much he wanted her.

"If you weren't so hell bent on doing what you think is right because, maybe Sandoval is alive and maybe we'll have enough to charge him with, she wouldn't be out there muttering up a storm." Sometimes, Ian thought, his friend's stubborn streak over doing what he thought was right was a pain in the ass.

"Stupid, fucking idiot"

Brody grinned as Piper's grumbling could be heard through the open door. Funny, he mused, he didn't mind being labeled a stupid, fucking idiot in this case because he was beginning to think she was right. "I think it's cute," he said, referring to her penchant for muttering under her breath.

"You would."

Flipping his keys, Brody ignored Ian's sarcasm and headed to the front door. "I'm going into town to check on her jeep and talk to Gary."

"And to avoid the morning after awkwardness?" Ian tossed him a knowing look over his shoulder then grinned when Brody flipped him off and left without answering. The rumbling of the Chevelle's engine starting up caught Piper's attention and Ian watched as the curiosity on her face switched to anger when she saw Brody drive off. This time her mumbling was indiscernible, but the meaning was clear. She was pissed. Ian stepped outside intending to try to soothe her ruffled feathers, but his phone rang and seeing it was Carlos, their man under cover with Pasquino, he had to take it.

Piper's gaze went from the tail lights of Brody's car as he disappeared down her long drive towards the main road to Ian who was walking away from her, his phone to his ear. Watching Brody drive away, simply leave without talking to her, raised her ire to an all new level. It must be nice, she thought sarcastically, to be able to come and go without reporting to anyone

or getting permission. She knew the restrictions they had put on her were for her safety, but she was also aware they thought the recent incidents aimed at her were to draw Charles out of hiding, thought if he was still alive, he'd show up to make sure she was safe.

Knowing the loss of her freedom to simply come and go as she pleased was temporary and for her safety meant very little in the face of his indifference last night and this morning, and especially when she remembered they were both only here in the first place because they were hoping Charles would come to her rescue. If he was still alive, which she didn't believe, why would he show up now when he hadn't cared enough about her in the past five years to let her even know he was alive?

Piper rose from her crouched position, brushed the dirt from her hands and knees and decided that a swim would help defuse her temper as well as cool her off. Ian had walked down the graveled drive and she started to call out to him to let him know where she was going. Then she remembered the way Brody hadn't given her that simple courtesy, even after fucking her brains out yesterday, and, ignoring the little voice telling her her reasoning was flawed, she headed for the lake path with angry, purposeful strides.

Ian ended his call, turned and spotted Piper just as she entered the woods towards the lake. "Piper, wait up!" he called. When the little minx simply flipped him off and kept going, Ian found his frustrations of the past few days coming to a head and did not appreciate being silently told to go fuck himself twice in the space of five minutes. Damn Brody, he cursed as he ran after her. If Brody hadn't been so obsessed with her ever since he had returned from that solo visit to Geneva years ago, and hadn't insisted they be the ones contacted if she was ever in trouble, and if he didn't have a fucking chivalrous streak a mile wide when it came to doing right by her where their involvement with Sandoval was concerned, then he wouldn't be chasing her through the woods, in the humid late morning heat, with pent up lust that hadn't had an outlet ever since they had touched every inch of that woman's body with their mouths and hands four nights ago.

He caught up with her on the dock, grabbed her hand and had her bent over his arm before he even realized his intentions. He probably shouldn't be doing this when he was mad, he thought, but knowing he wasn't angry enough to cause her any true harm and he would stop if she told him to, he grappled with her struggling, small body, ignored her curses and jerked down her shorts, not surprised to find her naked under them.

“God damn you, Ian, let me go,” Piper swore as she tried to break away from the hard arm he had her bent over, but his grip reached around her waist and had her pinned to his side and the next thing she knew, she was bare assed for anyone out on the lake to see.

“If you’re going to act like a spoiled brat, I’m going to treat you like one. Hold still.” Ian slapped her right cheek hard, the bright red imprint from his hand making his cock go from semi erect to a full blown hard-on.

Mortification had her gasping but when he landed the first hard swat, that gasp turned to a moan. Blaming Brody, she quickly found herself succumbing to the pleasure/pain of erotic spanking he had introduced her to. “I was just going to my boat,” she managed to get out after the next swat. “You can practically see me from my cabin and you would’ve heard me cry out if someone was after me. Ouch!” Damn, that one really hurt, but not enough for her to want him to stop. The stiff erection pressed against her thigh told her he wanted her, and Piper was feeling insecure enough, and resenting it, that she found herself wanting to feel that hard cock in her pussy in the worst way. Of course, the fiery burn he was raising on her ass that was working to heighten her arousal had a lot to do with her sudden desire for sex, and that was Brody’s fault too.

“Unless,” Ian bit out as he aimed several rapid fire slaps on the under curve of both buttocks and the tops of her thighs, “your assailant had chloroformed you and simply carted you off before I got to you.”

Well, shit, she hadn’t thought of that. Now she had a guilty conscience, a throbbing, burning ass and a need to know she was wanted, even if it was just for a quick fuck, fighting for supremacy within her. Pressed so tightly against Ian’s hard body not only aroused her, it made her feel safe and secure, his demanding hard-on made her feel wanted and the arousing heat from this spanking all worked together to make her throw caution to the wind when he stopped spanking her and rubbed the flesh he had just abused.

Turning her head up to him, she whispered achingly, “Touch me, Ian, please, touch me, don’t leave me hanging.”

Ian cursed his best friend again for reducing them both to this state as he stared into Piper’s swimming eyes and knew he couldn’t ignore the plea or the fear of rejection in them. Not only was his cock saying enough was enough, he simply couldn’t let her think he didn’t want her, especially after Brody had walked away from her last night. Shifting his hand from her

warm ass to cup her warmer pussy, he bent over her and kissed her, the position awkward but expedient. Thrusting two fingers into her sopping sheath, he finger fucked her as hard as he kissed her, his tongue dueling with hers as his fingers explored the warm, wet recess of her vagina. When they moaned into each other's mouth, he pulled away from her, bent her over the rail and fished a condom out of his pocket.

"You better be sure about this, Piper, because once I'm inside you, I won't be able to stop," he warned her as he covered himself and poised his cock at the apex of her puffy lips.

Piper kicked off her shorts that had fallen to her ankles when he turned her to the rail and bent her over as she replied breathlessly, "I am. Now, Ian, take me now."

Piper shoved Brody out of her mind, rested her head on the rail between her hands and simply wallowed in the pleasure of being filled again, the ecstasy of being fucked hard and deep by a large cock. She refused to let anything else matter except this, refused to think about anything except feeling the pleasure of an awesome climax ripping through her, giving her a brief respite from the pain of constant rejection and fear about what was happening with her life.

His cock slid into her in one smooth stroke, stretched her as much as Brody's had and as he set up a rhythm of well-aimed thrusts, she felt flaming need once again consume her. Lifting her head, she spotted a boat anchored in the lake, close enough to see what they were doing, and instead of shying away from the exposure, she found it only increased her excitement. Her body shook with the force of his thrusts, making her tighten her hands around the rail and lower her head back down to brace against the onslaught.

Ian's harsh breathing matched her own as her pussy started to tighten around his cock, the slap of their hips pounding together mingling with their gasps. When he released his tight hold on her hips, slid his hands under her loose top to cup her dangling breasts, he never let up on his smooth strokes. He was rough as he kneaded the soft mounds of her breasts and pinched the hard tips, his wide, hard chest covering her back as he lay over her. The onslaught proved to be too much and Piper finally let go, let the pleasure take over and sweep her insecurities and cares away for a brief moment. Her inner walls clamped around him spasmodically as her keening cry echoed across the wide watery expanse.

“Again,” he demanded as she convulsed around him, thinking Brody was an idiot for turning her away. “If we’re going to do this, we’re going to do it right.” As another orgasm soaked his cock, Ian couldn’t hold back any longer if his life depended on it. As soon as those silken walls started clutching at his rigid length, his balls tightened and his own orgasm spewed into the latex as he managed to keep up with his jackhammer thrusts, nothing but their hips slamming together as his body lay prone over hers. By the time his mind cleared and he was reduced to slow, shallow dips, he reluctantly pulled back, releasing her full breasts with a sigh and straightening back up. Running his palms over her still pink buttocks, he waited until the last of her small contractions ceased then pulled out of her and helped her to stand.

Her face was bright red, her chest heaving as he bent and pulled up her shorts before kissing her very lightly on her lips. “On second thought, sweetheart, feel free to defy me whenever you want. I like how you take your punishment.”

His easy, nonchalant attitude relaxed her and Piper found it easy to return his grin. “How about you catch whoever is tormenting me and then we won’t have to worry about me defying either of you.”

Swinging an arm companionably around her shoulders, he steered her back towards her cabin. “Take away all my fun, why don’t you.”

Piper’s good mood slowly slipped away as she showered, and she couldn’t figure out why she wasn’t in her happy place after having her happy button pushed so effectively like she had been yesterday after sex with Brody. The sex had been great, as good as it had been on Brody’s car, and she had gotten off on the exhibitionism. Why then, did she recall thinking of Brody while Ian was giving her such pleasure, wishing it was Brody behind her, taking her with such forceful possession she couldn’t help but respond. Her orgasm had been as body enveloping as the one Brody had driven her to yesterday, and really, one cock was as good as another, wasn’t it? Cole had always managed to get her off without the added foreplay of spanking her ass, and she didn’t have any complaints about their sex life. Or she hadn’t until Brody popped back into her life.

As she dried off and dressed, Piper was beginning to think all her posturing about wanting just sex from Brody was a smokescreen for craving more. Guilt spread through her at her behavior. Her actions today had been unlike her, going from one man one day to another the next. She didn’t

worry about Brody's reaction to her fucking Ian, after all, he had made it clear he didn't want anything else from her. Why then was she feeling so discontent?

Damn them, she swore as she slipped on her tennis shoes and went downstairs. She needed a beer, maybe several, and her best friend to vent to. After gathering up the few items she had managed to finish to replace the ones destroyed earlier in Haley's shop, Piper found Ian sitting outside on the small bench that she couldn't look at again without remembering the pain and pleasure they had both subjected her to on it.

"I'm going into Hope. Are you coming?" she asked without preamble.

"I go where you go, so I guess that means I'm coming." Ian tossed his empty bottle into her recycle bin and fell into step with her as they headed towards the trail that led to town. While he enjoyed the scenery on this trek and the friendliness of both tourists and residents they waved to along the way, he found the silence of the woods creepy and Piper's silence worrisome. "Are you okay?" he finally asked after ten minutes of hearing nothing from her, not even mumbling.

"I'm fine. Why?" Piper had no experience with casual sex, no experience with sex with men she barely knew, and was at a loss at how to act. Her and Cole had been friends before lovers and by the time they slept together, she was comfortable with both him and their on again/off again relationship. It had worked for both of them until now. Her only prior one night stand had been with Brody and he had left the next morning, leaving no time for awkwardness. Now, all she could think about was Brody, even after the awesome sex with Ian.

"I just want to make sure you don't regret what happened earlier, because I sure as hell don't." Ian stopped to hold a hanging tree limb up for her, his eyes meeting hers with open honesty.

Piper stopped and looked up at him. "It was just sex, right? Why wouldn't I be okay?"

"Maybe because you'd rather it had been Brody fucking you again? Relax," he said with a smile when she couldn't cover her start of guilt, "I don't have a problem standing in for him. He might, though."

Piper frowned at him. "Brody won't care because Brody doesn't want me." Turning from him, she started walking again.

"Oh he wants you, make no mistake about that," he said as he fell into step with her again. "The problem is, he wants more from you than sex. If it

was just lust he was feeling where you're concerned, he would've been upstairs in your bed with you since we got here and would say good-bye with no regrets when we leave. Now, me, on the other hand, I'm perfectly good with just sex from you or anyone else who's willing."

Piper thought he was just being nice and didn't believe Brody was interested in her on a personal level, so she ignored that comment and teased him about the last. "Yet you haven't been in my bed either."

"Trust me, sweetheart, if Brody hadn't put the brakes on, I would've been."

However, as they entered Haley's shop a few minutes later and Ian's cock had an instant, hardening reaction to seeing her again, he was beginning to doubt his own words. He had never reacted so strongly to a woman before and since he had the same reaction every time he saw her, he found it unsettling, especially coming so swiftly after having sex with someone else. He should be satisfied for now, but seeing Haley's blue eyes shy away from him, her slender body tense with a combination of discomfort and attraction, he was anything but. It was irritating to discover that the more he was around her, the more he wanted to know about her past and who had given her cause to live her life in fearful caution.

"Hi," she greeted them, her questioning eyes moving from Piper's piqued look to Ian before shifting away from his intense stare. "You sounded upset on the phone. Is everything all right?" she asked Piper as she set her backpack on the counter.

"Yes, sorry. I just need to unwind from the stress of the past few days. Can you get away for lunch at Rowdy's?"

"They serve food there? Real food?" Ian's mood brightened considerably at the thought.

"Just cold sandwiches from the diner, but they're good. What'd you bring me?" Haley picked up a pair of black satin boy shorts trimmed in pink lace that Piper had pulled out of her bag.

"That has a matching camisole," Piper said as she pulled the top out and held it up. "I thought it'd work for sleeping in or under clothes. What do you think?"

"I think it would be wasted under clothes," Ian commented as he leaned his arms on the counter and smiled when Haley blushed crimson. "It's much better suited for bed. It looks about your size." Ian couldn't help but needle

her, she looked so flustered whenever she was around him and even more so with a counter top piled with sexy lingerie between them.

Haley despised her telltale blushing as well as the lack of courage to pursue what she finally wanted again after so long. Sex with Ian would be hard and fast and she was beginning to suspect mind blowing, nothing like sex with her oh-so-proper ex. If she could ever get up the nerve to take him up on the interest she saw when he looked at her, she knew she wouldn't be disappointed. And the best part was that he would be leaving and wouldn't expect anything from her except sex. Unfortunately, her cowardice won out over her newly awakened libido every time he came around and she doubted if he'd be in town long enough for her to overcome it.

"I can close for lunch after we get these things displayed," she told Piper, ignoring Ian and his comment.

"Coward." Ian winked at her then went to stand at the front window while they worked. He had no trouble picturing Haley in that sexy number, or in nothing at all or imagining how her slender thighs would feel wrapped around him, the softness of her small breasts against his chest or the tightness of her pussy as she gripped him. Not. Going. To. Happen. He kept repeating that litany until they were ready to walk down to the bar, which, thankfully, wasn't too long.

Piper loved the close, homey feel of strolling down Main Street, waving at the people she knew, saying hello to friendly strangers who were nice enough to spend their vacation dollars in Hope. The Fourth of July always brought an influx of tourists and since it was only two days away, the town was bustling with activity and visitors. She couldn't help wondering, however, if one of these tourists was the one responsible for her recent troubles and, more importantly, why. For the first time, she was grateful to have one of the guys with her. From the look on Haley's face, however, she surmised her friend wasn't as grateful as she was. By the time they walked from Haley's shop at the far end of the street to Rowdy's at the other end, the tension between the two was almost as thick and impenetrable as that between her and Brody on occasion.

Ian held the door for them, nodded at Crack who was, as always, behind the bar in the darkened club. Pointing across the street at the sheriff's office where he saw Brody's car was still parked, he stated, "Be right back."

"Got it covered," Crack answered as Piper and Haley took seats in front of him. "What's wrong?" he asked them point blank, knowing them both

well enough to see something was bothering them.

Piper smiled, loving the feeling that she couldn't get anything by the gruff, tough looking ex-biker who had a soft heart. Her guilt over fucking Ian had increased when she saw Haley's reaction to seeing him again. Her friend had led an isolated life from men for as long as she had known her and now that she was showing an interest in one, what does she do? Knowing none of them were in a relationship did nothing to ease her conscience and Piper knew she was going to have to come clean, but not until she had a few beers.

"Just worry over who has a grudge against me. Did you hear about my tires?"

"Yes, as well as the way you took off without your bodyguards. What the hell were you two thinking?" His glare included both of them.

"Can you yell at me later and just give me a beer and veggie sub please?"

Crack never could resist either of them when they were batting their pretty eyes and cajoling him into quit nagging them. Heaving a sigh, he asked Haley, "What do you want, hon?"

"An Italian sub and iced tea, please. I have to go back to work."

"Let's get a booth." Piper hopped off her stool and settled in a booth in the corner. The bar was crowded since it was lunch time and she was lucky there was one available.

"Okay, give. What happened yesterday when Brody took you home? He looked really pissed."

Piper spilled everything quickly, sex with Brody, his rejection last night and the way she had taunted Ian then fucked him today. "I think now, that I wanted to push Brody into fucking me again yesterday and when he turned from me afterwards, I taunted Ian today in retribution. God," she moaned, throwing her head down on her folded arms on the table. "I'm sorry, Haley. I'm such a slut!"

"Why do you think you're a slut?" Crack asked furiously as he set their food and drinks down.

Haley laughed when Piper jerked her head up, her eyes wide, her face a bright red. "This is girl talk, Crack. Go away."

"Are Ian and Brody giving you a hard time?" he questioned, the double innuendo purposely implied, his scowl that of an over protective friend.

Both Haley and Piper burst out laughing while shooing him away. When their giggles stopped, Haley looked at Piper with a frown. “Why on earth would you think I blamed you for having great sex with two really hot guys? I mean really, Piper, those two men are walking orgasms. I’d think you’re crazy if you didn’t take advantage of the situation. Besides, I know how you’ve pined for Brody all these years.”

Piper closed her eyes in relief and swallowed half her beer before she answered her. “I did not pine for that jerk. I’m in a relationship, aren’t I?”

“No, you’re not. Hopping in the sack a few times a year with Cole when his tours bring him this way does not make a relationship. And, be honest, does Cole push your happy button as well as Brody?”

“Nobody pushes my happy button as well as Brody.” Piper finished her first beer, ordered another then bit into her sandwich before saying, “I’ve seen the way you look at Ian, Haley. You’re interested, and for you, that alone is a huge step. I don’t want you to resent me for being where you might want to go, especially after all this time.”

Haley took a deep breath then admitted, “I think I’m ready to have my happy button pushed again, but until I’m sure, feel free to indulge. Just make sure you give me details. Just hearing what they did to you has my panties damp, and for me, that’s huge.” The sex sounded exciting and erotic, but she didn’t tell Piper her reservations about the spanking. She knew what it felt like to be hit by a man and, even though she had heard of people responding to erotic pain, she didn’t think she would be one of them

“Okay, but you’ll never be sure one hundred percent until you actually get back in the sack, so to speak. Let me tell you what I remember about their first night here, that’ll really get your panties soaked.”

Chapter Eleven

Brody made a visible effort to keep his conflicting emotions under wraps as he stepped into Rowdy's. As if it wasn't bad enough to still have nothing concrete to go on in regards to the harassment aimed at Piper, both he and Ian were being pressured by their boss to head to Atlantic City as back up for Carlos. The undercover agent in with Pasquino reported that Pasquino is planning a party at the Empire this weekend on the same floor Charles used to hold his private parties, another slap in the face for Charles if he was still alive and keeping tabs on his business. As frustrating as those two things were, they didn't compare to what he felt when Ian told him what happened between him and Piper earlier today. Any other time, any other woman, and all he would have said was, 'Why didn't you wait for me?' He had always known Piper had the potential to be someone special to him, but it wasn't until he had popped back into her life again so unexpectedly and gotten to know the woman she had become that he knew it for certain. If his own lust for her wasn't enough of a clue, the possessiveness he found he had was all the proof he needed. But since it was his fault Piper acted out today and Ian, being only human, reacted, he had no one to blame but himself. It had been difficult sending her upstairs alone last night, especially when she gave him that devastating look of rejection followed so swiftly by stoic acceptance, but not as difficult as it was picturing her with Ian on that dock. Funny, he mused, how he didn't feel any jealousy as he thought of the three of them together, it was only when he thought of those two alone.

"Fuck it," he griped as he removed his sunglasses and looked around for Piper.

"Don't tell me her muttering's rubbing off on you," Ian said, secretly grinning over Brody's irritation. It was past time he came to terms with what he wanted from Piper, and if their actions pushed him to do that, it was worth having his friend irked with him.

They both saw and heard Piper at the same time, their gazes swiveling to the small stage set up for Karaoke where she was belting out the lines to 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun', her voice woefully off key. Brody spotted Crack lounging in a booth with Haley that faced both the stage and the room in general. "A lot about that woman is rubbing off on me. Let's go see what's going on."

He couldn't help but smile at her pathetic attempt at both dancing and singing, but that smile slipped when he saw the four empty beer bottles on the table. "Those better be yours," he said as he slid into the booth next to the bartender, Ian joining them on the other side.

"Nope," Crack answered without a qualm. "They're Pipers, every one of them. I told you that girl could drink you under the table."

"Why the hell did you let her have so many?" he demanded as his eyes moved back to her gyrating on the stage, her coordination poor but nonetheless arousing.

Crack threw his head back in a loud, guffawing laugh. "You think her piss poor voice and dancing are due to alcohol? Trust me, they're not." Crack didn't try to disguise his fondness for Piper as he watched her. "But neither she nor anyone else cares. Every once in a while she comes in just to let her hair down and I'll boot anyone out who bad mouths her, including you."

Brody believed him. The older man watched over both women like an over protective parent, something he was grateful for. Watching out for Piper was a full time job, at least on this trip. He was beginning to hope there'll be future trips to Hope that aren't filled with the stress of an unknown stalker.

Piper stepped off the stage and headed to her booth with every intention of getting another beer when she saw Brody and Ian sitting with Crack and Haley, grins splitting their faces. She barely had a buzz from her four beers, but it was enough to keep her from crawling away from them in mortification. She was well aware of what she sounded and looked like when she was on that stage, but she simply didn't care. It was mindless fun that helped clear the cobwebs from her head. It was even more fun when Haley joined her.

"You were supposed to have a fresh one waiting for me," she told Crack, ignoring the other two. "I worked up a thirst, so gimme."

"No, darlin'," Brody said as he stood and took her arm. "Time to take your cute little self home. You promised us spinach lasagna for dinner and I want you sober when you're making it. There's no telling what'll end up in it if you're not."

"Why do you always have a good point when you're trying to tell me what to do?" she grumbled as she told Haley good-bye and let him lead her out.

“Because I’m a guy and we’re always right.”

Her indelicate snort had both of them grinning as they poured her into the back seat, but if they expected her to nod off, they were sorely mistaken. She gabbed all the way back to the cabin, flirted and teased them while she made the lasagna they both had to admit looked really good, and then announced she was going to work for an hour while it baked. Crack had been right, she held her beer better than most men.

Piper came downstairs the next morning feeling better than she had all week. By the time she had fallen into bed exhausted, she had resolved to quit pining for Brody and what he wasn’t willing to give her. Before he had showed up unexpectedly last week, she had gotten along fine without him, had made it through weeks at a time without giving him or their one night together a thought. If she had still been plagued by erotic dreams that featured him on occasion, she had simply put it down to the fond memory of the best sex she had ever had and set it aside the next day. Now she knew she would always have a thing for him, the one man who had always been beyond her reach for one reason or another, but that didn’t mean she was going to let him bring her down again.

Today was the Fourth and, as small towns were wont to do, there were going to be celebrations all day, starting with a parade down Main Street at noon, and she intended to enjoy every minute of it, up to and including hooking up with Cole again. She was determined to take back control of her life, at least as much as she could until Brody and Ian either found who was after her or until they left. She would always be grateful to both of them for coming to her rescue and for being here for her this past week, but it was time she accepted the fact that Brody would never be more to her than a friend. And, if it turned out Charles was still alive and he and Ian managed to send him to prison, she knew he would no longer have even that tenuous hold on her. Despite his possible involvement with a drug lord, Charles was still the only person she could call family, the only one who was there for her after her mother died and the only father figure she had ever had. As devastating as it would be to discover he had survived his assassination attempt and then had simply dropped out of her life, that would be preferable than seeing him go to prison.

“Good morning, darlin’,” Brody greeted her when she entered the kitchen, his smile easy and unaffected.

Crap, it happened again. Every time he called her darlin' in that slow drawl, her nipples peaked, her pussy wept and her toes curled, a reaction she hadn't outgrown despite their time apart. Refusing to let her body threaten her new resolution to distance herself, at least emotionally from him, she returned his smile with ease. "Good morning. Want some eggs before we go into town?"

Sitting at the counter, Brody watched her go to the fridge, his eyes automatically lowering to her ass and the enticing way those damn shorts clung to her round globes. Shifting on his seat to adjust his stiffening cock, he replied, "Sure. Why are we going into town?"

"For the Fourth of July celebrations. The parade is followed by activities and games all afternoon in the city park and then, of course, there'll be fireworks over the lake when it gets dark." Setting a pan on the stove, she sautéed chopped onion while breaking some eggs in a bowl and mixing them with milk. "You and Ian would be sure winners in the three legged race. You ought to enter."

"Did she just say we ought to enter a three legged race?" Ian asked as he joined them, his dark brown hair still damp, his equally dark brown eyes suspiciously wary.

"I think it sounds like fun," Brody goaded him.

"You would. I now know why you keep so much beer on hand, Piper. It's to keep you from going bat shit around here."

Piper simply smiled at him, added some cheese to the scrambled eggs then put a plate in front of him. "I'd go bat shit in a big city with all the noise, rude people and no open space to simply breathe. Eat. We don't want to be late for the parade."

"Yes we do," Ian grumbled, but dug into his eggs anyway.

A few minutes later, Brody picked up his empty plate and started to take it to the sink when his phone rang. His good mood switched to anger and worry as he listened to Sheriff Norton and by the time he hung up, both Piper and Ian were waiting to hear what he had to say.

"What's happened now?" Piper asked resignedly.

All the joy and playful enthusiasm for the day had left her face and she looked at him as if she was bracing for a blow. "I'm sorry, darlin', Haley found a badly mutilated rabbit outside her back door this morning with a note attached to it. It said stay away from your friend before she gets hurt next."

“It sounds like he wants Piper isolated so he can get to her again,” Ian said, anger evident in his tone. He was not only thinking of the threat to Piper, but of Haley’s reaction when she found the rabbit. His sudden urge to go to her was uncharacteristic, but he wasn’t going to waste time analyzing his feelings for Piper’s friend. “I’ll go into town and talk to Gary and Haley,” he offered quickly.

“I’m sorry again, Piper, but I think it’s best if we stay here today...”

“Like hell I will! I am not going to let this jerk continue to run my life. I’m going into Hope and spending the day like I have the last four Fourth of July’s, socializing with my friends, eating and having fun. You can come or not, but I’m going.”

Tears of anger and frustration swam in her eyes and Brody could tell it was taking a tremendous amount of effort to hold them back. He simply didn’t have the heart to force the issue, and not only would he and Ian be there, but Gary, as well as Crack and practically the whole damn town would be out ensuring her safety. The man would have to be an idiot to try anything today.

“Let’s go then. I imagine Haley wants to see you, despite the threat.”

Haley was exiting the sheriff’s office when they pulled up front, her face pale and her eyes haunted and Ian’s first reaction was to turn her over his knee for backing away from him as he got out of the car and came towards her. He wasn’t accustomed to having such strong reactions to women, he had always been foot loose and fancy free with the opposite sex, dallying with women who wanted nothing more than a few good orgasms from him and generally avoided women who had hearth and home stamped all over them. Haley didn’t fall into either category, in fact, as far as he could remember, she was the only woman who didn’t want anything from him. Telling himself it was just his ego ruling his lust for this woman, he shoved it aside and tried to control his anger on her behalf.

“What’s it going to take to get you to trust us?” he asked her point blank.

Haley blinked at him, wondering where the anger was coming from. Her mind was still reeling from Sheriff Norton asking her when her ex, Tim Carlisle, was up for parole. As best as she could recall, he still had eighteen months before his first parole hearing and, since her attorney hadn’t notified her of his release, she assumed he was still imprisoned in Florida. Even though Gary had assured her he was going to check on him as a

precautionary move in light of the threats against Piper, just talking about Tim had left her edgy and uncertain. She was struggling to keep from reverting back to that fearful twenty-four year old who nearly had a break down after testifying against the man who had beaten her so badly in a fit of drunken rage, she had to spend two weeks in the hospital. It had been six years since she had been too young and too stupid not to see the signs that she had married a man who was a ticking time bomb, but she had come a long way since then and refused to take any steps back. She admitted she was edgy since finding what remained of that poor tortured rabbit and was now worried even more for Piper, but why that bothered Ian, she had no clue.

“I do trust you. If I gave you the impression I don’t, I apologize,” she answered stiffly.

“Don’t apologize, just don’t back away from me. That just pisses me off.”

Haley hadn’t realized she did that, then again, the urge to distance herself from anyone threatening was an automatic move for her, and Ian definitely looked threatening when he got out of the car and moved towards her. “I’m...” At his scowl, she stopped from apologizing again and said instead, “I didn’t realize I did. Force of habit, I guess. I know your anger is because you’re worried about Piper.” Switching her gaze to Piper, she demanded, “What are you doing here? Didn’t they tell you about the threat in that note?”

“Yes,” Piper bit out, her chin jutting, determination and frustration etched on her face. “And I’m not going to let that bastard control my life any more than he already has.”

“Just be careful today, Piper,” Gary told her as he joined them on the sidewalk in front of his office. “I have my hands full with the extra tourists the holidays always bring in. It’s a big county and I have a lot of territory to cover, but I’ll try to spend most of my time close to Hope.” Turning to Brody and Ian, he added, “I’ve instructed my deputies to be vigilant, but we’re looking for a stranger in a crowd of strangers, so I’m counting on you two to stick close to both of them.”

Because Brody knew Gary’s anger stemmed from concern, he didn’t take umbrage at his glare or tone. He was right, it was going to be difficult spotting anything or anyone that could be construed as a possible threat against Piper, but he simply couldn’t try to talk her out of spending the day

having fun with her friends after the stress she had been under this past week.

By that evening, Brody was struggling to keep his temper in check and berating himself for giving in to a pair of pleading green eyes. Piper had spent the afternoon distancing herself emotionally not only from him, but Haley also, a hint of desperation in her actions and on her face as she participated in one activity after another until he was exhausted keeping up with her.

Hope City Park expanded over thirty acres on the lake and was filled with several hundred residents and tourists for the Fourth of July activities. An air conditioned club house held rows of tables laden with food both from the local restaurants as well as the townsfolk. The four of them had filled their plates, found an empty table and indulged themselves with fried chicken, corn on the cob, coleslaw, beans, and an assortment of salads and desserts, all the typical fanfare of summer cuisine. That was over five hours ago and Piper hadn't stopped since. Piper and Haley had joined in the three legged sack race, despite Haley's attempts to try to talk her out of including her before she enrolled them in the row boat races, tug of war competition, air golf in which they tossed brightly colored golf balls through small metal hoops dangling from tree limbs and the egg spoon race, which Piper came in last. It was hot and humid and when she talked them into a water balloon fight, it was the first time that afternoon the three of them didn't complain.

Through it all, Brody sensed Piper's gaiety was forced, that she was making a concentrated effort to forget about the threats against her and carry on as she usually did at these events, and Brody had tried to be understanding and patient, but when she squealed in delight and ran to greet a man Brody had never seen before, throwing her arms and legs around him so he had no choice but to grab her ass and hold on to her, Brody found himself just a hair trigger away from losing both his patience and his temper. And when she crushed her mouth to his, those lips he constantly imagined wrapped around his cock, he literally saw red.

Ian's hand latched onto his arm in a tight grip and was the only thing that stopped him from pulling her off the stranger. "What?" he snapped at his friend.

Ian simply raised a brow, replying smoothly, "She's obviously in no danger, so let it go. You're the one who's walked away from her more than once, so you have no right to butt into this happy reunion."

“Who is he?” Brody asked Haley who was looking like she wanted to be anywhere but here right now.

“Cole Mason. He’s a wilderness guide and he and Piper have been friends for a few years.” When both men simply looked at her patiently, waiting for more, she rolled her eyes and added reluctantly, “Okay, the past year, year and a half, they’ve been more than friends whenever his work brings him this way. He’s a nice guy and wouldn’t hurt Piper.” Haley knew Piper, and she knew the false bravado and devil may care attitude she had shown all afternoon hid her anxiety, was a desperate attempt to put the events of the past week aside, at least temporarily, and she suspected her enthusiastic greeting to Cole was an attempt to put Brody aside as well. From the thunderous look on Brody’s face as he watched them, Haley didn’t think he was going to be as indulgent of her over Cole as he had been all day over her insistence on being so blatantly out in the open.

“Come on Haley,” Ian said as he took her hand. “I’m ready for some pie.” Ian decided to let Brody come to terms with his jealousy on his own and he had had about enough of this small town gathering. He couldn’t deny he had enjoyed watching the girls as they participated in the fun and games, but one could only take so much friendly chit chat with the neighbors without itching for a good, bare knuckled go around with someone who wasn’t so friendly and concerned about both Piper and Haley.

“You just had watermelon,” Haley sputtered on a laugh as he pulled her through the crowd, leaving Brody scowling after them. “You just going to leave him alone?”

“Yep, he made his bed, he can damn well lie in it alone.” The best part of the day had been watching Haley relax around him, drop that defensive guard she didn’t realize she carried with her like a shield. She had smiled, laughed and looked so damn sexy in a simple sundress and then had revealed a skimpy bikini that she wore underneath it when she stripped off the dress to jump in the lake that his cock had been semi erect all day. Hell, he found her sexier in a bra than he did all these young women bouncing around braless, and that was just plain wrong in his thinking. Still, he wasn’t about to let his own misgivings about his attraction to Haley mar what little time they had left here. Any day now, their boss was going to pull them away from Hope, and Piper, and order them to Atlantic City to back up Carlos, and he was going to make sure Haley knew she had a friend

in him whenever she needed one, which was all either of them could be since he doubted she'd be agreeable to a few nights in the sack.

“Okay, I could use a piece of pie, especially if they have lemon meringue.”

Sweet and tart, he thought that described her as well as her favorite pie. He was aiming for chocolate anything. If he couldn't indulge in one craving, he'd have to settle for another.

Piper was well aware of Brody glaring a hole in her back as she kissed Cole, but she didn't care. She had decided this morning, before learning of the latest threat against her that she was going to resume her life like normal as much as possible. She was through begging Brody for the only thing she wanted from him and the one thing he had always denied her. When she finally admitted to herself that she wanted more from him than sex, and realized how futile that was, it rekindled her determination to take back at least some semblance of control over the life she had made for herself here. And that life included Cole.

At five ten, she fit against him perfectly and his blond hair and blue eyed good looks made him as easy on the eyes as his easy going, laid back demeanor was for what they both wanted from their relationship of friends with benefits. They were a perfect match for each other, so why was she disappointed in this kiss? Why didn't her pussy clutch in anticipation of feeling his cock filling her again, especially since she hadn't seen him in three months? And, why was she comparing his mouth, his body, the way his hands clutched her ass with Brody's mouth, body and hands and finding Cole's lacking? Frustrated, more than irritated with herself, she ground her pelvis against his rigid cock, unmindful of where they were, seeking the same response she got every time she was near Brody, but to no avail.

She barely noticed when he released her and her feet slid to the ground. When he looked down at her questioningly, she simply shrugged and quipped, “So sue me, I'm happy to see you.”

“It looks like someone else isn't too happy to see me, and I don't even know him.” Cole looked over her shoulder and refused to back down from the other man's steely eyed glare. “Can I help you,” he asked politely, but he had a feeling he was going to be seeking another playmate for the night.

Piper turned and frowned up at Brody, wondering what he was so pissed about. She hadn't run off and she hadn't begged him to fuck her, so he ought to be happy, she thought derisively. “Brody, this is Cole, a good, *very*

good friend of mine,” she emphasized. “Cole, Brody is with the FBI and here because he’s under the delusion by adopted father isn’t dead and is going to show up here any time now.” She didn’t elaborate by telling him what had happened to make them think that, and had no intention of telling him later. Tonight, she was putting all that away and was going to enjoy herself.

Cole held out his hand and Brody took it briefly, seething over her emphasis of how good a friend this man was to her. Just because he had no hold on her, had refused to stake any type of claim on her and had turned down what she so freely offered and was now seeking elsewhere, didn’t mean jack shit apparently. It had only taken seeing her small body wrapped around another man she was obviously fond of to jerk him to his senses and to say the hell with doing what he thought was right by her.

“Cole, it’s good to meet you.” Turning to Piper, he stated firmly, “I think we should head back to your cabin before it gets much darker. It’ll be safer.” It hadn’t escaped his notice that she hadn’t told Cole about her troubles.

Cole frowned with concern at Piper. “Why wouldn’t you be safe?”

The band that had been tuning up in the nearby pavilion took that moment to start playing and Piper took that opportunity to thwart both men. Grabbing Cole’s hand, she said, “I’m not ready to go yet, Brody. Come on Cole, I’ll explain while we dance.”

Brody swore she wasn’t going to be able to sit for a week when he got through smacking that ass she was gyrating against Cole. His temper had gone from simmering to boiling and he was about two seconds away from acting like a Neanderthal by pulling her away from him, tossing her over his shoulder and carting her back to his lair to ravish her, after he whipped her butt for torturing him. Funny, he thought with no humor, she had no trouble dancing when she had a partner, a partner who held her close and enjoyed moving his hips in time with hers as he stared down at her with lust written all over his face. When he found himself wondering if her pussy was as wet for this guy as it got for him, he knew how they were going to spend the rest of this night was a foregone conclusion.

“Couldn’t lure her away from him, mmm?” Ian asked as he stepped next to him and grinned at the couple Brody was shooting daggers at.

“No, but I can damn well drag her away from him. Where’s Haley?”

“Went home real quick to get the blankets she forgot earlier to sit on when the fireworks start. Her place is just two blocks over so she should be right back.”

Brody frowned, something nagging at him. “Why didn’t you go with her? It may not be safe.”

“I offered, but she refused, rather adamantly. Said she needed a little space, which, given her past, I need to respect.” But he hadn’t liked it. There were people everywhere between the park and Main Street and it was still light enough that anything untoward would catch someone’s attention, but, like Brody, he had a sixth sense when something wasn’t right. “Ah, hell, maybe I better catch up with her and walk her back.”

“I’m sure she’s fine, but just in case whoever’s after Piper decides to switch gears.” Brody knew anything was possible when dealing with a possible psychopath.

Ian had reached the exit of the park when Sheriff Norton met him, anxiety etched on his face. “Where’s Haley?”

Ian’s gut tightened, foreboding creeping through him at the fury on Gary’s face. “Headed home. I’m going to catch up with her now. What’s wrong?”

“We had it wrong all along. Come on, I’ll explain on the way.”

They set off at a jog, both knowing they could get to Haley’s shop and apartment faster on foot than going back for a car. “Give, now,” Ian demanded.

“It’s her ex. I got suspicious about that note thinking the threat could be aimed at either of them, so I made a call to Florida. Found out the bastard was released early due to overcrowding, wasn’t considered a violent criminal, so they just turned him loose two weeks ago without informing Haley’s attorney.”

Ian picked up his speed as he just now connected the dots. They should have caught that the vandalism and the sabotaged tires and now the mutilated rabbit could have been threats aimed at either woman. It was only Piper’s missing two days that remained in question, her disappearance involving her and her alone. They reached Haley’s shop just as they heard her scream from upstairs. Ian kicked in the front door and raced up the stairs, intent on releasing the furious adrenaline rushing through him on the man that had already caused her so much harm.

Haley was taken completely off guard by a hard arm wrapping around her throat when she entered her apartment. Instant fear enveloped her as her breath was choked off, but hearing Tim's voice snarling in her ear had her fear turning to bone melting terror.

"I tried warning you, bitch, but you just wouldn't listen. I got rid of those slutty clothes in your shop, but you went and replaced them. I thought your friend would stay away from you once she realized how dangerous being around you was, but she doesn't take a hint any better than you do."

Suddenly, Tim loosened his arm and Haley bent over gasping for air, her mind reeling not only with his presence here in the town she considered her sanctuary but with the revelations that this had all been about her and not Piper, the danger she had inadvertently put her friend in this past week. Tim didn't give her time to recover her breath though, let alone her thoughts as he spun her around and backhanded her so hard she landed in a heap on the floor, a position she swore she'd never find herself in again. Humiliation, fear and determination not to be his victim again brought out her anger and she found herself rolling to her feet and facing him head on despite the throbbing in her cheek and her shortness of breath.

"You son of a bitch. You will not touch me again." Her bravado took him by surprise and she used that split second to try to dash by him to the door. She made it to the top of the stairs before he grabbed her by the hair, making her cry out. Spinning her around, she prepared to duck at the last minute in an attempt to avoid the next blow when the sound of someone pounding up the stairs and roaring out in fury kept them both immobile in surprise.

Ian saw Haley's swelling face first, the tight grip Carlisle had on her hair second and the calm look of trust she gave him third. "Move, Haley," was all he said as he charged the other man, grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and literally threw him against the wall. Keeping the future in mind, he let the idiot charge him and willingly took a solid jab to his chin and a weak one to his gut before taking him down easily and giving free rein to his rage as he landed a fist in his face, the sound of crunching bone when his nose broke not nearly satisfying enough. Another blow dislocated his jaw, but before he could land a third, Gary pulled him off with a stern warning. "Back off, now, or you'll be sharing a cell with him."

"Works for me." Ian knew he had crossed a line, one he hadn't ever crossed in his fifteen years of taking out the bad guys. At thirty seven, he

should have better control, but hearing Haley cry out in pain and fear and then seeing her stoic countenance despite the bruising around her neck already forming and the swelling of her cheek that had to hurt, he had simply seen red and reacted.

“Well it doesn’t work for me,” Gary argued as he handcuffed Haley’s ex and hauled him cursing to his feet. “Save it,” he told Carlisle coldly. “When assaulting a federal agent is added to your parole violations, you’ll be an old man before you get out again.”

Carlisle couldn’t speak due to his fractured jaw, but the look he sent Haley was filled with venom. Stepping up to him, she stated quietly, “You don’t scare me anymore, Tim. Only a weak man needs to skulk around in the dark. You never did have the balls to hold on to me.”

“Well done,” Ian told her when Gary escorted Tim out after asking him to call Brody and fill him in.

“Except I lied. He did scare me, a lot.”

“Only a fool wouldn’t be afraid when confronted with a madman, Haley, and you’ve proven you’re not a fool. Where’s your kitchen. We need to get some ice on that cheek.” While she wrapped ice in a towel, Ian called Brody and filled him in, noting the edge to his tone didn’t let up at learning they had caught their stalker. “We can question him in the morning about Piper’s disappearance, but I’m guessing we have two separate cases here.”

“Yeah, I think so too, which means we’re back to square one on the mystery surrounding those missing days and the condition we found her in. But for tonight, I think I’ll settle another matter with Piper that is long overdue. Later.”

Ian hung up the phone thinking he’d take his time getting back to the cabin tonight. In the mood he was in, he sure as hell didn’t need to see or even hear those two going at it. “Here, sit down and let me do that.” Ian stood next to her as she sat at the small kitchen table, took the ice pack and held it against her cheek, his hand automatically stroking her hair when she winced. A comfortable silence settled between them and he took a moment to look around her small, homey apartment. Like Piper’s cabin, the kitchen, eating area and living room were all open and he could see Haley’s little touches everywhere. There were a lot of seashell knickknacks, a sofa and chair in soft blue with beach scenic pillows in the corners. If Gary hadn’t mentioned that Carlisle was imprisoned in Florida, deducing she was from there also, he would have guessed she had lived near a beach at one time.

“I think that’ll help,” Haley said, feeling suddenly tired. Curling up in bed with a book even though it was still early sounded good to her, but being alone didn’t. She had passed a huge hurdle in admitting she wanted sex again, and she wanted her first time in six years to be with Ian, just not tonight. Tonight, she just needed to know she wasn’t alone. She knew she could ask Piper, but that meant going to her place because she was sure, after Brody’s possessive behavior all day, that he wasn’t going to let her go anywhere, including here, without him. But she wanted her place tonight, wanted to be in the home she had made for herself after fleeing Florida in shame. A home she had felt safe in until tonight. Before she lost her nerve, she tentatively asked, “Ian?”

“What do you need, Haley?” Ian tossed the ice in the sink and draped the damp towel over a rack before turning back to her and seeing the indecision on her face and a touch of uncertainty in her blue eyes. “Are you hurting? Do you want to go to the hospital?”

“God, no! I hate hospitals. It’s just, well, I hate to ask this of you, but I was wondering...”

“For God’s sake, Haley, just ask! You know damn good and well I won’t refuse you.”

Haley almost smiled at his frustrated outburst and look. There’s the man she had come to know this week, the one who said it like it is and you were either on board with him or you weren’t. She liked that about him, a lot. At least with him, she knew where she stood.

“Would you stay here tonight?” she blurted out then quickly amended, “I mean just to sleep. Not, you know, for sex or anything. At least not tonight.” She didn’t want him thinking she didn’t want sex with him at all.

Ian took a moment while he willed his little head to cooperate with his big head. Even if she had been willing, he couldn’t, in good conscience, fuck a woman who had just been bruised and traumatized. And if that didn’t sound like a page right out of Brody’s book, he didn’t know what would. Still, as much as he’d thought about fucking Haley, he knew before she had emphasized it that sex was off the table. He had taken it off before it ever got there and didn’t have any intentions of putting it on. Wrong woman, wrong place, definitely wrong time and those reasonings would have to suffice despite their obvious mutual attraction.

“Go get comfortable in your bed and I’ll sit with you until you fall asleep then I’ll bunk on your couch. I’m going downstairs to secure the

front door to your shop that I busted. Do you know how Carlisle got in here?”

“My fault,” she admitted. “I always leave my bedroom window open so I can make a quick exit in case of a fire. All he had to do was park in the back, stand on his car and he could’ve reached the sill. I know, I’m an idiot, but I thought I was safe, especially from him.”

“You are now, but lock it anyway.” Ian went downstairs, mentally preparing himself for a long night.

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Chapter Twelve

Brody snapped his phone shut, the relief he felt at hearing about Haley's ex from Ian at odds with the battle he had been waging with both Piper and himself ever since he met her. Watching her with Cole, flirting, dancing and laughing in an attempt to take back control of her life, had his cock pressing painfully against his zipper and his good intentions being shoved aside in his need to take control of her. She was wearing a two piece swimsuit under a sundress, a swimsuit that had still been wet from swimming in the lake when she had slipped the dress back on. Now that bright green fabric clung damply to her breasts and ass, drawing his and several other male eyes to those softly rounded, swaying body parts and he had spent the better part of the last thirty minutes trying to refrain from pulling her away from Cole, tossing her over his shoulder and carting her off.

He knew he would have to leave soon. The stalker had been caught, and even though he had been after Haley instead of Piper, those missing two days were still unaccounted for.

Unfortunately, as worried as he was over that, it wasn't enough to justify them putting off going to Atlantic City to back up Carlos. If she was taken to draw out Sandoval, then the plan backfired because they were the ones to come to her rescue, not Sandoval. As it stood now, the evidence he and Ian had managed to get against her adopted father was all circumstantial, enough to charge him with but not enough to ensure a conviction. However, they weren't above fudging that evidence in order to coerce Sandoval into testifying against Pasquino, even knowing that would keep the contract the drug lord had put on his former bookkeeper active.

Despite knowing all that, Brody found himself caving in to his body's demands and saying to hell with his good intentions. He had felt a fondness as well as a lustful tug towards Piper when he knew her as an overweight, shy college kid, only to discover that fondness had grown stronger despite the years that separated them and that the tug had turned into a hard yank this past week. A yank he was tired of struggling against. She had taunted him too far tonight, she could damn well suffer the consequences, even if that meant the consequences were him doing his job successfully by ruining Charles's life in order to put away a very bad man.

Piper glared up at Brody when he took hold of her hand and pulled her away from Cole. For the past hour she had tried putting all her

concentration and efforts into simply having fun with Cole, enjoying his easy going persona and fantasizing about getting naked with his well-muscled body again. Her body responded to him like it always did, with anticipation warming her blood and softening her pussy. Her breasts swelled as she rubbed against his chest, her nipples taut peaks she knew he felt by the grin he gave her accompanied with a brief ass squeeze. Unfortunately, she had taken that moment to glance at Brody's thunderous face, and that was all it took for her arousal to go from tepid to boiling. She had been more aware of the man she was trying to do without than she had been of the one she was trying to replace him with despite enjoying the familiar feel of Cole's body moving sensuously against hers. She refused to give in to her body's betrayal, however, and risk being rejected yet again by Brody.

"What do you want? As you can see, I'm not in any danger." Piper had explained the targeted harassments she had experienced in the past few days to Cole, but she omitted those two missing days and the state she was in when Brody and Ian had arrived. As open as they were with each other, she wasn't comfortable sharing that with him, and even though she knew he suspected there was more between her and the agents that she wasn't telling, he didn't say anything. They cared about each other, but they weren't exclusive despite the fact Cole was the only man she had been with in the last five years until Brody showed up.

"Something's come up," Brody stated evenly, not adding that the something was his cock. "You need to leave with me. Now."

Letting go of Cole, she faced him squarely, her heart in her throat as she asked, "Is it Haley? Is she all right? What's happened?"

"She's fine, now, but we need to go." Turning to Cole he extended his free hand, apologizing as sincerely as possible considering he wasn't sorry in the least. "Sorry. Maybe you two can hook up later when we've got this situation under control."

"Let me know if I can help." Cole bent down and kissed Piper, long and deep, giving his competition something to think about. It was obvious these two had issues to work out that included more than whoever seemed to be after Piper. He cared enough about her to want to stick around and make sure she was safe as well as make sure this man was who she wanted. If so, he wouldn't stand in the way, but he would miss their satisfying, uncomplicated get-togethers. "I'll check in with you tomorrow, hon."

Piper tried pulling her hand from Brody's iron grip but he refused to let her go as he led her through the park and back to his car. "What do you mean 'she's fine now'? What happened? And, damn it, let me go!"

"I'll explain on the way back to your place. Get in." Holding the door for her, he tried reining in his lust and his temper, but wasn't having much luck. That kiss Cole had leveled on her was a blatant red flag, one that had him more determined than ever to give her exactly what she had been asking for.

"It was Tim Carlisle, Haley's ex, who was behind the vandalism, the tires and the dead rabbit. Apparently, the state of Florida didn't think he posed a threat to anyone and released him early. I won't lie, according to Ian he got a good hit in as well as a strangle hold, but she's okay and Ian will be staying the night with her to help set her mind at ease," he explained to her as he headed back to the cabin. Brody knew Ian wouldn't cross any lines Haley wasn't ready for, just as he knew Ian wanted Piper's friend more than he was willing to admit. Brody knew just how he felt.

Piper breathed a sigh of relief and was grateful for Ian's offer, but pissed that Brody forced her away from the night's activities, and Cole, when everything was under control now. "If she's all right and Ian is staying with her," she stormed when he pulled up to her cabin and cut the engine, "then why did I have to leave? Cole and I had plans tonight, as you very well know." Turning from him, Piper strode angrily inside with the intention of changing out of her damp clothes and returning to the park for the fireworks, and she didn't mean the lighted display over the lake put on by the city. She was itching for fireworks of her own, ones she knew Cole could ignite in her despite the fact she'd rather have Brody.

In a fast, startling move, Brody had her pinned against the wall, his grey eyes snapping with fury and lust, his stiff erection pressed insistently against her mound. "You *had* plans," he snarled down at her. "Now you don't."

He had worked diligently all the way home to keep his jealousy and temper in check, but he snapped the moment his mouth met hers, his control a thing of the past, his body filled with hot flames of lust burning like a forest fire out of control as he kissed her like a man possessed.

Piper struggled, fighting herself more than him as she felt her pussy swell and dampen with each stroke of his tongue over hers, as she fought not to cling to his lips and react to the erotic scratch of his beard on her

sensitive skin. When his hand grabbed both of hers and pinned them above her head, her response was instantaneous, her hips grinding against his cock, seeking release as she mentally struggled away from giving in to him so soon after vowing she was done with him. Desperate not to fall into this trap again, she bit his lip, hard, and relished his curse as he pulled his mouth from hers, giving her the space and the seconds she needed to try to resist him.

“You should remember how I retaliate when you act up, darlin’.” Brody’s lip throbbed, that slight sting doing nothing to lesson his arousal, on the contrary, his cock was harder than ever, which made it difficult to bend her over one of the kitchen counter stools, but not impossible. “Did you do that just to get me to spank you, Piper?” he asked in a soft silky voice as he flipped up her dress and shoved her bikini bottoms down. Resting his palm on her right buttock, holding her hips down, he said, “Because if so, it was unnecessary. I was already planning on giving you everything you wanted tonight, including this.” He drew back and landed a hard slap on that same cheek, loving the way her startled cry ended with a whimper and a slight lifting of her hips for more.

Piper grabbed on to the stool’s legs, anchoring herself in place for the next smack which came fast on the heels of the first. How could she succumb so quickly to his demands, and more importantly, how could she survive another encounter with him only to have him walk away from her again? But, as had been the case since meeting him, her body’s dictates overruled her determination and common sense and she simply let herself enjoy this tainted pleasure. He rubbed the two areas he had just swatted before landing another two slaps right over them. The burn intensified, as did the pleasure, making her shift her legs restlessly in an effort to seek release.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Brody rasped as he braced a hand on her lower back to stifle her hip movements then quickly smacked her upper thighs in retaliation. “You’ll come when I say, and not before. You drove us both to this moment, and you’ll take what I dish out and love every minute of the torment.”

“Jerk,” she muttered lowly as her buttocks swelled and throbbed with each smack, the pain shifting down to her pussy and making it swell and throb also, leaving her to strive towards a climax whether he liked it or not.

“I heard that.” Leaning over, he whispered in her ear as he continued to swat her ass, “But I’m your jerk.”

Piper refused to believe him, refused to go where he was leading her with every sharp smack and every soothing caress. He was aiming for her surrender, and she’d be damned if she’d give it to him. She struggled in earnest then, trying to get relief by rubbing her pelvis against the bar stool, and despite his hand pinning her lower back, she managed to get just enough friction to start the first ripples of an orgasm.

Brody watched her closely, saw the way her hips managed to rub just the right way, saw the seeping evidence of her arousal and knew he wasn’t in control. The sight and feel of her red, warm ass affected him as strongly as her, his cock dampening his jeans, his shaft so thick and hard he may not be able to unzip. When Piper spread her legs in an unaware invitation, he ceded this battle to her and landed a sharp slap to her soft pussy lips, her scream of pleasure ricocheting in the room.

Her senses spun out of control with the sudden burst of her orgasm, the pleasure so intense she didn’t think she’d survive it. But when she finally came down, Piper was stunned to feel the tidal wave of urgent lust that had possessed her still demanding fulfillment. When Brody lifted her off the stool, they seemed to be of like mind as they started yanking off clothes, their breathing heavy as material ripped and got tossed aside and then they were rolling on the floor together in a tangled heap of bare flesh clinging together. This was the first time she had felt the impact of Brody’s completely naked body against hers, and she loved the way his taller, harder frame cushioned hers, loved the feel of his hands roaming everywhere at once as she reveled in the freedom to do the same. Everything about him was thick and hard and she knew it would take her a lifetime to get enough of him, which just pissed her off again and sent her right back into a snarling frenzy of lust that she didn’t want with a man she couldn’t hold, but couldn’t seem to do anything about but give in to it.

Primitive lust and needs consumed him as Brody felt the impact of her full nudity against his for the first time. The night he and Ian had exorcised the demons brought on by an aphrodisiac, they had both kept their clothes on, even though the desire to strip had been the hardest thing he had ever had to ignore. Now, he relished every inch of her hot, damp skin against his, the way her small body with its surprisingly lush curves fit against his, but when she started to fight him again in a pitiful attempt at control, he flipped

her onto her back and crushed his mouth down on hers, relieved when she kissed him back eagerly, her tongue dueling with his, her teeth nipping at his lips, her hips bucking up against his, seeking his cock. Pulling away from her luscious mouth, he raked his teeth down her arched neck, over her nipples that were as hard and as erect as his cock, taking his time relishing those sensitive buds before moving down her waist and settling between her legs. With his eyes on hers, he spread her thighs wide then slowly lowered his head and took a long slow lick up her parted folds.

Oh, God, Piper thought. There was no way she could fight this onslaught, fight the delicious feel of his tongue penetrating her pussy, fight the added pleasure his beard prickling her thighs gave her, fight the look of desire as well as a deeper emotion she was afraid to label in his eyes. Keen edged pleasure sliced through her when he added a finger with his tongue, and when he set up a rhythm between the two she was once again catapulted out of control. He continuously drove her to the edge with his deep strokes and soft licks only to repeatedly pull her back before she went over. Her misgivings were pushed to the wayside out of sheer desperation as she clutched his thick, black hair in an attempt to hold his mouth to her even though she refused to plead with him.

“Damn you, Brody, stop tormenting me,” she snapped when her small contractions were once again cut short of exploding into bigger ones when he pulled his tongue and finger from the well of her pussy. “I have ways of getting even, if you’ll recall.”

Brody winced as he vividly remembered her going down on him until he was ready to burst and then walking away. Taking pity on her, he dipped his head again, used his thumbs to spread her labia, and simply feasted on her. Licking her sheath, her juices coated his tongue and filled his mouth, but they kept coming as he stroked over her slick walls, teased her clit then plunged his tongue as deep as he could. When her muttered swearing switched to whimpering cries, he finger fucked her as he latched onto her clit, the swollen red bud more than ready for some undivided attention. Using teeth, lips and tongue on her, it took only seconds to have her bucking out of control, to feel the spasming release of her orgasm gripping his fingers and coating his tongue, her cries music to his ears.

Need inflamed him as he rose above her, her knees over his shoulders, leveling her hips for his cock. He pushed into her still clutching pussy without preamble and closed his eyes in sheer bliss at the feel of her

clamping around him. But his own need had raged out of control for too long for him to savor the feel of her right now. That could come later, after he had come inside her two or three times.

Piper was still reeling from another powerful climax when he thrust into her, giving her no time to get her bearings. His first plunge filled her, the second stroked her, the third knocked her over the cliff again, left her struggling through the layers of pleasure. She barely felt the rug abrading her bare back as he rammed into her over and over, barely felt his cock quicken and spew inside her as her own orgasm once more sent her spiraling into that sweet oblivion.

A few moments later she lay stupefied beneath him, her skin hot and damp, her body still shuddering with small aftershocks rippling through her. Then he groaned, his cock slipping from her and as he lifted his heavy, sweat slick body off her, the rush of cool air over her own overheated skin was as effective as a dip in the lake in January. Struggling to her feet, she took in the wadded up area rug, the tipped over stool and their clothing, some of it ripped, strewn in a haphazard disarray, the mess a blatant sign of just how thoroughly she had caved. Straightening her backbone, she vowed to be the one to reject him this time, instead of the other way around. Without looking at him, she turned to walk away with as much dignity as possible only to find Brody once again taking hold of her. The next thing she knew, her head was hanging over his back, his bare ass clenching right above her face, her ass perched over his shoulder as he headed toward the stairs.

“Put me down right now, Brody. I mean it,” she demanded as she struggled to resist the temptation to sink her teeth into one taut buttock.

“Nope,” Brody replied easily as he slipped a finger into her still damp, still warm pussy and lightly stroked her. “I’m not done with you yet.”

“Well, I’m done with you.” But even as she claimed that, her body was responding to that one finger, her pussy preparing for more whether she wanted it or not. “Oh, damn,” she muttered as she simply gave in. “I’ll worry about it tomorrow.”

Brody chuckled, feeling lighter than he had in days. Dropping her on her bed, he followed her down, his cock slipping inside her pussy easily, her hips arching up to welcome him despite her words to the contrary. He rode her hard, their mutual lust surprising given their recent climaxes, but Brody didn’t question his body’s demands or reactions any longer. It is what it is,

and right now, it was sheer ecstasy being inside her, once again feeling her slick walls enclose his cock like a tight glove, the pleasure of coming inside her again so intense it left no room for coherent thought.

Piper fell into an exhausted sleep, too tired to relish the feel of Brody's body keeping her warm instead of being subjected to the cold reality of him leaving her bed or to question why he seemed to be sticking close. But she was more than pleased to feel him spooning her from behind early the next morning, one hand cupping her breast, his hard cock nestled between her buttocks, poking her sensitive anus. She remembered the feel of his finger penetrating her back hole, vividly recalled the pleasure she had felt from having that orifice stroked. Just feeling the smooth crown of his cock rubbing back and forth over her, his seeping fluid softening her puckered hole, sent shards of pleasure to her pussy, her lust once again threatening to spin out of control.

Brody kneaded her soft, full breasts, loving the feel of her filling his hand, her nipple poking his palm and the soft cushion of her buttocks surrounding his dick. Her tiny hole was damp from his seepage, making it easier for him to wedge his finger between them and slowly slip it inside her. It had shocked him to awaken with yet another hard-on and a need to fuck her again that wasn't going to be ignored. He hadn't responded this fast, this often to a woman since he was a randy teenager learning the joys of a woman's body for the first time. He was beginning to accept that his strong feelings for Piper were tied to his strong lust for her, feelings he'd be damned if he'd ignore for another five years if things went badly concerning Charles and she walked away from him again. Somehow, someday, he'd make it work, his determination to remain a part of her life suddenly as strong as his desire to sink his cock into her tight ass.

"Brody," Piper whispered as she pushed back against that invading finger, unsure what she was asking him for. Shifting her shoulders, she gave him easier access to both of her breasts while keeping her ass snuggled against him, careful not to dislodge his probing finger that was stroking over such very sensitive nerve endings and igniting a fire in both her ass as well as her empty pussy.

"What do you want, Piper? Tell me," he demanded, needing to hear her say the words.

Unable to believe she was doing this yet equally unable to stop herself, she pleaded softly, "More, please. God, that feels so good."

Brody reached behind him to the nightstand, retrieving the lube he had thought to put there when he had gotten up earlier and straightened up downstairs before returning to her bed. He smiled when she practically growled in complaint as he pulled his finger back. "Relax, darlin', I'll be right back." Coating two fingers, he proved true to his words and slipped them slowly inside her ass, the tight channel giving easily with the help of the lube. He stroked her slowly, but deep, getting her used to the feel, stretching her by separating his fingers a little at a time, preparing her for his thicker cock. "There you go," he whispered as she relaxed completely, her tight hole loosening up enough to take three fingers. When she pushed against him in impatience, he released her breast and slapped her ass. "Stop that or I won't be responsible for taking you before you're ready."

If he thought that slap on her still tender cheek was a deterrent, he was sadly mistaken, Piper thought as it just ratcheted her excitement up another notch. "Then hurry up," she growled as he filled her with three fingers, the slight discomfort only adding to the pleasure. His slow tortuous strokes accompanied by the constant rolling and pulling of her nipples caused the slowly building liquid fire filling her veins to flow with all the slow heat of molten lava to pool in her pussy, leaving her no choice but to slip two fingers into her moist heat to try to get some relief. "Oh, God, Brody," she gasped when she could feel his fingers in her ass through the thin membrane separating them, "I can't wait. Fuck me now."

Brody felt her rectum tighten when she fingered her pussy, felt her strokes match his and he had no choice but to give her what they both wanted and hope he had her prepared enough. He took a shaky moment to coat his cock with lube before slowly pushing past her tight sphincter, her gasp when he stopped with just his head inside her orifice, echoing harshly. "Deep breaths, Piper. Give it a minute."

The sudden burst of pain when he entered her quickly subsided and left nothing but the need for more. Stroking over her clit, she discovered that enticement relaxed her anus even more and as Brody slowly pushed into her, she kept up the strokes over her clit until she was climaxing by the time he was fully embedded in her.

Swearing as he felt her contractions rippling through the thin skin separating his cock from her pussy, Brody strived for control, barely managing to shove aside the urgent need to start pounding into her. Her ass was as tight as a vise as he slowly withdrew until just his cockhead

remained in her. Her soft cries and jerking hips didn't help him keep control, so he clamped a hard hand on her hip to stifle her movements as she rode out the rest of her orgasm. When she finally quieted, he pushed ever so slowly back into her, not stopping until he was once again embedded fully inside her, his own body shuddering with the need to simply let go. "Okay?" he rasped hoarsely.

"More than okay," Piper admitted as she continued to stroke her pussy, her fingers tracing the outline of his rigid cock through the thin barrier separating them.

"Son of a bitch, Piper," he swore as he felt her stroke despite the wall separating them. "I'm trying to be gentle here."

"And I'm trying to get you to move. Fuck me, Brody, I can take it." At least she hoped so, because she simply couldn't stand waiting to feel him fully possess her another minute. Despite her climax, her pussy was still aching for more, her body wanting to feel those strong, deep strokes taking her to the height of ecstasy only he had been able to drive her to.

That soft, painful demand was his undoing, and with another curse, he started to thrust faster, go deeper, until he was fucking her like she said she wanted, with steady, sure plunges that had them both gasping. Releasing her hip, he cup her breast again, wrapping his fingers around her nipple to torment that tight bud as he braced himself with his other hand and took her faster, her hips thrusting back with each plunge, taking him willingly. He could feel her fingers in her pussy moving faster, her small body growing slicker, her mewling cries escalating to high pitch wails as she came again, leaving him absolutely no choice but to follow her.

Through the throes of yet another earth shattering climax, Piper felt his cock quicken, felt his seed spewing inside her, his climax triggering another one in her pussy, her come spilling onto her hand as she accepted all he had to give. At least, she thought ruefully as she slowly came back down from her pleasurable high, he wasn't being stingy with his body this time around, making her wonder what the dawn would bring right before she drifted back asleep, her fingers still inside her, his cock still nestled in her ass.

Brody heard Ian come in the next morning and reluctantly pulled away from Piper's warm body. Slipping out of bed, he drew the covers back over her, slipped on his jeans and padded downstairs in desperate need of the coffee he could smell brewing.

“You’re up early,” he said as he grabbed a mug and poured a cup before the pot had even finished filling.

“I got a call. We’ve been instructed to report to Atlantic City tomorrow and make ourselves known as guests at the Empire, guests who’d like an invitation to the private party Pasquino has planned for Sunday night.” Ian had been only too happy to have an excuse to slip away early from Haley’s, the desire to stay, to linger, to slip into bed with her too strong for his liking.

“Don’t tell me, the top floor Charles used to reserve for his private play, right?”

“You got it. Pasquino’s managed to ingratiate himself there and he’s now, apparently, a big, fucking VIP, with all the privileges that entails. With the board running things instead of Sandoval, they’re free to cater to whomever they want and since Sandoval kept his money laundering side gig to himself, no one’s the wiser to Pasquino’s true intentions. Rumor has it, Pasquino is going to be the first bidder if the Empire goes up for sale if Sandoval is still a no show and declared dead in two years. That alone has to rub Sandoval enough to risk coming out of hiding.”

Brody frowned, knowing where this was going. “And you and Carlos think those intentions are to still draw out Charles.”

“Don’t you?” Ian knew Brody wanted it otherwise, but facts were facts, and Pasquino has never, to their knowledge, let anyone leave his employ, at least not alive.

“Yeah, I do,” Brody admitted with a heavy sigh. For the drug lord, putting an end to Sandoval, the one man to thwart him, was a personal vendetta. For the FBI, ending Pasquino’s drug rein was priority, connecting the dots to charge Sandoval with his crime would be a bonus, but not necessary. Maybe, he thought with a flicker of hope, if Charles did suddenly return from the land of the missing and presumed dead in order to take control of his casino again, they could work out a deal with him, get him to testify in exchange for witness protection. It was a long shot, but one worth hoping for if it would give him a clear path to Piper.

“You think Piper’s safe then, that her disappearance was orchestrated to get to Charles and when that failed, Pasquino’s using this party and the rumors of a buyout to get him there, don’t you?”

“It’s the only thing that makes sense since the other incidents were perpetrated against Haley, not Piper. You don’t agree?” Ian wondered how

much of Brody's reluctance to leave Piper had to do with their case or with his feelings for the woman.

"Why dose her with an aphrodisiac, especially such a strong one and leave her untouched? That's the one thing I can't wrap my mind around." And the one thing that made him reluctant, for the first time, to obey a direct order from his superiors.

"Regardless, we don't have a choice but to fly out of here tomorrow, as early as possible," Ian stated even though he had to agree with Brody on that point.

"Maybe I can talk Piper into staying with Haley for now, at least until we can get back and settle this. She'll be safer in town, with everyone as determined as we are to watch out for her."

"I'm going," Piper stated implacably as she entered the kitchen. She had felt Brody leaving her bed and feigned sleep because she was enjoying rousing with a sore, well fucked body and a pleasant afterglow still filling her from the night of excesses and wasn't ready to face him and the inevitable end to their debauchery. A long hot shower went a long way towards easing her aching muscles and, remembering the pleasure of the night before, she would be ashamed of her easy capitulation if she hadn't enjoyed that surrender so much. Determined to face him without expecting or wanting anything else from him, she had headed downstairs only to stop mid-way at the sound of their voices and the mention of Charles. "I want to be there to say I told you so when Charles doesn't show. I told you, he has to be dead."

"Why?" Brody asked her bluntly. "Because his death would be easier for you to handle than the fact that he has been alive all this time and hasn't let you know?" The thought of her in that casino again with Pasquino and his goons calling the shots sent a cold chill up his spine.

Piper thought she could actually hate him at that moment, but she didn't have time to argue with him or worry that he might be right. "Okay, put it this way then. If he is still alive and there's a chance this man succeeds in getting Charles back to his casino, I want to be there to confront him." Actually, the last thing she wanted to do was come face to face with the man she had always considered her father if he didn't care enough about her in return to let her know he had survived an assassination attack she had been witnessed to.

"No, absolutely not, Piper. I forbid it."

Piper narrowed her eyes at him, refusing to back down despite the anger turning his eyes from dove grey to cold steel and the way he crossed those thick, muscled arms over his bare chest had her pussy weeping for more of what he gave her last night. “You what?” she asked him softly. “Just because I was stupid enough to let you fuck my brains out last night, doesn’t mean you own me. You can’t stop me from going wherever the hell I want.”

Brody closed his eyes in frustration, knowing she was right. Where was that shy, malleable young girl he first met when he needed her? “Piper, you don’t understand...”

“We need to talk,” Ian interrupted him. “Outside. Excuse us a minute, Piper.” Ian turned and went out the back door fully expecting his partner to follow him.

“Before you say a word,” Brody said as soon as they were out of earshot of the cabin, “I won’t even consider it.”

“Think with your big head for one minute instead of your little head,” Ian stated calmly. “This set up, at the casino, is going to be a slap in the face if Sandoval is alive and gets wind of it. If we manage to finagle an invite to that party, and I don’t think it’ll be that difficult considering our status as ex-employees of the man he’s trying to take out, that’ll just add insult onto insult, another irritant to goad Sandoval into facing his nemesis.”

“I get that. What’s your point?”

“Sandoval’s smart enough to know all that just as we do, which just might keep him in hiding until he finds another way out of the mess he’s got himself into. He’s still got two years before he risks being declared dead and losing the casino completely, and we both remember what that place means to him. If he senses a trap, he won’t risk it. He has time, and until then the Empire is still his and you can bet your ass he has someone feeding him info from that place. If we show up with Piper, he’ll hear and her presence might be enough to draw him out.”

Everything Ian said was true, but Brody couldn’t bring himself to use her against Charles, and that’s what it would amount to. “I’m not using her to bring down the only person she’s considered family since losing her mother. Besides, if he is alive, letting her suffer thinking he was dead all these years isn’t the sign of a man who would care whether she was there or not.”

“He also went out of his way for fourteen years to see she had an excellent education and, just so she wouldn’t feel abandoned, he made that trip overseas monthly. I think the man cares more than even he knows.”

Ian could be right. Brody had seen a change in Charles’s attitude when he had discovered Pasquino was keeping tabs on him. He suspected that was when Charles realized just how deep he was in with the drug lord and the potential consequences of trying to get out.

“She still has blinders on where Sandoval is concerned,” Ian said when Brody didn’t reply right away. “She won’t believe he’s alive without seeing him for herself. Given her actions this past week, do you really think she’s going to stay here when we leave?”

“I’ll lock her ass up if I have to,” he growled irrationally.

Ian rolled his eyes dramatically but a grin split his lips. “You’ve gone and fallen for her, haven’t you? You’re letting your feelings get wrapped up with someone involved in a case, and I don’t mean the physical feeling of her tight, wet pussy wrapped around your cock. Save it,” he said, raising his palm to stop the denial he saw forming. “We don’t have any legal grounds to hold her and you know it.”

Brody did know that just as he knew Ian was right about his feelings letting him get tangled up with doing what he knew he should do. “I’m still going to try to reason with her. If she doesn’t give, I’ll have no choice but to keep her close, and you know what that’ll mean if we go to that party.”

Both Ian and Brody knew and that was their only misgiving about bringing Piper along. Carlos had passed along to them Pasquino’s penchant for prostitutes and kinky sex, he had been to several parties held at Pasquino’s private home and it had been something Pasquino and Sandoval had in common. If Piper went with them to Atlantic City, she’d have to attend the party with them and she’d be expected to play the part of a paid escort, one that would allow them liberties in public.

Chapter Thirteen

Brody didn't trust the sunny smile Piper sent them when they entered the kitchen, but something smelled so good, he shoved his misgivings aside in favor of food. "What're you fixing, darlin'?" he asked her as he poured another cup of coffee.

"Waffles, from scratch, and a warm strawberry glaze to pour over the fresh strawberries you can put on top." Piper set a plate in front of each of them as they took a seat at the counter, each piled with three large waffles.

"No meat?" Ian complained even as he was reaching for the big bowl of sliced strawberries, the golden brown waffles looking and smelling too good to turn down.

"No, no meat, but tonight is chicken fried steak night at the diner, so you can always get your artery clogging fix later."

Piper was trying not to show how anxious she was to hear what they decided about letting her accompany them to the Empire. What she had threatened earlier still held true, she could and would travel back to Atlantic City without them, but she remembered how difficult it had been to learn anything about Charles when she had gone there five years ago, how no one had believed their relationship or would, for whatever reason, direct her to him. It would be so much easier, and faster, if she went with them and their undercover roles paved the way for her. She refused to believe Charles had simply abandoned her all this time, but maybe she could finally discover what really happened to him and why. To that end, she thought she'd have better luck convincing them to take her by appearing amendable instead of demanding.

"She's being too nice," Ian said to Brody.

"I know. Scary, isn't it?" Brody smiled at Piper across the counter as he took a large bite of his waffle.

Piper frowned at them, not liking how they saw through her so easily. "Fine. I won't be nice. Am I going with you or on my own?" She really, really didn't want to go there alone. She knew it would be a wasted trip unless she had their clout backing her to get information on Charles. She had convinced herself and come to terms with believing the man she loved so much was dead up until a week ago. Deep down, she was angry that their presence in her home after not hearing anything from Brody since she fled Atlantic City had not only disrupted her life, but had made her doubt

herself, and Charles. Instinctively she knew she wouldn't be able to put the matter to rest and resume her life like normal if she didn't know for certain.

She had the most expressive eyes and Brody could read her like a book through them. Her stance and tone was all bravado, but those Irish green eyes were filled with self-doubt and anxiety. He'd much rather see them smiling, her mouth turned up in a sassy grin as she teased him. Brody knew if he could ever convince her to give a real relationship a try after this was all over, she'd have him wrapped around her little finger in no time, especially if he managed to end the threat those missing days still held over her.

"You have no idea what this man is capable of, Piper. He's been neck deep in the drug trade since he was a teenager, working his way up the chain ruthlessly. He's not a man you want to be anywhere near." The thought of her in that casino at the same time as Pasquino sent chills up his spine. Just another damn reason to keep her close.

"But I'd be safe with you, wouldn't I?" she asked reasonably, confident they would be overly zealous in watching out for her.

"Of course," Ian answered. "And we'll be in public for most of the time, but that's not a guarantee he won't try to pull something, especially if he knows of your connection to Charles."

"We came here suspecting Pasquino was behind your disappearance, meaning he knows about you, and we haven't ruled him out yet. Your safe return..." At her raised brow, Brody amended, "Your relatively safe return, unharmed doesn't make sense. If he had you taken to lure Charles here, I would think he would've just ordered you killed when we showed up instead. We're pretty sure Pasquino knows we were employed as Charles's bodyguards and that our cover has stayed in tack, so why release you into our care, almost ensuring they couldn't get to you again?"

"As you can see, Piper, when it comes to you and your connection to Charles, we simply don't know what's going on. Taking you with us should help draw Charles out of hiding, especially if he knows you're in close proximity of the man who's had a contract on him for five years, but you have to be aware of the risks Pasquino poses," Ian added as he scooped up the last bite of his breakfast and rose to take his plate to the sink. Coming back to her, he dropped a kiss on her forehead before heading back outside. "I'll check flights for tomorrow morning."

Piper waited for the back door to shut before turning back to Brody. “You’ll just have to stick to me like glue, you know, like you’ve been doing all week.”

“You mean like I’ve been trying to do all week,” he corrected her with a grin, her own cheeky smile too hard to resist. “Seriously, though, what you’d have to do to stay close to us and attend that party, if we’re invited, won’t be easy. According to our source, Pasquino has a hard on for Charles that hasn’t let up in all this time. No one has left his employ and lived except him.”

“We don’t know he survived,” she said defensively.

“No body, no sign of him, no word. Even Doc, his closest friend and the one who got him away from the casino that night doesn’t know what became of him. He did surgery and left him comfortable for a few hours only to find him gone when he returned to his clinic, and says he hasn’t heard from him since.” Which they didn’t believe. Doc swore to them that Charles wasn’t out of the woods and by him up and leaving the way he did, almost ensured a death sentence, and that he left the clinic before the FBI got there and both of them were taken in for questioning. All of that might be true, but they believed Doc knew more than he was admitting, and since Brody and Ian had only put together a circumstantial case against Charles that wouldn’t hold up in court, the bureau had no legal recourse but to wait him out.

Since they were at a stalemate concerning Charles, Piper switched back to the topic at hand. “What would I have to do to attend that party with you?”

“Remember what was going on when you crashed Charles’s party?” Her eyes widened and she simply nodded, making him smile. “Well expect that and more, and if you’re there as our guest, you’ll be expected to participate, in public. Pasquino only allows professionals at his parties, just like Charles, and it’s because he apparently likes to watch instead of fuck. Our source hasn’t figured that one out yet, but he’s been at several of Pasquino’s parties and never seen him join in the debauchery. Usually he’ll leave with no less than two women when things wind down, but rumor has it he just watches them.”

“I can do it, Brody,” she said quickly before she could think about it. While the public displays of sex she had witnessed at Charles’s party had turned her on and all the times both Brody and Ian had her bare assed and

completely naked outside where anyone stopping by could see had sent her arousal soaring even higher, she really wasn't sure she would be into such open exhibitionism.

Brody knew why she agreed so readily. Desire, as well as the reality of the intimidating facts was plain to see on her face. "You think you can play the part of a paid escort in public? Do whatever we tell you to do, when we tell you, without balking? Because that's what these women are paid to do and what will be expected."

"Yes, but only with you and Ian."

As if he'd let anyone else touch her, Brody thought with a surge of unaccustomed jealousy. Needing to know for sure before they left, he said softly, "Prove it."

Her pussy dampened at his softly issued challenge, and Piper couldn't think of anything she'd rather do. She thought after their excesses last night she would be sated for a while, but apparently not. "How?"

Brody couldn't miss the way her nipples hardened beneath her thin tank top and his blood rushed to his cock so fast it made him lightheaded. Or maybe it was just the promise of being inside her again that had him responding so quickly. "Go upstairs, get out that vibrator you taunted us with the other night then strip." He didn't say anything else or wait for her reply as he rose and took his plate to the sink, but when he turned back around, she was reaching the top of the stairs. Why did he have a feeling this test was going to backfire on him?

It only took her moments to do as Brody instructed, and after propping up her pillow and leaning back against it, she waited anxiously for him to join her. She simply couldn't get over how quickly he could arouse her, how, with a simple look or suggestion, she could go from keeping her cool around him to raging hot, her need for him once again overriding her common sense. But right now she simply didn't care why he could affect her so strongly, she was determined to enjoy him while she had him. With the vibrator lying next to her and the cool air wafting over her heated skin, she was tempted to get started, but the sound of his treads on the stairs encouraged her to wait.

She was stunning, was his only coherent thought as he took in her lushly displayed body. Her torso was reclining just enough to make her breasts spread out, the fleshy mounds jiggling as she shifted under his intense stare. "Be still and let me look at you," he demanded hoarsely.

“You’ve seen me before.” Piper’s knees were bent but closed, and she knew he could catch a glimpse of her wet slit and puckered anus beneath them. She made sure of it. When he had ordered her up here, he had looked so sure she would balk that she wanted to wipe that knowing, smug look off his face, and from his startled expression, which he quickly masked, she knew she had succeeded already and she hadn’t even begun to torture him.

“Not enough, it never seems to be enough. Spread your legs. Wider,” he added gruffly when she barely parted them. “Better.” With her knees splayed he could see the pink recesses of her pussy, its glistening depth almost more than he can resist. But he had to, at least for a while. When he heard Ian come inside, he called out, “Ian, get up here!”

It was hard to remain still, lying there naked and exposed, especially while Brody just stood there calmly, waiting for Ian to join them. The thought of two men coupled with her memories of their first night here had her tense with aching lust, the need for that lust to be assuaged almost painful. When Ian stepped next to Brody and looked his fill, his already dark eyes going darker, she couldn’t help but squirm under both of their scrutiny.

“The last time you called me up here with such urgency, I spent the next several days with my hand wrapped around my cock,” he said dryly.

“Don’t worry. Piper said she could handle whatever we dished out at that party, so I’m giving her a chance to prove it. Show us what you were doing with your toy the other night when you knew we were listening and you were trying to drive us crazy.”

The idea of masturbating in front of them turned her on as much as everything else the two of them had subjected her to this past week, and as both men stepped closer to the bed, Ian’s hands pulling his tee shirt over his head, Brody’s going to unsnap his jeans, her immediate response made the vibrator slip easily between her folds. Slowly, as to torment all three of them, she pulled the fake phallus back out, the hard, ribbed rubber shining wetly from her copious juices, then just as slowly pushed it back in. The dildo wasn’t nearly as thick or long as either of their cocks, which both men were now erotically stroking, and it made her wish they were filling her instead. The sight of them standing naked at the foot of her bed, their hot eyes glued between her spread thighs, their hands moving tortuously slow up and down their rigid lengths, was both mouthwatering and distracting.

“You surprise me, Piper, although I don’t know why. You’ve been more than accepting of everything we’ve dished out to you,” Brody admitted dryly, his mouth turned up in a half smile, his face dark with lust filled intent.

“I told you I can handle whatever you need me to at that party,” she said a tad breathlessly as her arousal kept inching higher with each well aimed plunge of her dildo. Both of their cocks were now seeping precious fluid, the mushroom heads turning even darker as they seemed to harden further right before her eyes.

“We’ll see. We’ve only just started here. Turn it on,” he rasped. “Make yourself come.”

His hard, guttural tone had her arching into the downward strokes of the dildo, the way Ian moved to cup his sac with one hand, rolling his balls as he continued to stroke his cock, had her juices gushing around the hard object and seeping enough to drip down between her crack and over her anus. Brody’s eyes moved in that direction, his look growing even more heated and intense. Piper couldn’t hold back another minute, her intention to drive them crazy first taking a back seat to the pounding need coursing from her painfully erect nipples to her throbbing groin. Rooting out her clit, she pressed her small, swollen bud against the dildo then switched on the vibrator, the hard pulses right on that sensitive tissue sending her into an immediate burst of ecstasy, no slow build up, just a huge explosion of pleasure so consuming, she was oblivious to everything else.

“Son of a bitch,” Ian swore lowly as they watched her come apart, her hips gyrating against her marauding hands, her full breasts softly jiggling, their hard tips pointing upward in a silent plea for attention. Nodding towards her breasts, he said, “Those need a little attention.”

“Better that than ending this too soon by coming in our hands.”

They moved on either side of her, both men releasing their cocks to bend over her chest and suckle her nipples as her body continued to buck in the throes of what had to be more than one orgasm.

Piper felt their mouths latch onto her breasts, felt them both draw deeply on her neglected nipples, feasting on them as she continued to plunge into her pussy over and over, her entire body infused with blinding ecstasy. By the time she could see again and was reduced to small shudders, her wrists were aching and her body felt languorously replete. She had no time to savor her response to them, however, as they both pulled away from her and

Brody was pulling the vibrator from the small spasms still trying to hold onto it.

“On your knees, darlin’, it’s time for you to see to our pleasure.” Tossing the blatantly wet dildo aside, he grabbed her hand and helped her off the bed before asking Ian, “You up for breast fucking?”

Ian looked down at her generous mounds and his cock jerked in anticipation. “Works for me.”

With his hands on her shoulders, Brody gently eased Piper to her knees in front of Ian, following her down to settle behind her, one hand moving to roam lightly over her buttocks, the other simply cupping her warm, damp folds. “Hold your breasts up for Ian’s cock, keeping them close enough together to leave him room to slide between them.”

Piper shuddered with longing, moving to obey him without a qualm. This was new for her and as Ian pushed his cock between her uplifted breasts, the purple head coming within reaching distance of her mouth, she couldn’t keep from swiping her tongue over his smooth crown, lapping up the seepage from his slit, before he pulled back.

“Very good, Piper. For that, you deserve a reward.” Brody slapped her right buttock then followed with a smack on her left before once again running his palm over her now warm, soft flesh. “Do it again.”

“Only if you do that again,” she quipped, turning her face enough to look up into his.

“Of course.”

Ian didn’t need any prompting to push back between the soft plushness of her breasts, using one hand to hold the base of his cock, the other to tweak her nipples, one at a time, back and forth. When her tongue licked his head again, it took all his control not to let go yet.

Piper groaned when Brody slapped her ass again, this time harder, the sting and instant heat zipping to her pussy where his other hand remained idly cupping her. She knew verbally pleading with him would do her no good, so she moved her hips in an enticing parody of forward and backward gyrations, pushing her pubis against his hand then shoving her ass back to meet his descending palm. It was difficult keeping her breasts lifted, her mouth at the ready for Ian’s cock each time he pushed up and her hips in sync with Brody’s slaps, but the pleasure was worth the effort. Her buttocks were starting to burn, her pussy was pouring cream onto his hand, and Ian’s

cock was fucking her breasts faster and faster, making her keep her head lowered and her tongue out to meet him each time.

Brody moved downward, smacking the under curve of each cheek now, as well as the top of her thighs as he released one finger and tormented her further by softly stroking her seam without entering her. When she muttered a curse, he grinned and did it again just to hear her mutter again. "Something wrong, Piper?" he asked innocently as he landed another resounding smack across both cheeks.

Piper ignored his taunt, released her breasts and grabbed Ian's cock, bringing him to her mouth and engulfing his hard flesh. Both men's curses rang as loudly as the slaps on her bare flesh had, and as Brody released a volley of fast, uninterrupted torment on her ass, she whimpered in pure, frustrated need, drawing hard on Ian's cock, her tongue stroking over every inch of his ridged length, her lips tight as she pulled back to lave his head and under the sensitive flesh beneath the crown. Ian's constant twists and pulls on her nipples added to the slow torture of Brody's one finger teasing her with its shallow strokes.

"I can't hold back, Brody," Ian ground out as she suckled his head in a way no man could resist. Letting go of her nipples, he clutched her head and thrust into her mouth, deep and smooth, then fast and hard until his balls drew taut and he was seeing stars as he spewed down her throat.

Brody stopped spanking her and softly rubbed her red, hot flesh as he dipped his finger inside her, unerringly finding her clit and milking it between his finger and thumb until their mutual groans of release were the only sounds in the room. Watching them, hearing and witnessing their pleasure, had his own cock demanding its turn. As soon as Ian pulled from her mouth, he urged Piper's shoulders down until she braced herself on her elbows, her face turned to look at him filled with anticipation, excitement and arousal. Her stamina as well as her easy acceptance of their demands amazed and excited him and he knew in that moment she was the perfect woman for him, regardless of what the outcome was of this whole mess.

Piper shuddered as the possessive look on Brody's face made her body quicken. She had just achieved orgasm several times, high voltage, mind numbing climaxes that should have left her sated, but just looking at Brody had her libido in overdrive, her pussy once again creaming, swelling, preparing for his cock as she eagerly waited for his first penetrating thrust. She couldn't help but moan when he grabbed her sore hips, her ass

throbbing from his spanking, the discomfort feeding the need in her pussy to be filled.

“Brace yourself,” Brody told her as he shoved her knees further apart and pushed into her with one smooth thrust. “This is going to be fast and hard.”

Laying her head down, she took his deep plunge willingly, her pussy clamping around him like a band of steel, hoping to anchor him to her. His thumbs dug into her buttocks, spreading them, leaving her ass open and vulnerable to his gaze, and the thought of him just staring at her most private area while he thrust demandingly in and out of her sheath was a turn on in itself. Shoving back against him, she accepted every deep stroke willingly and fought to hold him to her each time he pulled back until their fucking became a battle of wills and harsh breathing. Her nipples rubbed back and forth on the carpet as he pounded into her, the rough abrasion only adding to the building onslaught of pleasure spiraling through her, but it wasn't until she felt fingers on her clit, fingers that could only belong to Ian pulling her clit out then holding it snugly against the hard, hot length of Brody's pummeling cock that her system exploded in wave after wave of indescribable pleasure.

Her small contractions jumped to tight clasps when Ian rubbed her clit against his cock, her slick, warm walls clamping around Brody, drawing out his seed whether he was ready for it or not. He practically lifted her knees off the floor with the power of his thrusts and he knew it was only the hard grip of his hands on her hips that kept her from collapsing. He battered her womb as hard as his orgasm battered his senses, but neither one of them was complaining.

Ian rose slowly, his cock already erect and ready again. Ignoring it, he pulled on his jeans and very carefully zipped them up, grinning as Brody and Piper simply lay in a sprawled, naked heap on the floor, his arm around her back, as they both tried to gain control over their rapid breathing. “I think it's safe to assume she'll be able to hold her own this weekend.” He left the room with that remark.

Fulfilling fantasies in the privacy of her home was different than indulging in public, especially with the stress of being witnessed by a criminal who wanted nothing more than to bury the man she cared so much about. “You okay,” he asked her as he stroked the back of her thick black hair.

Piper turned her face towards his thinking she'd never felt better despite the throbbing of her buttocks and pussy from all the abuse heaped upon them. It was a delicious sensation, an achy reminder of the awesome sex they had treated her to. "Yes, I'm perfectly okay."

"Then I guess I better have Ian book a flight for three in the morning." Standing, he held a hand out to her and helped her up then taking her in his arms, her small frame nestled against his much larger one just another reminder of how easily she could be hurt.

"I want you to know," she told him without lifting her head from his chest, "that I don't expect anything from you after this weekend, regardless of how it turns out and how much I appreciate you being here for me this past week." She knew the struggle to get over him this time was going to be ten times harder than last, but she refused to think about that now. Now, she wanted to simply put the matter of Charles to rest. If there was one thing Piper knew Charles loved it was the Empire and a no show by him would verify his death, as he would never just sit back and allow anyone to take it over, especially a man he considered his enemy.

"We'll see," was all Brody said because simply admitting he wanted more from her than sex wasn't enough to cross all the barriers standing in his way.

Piper had called Haley and asked her to meet them for dinner later that afternoon and as they pulled up in front of the diner, Ian was disconcerted to admit he was looking forward to seeing her again more than he was looking forward to the chicken fried steak Friday night special. When he saw her walking up the sidewalk towards them, the livid bruise marring her left cheek now clearly visible, he wished he had beaten Tim Carlisle a lot longer and harder.

"Haley! What did that bastard do to you?" Piper threw her arms around her friend, feeling guilty for spending the morning indulging in amazing sex instead of checking up on her even if Brody had assured her she was okay. "Are you all right?" she asked anxiously as she pulled back, her eyes lingering on Haley's discolored, slightly puffy cheek.

"I'm fine, so quit fussing." Haley looked at Ian over Piper's head, her smile tentative and questioning. He had been gone when she woke this morning and the disappointment she felt simply wouldn't do. She had no interest in men, definitely no interest in seeking out another relationship. She loved her shop, her small town and her friends. For the past six years,

that was all she had needed to be happy, but the way her nipples beaded and her pussy spasmed at just the sight of him told her that maybe she needed a little more now. Ever since Ian had walked into her shop a week ago, her body had been trying to tell her she wanted more, was ready for more, at least physically. She had managed to ignore her reawakened urgings until he not only rescued her last night, but had shown how compassionate and understanding he could be by staying with her through the night, his silent, platonic presence enough for her then. But when Piper had said they were leaving in the morning, she knew her time to end her six-year celibacy with this man was running out. “Thanks to Ian, Tim’s headed back to Florida with another minimum twenty years tacked on to his original sentence and I’m relatively unharmed.”

“He’s been picked up already?” Brody asked sharply. “I wanted to question him myself this evening about Piper’s disappearance.”

“Sheriff Norton was convinced he had nothing to do with that,” Haley told him.

“We’ll talk to him after we eat,” Ian said firmly as he led the way inside, his irritation with Haley’s gratitude uncalled for. It was only natural for a victim to be thankful to the person who saved them from any further harm from their attacker, but it was the lingering look of lust filled longing that had him on edge. Giving in to that look would be a colossal mistake. She definitely was not a woman he could indulge in a hot and heavy one night stand with. But the fantasy of showing her just how good it good be with the right man wouldn’t let up.

The diner smelled just as good, just as homey as the last time they were here, and Mary greeted Haley with just as much caring and concern as she had Piper a few days ago. “Are you all right, hon?” she asked, her hand resting comfortably, protectively on Haley’s shoulder after she seated them.

“Yes, thanks to Ian, Mary.” The minute she had spotted Ian unfolding his tall, cream your jeans body out of Brody’s hot red car and her body reacted by doing just that, she knew she wasn’t going to let the chance to have him scratch the itch he was responsible for causing pass her by.

“Can we just order,” Ian growled, glaring at Haley sitting next to him. “It was nothing, okay? Any man worth his salt would’ve done the same thing.”

“Not any man would have allowed Tim to hit him twice just to make sure he got extra time on his sentence.”

“Did Gary tell you that?” He frowned at her, not liking that she knew just how far he’d go to protect her. She was right, he wouldn’t have gone that extra step for just anyone.

“Yes, but he didn’t have to. I already suspected as much.” Which just made Haley even more sure that he was the man for her to test the sexual waters again with. The timing couldn’t be more perfect since he was leaving tomorrow and the decision whether to see each other again would be taken out of both their hands.

“You did that?” Mary asked, tears in her eyes. “Do you like chocolate?”

“I love chocolate.” Narrowing his eyes at her, he asked suspiciously, “Why?”

“I have a whole chocolate cream pie I’m saving just for you. Now,” she stated briskly before he could argue, “I’ll go ahead and take your orders so you don’t have to wait for Darlene. As you can see, we’re still swamped with the holiday tourists.”

The tables were filling up as soon as they were vacated and cleaned and from the number of both pedestrians and cars traversing Main Street, the extra business holidays always generated looked like it was going to stretch through the weekend.

Brody and Ian spent the next hour conversing quietly as they ate while half listening to Piper and Haley first filling each other in on the last twenty-four hours since they saw each other and then on clothing designs. When they started discussing the lingerie items Piper was currently working on, both men listened attentively, much to their amusement. Feeling devious, Piper elaborated on some very risqué outfits she contracted for an online store that sold an assortment of sexy clothing as well as sexual enhancements and toys.

“What’s the point of wearing crotchless panties,” Brody asked as he imagined a pair of red lace framing Piper’s nude sex. Shifting uncomfortably, he tried to adjust his semi-erect cock discretely, but by the grins spreading across both women’s faces, he knew he failed. “Fuck it,” he growled as he blatantly reached down and shifted his dick to the side so it wasn’t pressing against his zipper, adding to his misery.

Smirking, Piper looked down at his crotch pointedly. “That’s the point,” she said, smiling widely and pointing at the obvious bulge in his pants.

Haley couldn't help but glance down at Ian's cock and wasn't surprised to see a hard bulge pressing tautly against his jeans. Moving her eyes up, she found his on her, narrowing to dark brown slits.

"Yes," he admitted succinctly and that was all he was going to say on the matter. He had been having enough trouble keeping himself in check just sitting next to Haley, his mind insisting on conjuring up scene after scene of him fucking that slim body, the best part of his fantasies watching her eyes widen and glaze over with the pleasure he was giving her. And if that was the best part, he was all the more thankful that he was booking out of here tomorrow.

"Come on, we're drawing attention." Brody pushed back, grabbed Piper's hand and led the way out of the still busy restaurant, Ian following him with his boxed up pie in one hand and Haley's hand held tightly in the other. "I'll call the sheriff to meet us at Rowdy's and we'll fill him in on our departure and he can tell us how convinced he is that Haley's ex didn't have anything to do with Piper's disappearance."

Rowdy's was just as crowded as the diner, but apparently Crack had been expecting them because he was waving them over to an open booth in the back corner when they came in. "Clem texted me and let me know you were headed this way," Crack said as he plopped a beer down in front of each of them then planted his fists on his hips and glared at both Brody and Ian. "First, you let that sleaze ball of an ex hurt Haley again and now I hear you're taking Piper to Atlantic City when you know there's going to be someone there gunning for her father. I thought you were good at your jobs."

"Now, Crack," Piper began soothingly, placing her small hand on his forearm as Haley said at the same time, "Ian saved me."

Ian growled next to her, his frustration with her evident in the hard look he gave her before taking a hefty drink of his beer.

"Don't you 'now Crack' me, missy, and if he had been more diligent, he wouldn't have had to save you," he told Haley. Turning back to Piper, Crack added, "You have no business getting mixed up in this. It's their damn job, not yours."

"I assure you she'll be perfectly safe." Brody found it difficult to assure the older man of anything when he himself couldn't be positive that would be the case. He, Ian and Carlos weren't the only law enforcement that will

be there. Undercover cops will be stationed inside and out of the casino, but even with all bases covered there were always loopholes.

“You can’t assure me of any damn thing and you know it.” Turning his glare back to Piper, he reiterated, “Don’t go, Piper, let them handle it.”

“I have to know, Crack. I’m ninety-nine percent sure Charles is dead, but that one percent will haunt me if I don’t go. If he doesn’t show, I’ll know for sure.”

“Why would you say that?” he asked, clearly confused.

“Because Charles loves the Empire more than anything or anyone else. He won’t relinquish it without a fight, not if he’s alive. That place is the reason he started doing business with this Pasquino in the first place.”

It wasn’t lost on Crack that she called Charles by his given name instead of dad or father, and now he knew why. Shaking his head in resignation, he told Brody and Ian, “You better be right,” his tone as hard as his eyes before turning away.

Crack had no sooner returned to his station behind the bar when Sheriff Norton came in, followed Crack’s point and joined them in their booth, making the four of them crowd closer together. “What’s this I hear of you letting Piper in on this sting you’ve got set up in New Jersey?”

“Does news always travel this fast in this damn town?” Ian asked irritably, not used to having his business spread like wildfire before he had even ironed out the details himself or having to explain himself to so many people. He should have known after Clem had come out from the kitchen to grill them that it wouldn’t stop there.

Gary shrugged lightly, unperturbed by their scowls and obvious frustration with small town grapevines. “Pretty much. Now, give.”

Piper ignored them, through trying to explain herself. By Monday, she planned to be back here resuming her life and working to put the past behind her once and for all. Turning to Haley, she asked her quietly the one thing she had been dying to know all night. “So, are you going to give Ian a nice farewell, or not?” When she had called Haley about meeting for dinner, she had told her about what happened between her and both men, relieved when Haley said she was looking forward to hearing all the intimate details later and showed no signs of jealousy.

“If he’s willing, yes, I’m going to go for it. Wish me luck?” Haley had no idea how she was going to get Ian into her bed, she was definitely not

some sexy, conniving diva experienced at seducing men, and Ian was not a man who could be seduced easily.

“All men are willing,” Piper returned dryly. “But with these two, you have to get through their moral brick wall before they’ll cave. If I didn’t respect that about them so much, it’d really, really piss me off.”

“Instead of just really pissing you off?” Haley grinned.

“Yeah.”

By the time Gary left them with a warning to Brody and Ian and a softer caution to be careful to Piper, it had grown dark and they were ready to head home. Haley reluctantly slid out of the booth, building up her nerve as they walked through the crowded tables to the door to broach Ian about coming back to her apartment. She had never asked a man home before, never had a one night stand and her fear of rejection after waiting so long to take this step again was as strong as her desire to get naked with this man, to see if he could drive her to the heights of pleasure Piper had tantalized her with.

As they stepped out onto the walkway, she quickly turned to Ian before she completely lost her nerve, blurting, “Will you walk me home?” at the same time as he said, “I’ll walk you home.”

Brody laughed softly, took Piper’s hand and headed back down to his car, saying over his shoulder, “Call me or have someone bring you back later.”

Chapter Fourteen

Main Street was quieter now, the shoppers and diners having left for either one of the bed and breakfast inns if they had been lucky enough to get a room, or to one of the numerous campsites and cabins surrounding the lake. “You can see every star in the sky,” Haley murmured as she looked up, liking the feel of Ian’s hand holding hers as they neared her shop. The distance from the south end of Main Street where her shop was to the north end where Rowdy’s was located had always seemed longer than it did tonight. She was going to have to put on her big girl panties soon if she wanted this night to end with an orgasm, she thought ruefully.

Ian looked up and had to admit, unfortunately, that the brightly dotted inky sky did look appealing and was a sight rarely seen in Richmond. “Okay, I’ll give you the sky, but honestly, Haley, doesn’t it drive you fucking nuts having everyone know your business, not to mention hovering over you constantly.”

The disgust in his tone made Haley smile. “No, I think it’s nice. If Sheriff Norton hadn’t been so protective of both Piper and me, our circumstances could have turned out much different.” She let him take her key to the front door of the shop and waited until he stepped in first and flipped on the lights before she took a deep breath, and simply took the bull by the horns, blurting, “Ian, would you have sex with me tonight?”

Ian turned from taking a quick look around to stare at her incredulously. He knew she wanted him, just as he knew he wanted her, but he had thought he was safe from acting on his baser needs because he thought she never would. And then a thought occurred to him that just plain pissed him off. “Damn it, Haley, if that’s a way for you to thank me, again, for last night, that’s an insult to both of us.”

“No!” Appalled, she never thought he would think that. “I’m sorry, I’m sure you’re better at this than I am. I don’t have any experience, and maybe that turns you off...”

“Oh, shut up before you dig a bigger hole for yourself,” he snapped as he felt himself caving fast. Moving slowly towards her, he tried to get her to see him as he really was, not as someone who just happened to be in the right place at the right time. He refused to let the fact that he was in her place, at that time because he had been worried about her enter into the equation. “I was with Piper earlier today, as was Brody.” He didn’t know

what surprised him more, the fact she didn't look disgusted or the way her small nipples hardened, their shape noticeable through her sheer top under which she wore some lacy thing that drove him nuts. "When I leave here, I'm probably going to fuck her again." He didn't add that it wouldn't be because he wanted Piper more than he had wanted any woman. Haley held that honor all by herself.

Haley didn't back away from him. She knew without a doubt he was not a threat to her physically, just as she knew he was trying to turn her off of wanting him by making more of his sexual encounters with Piper than was warranted. "Mmm, I know. Lucky her. It's just sex, Ian," she said since that's what most men want to hear in just such a situation.

Ian found himself irked at her statement even though he hadn't felt anything but amusement when Piper had said the exact same thing to him. "Just sex?" he asked silkily as he caged her against the counter with his arms braced on either side of her. There was no fear on her face, no hesitation clouding her blue eyes. If there had been, he could have turned her away gently, instead, he knew he was going to try to give her what she was asking for and hope she didn't regret it come morning. "How long has it been since you've had sex?" he asked, wondering how slow he was going to have to take her.

Haley wasn't going to tell him. She knew if she did he'd use that as an excuse to back away. According to Piper, he was a demanding man when it came to sex, and that was exactly what she wanted, what she needed now. She had sweet, romantic and overly considerate. Ian was the exact opposite of Tim in every way and that was only one of the reasons she wanted him so badly.

"Fuck me, Ian, unless you want me asking you about your sex life."

Damned if she didn't volley that one right back to him, he thought with both humor and admiration as lust slammed into him, his reaction at hearing her so crudely ask for what they both wanted, shocking him. "Just remember," he ground out as he lowered his mouth to hers, "you asked for this."

Haley jolted as his lips came down on hers with ruthless intent, but within seconds she was molding her body against his, her lips clinging to his as she opened willingly for the dueling exploration of their tongues. Wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders, she moaned into his mouth as her breasts came into contact with his chest, the soft mounds flattening

against his thick muscles, her nipples poking him insistently, hardening into aching pinpoints as she shifted against him.

Pulling back abruptly, Ian stared down into her flushed face, her lips damp from his, her nipples straining against the thin cloth. “Go upstairs, strip and wait for me in bed. And make damn sure this, I’m, what you want tonight before I get there. I’ll lock up.”

She could have told him she was already sure, but why waste words when she could show him. It took her only moments to get to her bedroom, strip out of her skirt and blouse, tossing them along with her panties on a chair before pulling the covers back, jumping in bed and pulling just the sheet back up. She wasn’t quit brave enough to just lie there completely exposed when he walked in.

Ian tried to go slow checking the doors and making sure everything was locked up tight, but his cock was insisting he didn’t linger, his mind worried she might change her mind, his conscience berating him for being a fool, leaving him no choice but to take the stairs two at a time as he unbuttoned his shirt on the way up. He was pulling it off as he walked into her bedroom and saw her lying there so innocently, the crisp white sheet tucked under her arms making him smile. Keeping his eyes on her, he slowly unsnapped his jeans and lowered the zipper, his engorged cock springing free as soon as he cleared it. Her eyes widening was comical, but when she licked her lips nervously, he took pity on her.

“Relax, Haley, it’ll fit.” Shucking his jeans, he wrapped his hand around his cock as he moved slowly towards her, his eyes staying on her face, her eyes riveted to his hand gripping his cock.

Haley knew men masturbated, of course, but she had never imagined how erotic it would be to watch one stroke his cock with such slow, teasing strokes. His cock was as big as the rest of him, long and thick and she had doubts about its fit, but the closer he came, the more she wanted to feel all that hardness filling her, stretching her like she had never dreamed she would be fucked.

Reaching out with his free hand for the sheet, Ian gave it a tug and tossed the offending cover to the foot of the bed, his eyes feasting on her naked body. Long and slim, her breasts small but softly rounded, her nipples taut berries he hungered to taste, her damp labia barely visible through her neatly trimmed blond pubic hair, she was absolutely, fucking

perfect. “You are a beautiful woman, Haley. Let me see more of you. Bend your legs and spread your knees for me.”

A shudder ran through her at the command in his tone. His take charge attitude made it easy for her to comply, made her grateful that she didn't have to guess what he wanted, didn't have to wonder if she was pleasing him. Bending her knees, she slowly widened them, her face flaming with embarrassment even though her pussy heated with pleasure at his look of approval. “Ian,” she groaned softly, “lay down with me.” She really wanted to feel all that hard, naked flesh next to her skin.

“Not yet. Once I do, I'll be inside you, so just let me savor you for a minute. Grab the headboard and don't let go.” Releasing his cock, he reached out one hand to cup her right breast, the other one going between her legs, one finger sliding inside her with ease.

Gripping the slats tightly, Haley arched into his hands, the pleasure of being touched again after so long almost too much. His eyes stayed on her body, watching his hands explore her, watching her body's response. Her nipple pulsed beneath his fingers when he rolled the puckered bud between them while slowly exploring the depth of her pussy, every inch of her slowly contracting walls, lightly, too damn lightly, rasping over her clit. A whimper escaped her, a small cry of frustration as he slowly teased her.

Ian broke out in a sweat, controlling his own lust until he had brought her pleasure first. As difficult as that was, it was worth the torment to watch her slowly come apart. Her body started to writhe under his hands, her own sweat-slick flesh glistening as her hips bucked against his hand and her torso pushed up against his fingers, turning slightly to lure him over to her other breast. “That's it, show me what you like, what you want. Come for me, Haley.”

There it was again, that commanding voice giving her no choice but to obey, leaving her with no desire to do anything but what he dictated. She cried out with the deep plunge of two fingers, shook as he rooted out her clit then screamed as he milked that small, long neglected piece of flesh, gifting her nipple to the same treatment. Incoherent with pleasure, she got lost in the ecstasy consuming her, pleasure like she had never experience before, more pleasure than she had ever hoped for from this encounter, and he wasn't even fucking her yet. God help her, she groaned as she slowly came back to her senses, her body reduced to small tremors yet already aching for more.

“That was stunning,” he said hoarsely as he dropped down on top of her, his hips fitting perfectly between hers, his arms braced beside her head as he gazed down into her flushed face, her blue eyes still showing signs of the shocked pleasure she had just experienced. Narrowing his eyes at her, he asked quietly, “Just how long has it been?”

Ignoring him, Haley dropped her arms around his bare shoulders and lifted her hips up against his in an open invitation, hoping he’d take the hint. “Fuck me, Ian.” Reaching between them, she curled her fingers around his girth, not surprised to discover she couldn’t quite reach all the way around him. “Nothing matters tonight but this, okay?”

Grabbing the condom he had tossed on the bed, he snapped, “Put it on,” then had to clench his teeth in restraint as she did just that, taking her time making sure the latex was nice and snug. Bending his head, he sucked one nipple into his mouth, his teeth nibbling as he reached down, cupped her right buttock and lifted her up for his penetration.

He filled her in one stroke, his size and her long celibacy causing her some discomfort, but that only seemed to heighten her arousal, push her higher faster as he wasted no time pulling back and plunging back in with a force that pushed her body upward. Haley had no idea what triggered her slight panic, what caused her to go from eagerly meeting each downward stroke with enthusiasm to gasping for air as if she was suffocating. His size blocked out the meager light and she suddenly found herself in the darkness of her past, of Tim coming towards her in a fit of jealousy with the intent of causing her tremendous pain. She thought she was doing an admirable job of suppressing her fear until Ian flipped them over with a curse, settling her on top of him without dislodging his cock, his hand coming down hard on her ass.

“Next time, you fucking tell me when I do something that scares you. Got it?” he snarled, his eyes dark and intent on her face as he gauged her reaction.

Haley didn’t know what startled her more, that there might be a next time or the way the sting from that slap set her pussy on fire. The panic that had come upon her so quickly was gone just as fast, making her struggle to set aside the shame to embrace the pleasure once again. Wondering if her response to that sting was a fluke, she said, “Do that again.”

Frowning, trying to keep from moving until she was ready, he asked, “Do what again?”

She didn't let her mortification keep her from saying, "You know... spank me."

Surprise held him still for a moment. He didn't even realize he had smacked her, the gesture had been so automatic. Thank God she took it so well, not only took it well but was asking for more. Before she could question her own response, he slapped her cheek again, just hard enough to sting, not hard enough for that sting to linger long. Her pussy clutched at his cock, her cream soaking him as she gasped in pleasure and lifted slightly, her slick walls clinging to his cock. Another slap drove her back down and another had her hands clutching his shoulders, her nails biting into his skin.

Piper had been right, was all Haley could think as she rode him harder, faster, in time with the light slaps he peppered on her buttocks. Thankfully, he knew just when she couldn't handle anymore, just when she needed him to take over again, just when she needed to come or die trying.

Grabbing her warm hips, Ian thrust up into her, controlling her hips as their groins slapped together over and over. Just as her pussy clamped tightly around him, the small contractions escalating to tight fisted clutches, he flipped her back over, praying he was doing the right thing.

Haley's orgasm burst upon her with a force beyond her control, the pleasure whipping through her uncontainable as she met him thrust for thrust, her legs going around his hips to further anchor him to her. He drove her ruthlessly from one climax to another so fast she never knew when one stopped and another began. Six years of abstinence exploded in a torrent of pleasure that let the past recede for good as each hard thrust sent her spiraling towards a brighter future.

Ian held on as long as he could, his senses drowning in the pleasure of watching and feeling her come apart beneath him. Arching like a bow under his pistoning body, her pussy repeatedly clamping around his dick, however, was too much to bear and he let go, let the pleasure consume him as it did her until they lay in a heap of damp, panting exhaustion. Drawing the sheet back up, he pulled her pliant, sated body over his, smiled when she draped her arm and leg across him with a tired, contented sigh, and drifted to sleep.

Atlantic City

Piper savored the feel of Brody's hard, sweat slick muscles beneath her as she straddled his hips and slowly lowered herself onto his straining cock. He had surprised her last night by joining her upstairs after they returned from dinner and she enjoyed having him in her bed again too much to question him about his change of heart. After catching an early flight out of Branson to Atlantic City, he had surprised her yet again by booking a room for them in the Empire's hotel with one king sized bed, a bed she was now taking full advantage of as well as the very willing, very aroused man sharing it with her. "Brody," she whispered shakily as she came to rest on his groin, his cock fully embedded in her pussy.

"Don't move," Brody rasped tightly, his hands gliding up her sides to cup her full breasts. "If you do, this'll be over way too soon."

"Then I'll just have to work at getting you back in gear, won't I?" Smiling down at him, she dug her fingers into his shoulders and tortured them both by lifting back up so slowly, she could feel the ridges of his cock against her sensitive flesh, his girth so wide it was impossible to avoid gliding over her swollen clit, the stroke just slow enough, just light enough to build on her arousal. Coupled with his hands kneading her breasts, his palms stroking just as lightly over her distended nipples, she knew she was going to be begging him for more, for harder any moment.

"If anyone could get a quick second rise out of me, it would be you, darlin'. Why didn't you lose weight in your breasts? I would've thought you would have." Her breasts were more than a plump handful, firm but soft, and looking at them from this angle, they were an awesome sight.

"I did, a whole cup size. More, Brody, please," she finally pleaded as she lowered her hips again, this time a little faster.

"Jesus, how big were you? Not that I'm complaining, because, frankly, I think they're fucking awesome as is." The way he was feeling towards her, he knew she could lose every inch and he'd still want her. Just one more reason he hoped they ended up with enough evidence to move on either Charles or Pasquino by tomorrow night. If not, he had no idea how much longer before Carlos could get enough on his own on Pasquino to end his tight rein on the East coast drug trafficking.

"Big," she said absently as her body strained for more and he continued to hold back on her. Rather than begging again, she took matters into her own hands and leaned forward when he released her breasts to smooth his hands back down her sides without giving her what she wanted. Leveling

her shoulders over his head, she stopped with her left nipple dangling right above his mouth. Swaying very lightly, she teased those sensuous lips open by rubbing her hardened tip back and forth then, right before he clamped down on it, she switched to tormenting him with her right nipple until, with a frustrated growl that made her pussy gush, he tightened his hands on her hips, held her still and took her nipple as well as much of her soft flesh surrounding it into his mouth. The feel of her achingly sensitive flesh being sucked into the wet heat of his mouth sent shards of pleasure down to her throbbing pussy, but it was the hard swat on her ass that had her pussy clutching the hard flesh filling her.

Wanting to feel that fiery burn spreading to her pussy again, she moaned, “Again, Brody,” as she rose halfway up his length before slamming back down with the next slap, his lips and teeth never letting up on torturing her nipple.

Reluctantly, Brody released her nipple to ask, “Again, Piper?” as he rubbed his palm over the warm skin he had just smacked.

“Yes, harder, please.” She was beyond caring how she sounded as she rose with his caress and lowered with his slap, this one harder like she had asked, the pain sharper, the pleasure higher. “Again,” she demanded when he caressed that ache as he sucked her other nipple into his mouth. This slap was accompanied by the sharp nip of his teeth on her nipple, the slight sting adding to the sting from his swat, both merging in her spasming pussy and aiding in arousal that was quickly spiraling out of control.

Her voice became a litany of softly pled demands of more and more as he continued with the slap and rub titillation, continued to torture her nipples, switching back and forth, leaving one damp and throbbing as he suckled, nipped and licked the other. Her buttocks swelled and pulsed with warmth, just like her pussy did. She managed to keep in control of her driving rhythm until her small contractions exploded into one large burst of consuming pleasure so intense she was unable to do anything but hold on to him tightly.

As soon as her soft cries erupted into a scream of pleasure as her pussy clamped like a vise around his cock, soaking him with her release, Brody grabbed her hips and slammed up into her, fucking her faster, harder than she had been able to manage, his own restraint gone, lost in the throes of his own climax. With her face now buried in his shoulder, stifling her cries, the rhythmic slick slaps of their bodies coming forcefully together along with

their labored breathing were the only sounds in the room until her small teeth biting into his shoulder elicited his shout as his cock jerked out the last of his seed into her welcoming body.

Piper settled against Brody thinking this had been a good way to end such a stressful day. Returning to the casino had been more difficult than she had thought it would be, the memories of what happened the last time she sought out Charles on his turf hadn't, apparently, dimmed enough in the ensuing years to deaden the pain of his violent loss. The three of them had spent the afternoon in the casino, Brody and Ian playing the tables while she sat at the slots, speaking to both guests and employees, many of whom remembered Brody and Ian as Charles's former employees. She had been surprised at how easily and convincingly they both slipped back into their false roles, and at how good they were at ferreting out information. Even though watching them made her realize how very little she knew about the man she was sleeping with, it hadn't lessened her desire for him in the least.

Unfortunately, no contact had been made with Pasquino, the man they were determined to use Charles to bring into custody, if he was still alive, which she simply refused to believe. She always knew she came in second to his business in his life, but Piper never thought the man who had so faithfully visited her overseas up until those last few months cared so little for her that he would simply drop out of her life without any contact for so long, not if he could help it.

Shifting against Brody, she tightened her arm around his waist as she nestled her thigh over his, his longer, harder frame a big comfort to her as she contemplated how far she had told both him and Ian she was willing to go to prove Charles wasn't still living. She vividly recalled the scenes at the last private party on the thirty-fifth floor she had witnessed, the arousal she had felt watching various decadent activities she had only read or dreamt about. Now, the plan was not only for Brody and Ian to get into Pasquino's party, but for her to accompany them as a paid escort, one expected to participate willingly, eagerly to whatever demands they made. It would be what Pasquino expected and while the thought of what they might do, in public, turned her on, she didn't know if she would enjoy it faced with the man responsible for killing her beloved adoptive father. She couldn't escape the worry and fear he was the one responsible for her disappearance.

"Go to sleep, Piper, and quit worrying, neither Ian nor I will let anything happen to you. We're well covered," Brody assured her, her small tense

body giving away her thoughts.

“What happens if you don’t get asked upstairs tomorrow night?” Would the angst from this whole trip be for nothing? On one hand, Piper would be happy to return home tomorrow without going through with attending that party, but on the other, she wouldn’t be able to live with herself if she didn’t do what she could to help, even in such a small, insignificant way, bring down the man who had killed Charles.

“Pasquino’s ego is about the size of this casino and hotel put together. Our source assures us he won’t be able to pass up inviting his nemesis’s former bodyguards, a blatant attempt to make Charles wonder if he was going to follow up with a job offer. We’re not sure if Charles became aware that we were feds before he slipped away, but we are sure Pasquino doesn’t know.” Pasquino would’ve let something slip by now if he knew his money man had been made and was under such personal surveillance, Carlos assured them, just as he had sworn that Pasquino had never hinted at knowing anything about Piper, which was why he had allowed her to threaten her way into accompanying them.

As if she read his mind, she asked, “You don’t think he was behind those missing days, do you?”

“We could be wrong, but no. He hasn’t even hinted that he knows about you, and our colleague swears he wouldn’t have simply returned you safely to your cabin if his plot backfired and brought us instead of Charles. Now, go to sleep. Tomorrow’s going to be a long day.”

Ian met them in the hall the next morning, his surly ‘it’s about time’ making Brody wonder what he was so out of sorts about. “Get up on the wrong side of the bed?” he asked as they walked down the carpeted hall to the elevators.

“No, it was the noises coming from my adjoining room that kept me up half the night that’s responsible for my mood. Deal with it.” His cock had been so hard listening to those two, Ian had no choice but to wrap his hand around it and pump himself to climax. But it was the memory of Haley’s slim body moving under and over him that he jerked off to, the feel of her pussy wrapped around his cock that had his balls drawing up tautly and her soft, breathless cries as she came, over and over, that he ejaculated to. He had never had trouble putting a woman out of his mind once he left her bed before, and that he hadn’t been able to do so with Haley just pissed him off as much as how much he wanted to fuck her again.

“It seems you’re the one having trouble dealing with something.” Piper knew he had spent Friday night with Haley and knew Haley had loved every minute of it. She was grateful to Ian for being the one to pull Haley back into enjoying sexual pleasure, but she worried that Haley had stronger feelings for Ian than she’s admitted, and Ian was about as much a staying man as Brody was.

“Anyone ever tell you you have a smart mouth?” Ian smiled down at her as they exited the elevator into the casino and headed toward the huge buffet he couldn’t wait to dig into.

“Yeah,” she sighed without an inkling of remorse. “Several people. I ignored them.”

“I like your smart mouth,” Brody told her as he held a chair out for her at one of the few remaining empty tables in the casino’s largest restaurant.

“You would.” Ian ordered a Bloody Mary then didn’t wait for either of them as he headed straight for the buffet determined to put all thoughts of sex and Haley out of his mind.

It was mid-afternoon when both Brody and Ian were seated at a twenty-one table and were approached by two men, one of Hispanic descent in his middle thirties, about their age, the other a rather pale looking older man with cold blue eyes. Piper had been standing behind Brody, simply watching the play, but when those cold blue eyes came to rest on her face, she inched closer to his back, the man making her decidedly uncomfortable.

“Brody, Ian, this is my boss, Antony Pasquino.”

“You used to work for Charles Sandoval I hear,” Pasquino wasted no time saying as he shook their hands. “Hear from him lately?”

The casual way he inserted the inquiry was belied by the man’s stiff posture and the way his lip curled over Charles’s name. “Not since he took a few rounds upstairs several years ago. Ruined a damn good party.” Brody stood in front of Piper, shielding her as best as he could from the other man’s shrewd gaze.

“Let me make it up to you by inviting you to join me tonight. If all goes well, I’ll be taking over the Empire in a year or two and will be able to use a few extra hands who know the ropes.”

Not wanting to sound too eager, Brody turned to Ian, asking, “What do you think? Want to skip the private game and play tonight instead?” He made up the game quickly knowing Ian would have no trouble following along.

Ian shrugged as if either option was fine with him. “There’ll be another game tomorrow or the next night.” Turning to Pasquino, he accepted the offer. “You providing entertainment or do we bring our own?” He let his look shift to Piper, his meaning clear. Brody stiffened next to him, which was why Ian pushed to include her. The less baggage Brody had to deal with when this was over the better for all three of them.

“Paid pieces only, willing to do as told.” Cocking his head, Pasquino looked at the young woman stepping out from behind Brody’s back, wondering where he had seen her before. “Have we met?” he asked abruptly, his tone rude.

“Not that I recall,” Piper managed to answer without inflection despite the instant hatred she felt for the man. Unable to keep from getting a dig in, she added, “Then again, there have been so many men, the faces and the bodies do tend to blur after a while.”

Pasquino narrowed his eyes for a brief, menacing second then shifted his cold look to Ian and Brody. “Make sure she learns some respect before tonight. Carlos.”

The two of them left without a backward glance and not by a word or look did Carlos, Brody or Ian let on they knew each other aside from the introduction, but Piper suspected Carlos was their source.

“Damn it, Piper, it’s not smart to goad the man.” Brody felt like shaking her, but doubted it would do any good. He’d much rather vent his worry and frustration on Pasquino and hoped he got the chance tonight.

“I promise I’ll be good tonight,” she told him just to set his mind at ease. Truthfully, she didn’t know if she could be around Pasquino for very long without either throwing up in fear of the man or using her nails to wipe that sneer off his face.

“See that you are,” Ian answered for Brody. “We have enough to deal with without you stirring things up.” Ian walked away, still surprised at how angry he had become out of fear for Piper. He had become fond of Brody’s girl, and would regret it until his dying day if something happened to her because he had talked Brody into letting her come this weekend.

Brody was thinking along those same lines as he and Piper left the casino to get ready for tonight. With feds and cops stationed in and out of the casino, the odds of anyone getting away or hurting her were slim, especially with both of them sticking to her side all night. But good odds weren’t guarantees. They did verify one important fact from that meeting.

Pasquino didn't know who Piper was, something that was in their favor despite still leaving them in the dark about her disappearance.

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Chapter Fifteen

Entering the thirty-fifth floor suite flanked by Brody and Ian helped ease Piper's nerves and for the first time she didn't resent their hovering. The large room was exactly as she remembered, sofas and chairs spread about, floor to ceiling windows along one wall giving a spectacular view of the star studded night and brightly lit skyscrapers along the boardwalk, a small bar set in the far corner and soft, muted music being drowned out by the sound of people talking and, occasionally, voices crying out in sexual pleasure. Her response at seeing the open sexuality that reminded her of Charles's party that she had crashed was the same despite the underlying risks involved tonight. Excitement hummed through her veins as she watched a man casually reach over and release his escort's breasts from her black satin bra without stopping his discussion with the three other men he was conversing with. The woman, a tall redhead with full breasts, seemed eager to have him touching her, her gasp audible as the man gave one light pink nipple a hard twist.

Two men were seated side by side on a couch, already enjoying blowjobs from the women kneeling between their legs. Piper couldn't take her eyes off the sight of their bobbing heads and busy hands, the way they knelt there with their nipples showcased in cutout bras and their pussies on display in crotchless panties. When a tug on their hair from the men made them switch places and cocks, she knew they had done this before.

"Okay," Ian said, his gaze on the women's bare asses, "Now I see the point of crotchless panties."

Brody thought the green satiny thong he had helped Piper into was sexier, leaving something to both the imagination and to look forward to uncovering, but he'd have to be a eunuch not to get turned on by the sight before them. "Try to keep your eyes in your head and remember we're here for a reason," he told Ian dryly, their gazes locking over Piper's head.

"We still have to fit in and you know it."

"Maybe sooner than later." Brody watched Pasquino break away from a small group of people and head their way, his eyes curious on Piper again, which made him nervous. Grabbing Piper's hand he gave it a squeeze before letting go and greeting the drug lord. "Pasquino. Thanks for the invite."

Antony Pasquino coolly greeted Sandoval's ex-bodyguards, his attention on their escort as he once again tried to remember where he had seen her before. Her black hair and vivid green eyes were very attractive as were the curves he could detect beneath the clinging camisole she wore above her thong, but it was the nagging suspicion that he had seen that face before that held his attention. Irritated that he couldn't place that face, he told Brody, "Enjoy your evening. Maybe we'll talk later."

"Well, that was short and sweet," Ian remarked as Pasquino rejoined his small group, his eyes now more interested in watching the two women in the midst of several men kissing and kneading each other's breasts. "I need a drink."

"Let's head that way and then we'll have to start participating." Brody looked down at Piper, seeing if she knew what he meant, which, by the way her eyes lit up, she did.

"I'm fine, Brody," she assured him. Even though she wasn't sure about how far she wanted to go publicly, she was excited enough to want to indulge in a little exhibitionistic foreplay.

"We just have to take it far enough to be convincing. Ian and I have to keep focused, and that's hard to do around you, darlin'."

"I'm glad to hear that."

Brody reached down and fondled Piper's exposed buttocks as he and Ian struck up a conversation with the bartender and was proud of the way she responded, acted like she was used to being touched in front of strangers. In fact, she responded almost too convincingly, her pointed nipples plainly visible through the thin top and her shifting hips against his hand made it difficult for him to concentrate on their conversation with the bartender as he poured their drinks. He did manage to stay focused enough to learn he was a new employee at the Empire and was enjoying his job. After a few more minutes talking about the casino, Brody knew the bartender hadn't heard any information about either Pasquino or Sandoval that could be useful. Still, it hadn't hurt to try. Usually bartenders knew everything about everyone, but this one was too new to have been privy to much gossip yet.

"Time to mingle," Ian said as they moved away from the bar. Other than a few of the high rolling spenders that Charles had befriended and who were now guests of Pasquino's, they didn't know anyone here, which would make it easier to simply listen in.

“Remember Piper, you’re a woman on the clock, paid to do whatever we want,” Brody reminded her as they started to mingle.

“Got it,” she said with confidence. Piper didn’t think she’d have any trouble if he kept touching her. Knowing there were eyes on Brody’s hand caressing her bare cheeks coupled with the feel of him fondling her ass had its usual effect and she was pleasantly aroused, her excitement working to keep her mind off Pasquino.

Either Brody or Ian had their hands on her as they moved around the room, stopping to chat with people or to simply stop and watch whatever sexual act they were engaged in, their constant fondling of her ass, the way one would casually slip a hand under her top to caress her breasts or slip a finger down between her buttocks to lightly graze her anus and her slit, kept both her arousal and her confidence high. That confidence was tested a few minutes later when Brody, in the middle of a heated debate about sports with a small group, reached down and cupped his hand around one exposed buttock again before giving her a sharp smack, the sudden sting making her jump. Quickly, she remembered her place and turned liquid eyes up to him as she shifted her ass against his hand. Her response didn’t have to be feigned as her body reacted the way it always did when he spanked her. When Ian reached down and started fondling her other cheek, she kept her eyes averted from the other men and two women in the small group, her arousal building so quickly she was having trouble controlling it. She suspected most of the women here tonight faked their responses, and were damn good at it, just as she suspected most of the men could care less whether their partner was pleased or not as long as they were. She knew Brody and Ian had to remain detached enough to keep alert, but if she got this turned on from some simple ass play and a light swat, there was no way she was going to stay focused on anything except climaxing. It was a good thing she wasn’t an undercover FBI agent, she thought ruefully.

Brody didn’t like the way one of them men was looking at Piper, namely from the neck down, but that was to be expected. Her breasts were barely visible through the thin low cut top, just enough of their shape and size to make a man want to see the barrier removed. Fondling her ass was having its usual effect on him, and, if he wasn’t mistaken, on Ian, but he could handle his arousal. It was others he was worried about.

“Why don’t you give us a better look at those tits, girl.”

Even though she knew it was coming, the request from the guy who had been staring at her breasts since they joined their group still took Piper by surprise and she couldn't help glaring at him for his rude crudeness even though she planned to do as he asked. When she hesitated, Brody stepped in for her.

"Lower your top, darlin'. Show us what you've got for us." Any of these other women would've looked at this jerk as a temporary boss and done his bidding without hesitation. Thankfully, he had been expecting Piper to act normally by glaring at him instead of meekly obeying.

Hearing him calling her darlin' in that slow, toe curling drawl made it easier for Piper to do as instructed. Keeping her eyes downcast, she pretended it was just Brody and Ian watching her as she lowered the thin straps of the camisole and let it drop around her waist. The exposure made her nipples tighten even more and the feel of all those eyes on her made her pussy swell with cream. Now she was thankful more than ever for the experiences Brody and Ian had subjected her to. Their sexual encounters had unknowingly prepared her for tonight, the risks of being seen making it easier to stand here half naked in front of strangers, her off the chart responses to everything they exposed her to making it easier to accept the arousal she felt from both watching and now participating in their hedonistic exhibitions.

"Very nice. They even look real."

Before they realized the man's intent, he reached out and squeezed Piper's breast, digging his fingers into the soft flesh before she gasped and lifted her arm to knock his hand aside. "They paid to touch me, you didn't," Piper snapped, her breast sporting the red imprints from his fingers.

"I see you haven't done anything to teach her some respect," Pasquino stated coldly behind them.

Brody reined in his temper and saw that Ian was struggling to do so also. If Piper hadn't reacted so swiftly, he would have. His response would have been acceptable to any man who wanted to keep a woman for himself, at least for the time he had paid for. Piper's response, he knew had angered Pasquino, who seemed to have a distaste for women in general. Turning to face him, he said as smoothly as possible, "We spent a lot of money to book her for the weekend and don't want to share. Your friend can wait and schedule some time with her when we're through with her." He felt Piper stiffen and reached out to squeeze her arm warningly. Hopefully she knew

he omitted her name to keep her identity a secret as much as possible and the rest was cover.

Piper remained silent, hoping she hadn't screwed up too bad, but when Pasquino turned those icy blue eyes on her, she couldn't help but lean against Ian for support. She'd be an idiot not to fear this man.

"A little discipline then, since I don't allow insubordination from any woman." Pasquino handed a round leather paddle to Brody, adding, "Five swats."

Brody almost smiled. He knew Piper's body well enough to see the signs of her arousal, even though they were still subtle. If she responded to the paddle as eagerly as she had his belt, especially if he was right and she was excited about the exhibitionism, this could turn out very good for her.

"I'll hold her." Ian quickly took Piper's arm and bent her over his, leaning over her and whispering quickly, "Think of the dock," before reaching behind her and swatting her ass hard.

Piper would be forever grateful to Ian for that suggestion and that warm up, both working to send her senses reeling with anticipated pleasure instead of dread. Blocking out the sight of all the feet in front of her, she clutched Ian's arm wrapped around her waist as she felt Brody move closer, his hip against hers a reassuring brace.

The snap of leather against skin was loud, the pain sharp, the pleasure exquisite and Piper didn't even try to struggle against any of it. Even though she probably should, considering the circumstances, but she couldn't bring herself to give Pasquino that satisfaction nor did she think she could act well enough to be convincing. She had been counting on her response to both Brody and Ian to help her through whatever happened tonight, and her body didn't betray her. Ian helped her through the next swat by using his free hand to softly knead the breast the other man had abused, rasping his thumb over her nipple just as softly. The contrast between the comforting caress of her breast and the sharp pain on her ass worked to send her arousal higher, every stroke of his thumb over her nipple and every stinging snap of leather on her ass sent sparks of pleasure to her pussy until she was struggling to hold back, fighting the urge to beg for more in front of these strangers. She instinctively knew Pasquino wouldn't be pleased if she found pleasure in her punishment and she didn't want to rile him or keep him focused on her. By the time Brody landed the fifth and final stroke, her ass was on fire, her buttocks felt puffy and warm and she knew her slit was

glistening damply, proof that her punishment had turned her on instead of debasing her and she could only hope he didn't notice.

Brody had no trouble noticing the telltale signs of her arousal and tried to keep his body in front of her hips as much as possible without seeming suspiciously over protective. Ian wasted no time lifting her up, her face as red as her buttocks as she faced them, her eyes downcast demurely. "I think she's properly chastised and now she needs to see to us. If you gentlemen will excuse us?"

Brody took her arm and led her away quickly. Piper could feel the gazes of all those people on her bare, red ass, but the only one that bothered her was Pasquino's.

"Put it aside and concentrate on us," Brody told her as he found an empty chair and sat down before motioning her to kneel in front of him. Releasing his cock, confident Ian would be vigilant while Piper went down on him, he leaned forward and asked her, "Can you make it look good or do you need some incentive?"

"You've already given me all the incentive I need and you know it." Grasping his cock, she had no trouble bending and taking him in her mouth, no trouble enjoying the taste of him again, no trouble showing anyone who was watching that she could be amendable for the right man. Tuning out the room in general, she concentrated on stroking every inch of his rigid length, laving over his smooth crown, swallowing his seeping fluid all while her hand cupped his sac and rolled his balls. When she felt Ian caressing her sore buttocks, she moaned around the hard flesh filling her mouth and pushed back against his hand for more of whatever he wanted to give.

Her ass was warm, and when Ian dipped lower and ran a finger up her slit, he found her pussy just as warm. This was the last time, he swore, that he was taking an assignment that involved anything sexual. His restraint this past week was going to take weeks to get over, but when he tried to think of which former lover he wanted to contact first for a round of uncomplicated, hard and kinky sex, the only face that popped up was Haley's. Swearing again, he slammed the door on that thought all together and concentrated on watching the room in general while helping Piper put on a convincing show for Pasquino.

Brody also kept a trained eye on the room while trying to look totally engrossed in his blowjob, and he had managed to do that until Piper started swirling her tongue under the edge of his head, stroking over and over that

sensitive area until his balls drew up and he felt his climax pushing for release. “Piper,” he groaned with a tug on her hair, “pull back or I’ll come in your mouth.”

Brody’s warning only inflamed her more and when Ian finally slipped his teasing finger inside her and unerringly found her clit, it took all of her efforts to continue sucking Brody’s climax from him as her own burst with lightening bright ecstasy that robbed her of everything but the pleasure consuming her and the spewing cock in her mouth.

When Brody came to his senses, he saw a look of puzzlement and concern on Ian’s face as he looked across the room. “What’s wrong?” he asked quietly as he stood and then helped Piper to her feet, barely resisting the urge to cover her breasts again.

“Pasquino doesn’t look too steady on his feet.”

Pasquino was swaying slightly, his eyes blinking slowly as if he was tired. A woman had her arm wrapped around his waist as he leaned on her and let her take him down the hall to one of the private rooms after Carlos had gone over and spoke quietly to him, got a vigorous shake of Pasquino’s head to his concern, then stepped back with a shrug. Brody watched the woman close the door behind them, presumably going in to help him sleep it off. He hadn’t noticed how many drinks Pasquino had, so maybe he had just over indulged, but something was nagging at him.

“What’re you thinking?” Ian asked. No one else seemed overly concerned with their hosts’ departure, but it seemed odd that Pasquino wouldn’t want to stay front and center if he was hoping Sandoval, as owner of the Empire, would show up and at least try to have security boot him out.

“I’m not sure,” he murmured. “What’s odd about that?” Brody asked Carlos when he joined them a few minutes later.

“I’ve seen him escape his parties for privacy several times, but never with just one woman, and I’ve never seen him drunk or take drugs. He prides himself on staying in control.”

Brody looked around the room again, noted that everyone was still partying, then cursed when he spotted the absence of the bartender from behind the bar. “Something’s up. Stay put,” he ordered Piper as he pushed her into the chair he had just vacated, his tone hard.

Piper wasn’t dumb enough to argue and watched the three of them move swiftly down the hall as she adjusted her top and covered herself.

Antony Pasquino remembered where he had seen the black haired, green eyed woman before just as the escort who had been his constant companion tonight lowered him onto the bed. Two weeks ago, one of the investigators he had researching every nook and cranny of Sandoval's past for any clue that would help him find the man came across a picture of Sandoval's mistress, a mistress he already knew about and had discarded as possible leverage since she had been dead for years. But he had never seen Christine Winter's picture until two weeks ago and he now realized the woman in the other room was the spitting image of her. It couldn't be coincidence, he thought as he laid down and cursed the fuzziness clouding his head. He had Sandoval's fucking daughter right under his nose and didn't realize it.

"Just give me a minute and I'll be out," he slurred. Blinking bleary eyes, he looked up at the woman leaning over him and never had a chance to feel fear as she said quietly, "Sandoval says 'go to hell'," then plunged the small dagger hidden under the pillow into the base of his skull, cutting his brain stem and killing him instantly. Moving quickly, she slipped into the closet where she found the hidden door unlocked like she was told it would be and was running towards her escape, the assassination taking less than one minute to complete.

"God damn it," Brody swore as they spotted Pasquino lying motionless on the bed, his eyes glazed open in a death stare, no sign of the woman who had just killed him. Striding to the closet, he swore again as he turned to Ian and Carlos. "I thought this door was supposed to be locked tonight."

"Obviously, an employee made sure it was unlocked, probably the same one who's been feeding Sandoval information about both the casino and Pasquino these past years." Ian was just as angry as Brody that they hadn't stopped this assassination and lost the chance to question Pasquino about his buyers.

Carlos closed his phone and shook his head as they looked at him expectantly. "Gone before our people got to the garage exit. The bartender just left, probably with the woman stowing away in the trunk and, since he was an employee, wasn't stopped."

"Sandoval's behind this, I know he is. I'll be right back."

Piper could tell by Brody's face that something was wrong. Rising, she looked up into his angry face, asking simply, "What?"

“Pasquino’s dead, assassinated,” he said brusquely, needing her to get down to their room before the troops got here and detained everyone for questioning. “Run upstairs and slip on your jeans fast and go back to our room. I’ll be there as soon as I can, but it’ll be a few hours. Wait for me, Piper,” he instructed her sternly, remembering the last time this had happened and how she had disappeared on him.

Piper simply nodded her head and got out of there as quickly as possible, not wanting to be interrogated along with the rest of Pasquino’s guests. She wasn’t upset about the drug lord’s death, in fact she was relieved, but as she entered their room a few minutes later with tears pouring down her face, she realized that Charles was indeed dead, had been dead all this time, and the small iota of hope she had unknowingly embraced, was gone. Which meant the only connection she had with Brody was also gone. Coward that she was, she wasn’t willing to stick around and face another inevitable rejection from him. He had a job to finish and probably another one waiting for him and she had a home, business and friends she wanted to return to.

Somehow, Brody wasn’t surprised to return to his room five hours later and find Piper gone. Despite the anger and disappointment he felt, he was too tired to try to track her down now. At least this time he knew where she was headed and it wouldn’t take him six months to find her. He and Ian had time to get a few hours shut eye before they were heading out to join the team Carlos was putting together to raid Pasquino’s holdings. Now that he was gone, word would spread quickly and those loyal to him will take what they can and split without giving the man who was their boss a second thought. If they wanted to gather any evidence at all, they had to move fast. Falling face first on the bed, his mind, however, wasn’t on the upcoming op, but on a small, black haired, green eyed woman who had him tied up in knots since the moment he met her and trying to figure out what he was going to do about it. One thing was for certain, he wasn’t going to wait another five years before figuring it out.

“Wonder what’s going on,” Ian said as they stepped out of the elevator on the ground floor and saw a crowd of people gathered around the front of the casino the next day. “The last thing we need is a delay in getting out of here. I, for one, am ready to put this place at my back.”

“I thought you liked the crowds, noise and activity.” Ian hadn’t said much when they discovered Piper gone, then again, he hadn’t been

obsessed with the woman like Brody had.

“I do, or did. Hell, this case has me so fucked up I don’t know what I like anymore.”

Brody smiled at his frustration, suspecting it was Haley who had his friend so confused. He could sympathize with him on that score. Prepared to shove their way through the crowd, both of them were shocked to see Charles Sandoval break through upon spotting them. Flanked by two suits who looked like the lawyer type, he walked right up to them and stuck out his hand.

“Agents Pearce, MacGregor. It’s good to see you again.”

Pushing seventy, Piper’s surrogate father had aged well in the past five years. His full head of hair was now completely grey and new lines creased his face, but otherwise he looked hale and robust. “How long have you known?” Brody asked him after he shook his hand. No point in being uncivil, at least not yet.

“I figured it out the night someone tried to kill me. Where’s my daughter?” Charles asked abruptly, his need to see Piper and assure himself she was all right his top priority.

“Piper left sometime last night, I assume to go back to Missouri. We need to talk. Now.” Brody didn’t have time to play nice. He had to get Charles where he knew he couldn’t take off again, at least until they had time to question him.

“Am I under arrest?” Charles asked him calmly knowing full well they didn’t have enough on him to do so.

“You’re wanted for questioning on a number of matters at this time.”

“Then questions can wait. I’ll speak with you, however, privately.”

“Charles, I have to advise you against that,” the suit to his left said, scowling at him in disapproval.

“Fine,” Charles answered coolly, “you’ve advised me. Agent MacGregor, if you’d like to speak with my attorney’s, feel free to do so. Pearce, we can talk in my office.”

“How do you know you still have an office?” Brody asked him as they left the others and Charles led him to a private elevator.

“I know.” They took the elevator to the second floor where the business offices were and Charles stepped into his office as if he owned the place, which he still did, thank God. Per his instructions from the private plane he had chartered first thing this morning upon getting word that Pasquino was

dead, his office was cleaned and aired out, his desk neat and ready for him to resume his seat behind it. Instead, he walked to the bank of windows that overlooked the strip and gazed out at the sights he had missed so much, but not as much as he had missed Piper.

Getting a new identity and living off the money he had stashed in a Swiss bank account under a dummy corporation had been no hardship and neither had spending the last five years living peacefully on a tropical island and traveling throughout Europe whenever he wanted a change of scenery. What had been hard was leaving Piper, having no contact with her, especially right after he realized just how much he loved her. And harder still had been the terror that filled him when he learned by sheer luck that Pasquino had been shown a picture of Christine and knowing it was only a matter of time before he discovered she had left a daughter behind.

“Talk Sandoval,” Brody snapped when the man just stood with his back to him without saying a word. “I don’t have much time.”

“I know.” Heaving a sigh, he turned to face the man he had taken a huge chance on to keep Piper safe. “I wanted to thank you, personally, for looking out for Piper, not just in these past few days, but the past five years.”

“How did you know?” Brody wasn’t surprised by his knowledge of the tabs he had kept on Piper, just curious about how he knew.

“Your face when you heard her and saw her that night. It was more than surprise at seeing her there, it was pure terror for her, the same as I felt. I suspected from your behavior when you returned from your trip to her graduation that something happened between you two, something that made you think of her as more than just a nice kid whose father you thought was a crook. I banked on it.”

Brody wasn’t about to explain what happened between him and Piper back then or now. Let him wonder, he thought irritably, just as she wondered what had happened to him. “What do you mean, you banked on it?” And just that quickly the light bulb went off in his head making him swear a blue streak as he visibly struggled to keep from jumping across that desk and plowing his fist into the man’s face. “It was you,” he accused him with cold fury. “You’re responsible for her going missing and returning in the state she was in. What the fuck were you thinking?!”

Charles closed his eyes to briefly block out the fury on Brody’s face before sucking it up and facing him head on again. “I was desperate. I don’t

expect you to understand how a parent feels when they know their child is in danger, the fear and desperation that make you do the unthinkable if it means keeping her safe.”

“Piper’s not your daughter,” he threw at him coldly as he remembered all the times she had looked at him with uncertainty and fear over her memory loss.

“The hell she’s not,” he snapped back, just as furious now as Brody was. “I may have been too wrapped up in this place,” he said, waving his arm in a wide arc, “to realize it until it was almost too late, but that girl is my daughter in every way except biologically, and I don’t give a rat’s ass who planted the seed. She took her first steps into *my* arms, called *me* daddy and it was *me* her mother trusted to take care of her. I was there when he wasn’t and that’s all that matters.”

“You weren’t there these past five years,” Brody reminded him.

“I know,” he admitted more calmly. “And that was my fault. I’m not about to confess to you about anything, I just wanted you to know that everything I did, from hiding out all this time to orchestrating her disappearance in a gamble that you’d run to her rescue and stay until she was safe was because she means more to me than anyone else in this world. There is nothing I wouldn’t do for her. I was hoping she’d still be here so I could tell her myself.”

“You know where she is and obviously you had help with your little scheme. I’m thinking your friend Doc. He would have the means to get drugs, drugs that cause amnesia, sexual enhancement drugs. Why that one, why leave her to suffer like that?”

Charles sank down onto his chair, leaned his elbows on his desk and rubbed his hands tiredly over his face. He had had some bad moments over his decision to have Doc give her the aphrodisiac, as a parent he didn’t want to think about its effects or what Brody had done about it. “It had been so long since you’d seen her, I needed to make sure you didn’t just assure yourself she was okay and then leave again. I was hoping if you picked up where you left off in Geneva you’d be more inclined to stay awhile.”

And damned if his little plot hadn’t worked like a charm, Brody thought derisively. “Pasquino didn’t know who she was last night, so why did you think she’d be in any more danger now than any time before that.?”

Charles stood again, needing to end this before he dug himself into a hole his lawyers couldn’t dig him out of. “You had your people feeding you

information and I had mine, and that's all I'm saying on that." He thought of Doc, Crack and Ashcroft, the only employee he trusted enough and whom he knew would be more than willing to help him out, contacting him with disposable cell phones to pass on information and the sacrifices they had made for him. Crack had moved to Hope just to watch over Piper for him and Ashcroft, one of his best dealers, had kept him apprised of everything happening with the Empire, especially after Pasquino had become a regular patron. It had been sheer luck to have Pasquino's man show him Christina's picture while he was gambling at Ashcroft's table and it was Ashcroft who had made sure both doors to the secret passage were unlocked last night. "I'll answer any other questions you have with my attorneys present and not until then. I was hoping to clear the air with both you and Piper. After I meet with the board and get caught up here, I plan to go see her in person. Until then, I'll be here. You know where to find me."

Brody didn't have time to argue or question him further. Some facts were obvious. There had to be a reason for the hit Pasquino put on Sandoval and there had to be a reason Charles thought Pasquino was a threat, or about to be one, to Piper. But obvious didn't mean provable and they both knew it. "Just so you know," he said as he turned to the door, "I plan on returning to Missouri, and Piper also. Your plot worked better than you thought." With that admission, Brody hurried back downstairs, anxious now more than ever to end this case once and for all.

Chapter Sixteen
Hope, Missouri

One Month Later

Charles Sandoval sat in a corner booth in Rowdy's, his eyes glued to the door, his body taut with anticipation and worry. Piper, the young woman it had taken him too long to realize he loved like a daughter, was on her way and he would have his first glimpse of her in five long years. He had no one to blame but himself for that, no one to blame for making the worst decision of his life by taking Pasquino up on his lucrative offer and definitely no one else to blame for the things he had done to try to set things right not only for himself, but for Piper also. He was back among the living now, back doing what he loved, running the Empire twenty-four seven. The Feds were off his back, finally conceding they didn't have anything on him concerning either his alleged money laundering for Pasquino or his involvement in the drug lord's murder except suspicions. Now, all that remained to be seen was if Piper would forgive him, not only for the jeopardy he had put her in, but for what he had to do to see that she was kept safe from his mistakes.

He didn't feel guilty for sending her overseas when they both lost Christine. He had done the best for her at that time that he could. Living in a casino, with him working around the clock, would have been no life for a young child, and, frankly, he had no desire to change his life to become a surrogate father for the next ten years. But he hadn't deserted her, hadn't wanted to and over the years, during those monthly visits that he had enjoyed more than he had ever imagined he would, he had grown to love Piper as the daughter he never had. But it wasn't until he saw her face, the look of utter shock and devastation when she had seen him get shot, that he realized she had become more important to him than the Empire that he had always put before her.

Neither did he feel guilty for the extremes he had to go to to free both of them from Pasquino. It had been relatively easy seeking out a professional to handle the matter. He hadn't asked for details but Doc filled in the gaps for him, guessing the duo assassins had worked together, planting the knife before anyone showed up, probably slipping a drug like valium into his drink, making it easy to lead him out of the room and to a quick, relatively painless death. Since Charles was still on Catalina when he got the call

about a murder taking place in his casino, there was no way to connect him to it. The professional hit team knew how to cover their tracks and his involvement with them and he was more than ready to put the whole ordeal with Pasquino behind him. He only hoped he could do it with Piper still an important part of his life.

Piper hurried down the walk towards Rowdy's wondering what was so important that Crack had to see her right now. She had worked her tail off this past week getting some new items finished for Haley's shop as well as fulfilling her mail orders so she would be free to attend the big retirement bash they were throwing for Sheriff Norton this weekend. Ever since returning from Atlantic City four weeks ago, she had been going non-stop working on her designs and sewing, and when she wasn't doing that, she was working outside or trekking through the woods on long hikes, anything to keep busy. The busier she was the less time and effort she had to dwell on things she couldn't change. By falling exhausted into bed each night, she was too tired to think about how much she missed Brody, how big her bed seemed without him in it, how much her body craved to be filled by him again.

Before Brody had re-entered her life so unexpectedly, she had gone months without sex, without even thinking about sex. But now, sex with Brody was all she thought about, that and the way both he and Ian had so protectively, irritatingly, looked out for her, the possessive way Brody had kept close to her that weekend at the Empire, the way her pussy would moisten and clench when he glared at her, the way he looked at her when he didn't trust her, the way her body ached to feel his hard cock slamming into her over and over, the way he smiled at her. And she had discovered that not even both physical and mental exhaustion could keep her from wanting him.

Entering Rowdy's, she vowed, once again, to put him out of her mind for good. Cole was coming back this way in another month or two and she'd be ready to resume their relationship again, the last hurdle to resuming her life.

"What's up, Crack?" she asked him as she leaned on the bar, glad to see him despite her busy schedule. "What couldn't wait until I saw you tomorrow at Sheriff Norton's party?"

"Who, not what," Crack told her, hoping she was still smiling when she left here. He had told Charles it'd be better if he let Piper know he was

coming, at least let her know ahead of time he was alive, but he had adamantly refused. It wasn't worth the risk, he had said, of Piper refusing to see him at all. Nodding towards the back, he said, "Just give him a chance, Piper, that's all he's asking for."

Piper turned, expecting, or maybe hoping, she would see Brody, but instead she saw the last person she had ever thought she'd see again. "Dad?!" she whispered incredulously before turning shocked, accusing eyes back to Crack. "You knew?"

Nodding his head slowly, he cursed his long-time friend for making her look at him with such disbelief and now, mistrust. "He'll explain. Go talk to him."

Piper walked slowly to the back booth, struggling to suppress both the pleasure and the anger consuming her as she sat across from Charles, her eyes glued to his face, his eyes shining with some emotion she had never seen before. "Charles," she managed to address him softly with little inflection despite the lump in her throat threatening to choke her. "Welcome back to the living."

"Piper," Charles choked, fisting his hands under the table to keep from reaching for her, heartbroken that for the first time she hadn't called him dad. She looked good, had matured into a beautiful woman who was the spitting image of her mother. The pain of seeing her again, of seeing Christine in her, was almost unbearable. "You look more like your mother than ever. I've missed you, Piper."

She had managed to get her emotions under control, enabling her to answer him calmly. "Not enough to let me know you survived though. I spent a long time mourning you." That last came out more as a painful accusation than a simple statement of fact.

"And I'll add that to all the other things I'm sorry about. Will you let me explain?"

He had never looked at her that way, with such caring and worry, as if he needed her now as much as she had always needed him and she found that late was better than never. "Yes."

Charles closed his eyes briefly as relief washed over him before he told her how his wounds were worse than they looked, how he and his good friend Doc had managed to get him out of the country, not out of fear of the Feds, but fear of Pasquino and what he would do if he learned he was alive and out of fear for her if he learned she existed. "When I found out you had

returned here, I imposed on another good friend to keep an eye on you for me, to let me know if there was ever a sign of a threat against you.” His eyes went from hers to across the room.

Piper turned, saw Crack nod at them, smile then shrug as if to say ‘that’s the way it is’. “He moved here just a few months after I did.” And she had never suspected that the hard looking, gruff ex-biker she had grown so fond of was a friend of Charles, there to look after her. “He didn’t mind?”

“No, not at all. I imposed on him at a good time, he was ready to lead a quieter, less stressful life, and from what he told me, he has grown genuinely fond of you, which doesn’t surprise me. What saddens me, Piper, is that I didn’t realize how much I love you until I saw you at the Empire that night, saw the fear and devastation that I had caused on your stricken face. Everything, and I mean everything, I’ve done since then has been, first, to keep you safe and second, to give me a second chance to be more of a father to you. Will you give me that chance?”

Piper barely heard him as certain pieces fell into place. She had been here, at the bar, the night she disappeared, had felt tired and woozy by the time she left with Crack and had passed out in his car before they reached her cabin. “It was Crack who took me until Brody and Ian arrived, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, him and Doc. You were perfectly safe. I remembered how you had taken Ambien in college and how it not only knocked you out, but you were one of the few who suffered the side effects of lost time and memory. And, before you ask, yes, Doc gave you a new aphrodisiac, a strong dose of it, when Crack relayed that Pearce and MacGregor were on their way.” At her recoil, Charles reached for her hand, desperate now for her to understand. “Please, Piper. I had to first get them here then I had to make sure the bond between you and Brody was reinforced to get them to stay until I could end the threat against you.”

“Pasquino didn’t know who I was,” she told him as she tried to wrap her mind around how far he had been willing to go to protect her. It was just dawning on her that he couldn’t have proven his love for her any more effectively than by doing that which he found abhorrent but necessary. And really, she thought pragmatically as she held onto his hand, hadn’t she benefitted greatly from his mechanisms?

“Not yet, but after seeing a picture of your mother, I knew it would only be a matter of time until he dug deeper, found out she had a child and

looked for you. I couldn't risk that. I'm sorry if what I, we did, caused you any distress. Tell me now, honestly, sweetheart. Have I lost you anyway?"

How could she walk away from him after hearing what she had waited so long to hear? How could she turn her back on him after all he had done to see she was safe here in her home, with her friends and the life she had made for herself? She didn't have Brody, never did, but it just dawned on her that all this time she had a father. Charles was sixty-eight now and she wasn't about to let any more time go by bemoaning past mistakes.

Scooting over, she wrapped her arms around him, whispering shakily, "Thank you."

Piper was still wiping tears from her face an hour later as she was walking through the wooded path back to her cabin. Charles, her father, had wanted to come back with her, but she needed some time to get herself together, time to just absorb everything he had told her and come to terms with having him not only back in her life, but a part of her life even though he would be returning to his casino at the end of the weekend. But this time when they parted, she knew she would be seeing him again, and soon. She smiled as she recalled the astonished look on Crack's face when she hugged him and thanked him for being there for her all these years. It wasn't often she could cause him to blush and he knew she wasn't going to let him live it down any time soon.

Now, if only she could have a happy ending with Brody. But she knew that wasn't going to happen. She hadn't heard from him since she fled the casino four weeks ago. Haley told her, often, that she shouldn't have taken off, she should have waited and talked to him, waited to see if he would ask to see her again. But she knew he wouldn't. The only reason he had come to her after five years of having no contact with her at all was because of Charles. Now that he was no longer the drawing factor in their relationship, there was no incentive to bring him to her.

Halfway home, the cloudy sky darkened and threatened rain, but the storm didn't bother her. Maybe she'd spend the rainy afternoon with her vibrator even though she had no hopes of achieving the explosive climaxes that Brody had driven her to, but maybe it would be a start to putting those experiences behind her.

"As if that's possible," she muttered as she came out of the woods into her yard.

“Still muttering to yourself, darlin’?” Damn he had missed her. Brody smiled as he watched her head jerk up, her eyes widen at the sight of him, her face paling then blushing as shock, pleasure and then anger suffused her.

“I know I’m not dreaming again,” Piper snapped, her shocked pleasure at seeing him quickly turning to anger at her immediate response despite his gall in just showing up out of the blue again. That nipple tightening, pussy creaming slow drawl hadn’t changed and neither had her response to it, and him. A month of no word and there he stood looking mouth wateringly sexy in tight jeans and an even tighter tee shirt, leaning indolently against his hot red car, those muscled arms crossed over his broad chest, his grey eyes gleaming with amusement as he looked her over in a way that had her pussy clenching in an effort to suppress the moisture threatening to leak out.

“Not unless I am too, which I assure you I’m not. In my dreams you’re naked and begging for more, not clothed and standing ten feet away scowling at me.”

“What are you doing here, Brody?” And then she realized just why he had shown up. “Charles?” she asked derisively. The pain that swept through her at the thought of him returning for the same reason as before was as sharp as a knife. “He told me you have nothing on him.”

“Sandoval’s here?” Brody hadn’t known that, nor did he care other than to make sure the man didn’t cause Piper any more pain.

“As if you didn’t know.”

“I didn’t, not that it matters. The case against Pasquino is closed, as is the one against Charles. I’m no longer with the Bureau, Piper,” he told her hoping that would convince her he wasn’t here because of Sandoval.

“You’re not?” Piper couldn’t be more surprised if he claimed to be madly in love with her. “Why?” she asked as she allowed a sliver of hope to blossom in her chest.

“Because I can’t keep working undercover, being gone for God knows how long stretches at a time when you’re here. Damn it, Piper,” he swore when she continued to glare at him skeptically, not making a move to close the gap between them. “I’ve been crazy about you since I first met you and I’ve already wasted five years fighting it and trying to do what’s right for both you and my case.”

“And now you no longer have a case, so you’re done fighting it and I’m just supposed to say okay?” Piper didn’t know why she was goading him,

he was offering her everything she ever wanted from him. Maybe it was because after wanting him for so long she didn't trust this sudden change or maybe it was because she was remembering the way he retaliated when she goaded him.

This wasn't how he imagined her response and he was at odds with how to convince her of his sincerity. He knew she still wanted him, her tight nipples pressing against her top was proof of that, but he wanted more from her than sex this time. Still, if he had to start from scratch in getting her to come around, he'd start with sex and work his way back into her good graces if necessary.

"No," he answered her softly as he pushed away from the car and took a step towards her, "you don't have to simply say okay. We'll work around to that eventually. I figure after about a year or so and I'm still here, you'll realize I'm not sticking around because of Charles."

Piper's pulse picked up speed as she retreated a step for each one he made towards her, the happiness spreading through her threatening to burst. The two most important men in her life showing up on the same day and giving her everything she had ever wanted was almost too much to comprehend. So she'd do what she did best when she was overwhelmed, she'd save it for another day and take what she could get for now. And now, from the gleaming intent in Brody's eyes and the large bulge pressing against his zipper, she could have Brody.

"And what do you propose we do in the meantime?" she asked him as she slowly peeled her top off while backing up another step. Thunder rumbled quietly and a few drops of rain landed on her heated skin, doing nothing to cool her down, the storm only adding to the recklessness running through her.

"Let's go inside and I'll give you an example of how we can pass the time until you come to your senses." The sight of her in that plain white bra that was quickly leaving nothing to the imagination as it got wet and those god awful, easily accessible gym shorts had his cock straining for release, aching to be inside her again, an ache that had been with him for the past month as he cleared the path of all the obstacles keeping him from her.

"You can work on getting me to come to my senses out here." Slipping off her shorts, she tossed them aside then squealed when he made a lunge for her, just barely evading his hands as she ran behind her garden bench and used it as a taunting barrier between them.

“The first thing I’m going to do,” Brody said with a wicked grin despite the light, steady mist now starting to fall, “is teach you not to run from me. That’s a bad habit you have that I intend to break.”

Laughing, turning her face up to the sky, she quipped, “You can try.” She never could resist him and when he simply reached over the bench and lifted her over it as if she weighed nothing, she found herself wrapping her arms and legs around him willingly, fusing her mouth to his eagerly. “Too long,” she muttered into his mouth as she opened for his exploring tongue. “It’s been too long.”

“No argument there, darlin’.” With one hand holding her head and the other clasp one soft buttock, Brody ravished her mouth, biting at her lips, dueling with her tongue, relishing the way she gave as good as she got. It took him only seconds to remove her bra, a few more seconds to lower her legs and strip her panties from her, all without releasing her mouth. Running his hands over her wet skin, he molded her breasts, rolled and pinched her nipples before gripping her ass and lifting her against his cock, rubbing her mound against his hardened flesh.

“Brody,” Piper pleaded as she pulled her mouth from his, an orgasm already teetering on the precipice of eruption, “Now.”

Now, that was his Piper, he thought with relief. “Most definitely now,” he said on a laugh as he turned her and bent her over the bench, placing her hands on the back and pushing her feet apart. “But not until I remind you what happens when you run from me.”

The rain was coming down in a steady drizzle now and Piper discovered that a hard slap on wet skin made the burn that much hotter. Throwing her head back, she let the rain pelt her face as Brody pelted her ass, the pleasure/pain she remembered so well building and sweeping through her with the intensity of the storm she saw brewing and heading their way. “More Brody, please, more, harder.”

“You want more?” he whispered in her ear as he took a moment to release his cock before he had a permanent zipper imprint along his shaft and then, before she could say anything else, he cupped his other hand over her bare pussy, relishing the feel of her plump, soft folds right before he landed a slap on that tender flesh simultaneously with the one he gave her right buttock.

“Oh God,” Piper moaned, the dual slaps firing up her senses on all levels, the burn on her ass now reciprocated on the tender flesh of her

pussy, the building pleasure almost too much to bear.

Chuckling at her uninhibited response, Brody slapped her again, her labia and buttocks warming with each stroke, the rain dampening her back and ass, her own juices dampening her folds as he kept up a steady barrage of smacks, moving from buttock to buttock, down under the fleshy globes to the top of her thighs then working his way back up again, all the while keeping up steady, lighter slaps on her pussy until she was hot to the touch front and back and she was pleading incoherently for him to fuck her.

Before he allowed himself that pleasure, he couldn't resist bringing her to orgasm with his fingers first, wanted to watch her face when she came on his fingers. Changing tactics, he rubbed her ass softly as he slipped three fingers inside her, her slick walls closing in welcome around him, her sheath a fist tight grip. "Come for me, Piper," he demanded harshly, hoping like hell he could hold back. Not even the cool rain landing on his exposed cock was enough to tamp down his need to be inside her again, to feel her clutching his dick as hard as she was clinging to his fingers.

Piper shuddered when he stopped, moaned when she heard him lower his zipper and then whimpered when he filled her with his fingers, his other hand soothing the pulsing ache he had built on her ass. Her hips jerked against his hand, and when he landed a lighter slap on her sore cheeks, she splintered apart, his fingers milking her clit even as she clamped around them, the feel of his other hand continuously rubbing then slapping her buttocks worked to send her ever higher as her climax held her entire lower body in a tight grip of never ending ecstasy.

She barely noticed when he grabbed her hips, but definitely noticed and cried out as he filled her with one deep plunge. He felt as big as she remembered, but she was so wet she had no trouble taking his entire length, no trouble feeling every hard ridge and delicious stroke against her swollen, sensitive clit. And absolutely no trouble succumbing to another powerful climax ripping through her, filling her senses with all the molten heat of hot lava, roaring through her body with an eruption of pure, unadulterated pleasure. When he cursed and she felt his cock jerk inside her with his release, she came again, this time with him as they rode through pleasure together so intense it bordered on painful.

By the time Brody was reluctantly pulling out of her still spasming sheath, the light rain had turned into a downpour and the sky had gone from milky grey clouds to roiling black ones. Picking her up, he tossed Piper

over his shoulder and ran inside with her, both of them laughing by the time he shut the door and lowered her to her feet.

“My clothes are still out there,” Piper stuttered, laughing.

“They’ll dry. I hope this passes before Gary’s retirement party tomorrow.”

“You know about that?” Piper asked as she went down the hall to grab some towels.

Brody grinned as she sashayed those red cheeks knowing he was watching. “Of course. I’ll be working with him for a few weeks before I fully take his place.”

Piper came out of the bathroom, her face once again reflecting surprised shock. “*You’re* the new sheriff?” She swore her heart wasn’t going to survive one more surprise today.

Brody walked to her, grabbed the towels, tossed them aside and drew her into his arms. “I told you I was here to stay, with you, darlin’.”

And for the first time since she met him, Piper let herself believe that they might have a future after all.

Six Months Later

Ian pulled up in front of Haley’s shop, his cock already hard and ready and he hadn’t even set eyes on her yet. For six months he had fought returning here to this small bumfuck town with its quaint streets, friendly residents and awesome scenery. He had managed to go a whole five days after leaving here last summer without calling Haley even though it had practically killed him to wait that long. When he finally caved, hearing her voice again was all it took to have his cock hard and eager for her slim body and shy smile, which he told himself at the time, simply wouldn’t do. They talked and talked and then delayed and delayed before hanging up only to repeat the same routine a few days later and every few days since. He didn’t ask if she was seeing anyone, she didn’t ask if he was fucking anyone. As a matter of fact, they talked about everything except that.

He now knew more about Haley than he did any other person besides Brody and he liked it. He liked her. But more than that, he wanted her. He just hadn’t figured out yet how to have his cake and eat it too and he hasn’t figured out what she wants. She had never let on in any way about wanting to resume their relationship, getting together again, even for a weekend of

nothing but sex, which just irritated the hell out of him. Now that he was finally ready to explore the possibilities of an all-out relationship with a woman, she was proving to be impossible to pin down. Brody and Piper's wedding was the perfect ice breaker and he wasn't above taking advantage of his required presence this weekend as Brody's best man to spend another night in Haley's bed and convince her to give them a chance at something more.

Getting out of the car, he hurried into her shop out of the cold, thinking the hint of snow in the air might be nice since it was two days before Christmas, but made for a damn cold wedding day. A young girl stood behind the counter and beamed at him as he walked over.

"Merry Christmas. Looking for a gift for someone special?"

More like looking for someone special he thought as he didn't see Haley in the shop. "I'm looking for Haley Parsons. Is she around?"

"Oh, sure, she's upstairs. Just go on up." The girl pointed to the stairs even though he knew damn well where they were.

"Thanks," he muttered, his anger at the way she told a total stranger the way to Haley's private apartment churning through him. Didn't the kid, or Haley for that matter, have a lick of sense? By the time he reached the second floor and found the door to her apartment unlocked, his anger had him cursing as he entered her apartment without knocking. "Damn it, Haley," he called out. "Get out here."

Haley couldn't help but smile when she heard Ian's blustering voice, and then practically went giddy when her body responded with just as much pleasure, her pussy warming in the hopes of feeling his thick, hard cock fucking her again. She had been surprised and inordinately pleased when he had called her a few days after leaving, and had relished every conversation they had had since. She felt as if she knew him better than she had known her husband when she married him, knew Ian almost as well as she knew Piper and she wanted him with every fiber of her being. But she never thought they could have anything except friendship, despite the awesome sex they had shared that one night.

She hadn't spent the past six months pining for him. She had dated a man she had known for years, a high school coach and science teacher, but soon discovered there were no sexual sparks and slowly let the friendship revert back to its platonic state. When Cole came to town and was looking to hook up since Piper was now with Brody, she hadn't hesitated to jump at

the chance of a few days of uncomplicated sex with a nice, really hot guy. But the only thing she got out of those few days were some mediocre orgasms and an even bigger desire for Ian. When Ian told her he'd be here for the wedding, she asked him to stay with her and was pleased and excited by the way he gruffly replied, 'Where else would I stay?' She just hoped the difficulty of getting over him again will be worth the pleasure of having him in her bed again.

Unable to reach the zipper in the back of her dress, she finally gave up and left her bedroom to see what had him so irritated. "It's nice to see you again, too." God he looked good. Still dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, his dark hair was windblown and his dark eyes were snapping as he glared at her across the room.

"That idiot kid you have working for you sent me up here without even asking who I was. I could be a deranged psycho for all either of you know." Damn but she looked pretty, he thought as he took in the deep red dress that skimmed her knees and hugged that slim body. But she'd look prettier out of it. At least that's what his cock was telling him.

Haley laughed softly. Was it any wonder she had missed him so much? "I told her I was expecting someone, Ian." Walking to him, she wrapped her arms around him and whispered, "It is good to see you again." And to feel him again as his arms came around her and molded her against all those hard muscles.

"Ah, fuck it," Ian swore tightly as he gave in to the inevitable. He was done pussy footing around this woman. Fisting his hand in her blond hair, he pulled her head back and simply devoured her mouth with all the pent up frustration of six months of indecision.

Haley could do nothing but meet him willingly and return his kiss just as eagerly. When he backed her against the wall, she was grateful for the support, when he slid his hand under her dress and ripped her panties off she didn't complain and when he grabbed her ass, lifted her and thrust into her all without releasing her mouth, she welcomed him with a wet grasp and a low moan. "Ian, God, I've missed you."

"Here's how it's going to be, Haley," he ground out as he ground into her over and over. "I'd go fucking nuts in this town day in and day out, but there's a position open on the Branson PD for a detective that I'm looking into." He withdrew until just his head was enfolded by her sweet pussy then

shoved back in with a well-aimed thrust, pulling her hips forward to meet his plunge. “God you’re tight. Where was I?”

“Right here, with me,” she answered still reeling over the feel of him taking her again with those deep, hard strokes as well as what he said. “You’re going to be working in Branson?”

“Maybe. Pull that damn dress down.”

Haley quickly lowered the top, glad she hadn’t been able to zip the dress and even gladder that she was braless when he closed his mouth over one turgid nipple and took a deep pull that went straight to her pussy. “Ian, I can’t wait,” she gasped right before she clamped tightly around his pistoning cock in the first of several spasms of pleasure. Rocking against him, she rode out the pleasure, relishing his deep, guttural groan against her nipple as his cock swelled and drove relentlessly into her spasming sheath jerking out his release.

“You’re just going to have to find a way to make this work, because I simply can’t get by with sex every six months,” he told her as soon as he could manage to speak again. Nothing beat coming inside Haley.

Haley giggled again at his irritated tone. He was abrasive, rough and blunt, exactly the opposite of what she had before and exactly what she needed now. “We’ll make it work because I can’t get by with once every six months either. But, right now, we have to get ready or we’re going to be late for our best friend’s wedding.”

Looking at his watch then lifting his gaze to look at Haley who was standing there bare breasted, her lips wet and puffy from his mouth, his cock ready to feel her clutching him again, he said succinctly, “What the hell, we have time to rip off one more,” before turning her to the wall, flipping up her dress and slipping back into her again, his hand coming down on her right cheek in a sharp smack. “We can blame Brody and Piper for introducing us if we’re late,” he said with a grin as he drove them both up again while thinking this town did have its finer points.

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