



**PLAYING HIS GAME**

**KIT TUNSTALL**

**MS Reader (LIT) ISBN # 1-84360-263-6**

**Mobipocket (PRC) ISBN # 1-84360-264-4**

**Other available formats (no ISBNs are assigned):**

**Adobe (PDF), Rocketbook (RB), & HTML**

**(c) Copyright KIT TUNSTALL, 2002.**

**All Rights Reserved, Ellora's Cave.**

**Ellora's Cave, Inc. USA**

**Ellora's Cave Ltd, UK**

**This e-book may not be reproduced in whole or in part by email forwarding, copying, fax, or any other mode of communication without author permission.**

**Edited by Martha Punches**

**Cover Art by Darrell King**



## **Prologue** ***Bobby's Big Break***

"Whoo, baby, I got it!" Bobby swept Mya into a hug, then circled her around the room.

Her hazel eyes shone with excitement when he finally set her down in the middle of their tiny apartment. "Really?"

Bobby's long, flaxen locks waved about his face when he nodded. "You're looking at the co-star. No more two-bit shit for me." He puffed out his chest, which was admirably displayed by the almost completely unbuttoned silk shirt.

Bobby still held her in a loose embrace and Mya pressed herself closer. She put her arms around his neck and hugged him tightly. "This is it. Your big shot." She started to kiss him, but he moved away.

He nodded. "I'm going all the way. This movie is shit, but some day there will be an Oscar waiting for me." Bobby's dreamy blue eyes went slightly out of focus. He stared into the cracked mirror in the hall.

Mya rolled her eyes because she knew he was either lost in his own reflection or in his dreams of the glory days that awaited him. She cast an eye around the hovel they had shared for eighteen months since their arrival in Los Angeles. Now they could finally afford something better—and more than that. "We can get married."

He blinked and turned his deeply tanned face back in her direction. "Yeah. Soon."

She threw herself against him and hugged him again. "I can't believe it's finally happening." It had seemed like forever while they waited for his big break. He worked in whatever bit parts he could find, and she had worked fast food, childcare, and retail. Of the jobs she'd had, Mya preferred her current one as a salesgirl at Macy's makeup counter. "We're going to be rich."

He frowned down at her. "This isn't about being rich, Mya."

Her eyes widened. "But you always say..."

A grin teased his lips. "This is about being fucking rich—and more famous than God."

She laughed along with him.

His expression turned serious. "I'm going to make it. I swear to you now. I'll do

whatever it takes."

Mya framed his flawless face in her cupped hands. "We'll do whatever it takes, baby."

## Chapter One

### *Introductions*

"Please?" Mya stuck out her bottom lip. "You promised to let me come."

Bobby's mouth curled. "It's going to be a heavy shooting day..."

"I won't get in the way." She batted her reddish eyelashes at him as she worked her fingers up the buttons of his shirt. "It's my day off, and I don't have anything to do."

He waved a hand around their new, larger apartment. "You could finish unpacking."

"Oh, Bobby! I'm sick of being stuck in this apartment."

"We've only been here a week, Mya."

She heaved a deep sigh. "I never get to go anywhere. You're always working or meeting with people." She clasped her hands together and rested them against her chest. "Please? Let me watch your brilliant performance again?" Mya batted her eyes at Bobby rapidly. She hoped to persuade him.

He still looked pained, but his blue eyes gleamed. "I know you like watching me, but you didn't have any fun the last two times you came with me."

"I'm sure they were off days," she said quickly.

Bobby shook his head. "You told me you wouldn't want to go back after the last shoot you attended. Have you forgotten?"

She remembered having said that and squirmed—mostly because she remembered why she hadn't enjoyed herself. When Bobby himself called cut, in the middle of a scene, to announce he looked awful in yellow, she had been embarrassed. When he tossed his bagel at an assistant during a break because it had onion cream cheese instead of plain, she had vowed never to return to the set.

That was before the unrelieved boredom of every day began to wear on her. The first time she was on set, he had been just fine. Surely last time had been an aberration? "Oh, please, Bobby? I can't stand to stay here another day." She trailed her fingers up his chest. "It's so boring when you're gone. I miss you so much."

He rolled his eyes. "Fine, but you'll have to stay out of the way."

She nodded eagerly. "I will. I promise."

To Mya's relief, Bobby's only colorful display had been minor. Earlier in the morning, he had flubbed a line and yelled at the script lady when she corrected him. Later—after prompting from Mya—he apologized to the woman. Since that incident, Bobby had been focused strictly on his work.

Mya's attention was drawn from Bobby's scene by the approach of a man with massive shoulders and the physique of a world champion bodybuilder. He wore a black shirt stretched across his bulging muscles. It said Security in gold letters.

"Ma'am?"

"Yes?"

"Mr. Thomas has asked to see you."

She frowned. "Who?"

"The owner of the studio."

Mya lifted the security pass on a string around her neck. "I checked in. "

"You aren't in trouble."

"Then why...?"

He shrugged, which sent the tops of his shoulders up to his ears. "I didn't ask."

She turned away from the scene to follow the security guy through the sound stage and carefully dodged equipment and people as they made their way to a set of split-level metal stairs that led to the top three floors of the studio.

Mya struggled to keep up as the man's long legs took the stairs at a brisk jog. She was a little breathless when they stopped on the second level before a black door with a gold nameplate that read Roarke Thomas.

"Go on in, ma'am." He knocked for her, then stepped aside.

"Come in." The voice was distinctly masculine, with a hint of velvet.

Mya shivered as she opened the door and stepped into the office. Her eyes widened as she scanned the recesses. Black carpet blended seamlessly into the silvery-white walls. Silver filing cabinets lined half of one wall, and the only other furniture was the massive glass-topped desk, a smaller leather seat across from it, and a presidential style leather chair. The chair was occupied, and she tried to discreetly study the man who had summoned her as she waited for him to speak.

His hair was wavy and brushed straight back. The rich sable shade gleamed in the sunlight that spilled through the glass wall opposite the one that looked down into the studio. A neatly trimmed mustache and goatee accented his rugged features. He wore a dark suit jacket and white turtleneck that hid most of his body from view, but she could see definition when he moved his arms. A blush swept across her face when she realized he studied her just as intently with rich brown eyes framed by thick, dark lashes.

"You're here with Waller?"

She stood awkwardly before him as she nodded. Mya clasped her hands together. "You are...?"

"Roarke Thomas." He waved to the only chair in front of his desk. "Have a seat, please."

Mya struggled to hide her anxiety as she dropped into the chair with what she hoped was grace. "Have I done something wrong?"

He shook his head and leaned forward to prop his arms on the desk. "I'm not concerned with what you've done, but what you will do."

"Huh?"

"What's your name?"

"Mya Langelles. I'm with Bobby..." She lifted the security pass.

"Are you his sister?"

She unconsciously twisted the modest diamond on her finger. "Fiancée." Mya shifted uncomfortably. "Are you sure I'm not in trouble?"

"Of course not."

"Why did you send for me, Mr. Thomas?"

Roarke leaned back in his chair. There was a strange expression on his face. "Does Bobby want to be more than a one-hit wonder?"

Her concerns lifted and relief swept through her. He wanted to talk about Bobby. "He plans to make it big, sir. He's been in four movies already, and..."

"Yes, I'm sure he's dedicated." Roarke steepled his fingers together. "What are you doing to help his career?"

She frowned. "I supported him when we first got here."

"Where did you come from?"

"Serpent Springs in Washington."

A corner of his mouth quirked. "Sounds charming."

She shrugged and averted her eyes to hide her homesickness.

He waved a hand, mentally and physically dismissing her hometown. "Let's cut to the chase, shall we?"

She nodded.

"I want to see Bobby have a long, successful career, and I can make that happen."

Her hazel eyes widened. A wide smile spread across her face, displaying white teeth. "Really?"

"But I can make sure he doesn't ever work in movies again."

A frown chased away her grin. "What are you saying?"

"I want something from you, and you want to help your fiancé, don't you?"

"What do you want?"

His smile bordered on feral. "You, specifically."

Her eyes widened, and her mouth opened and closed several times before she laughed.

Roarke looked confused. "What's so funny?"

Mya was busy scanning the office, searching for a camera. "Bobby arranged this, didn't he? His practical jokes..."

Roarke scowled at her. "This isn't a joke."

"Right..." She trailed off when she realized it wasn't a joke. "You can't be serious!"

"I'm very serious."

Mya jerked from the chair and strode to the door of his office. "You're a sick man."

"Poor Bobby," he said as she grasped the handle. "He's going to be crushed when I fire him from this movie. And he'll have to reimburse us since he didn't fulfill his contract."

Her hand dropped from the doorknob while she mentally tallied how much of the money they had already spent. New clothes for his image, the expenses of the move to the



new place, and a large down payment on the Cadillac SRX Bobby had wanted sprang to mind. It went well into the thousands. She felt sick when she turned back to him. "Why are you doing this?"

"I'm a powerful man, and I get what I want. I want you."

"But why?" Mya waved a hand down her body. "I'm nothing. I love someone else. Why would you go to all this trouble?"

"It's a game, darling. Some play it, and others get played."

Her mouth fell open. "This is all about some game?"

He nodded.

"You can't be serious."

"I am. All I want is your lovely body in exchange for Bobby's secure future."

All the money they would have to repay—and Bobby's aborted dreams—weighed heavily on her. She held his future—their future—in her hands. Could she do it, though? It was tantamount to prostitution. However, so much was at stake. She swallowed back tears and asked in a thick voice, "When?"

He opened a drawer on his desk and extracted a key ring. "Catch."

As he tossed it to her, Mya held out her hand to intercept the key chain. It was one of the simple clear kind, tinted purple, with a handwritten label inside. "What is this?"

"Where we rendezvous. 1427 Flower de Boliva Avenue. The penthouse, of course."

Sick, Mya shoved the key chain into the pocket of her jeans. "When?" she asked again.

"Every Tuesday and Thursday from one until—whenever we finish."

She shook her head. "I have to work on Thursday afternoons."

"How about Fridays?"

"I work in the mornings, until one."

Roarke shrugged. "Fridays, we'll meet at two-thirty instead."

"What about Bobby?"

"I'm not going to tell him." His mouth twisted. "I'll make sure you're home in plenty of time."

"How long do I have to..." she lifted her chin as she paused, "...whore myself to you?"

He seemed to flinch, but his voice was still cool and level. "Until this movie's in the can."

Mya shook her head. "That could take weeks."

"Months, probably," he said, and sounded entirely too happy.

"I..."

"Having second thoughts?"

She glared at him. "No." He didn't speak again, so she turned on her heel and touched the handle for the second time. Once again, his voice stopped her.

"Are you clean?"

She turned back to him, puzzled. "Clean?"

"Disease free?"

Her eyes widened. "Are you?"

"Fair question. Bring your test results with you to our first meeting, and I'll do the same."

"Test results?"

He nodded. "Go see a doctor. Have the usual tests, and we'll compare notes."

With a cry of outrage, Mya turned back to the door, threw it open, and stormed out. It wasn't until she was in the ladies' room on the first floor that she gave in to the tears. What had she agreed to? But what choice did she have? She loved Bobby too much to deny him his chance. They had promised to do whatever it took, and it was her time to live up to that vow.

## Chapter Two

### *Second Thoughts*

As soon as Mya had slammed the door behind her, Roarke wilted in his seat. He laid his head on the desk and took deep breaths to regain his composure. Had he really just done that? How had he done that? Apparently, his long-ago acting lessons had stayed with him, more so than he ever would have imagined.

He pushed away from the desk to walk over to the glass wall of his office that looked down on the sound stage below, where a crew was in the middle of shooting *Wilder Hearts*. He leaned against it and stared at the bustle below him.

How he missed it. It was the first movie to carry his name that he wasn't directing, but his brother had wanted a shot. Roarke grimaced as the actors turned away from the camera to do half of their scene before anyone realized it was the wrong angle. Maybe he should pull Lenny out of the project.

He leaned his forehead against the cool glass and sighed. Mom would rake him over the coals if he didn't give his little brother a proper chance or if he stepped in now. She wouldn't understand that they were already a month behind in schedule and a few million over the projected cost. A smile teased his firm lips as he imagined what she would say if he told her that. "*What's more important? Money and schedules, or your brother's confidence?*"

His conscience pricked him and forced his thoughts from his family to what he had just done. He felt guilty, especially as he remembered the tears in her eyes. Why had she been so put off by the idea? He wasn't a gargoyle, by any means. Women occasionally fell at his feet. There was a lump in his throat brought on by disappointment. What had he expected? Her unqualified joy? Had he imagined she would eagerly drape herself, spread-eagle, across his desk? Dream on. She was an engaged woman.

The best thing to do would be to release her. Maybe tell her it was all a joke. His eyes fell on the script on his desk. *Playing His Game* had been the inspiration for today's meeting. Hell, it had been the only way he could finally engineer a meeting with her at all. Her beauty had mesmerized him on the two occasions she had been on the set before today. He had asked around about her, but no one knew anything. Each day, he held his breath as he waited for her to reappear. When she came on the set today, he had been

determined to act on the opportunity.

He was distracted once again as her face popped into his mind. Mya was even more beautiful than he had thought when he saw her for the first time from the view his second-floor office provided.

She had been somewhat different in person though. For starters, she was about five-four, which was shorter than he had guessed. Her breasts were a nice surprise—firm and lush, and larger than he would have expected judging from the rest of her stature. They were just a bit more than a handful. Perfect.

Roarke stroked his goatee as he recalled her finely drawn features, straight nose, and sweeping cheekbones. Brown freckles adorned the bridge of her nose and swept across her cheeks to whisper secrets in her shell-like ears. How he longed to be those freckles.

Yes, guilt weighed heavily on him, but the anticipation over their first meeting already dimmed the annoying prick of his conscience. She was his to play with, although he didn't want to hurt her. She honestly believed he could keep Bobby from working again, so she would do whatever he asked. Roarke fought down a flush of embarrassment at the lie he had told. He had power, but not that much.

He fell into fantasizing about their first encounter before abruptly realizing the condo was still on the market and completely bare of furniture. He hadn't really believed it would work, and so he hadn't prepared a plan. The script called for the playboy to arrange weekly meetings in a hotel room he owned for the convenience of his myriad trysts. Having no suite in reserve, Roarke had impulsively settled for the next best thing. The keys to the condo he'd had on the market for over a month had been conveniently nearby, to his relief.

Unfortunately, because of a lack of preparation, he only had three days to get everything in place. He temporarily put a hold on the delicious erotic images parading through his mind to focus on practical matters. After all, they couldn't play the game without props.

## Chapter Three

### *Sacrifices*

By the time Mya and Bobby returned to their new apartment, she knew she couldn't go through with the bargain she had made with Roarke Thomas. They would find some way to repay the money. Maybe even enlist the help of an attorney. She wished she carried a recorder with her everywhere so she would have proof of his coercion. Too bad she wasn't the star of a movie or the heroine of a book. She might have been prepared for the bizarre situation had she been.

"Whadya think?" Bobby asked as he tossed the keys on the hall table before he unbuttoned his shirt. "Didn't I just blow your mind?"

Mya nodded, unable to summon a smile. She tried to recapture her previous enjoyment of Bobby's performance, but she was too preoccupied. How would she tell him? He would be so distraught.

His lower lip sank into a downward curve. "I can tell you loved it." He tossed the expensive red silk shirt onto the thick gray-green carpeting.

She noticed his sarcasm and forced a smile when she touched his bare arm. "You were wonderful, as always."

"Why didn't you say so before I had to ask you?"

"I've been thinking about something."

His eyes widened. "What could be more important than me?"

"Mr. Thomas called me into his office." She twisted a long strand of hair around her finger nervously. "He wanted..." She broke off as she searched for the right words. "Well, he started out by talking about you."

Bobby gripped her upper arms. "Really? What did he say? Did he love me?"

"He said he could make sure you have a long career." Mya didn't have a chance to add more.

"Yeah! He loves me."

"But, Bobby..."

"What?"

Mya bit her lip before continuing. "He wants something in return."

"I'll do anything."

"He wants me," she burst out.

Bobby blinked. "What?"

"He wants me to sleep with him to further your career." Mya's eyes widened when Bobby laughed. "What's so damn funny?"

"Seriously, what did he want?"

She glared at him. "He wants me to become his virtual sex slave for the remainder of shoot time."

He finally seemed to realize it wasn't a joke. "But that doesn't make any sense."

She frowned at him with confusion. "Huh?"

"He's surrounded by beautiful women all day. Why would he pick you?"

Tears flooded Mya's eyes.

He awkwardly patted her shoulder. "I didn't mean it that way, babe. It's just he could have his pick of any starlet. I don't understand why he wants my fiancée."

She sniffled, trying to fight back the tears. Of course, he hadn't meant to hurt her feelings. And he had a point. Why plain old Mya when he could have any woman? "I don't know."

"What did you tell him?"

Instead of answering, Mya said, "He threatened to fire you and demand your advance back. He said you'd never work again if I said no."

"My God! He can't do that."

She nodded. "I thought maybe a lawyer..."

Bobby waved his hand. "Too much of a hassle, and we have no proof." His blue eyes darkened. "I want you to know that I'm not happy about this, but I won't hold it against you."

Mya stared up at him with a frown. "Are you saying you think I should...?" She shook her head, certain she had misunderstood. "You really want me to...?"

With a solemn expression, Bobby pulled her against him. "I don't think we have a choice."

"We can fight this," she said against his bare chest.

"Mya, we don't have the money for all that. If he fires me and I have to repay the advance, how will we manage? Especially if he ruins my career. I'll have to go back to Serpent Springs with my tail between my legs." He patted her back. "I don't want to share you at all, and definitely not with that perv, but we're both making sacrifices."

She lifted her head and didn't fight the tears. "Not this, please. I'll work two jobs until we have enough to repay him. I'll even borrow money from my folks." The prospect filled her with revulsion, but she would do anything to avoid Thomas' bargain.

His fingers were tender as he touched her face. "I hate this as much as you do."

Her lips trembled as she recognized the acceptance in his eyes. "I can't do it, Bobby. I've never been with anyone else."

"We both promised to do whatever it took to help my career."

She closed her eyes and recoiled from his reminder, but was unable to deny she had made the vow. She was defeated when she dropped her head against his chest again and sobbed.

"It won't be so bad." Bobby's tone was soothing. "Once it's over, we'll pretend it never happened. It won't change things for us."

How could it not? The words were on the tip of her tongue, but Mya knew it was pointless to utter them. Bobby saw the long-term benefits of a short-term sacrifice. He was right—she knew that. Every fiber of her being protested it was wrong, but she knew it was the only option. She would grit her teeth, endure whatever that Thomas guy had in mind, and think of Bobby every step of the way.

## Chapter Four

### *First Encounter*

Mya took a taxi to the apartment on Flower de Boliva and used the key Roarke had given her to open the glass doors and access the elevator. She took it to the fourteenth floor, where she stepped out into the luxurious hallway. Her sandals sank into the deep carpet, which completely cushioned the sound of each step.

At precisely two-thirty, she let herself into the apartment. She tried to quell her nervous stomach as it protested her presence there. Her eyes widened at the bare living room and kitchen. There were no furnishings—not even pictures on the wall or a phone. The only items in the kitchen were a fridge, stove, and dishwasher. The white tile sparkled, and the scent of lemon cleaner still hung in the air.

Her legs shook as she walked down the hallway. Was he here yet? "Hello?"

"In here, Mya. The last room on your left."

The sound of his voice made her grimace as she made her way down the bare hallway. Two of the four doors stood cracked open, and each room was bare. A closed door separated her from him in the other room. She knocked on the black wood and felt ridiculously like she waited for someone important to admit her.

"Come in."

She took a deep breath, then twisted the doorknob and entered the bedroom. This room was furnished with a recliner positioned near the foot of the massive bed. He sat with his feet up on the footrest. A glass of amber liquid rested in the cup holder built into the elegant black recliner. A box lay on the bed.

"Welcome."

She frowned at him, refusing to answer. She didn't care how petulant her behavior seemed. It didn't hurt to remind him she didn't want to be here.

He waved her closer, and her reluctant feet obeyed. When she stood within touching distance, he handed her a sheet of paper. "What's this?" She stared at the crisp, white paper and tried to make sense of the black letters.

"My health report."

She dropped the envelope she held onto his lap before she looked at his page. Mya



had no idea how to interpret it, but assumed he wouldn't have shared it with her if it revealed anything negative.

He opened the envelope and scanned the pages. "Excellent. You're on the Pill, I see."

"Yes."

Roarke took a drink from his glass. He fidgeted with the envelope, then sat up so abruptly the footrest folded in with a snap. "Would you like iced tea? It's all I have on hand." He winked at her. "I know tea isn't the stiff drink you probably think you need to get through this."

She shook her head and crossed her arms over her chest. She ignored his banter as she studied him. Was it her imagination, or did he seem lost? Mya dared to hope he had changed his mind. "What now?"

Roarke had fantasized about this moment repeatedly for the last three days, but somehow it didn't seem to be going so well in real life. "Take off your clothes."

Her eyes widened. "Already?"

He shrugged.

She compressed her lips into a straight line. "Fine. Where's the bathroom?"

"Out here."

Mya shook her head.

He grinned up at her. "I only want to see what you're wearing under those shorts and that prim little shirt you have buttoned all the way to your neck."

With a glower, Mya unbuckled the belt on her khaki shorts and pulled it off. She maintained her glare when she dropped it on the floor. She tried to blank all thoughts from her mind as she fumbled with the zipper and button and pushed down the shorts. She shuddered when his eyes caressed the length of her leg from the hip to her toes in the rope sandals.

"Very nice." Roarke's erection hardened almost painfully, and he wondered if he could stick with today's schedule of events. "The shirt too."

Mya bit her lip as her trembling hands fumbled with the first few buttons. She saw his lips part as the shirt gaped open at her breasts. She struggled to prevent the flush as it blossomed on her cheeks. She finished unbuttoning the shirt and let it fall to the floor. *I*

*have nothing to be embarrassed about. He's the one who should be ashamed.* Her pep talk didn't ward off an attack of self-consciousness as he eyed her critically.

Roarke shook his head and clicked his tongue. "Chain store bra and panties, Mya? It's a crime to cover your luscious curves with plain white cotton."

She tossed her head back and resisted the urge to cover her breasts when his eyes lingered. "Why does it matter what I wear under my clothes? No one sees it."

"Bobby does."

She lifted a shoulder. "He doesn't care."

"Well, I do." He pointed to the box. "That is for you."

"No, thank you."

He smiled. "It's not a choice, Mya."

She frowned at him as she marched to the bed and ripped the box open. She faltered at the sight of the white teddy. Although she worked the makeup counter, Mya had picked up enough during her tenure with Macy's to know the material was real silk and probably very expensive. She was careful to ensure it didn't snag on the box as she lifted it out and laid it across the bed. "You want me to wear this?"

He nodded.

"But..." Mya couldn't think of a reason not to, and even the skimpy covering it would provide was preferable to complete nudity. "Where's the bathroom?"

Roarke quirked a brow, but decided to indulge her. "Through that door." He pointed to the door by the closet.

Mya scooped up the teddy and swept through the black door that contrasted so dramatically with the silver walls. The bathroom was as unfurnished as the rest of the condo, without so much as even a bath mat. Two fluffy towels were folded on the counter, but they were the only personal touches she could see.

In an attempt to delay the inevitable, Mya opened the medicine cabinet to snoop, but didn't find even one bottle or tube. She closed the mirror and sat on the toilet. She shivered. It wasn't really cold, but she was nervous. Forced to stand in front of Roarke in her underwear, she had been unnerved, but the teddy was so much more intimate, which made it even worse.

She firmed her lips before she unhooked the bra and slipped it off. The panties followed, and she laid both on the counter. Knowing the sooner she got dressed, the sooner the afternoon would end, Mya stepped into the teddy and pulled it up. She frowned at herself in the mirror.

The legs were French cut, with a narrow crotch made from sheer lace. A lace panel revealed a diamond of her midriff, the shadow of her pubic region, and a hint of cleavage where her breasts were pushed together at the bottom of the cups. The neckline plunged to meet the top of the diamond, and two spaghetti straps held it up on her shoulders. She turned around to look at the back and realized it was completely sheer except for a band of lace that fell below her shoulder blades.

She stared at herself in the mirror and wondered how she could walk out there dressed in that. His eyes would eat her up. How could she maintain a facade of indifference when her defenses—and body—were stripped bare?

Her head whipped around when he tapped on the door. "What?"

"Are you coming out?"

"In a minute." She tried to keep the edge of panic from her voice.

"Don't make me come get you. A tryst in the bathroom isn't on the agenda. Today, anyway." His laugh sounded more like the purr of a large, predatory cat than a sound of amusement.

She heard him walking away from the door and breathed a sigh of relief, but knew her reprieve was short-lived. Mya bent over and flipped her hair forward as she fluffed out the heavy strands. She stood up and arranged the locks to hide her breasts where the pink areoles were clearly visible through the thin silk.

With another deep breath, Mya opened the bathroom door and plunged into the room. Momentum carried her within three feet of the bed, before she froze like a deer in headlights. His hungry expression caused shivers to race down her spine.

Roarke struggled to control his breathing as he stared at her. A grin teased the corners of his lips when he saw how carefully she had positioned her hair to cover her breasts. "Stunning, but I think the sandals clash."

Color flooded her cheeks, and Mya kicked off the brown rope sandals. She stood near him while her arms dangled at her side. "Now what?"

"Let's talk."

"Talk?"

He nodded and waved at the bed. "You sit there."

She wasn't thrilled at the idea of being on the bed, but it was a better alternative than sharing the only chair with him. Mya perched on the edge of the bed, crossed her legs, and folded her arms across her chest, even though modesty was a lost cause.

Roarke racked his brain as he tried to remember the questions he had written down and memorized. "How many lovers have you had?" He cringed when he blurted out the question. He had planned to ease into questions like that.

She glared at him, but didn't refuse to answer. "Just Bobby."

He groaned under his breath and suddenly felt like the most deprived man in the world. "Why?"

"Because I love him."

"No. I mean, why just Bobby?"

Mya blinked. "We've been together since I was seventeen and he was eighteen."

"How old are you now?"

"Twenty-one."

So young. Had he ever been that young or innocent? The eleven years between them might as well be eleven thousand. "You've never wanted to be with anyone else?"

She shook her head.

"How do you know you love him if he's the only guy you've ever had?"

Mya frowned. "Can we not discuss this? I'll do whatever you want sexually..." She closed her eyes to summon the strength to continue. "...within reason, but I want to keep you—this—separate from the rest of my life. Otherwise, I'll go crazy."

He shrugged. There would be time for them to get acquainted later. "Fine. Do you like sex, Mya?"

She gasped at the question, but couldn't refuse to answer. It fell within the parameters she herself had set. She wondered how honest she should be.

"Do you love it, or do you tolerate it?"

"It's okay."

Roarke choked on the sip of tea in his mouth. She moved so gracefully, with an overt sensuality that inspired certain expectations. That was not the answer he had expected to hear. "Just okay?"

She shrugged. What was she supposed to say? None of her female friends enjoyed sex much either. They sometimes giggled over what a fuss their partners made about the act.

"Have you ever had an orgasm with Bobby?"

Mya blushed. "Yeah, of course." Twice, back in the days when they had first gotten together. Since then, things had fizzled.

Roarke saw the blush on her face and the longing in her eyes. "I see. How did he do it?"

She cleared her throat. "I don't want to talk about this."

"Just tell me, Mya." He winked at her. "While we're talking, I'm not touching."

Her face grew even more fiery. "He..." She cleared her throat again. "His tongue," she settled for saying. She knew she couldn't bluntly say one of the harsher terms and had always found the technical term to be even more awkward.

"Do you touch yourself, Mya?"

The way he kept saying her name caused tingles to course through her body. She frowned at her own response, disgusted that the sexy, growling tone could affect her at all. What was wrong with her?

Roarke almost laughed as she dropped her gaze from his. From her body language, he knew she did, and that she had been taught it was wrong. "There's nothing wrong with it. It's your body. Why shouldn't you know every creamy inch, curve, indent, and sensitive spot?"

"Can we...? Ask me something else!"

He lifted a shoulder. "As soon as you answer the question. Do you?"

She kept her gaze averted as she jerked her head up and down once.

"Are you good at it?"

Mya's hazel eyes clashed with his. "What?"

"Can you make yourself come?"

Exasperated, she asked, "Do you think I'd keep doing it if I couldn't?"

Her answer caught him by surprise, and Roarke laughed aloud. Her disgruntled expression only added to his amusement. He forced the grin from his face, because he knew his next words would piss her off. "Show me."

Mya jumped to her feet. "What's wrong with you?"

"I want to see how you touch yourself so I'll know how to touch you when it's my turn."

"Why would you care?"

She was honestly puzzled, and Roarke felt the first stirrings of anger for her inconsiderate lover. "I want you to get as much from this as I plan to."

She couldn't hold back a snort. "Right."

He shook his head, but didn't press the topic. "One of us will be touching you today, Mya. It's your choice."

Hot color invaded her cheeks. How was she supposed to choose? It almost seemed easier to let him do it and get it over with than to do something so personal in front of him. However, the thought of his hands on her made her muscles clench. She balled her hands into fists and felt the short nails carve half-moons in her palms. "I'll do it."

Roarke watched and tried to remain impassive as she propped pillows against the headboard and lay down. His breath caught in his throat when she parted her legs, and he caught a glimpse of the fine, red-gold curls at the juncture of her thighs.

The breath exploded from him in a sharp gasp as she pushed the material aside to slip a finger into her folds. As he watched, entranced, she began to massage the nubbin shyly peeking out from its hiding place. His eyes flicked to her face, and he saw she was too embarrassed to be aroused. With amusement, he watched her manipulate herself for half a minute before she assumed a twisted expression, shuddered a couple of times, and relaxed.

"Can I go now?"

He laughed. "That performance might fool Bobby, but it won't work on me. We aren't leaving until you come—for real this time, please."

She scowled at him.

"Are you even wet yet?" By the mutinous set of her lips, Roarke knew she planned not

to answer. "Shall I find out for myself?" He knew if he touched her he wouldn't be able to stop, and that wasn't part of today's plan. He had no interest in forcing her. He wanted to seduce every one of the lovely Mya's senses until she was as desperate for him as he was for her.

With renewed determination, Mya pushed her head back into the pillows, resolved to ignore his presence. She closed her eyes and focused on the sensations that coursed through her body as she caressed her clit. Random erotic images flew through her mind as she got wet. She brought a second finger into play to spread the moisture around and explore her deeper regions.

Mya arched her hips off the bed as she touched herself with an expertise born of practice. She grew wetter as her fingers increased their tempo and brought her closer to the brink.

Roarke wiped at the sweat beaded on his forehead as his amazed eyes soaked up every second of her solo show. His manhood throbbed with each beat of his heart, simpatico with each thrust of her hips. He longed to offer his assistance, but knew any reminder of his presence would shatter her passionate haze, and the temporary illusion that they were both here of their own free will. He couldn't bite back a moan as she completely encased two of her fingers, and her body started to shake. A cry broke from her, and he knew this was no performance.

She blinked when he moaned, suddenly reminded of his presence. She had almost forgotten he was in the room with her. Even the renewed awareness of his presence couldn't stem the tide of her orgasm as it washed over her. She shook with fulfillment, while tears leaked from her eyes. For a long moment after the last spasm had passed, she lay on the bed and struggled to regain her breath and composure.

Finally, she lifted her head to find his intent gaze fastened on her. She had expected him to leer, or maybe stroke himself from his front-row seat. Instead, he wore a tender expression. She was too tired to analyze it, or play any more games for the day. "I'm leaving now. If you don't like it, do your worst."

Roarke glanced at his watch, amazed that an hour had passed. "You're free to go—until Tuesday."

"Don't remind me," she muttered as she rolled from the bed. She kept her eyes off

him as she grabbed her clothes from the floor and rushed into the bathroom. She stripped the teddy off and kicked it across the floor so she could dress in her own clothes. All the while, she attempted to ignore the uncomfortable dampness in her panties. She would shower at home.

On her way out of the bathroom, Mya saw her reflection and froze. She looked embarrassed, but there was also a glow to her cheeks, and a sated look in her eyes. Her entire body felt relaxed, but she frowned when she realized she was still aroused. With a wordless cry, she denied what she saw in the mirror. She wrenched the door open and ran from the apartment without a word spoken to Roarke. She couldn't outrun the truth though.

As she flagged a taxi and dropped into the back seat, Mya shied away from admitting that part of her—a very small part—had reveled in having an audience. No! She had not enjoyed the role of sexual plaything thrust upon her. She had hated every minute of it. Only the dampness between her thighs countered her vehement denials of pleasure.



## Chapter Five

### *Details*

When Mya let herself into the apartment, she was surprised to find Bobby sprawled across the red leather sofa he had spent \$3,000 for. She glanced at her watch. It was just past four, although the afternoon seemed to have taken forever. "You're home early."

He shrugged. "There was a problem with one of the cameras. Lenny sent us home for the day."

She frowned. "They let you go for that?"

Bobby shrugged again as he got to his feet. "What happened?"

Mya dropped her keys and purse on the table and deliberately avoided his eyes. "It's over."

"You mean he called it off?"

"No. It's finished for today. I don't want to talk about it."

As she turned down the hallway toward the bathroom, Bobby followed her.

"Tell me about it."

She sighed. "No."

"You owe it to me to tell..."

She spun around in mid-step, catching him off-guard. "I'm doing this for you, Bobby. Don't tell me I owe you the details."

He nodded. "I'm sorry. It's just...I have to know."

"Why?"

"Was he better than me?"

She bit her lip, wanting to reassure Bobby, but not willing to set the precedent of divulging the details of her meetings with Roarke. To continue functioning normally, she had to keep those separate from her real life. "Nothing happened today."

He cocked an eyebrow. "Don't lie."

"I'm not! He didn't touch me."

Bobby put his hand on her arm. "I just wanna know..."

She jerked away. "I told you nothing happened." Mya stormed to the bathroom and slammed the door behind her. She stripped off her clothes and started the hot water. She

was bent forward to gather her hair into a large shower cap when she felt Bobby's hands on her hips. She stood frozen as he slid his hand down her bottom to touch her intimately. "What are you...?" She started to stand, but his hand on her lower back stopped her. "Bobby?"

"Reminding us both," he said as he stepped closer.

Mya realized he was naked as his erection brushed her thigh. Despite the way her body still tingled with arousal, she wasn't in the mood. "Not now, Bobby."

He pulled her up and wrapped his arms around her until her back was pressed against his chest. "I need you, Mya. I have to know you're still my girl."

With a sigh, she submitted to his caresses and moaned when he brought his hand up to rub her nipples. His other hand forayed inside her to ease his passage. "You're so wet."

It sounded like an accusation. "I didn't..." She broke off when she decided it wasn't wise to tell him she hadn't showered earlier. He would naturally wonder why she had needed a shower if nothing had happened. She sighed when he turned her around and lifted her in his arms. Bobby moved so that she was braced against the wall, then slid inside her.

Her softness tingled as it accepted his length, and she leaned forward as he filled her. Mya grasped his shoulders and began to thrust with Bobby. She tried not to think of anything that had happened earlier in the afternoon. She managed to ignore her thoughts as Bobby continued to push her bottom against the wall with each deep thrust. She was poised on the brink when she felt his fluid fill her before his erection softened.

Mya could have cried with frustration when he slid out and sat her on the marble tile. She continued to ache for fulfillment, but he already had that sleepy expression he got after making love.

His expression was brooding. "You were wet before I ever touched you."

She rolled her eyes. "How many times do I have to tell you that he didn't lay a hand on me?"

"Whatever happened, you liked it."

Mya turned away from him, too angry to speak.

His tone was still disgruntled when he said, "I bet that wiped away all memories of

him."

Her mouth fell open, and she spun around to face him. "Is that what this was about? You were..." She floundered as she searched for a way to describe what he had done. "Was this about comparison?"

Bobby shook his head and pushed loose strands of hair behind his shoulders. "It's not like that. I just wanted you to remember what it's like with someone you love."

"But he didn't touch me!" Mya winced at the shrill tone and bit her tongue to hold back a scream.

His expression became sad. "How are we going to get through this if you won't be honest with me?"

"How am I supposed to do this if you insist on fucking me after each meeting to remind me who I belong to?"

His lower lip protruded. "I don't like sharing you."

She tossed her hands up. "Fine with me. I'll call Thomas and tell him to shove it."

Bobby's blue eyes grew dark, and he shook his head. "You can't. We have to do this."

She sighed. "Just let me cope in my own way. Don't ask for details, and don't make love to me to mark your territory."

After a pause, he finally nodded. "If that's what you want."

Before Mya could respond, he had hopped into her hot shower. She bit back her annoyance and sat on the toilet, knowing Bobby hated to share a shower unless they had sex under the pulsating stream. She wanted to tell him that she didn't want any of this, but his spontaneous rendition of *Another One Bites The Dust* made it impossible for her to speak.

When he finally emerged, she was too tired to pursue the conversation. Mya got in the shower and yelped when cold water pelted her. She slid the glass door open a few inches and leaned her head out. "All the hot water is gone."

Bobby carefully wrapped his long locks in a powder-blue towel. "I noticed that too. Probably because you left the water running."

She slammed the sliding door closed, satisfied with its protesting thunk and the way it rattled. Mya's body shook as she tried to control her anger and repress the tears that

pricked the back of her eyes. It wasn't the lack of hot water—or even his ability to always make everything her fault—that made her so angry. It was a combination of the afternoon's events and his reaction—most especially his refusal to believe Roarke hadn't touched her. "I thought nothing would change," she whispered as the hair dryer turned on. She let cold water sluice the hot tears from her cheeks.

## Chapter Six

### *Family Dinner*

Roarke bit back a groan when Sam and Lisa made their big announcement. It wasn't that he wasn't happy for his oldest brother and sister-in-law, but he knew what he and Lenny were both in for as his mother's teary eyes fastened on the two of them. They sat at the opposite end of the white oak table, and both found their attention suddenly focused on their plates.

"When are you two going to give me grandchildren?"

Lenny's face reddened with embarrassment. "I'm not even married."

"It's no wonder since you never date."

Roarke shared an amused look with Sam. In point of fact, Lenny dated frequently, but Mom refused to acknowledge his male friends. She had dismissed his being gay as "just a phase."

To Roarke's discomfort, her brown eyes, the same shade as his, turned to him. He held up a hand in an attempt to ward off the interrogation. "Don't start, Mom."

She shook her head. "You need a woman, son. I want grandkids."

He pointed to Lisa. "All you have to do is wait a few months."

Deirdre didn't pay any attention. "You're thirty-two-years-old. It's time you married and settled down."

"It's the new millennium. People don't marry so young these days." How did she always manage to reduce him to feeling like the same guilty five-year-old who ate the whole blueberry pie she had made for Dad's birthday?

She shook her head as she pointed to Sam and Lisa herself. "Posh. You marry when you find the right one. It's as simple as that."

He sighed. "I haven't met the right one." Unbidden, an image of Mya popped into his head, just as quickly followed by the ring on her finger.

"All I'm saying is you have to start looking."

"Okay, Mom." Roarke concentrated even harder on the plate and pretended to be completely engrossed in his pot roast and carrots. Deirdre took the hint and dropped the subject.

After dinner, Roarke left the Mediterranean-style house, taking a seat on the railing of the porch. He took the script from his inside jacket pocket. It was dog-eared from his many readings. As always, the scenes following the initial encounter between the playboy and the girl did nothing to inspire him. As with most scripts, the passage of time was swift. By the next sex scene, the girl was a willing convert. Roarke felt his mouth twisting, knowing Mya wouldn't be so easily won over.

Fantasies about all the things he wanted to do with her came easily, but they all seemed too forward this soon into the game. Roarke didn't want to frighten her with his desire, and he didn't want her to hate him anymore than she already did. He had to come up with something for tomorrow's meeting, but so far nothing he had thought up was the right thing.

The sound of the screen door opening had Roarke looking up, hoping it wasn't Mom coming to continue their discussion. To his relief, it was Sam. "Hey."

"What are you doing out here all alone?"

Roarke shrugged as he bent the script in half vertically so he could stuff it back in his jacket. "I just wanted to get away."

The grin teasing Sam's mouth grew, giving him a boyish look. "From Mom?"

"Maybe." Roarke's smile gave his real answer. "Congratulations."

"Thanks."

"You ready for fatherhood?"

Sam shrugged, and a hint of doubt showed on his face. "It's scary." He leaned against the railing on the other side of the support post. "Ever give it any thought?"

"Nah. I'm too young."

"Four years younger than me, bud. That's not too young." Sam shook his head, which caused his brown curls to flop. "Mom means well, you know?"

"Yeah, I know." Roarke started to put the script away, but Sam took it from him. "Hey!"

"Another movie that's going to make you millions?" Sam flipped it open before Roarke could grab it back. His eyes widened. "What are these notes?"

Ruddy color swept across Roarke's cheekbones. "Nothing. Just director's notes."

"Mya would hate this'." He flipped the script open to the middle. "'Possibility once I know Mya better'." Sam looked up. "What is this? There's no Mya listed on the front page."

He snatched the script from his brother's fingers and shoved it back in his jacket. "Nothing."

Sam crossed his arms over his chest. "C'mon. Spill."

"Honestly, it's nothing."

"Who's Mya?" His tone was casual, but his questioning eyes were sharp.

"No one. There is no Mya." Roarke averted his eyes.

"You never could lie very well." Sam chuckled. "Fine, don't tell me."

"She's just a girl." *A girl I'm completely crazy about.* "Nothing important." *Why can't I stop thinking about her?*

Lifting a shoulder, Sam said, "If you say so."

"She's driving me nuts!"

Sam quirked a brow. "What?"

"I can't stop thinking about her—fantasizing about her. She's in my dreams, dammit." To Roarke's surprise, Sam laughed. "You think that's funny?"

"I never thought I'd see you fall in love."

"I'm not in love." He couldn't be. She belonged to someone else. He had only a tenuous hold on her, and there was no way she could ever love him.

With a snort, Sam clapped him on the back. "I hope Mya realizes how lucky she is."

"Yeah, she's in seventh Heaven," Roarke muttered under his breath.

Sam frowned. "Problems?"

"She hates me."

His eyes widened. "What did you do to make her hate you?"

Roarke hesitated. His actions weighed heavily on him, but Sam was probably not the best choice of confidant. He had very rigid moral views and would never understand. On the other hand, he gave sage advice. "We're playing a game together." He handed him the script once more. "This game."

Sam's eyes grew round as he read the brief synopsis of the script. "I take it she doesn't want to participate?"

"She's engaged to someone else."

He was succinct. "It'll never work."

"Maybe..."

"If you really care for the girl, don't make her do this."

Roarke's shoulders dropped as his brother confirmed what his own conscience had told him for days. "I know you're right."

"Good." Sam shoved the script into his hands. "If you're lucky, maybe you haven't ruined her life yet."

"Yeah." Yet. Despite his brother's words, and the prickle of his own conscience, Roarke knew he couldn't let her go. The game hadn't played out to its conclusion. And for him, the game was all too real.



## Chapter Seven

### *Dancing*

Mya let herself into Roarke's apartment, unsure of what to expect. Her stomach clenched when she saw him propped against the counter in the kitchen. A blush swept across her face as she remembered the way he watched her at their last meeting. She dropped her eyes and frowned when she noticed he wore a tuxedo. She opened her mouth, but he spoke before she could ask about it.

He smiled at her as his eyes raked over the blue and gold sundress that displayed just a hint of cleavage. She looked wonderful—fresh and composed—but the outfit wasn't suitable for today's activities. "There's a box for you on the bed."

"Is every session going to start with dress-up?" Her tone was sarcastic. She ignored the flutter of excitement. She had never gotten many gifts from Bobby, but that was no reason to look forward to something from Roarke. It was sure to be another teddy, which was for him, not her.

Roarke shrugged. "Maybe." His sanguine response hid his anxiety over their upcoming meetings. Planning their meetings was nerve-racking, especially with him wanting each to be better than the last. He had a feeling she wouldn't be at all thrilled with the plans for their next meeting. He didn't even know how she would respond to today's events, and they weren't nearly as intimate. "Go get dressed."

Mya walked down the hall to the bedroom, alarmed to notice he followed her. "What are you doing?"

Roarke gave her a lop-sided grin. "Watching."

"I don't..."

"I'm staying, Mya."

She glared at him, then walked over to the large beige box on the bed and carefully pulled off the blue satin ribbon. She lifted the lid and gasped. It wasn't lingerie as she had expected. Mya lifted the dress out to examine it more closely. It was a midnight blue shade with a velvet bodice and full satin skirt. There were no straps, so only her own endowments would hold it up.

With a glance over her shoulder to gauge his reaction, she pulled the sundress off and

draped it across the bed. Mya shivered as she felt his eyes slide over her body. She didn't have to turn around to know he watched her every move.

She unzipped the blue dress with trembling hands and dropped it over her head as quickly as possible.

"Beautiful, except for the bra straps."

Mya turned around and scowled at him. "It doesn't matter if they show."

Roarke shook his head. "It matters to me."

"Fine!" She pushed the dress down to her waist and removed the plain white bra. She heard Roarke's indrawn breath and froze. Mya lifted her bowed head and met his hungry gaze. She could feel her nipples harden as his eyes settled on them. It was almost like he was touching her. He lifted his eyes, and they locked with hers for a long moment. She had no doubts of how much he wanted to cross the bedroom and touch her.

The thought alarmed her, and she tore her gaze from his. Mya pulled the dress up and fumbled with the zipper, which she got halfway up her back. The back of the dress itself fell just below her shoulder blades. The bodice was lined with a slippery material that molded itself to her and caressed her body with every movement. The sensation, combined with the way he looked at her, caused her to shiver again.

"There's another box too," Roarke said.

She turned her attention to the smaller box on the floor. She lifted it up and removed a pair of high-heeled blue satin pumps. Mya kicked off her sandals before she slid her feet into the shoes. As she looked at herself in the mirror, she realized her hair didn't look right with the dress. She obeyed a spur-of-the-moment impulse and opened her purse to take out a brush and plain black barrette she kept to pin up her hair.

Mya started to brush her hair, but stiffened when Roarke walked toward her. Without speaking, he took the brush from her and began to brush out her long hair. Her stomach clenched, and her breathing grew shallow as his hands moved through her hair, gently wielding the brush and smoothing through the strands. He didn't touch any other part of her, but she found herself wishing he would. That thought propelled her to step away. "That's fine."

He nodded and proffered the brush before he stepped away.

She gathered her hair into a ponytail and rolled it up, then fastened the barrette to hold it in place. Once more, she looked at the mirror, and her mouth bowed into an O of

surprise.

She hardly recognized herself. She had never worn anything so elegant, not even for the prom. It seemed silly to waste the dress on whatever Roarke had planned, but she wasn't about to ask to keep it. She wouldn't feel comfortable wearing it again, and Bobby would throw a fit if she brought home a 'gift' from Roarke.

Thoughts of Bobby dispelled her mental fog, and she firmed her mouth as she turned to face Roarke. His eyes darkened as he looked at her. His expression made Mya shift restlessly. "What's with the dress?"

"You can't do ballroom dancing without a dress like that."

Mya frowned at him. "Ballroom dancing?"

He nodded as he walked toward her. When he stood a few inches from her, he said, "Turn around."

Her expression was suspicious. "Why?"

Roarke grinned at her. "So I can zip you up."

"Oh." She had been expecting something else. Mya turned around and stumbled a bit on the unaccustomed height of the heels. His hands steadied her for a moment before one hand slid the zipper down. A shiver danced up her spine as his warm fingers pulled the zipper up to the top and locked it in place. For a brief second, his hands lingered on her shoulders, then dropped away. Mya turned around, surprised to find her face within inches of his chest.

She stepped back and turned to the door, followed closely by Roarke. She left the bedroom and walked into the living room. Mya stood in the center of the room, wondering what would happen next.

Roarke walked into the kitchen and bent down to a cupboard. When he stood up, he held a portable stereo, which he set on the counter. He pressed a button and slow music wafted from the speakers.

He walked into the living room and stopped a few inches away from her. "You really are beautiful," he whispered. With a deep breath, Roarke put his arms around her and took one of her hands in his. He rested the other one on her back. "Lay your head on my chest."

Reluctantly, Mya did as he instructed and put her free hand on his shoulder. There

was something so intimate about being this close to him. She felt exposed. Even more so than she had on Tuesday, when he had seen her in that teddy as she touched herself. That day, he hadn't laid a hand on her, but now his body was pressed against hers. She could feel his rapid heartbeat against her cheek, and it echoed through her ear. He smelled of peppermint and a spicy cologne. A curiously pleasant combination that was uniquely him.

He resisted the urge to pull her so tightly against him that they couldn't dance. If his feet didn't move continuously, Roarke knew his hands would start to explore, and she wasn't ready for that. He ached for her, but held off. He buried his face in her hair and breathed in her scent. He tried to tell himself to be content with her in his arms, despite the layers of clothes between them. He lowered his head to the bend where her neck and shoulder met and inhaled.

Mya's eyes widened when he moved to her neck. She froze as she waited for him to nip her, but all he did was breathe against her skin. Her stomach clenched, and her nipples hardened further, much to her embarrassment. As his facial hair tickled her neck, and his breath whispered across her skin, Mya's head tilted of its own volition to allow him better access.

Unable to resist, Roarke pressed a gentle kiss to the sensitive spot. His mouth curved upwards as she moved her head. A small sign of acceptance, but enough to nurture his hope.

She shivered when his lips touched her. Mya's eyes closed, and she snuggled a bit closer. A dull ache started in the pit of her stomach and soon spread downwards. She sighed when he kissed her again.

His hands tangled in her hair, and he pulled the barrette out to let the mass fall free around her shoulders. He took a handful of the red-gold hair and rubbed it against his cheek. Roarke was relieved when the music suddenly stopped. He was shaky and knew he was almost out of control. He stepped away from her so fast she swayed at the abrupt withdrawal of his support.

Mya bit back a protest as his arms fell away from her. She lifted her heavy lids to look up at him with confusion. "What—?"

He smiled down at her and touched her cheek. "The CD ended."

She glanced at her watch. How had thirty minutes passed without her knowledge? She cleared her throat. "Yes. I was counting down the minutes." They both knew it was a lie, and Mya raised her chin. Her eyes dared him to challenge the statement.

He bit back a laugh. "You can leave now."

"Already?" She turned bright red when the question slipped out of her mouth. What was she thinking? She should be relieved that their meeting had ended so soon and without anything unpleasant first. She shouldn't feel even a hint of disappointment. Mya was seized by the urgent need to escape before he could respond to her question. She hurried around him, but froze when his hand fell on her shoulder. She turned back to him with a frown of censure. "You said I could go."

Roarke smiled at her, pleased to note the flush of desire on her cheeks—or was it embarrassment? Either way, it indicated a reaction to him. Rather than answer, his hand moved to the zipper and lowered it for her. When he let go, she rushed past him to the bedroom. Her flight spoke of a desire to escape. If he judged from her response to his touch, she sought escape from her own reaction more so than him. A satisfied smile curved his mouth. He didn't want to endure another night of frustration, but it was a small price to pay to leave her in the same condition.

His smile was chased away by an image of a naked Waller, eager to hold Mya in his arms. Unlike Roarke, she had someone who waited for her at home. Someone who would ease her frustrations. He almost abandoned his plan and stormed into the bedroom. Only the realization that he would lose all chance with her caused his feet to turn in the direction of the door.

Mya had just hung the dress in the closet when she heard the front door slam. She walked over to the bedroom door and peered out. >From this angle, there was no sign of Roarke. She went back to the bed, scooped up her purse, and left the room. There was no sign of Roarke as she walked through the condo. The only proof of their presence was the stereo on the counter and her barrette on the floor. She bent down to retrieve it on her way out.

As she locked the door behind her, Mya wondered why Roarke had left in such a hurry. He hadn't said a word before he rushed out. Had she done something that upset or offended him? Her mouth twisted. She hoped she had so he would let her out of this

ridiculous game. She ignored the little voice in the back of her head that said otherwise, ruthlessly squashing it as she hailed a taxi to take her home. Back to Bobby, where she belonged.

## **Chapter Eight** ***Roarke's Summons***

Mya didn't sleep well Tuesday night. Bobby had sulked the entire evening and didn't speak to her once. She was relieved to find him gone when she woke up later than usual on Wednesday. That made her feel guilty, but she was too consumed with a headache to worry about how she felt. She rolled from the bed and padded into the bathroom. After swallowing two Advils, she went into the kitchen to pour a cup of coffee.

She hissed with annoyance when she saw Bobby had shut off the warmer, despite the half of a pot that remained in the carafe. She dumped out the contents and started a fresh pot. While she waited for it to brew, she went to the answering machine when she noticed the light flashed.

When Mya pressed play, she groaned. Her boss' voice was as brisk as usual, although her message was a surprise. "We won't need you today, Mya. I double-scheduled, and you have seniority, so you get the free day. With pay, of course."

She frowned and deleted the message. It wasn't like Chelsea to give anyone a day off. The next message offered an explanation.

"Mya, it's Roarke. I wanted to see you today. I can't wait until Friday. I handled your boss, so don't offer that excuse."

Damn, his voice was as sexy on the tape as it was in real life. She glared down at the machine and wished she could retort.

He continued. "You should have a delivery around ten-thirty. Be at my office by noon, wearing only what's in the box."

She stuck her tongue out when the machine beeped, indicating the end of the message. He couldn't see her response, but it made her feel better.

Mya was distracted by the doorbell, and her gaze automatically flew to the clock. 10:34. Her visitor could only be the delivery Roarke had spoken of.

She didn't bother to change from the silk pajamas when she answered the door. A petite UPS driver stood on her step, holding a small box. "Yes?"

"Are you Mya Lang...uh..."

"That's me." Mya signed the electronic box before she took the package. Once she had

closed the door, she took the box into the bedroom and unwrapped it. She frowned when she lifted out the contents. It looked like a raincoat, with a zipper down the front, but was made from some lightweight tiger-printed material. The model on the tag was shown wearing it as a dress, with a scarf around her head, and blocky heels.

"He wants me to wear this?" She shook her head and held it against her. It was indecent. The material was so sheer it must be transparent.

She wanted to lift the phone and tell him to fuck off, but she restrained herself. Mya groaned, knowing she had agreed to play his stupid game, which made her at his beck and call. She left the scrap of cloth on the bed and went to shower.

When she returned to the bedroom, she slipped on a bra and panties before lifting the dress and unzipping it. She pulled it on and was surprised at how soft the fabric was. She zipped it up the front and looked in the mirror. It wasn't transparent, as she had thought. The interior fabric was woven together to keep some secrets of the wearer.

She felt uncomfortable in the dress as she walked out of the apartment and went downstairs. Mya flagged a taxi, carefully watching the driver's expression for any indication that he could see through the dress. He seemed uninterested in anything at all, except her destination.

Once she had settled in the backseat, Mya found herself wondering what Roarke had planned for today. The unscheduled meeting irked her, but she thought Roarke was probably testing her obedience.

By the time the driver dropped her at the studio, Mya was fuming. She checked in with security with barely a word, afraid to let her tongue fly. The same man who had escorted her to the first meeting with Roarke led her up the stairs. He knocked and held the door open for her. He nodded as she walked inside, then closed the door behind her.

Mya's eyes fell on Roarke, with his feet propped up on the desk. She glared at him. "How dare you rearrange my work schedule? I don't appreciate being summoned like a peasant to the king."

Roarke swung his legs off the desk and laughed. "I know, but I had to make sure you would come if I sent for you."

She walked forward and threw herself in the chair. She crossed her arms. "Do I have a choice?"



Roarke lifted a brow. "Yes."

Mya shifted. The choice she had was no choice at all. She sighed. "So, what do you want?"

"You're going to dance for me."

She rolled her eyes. "More dancing?"

A peculiar grin curved across his face. "Solo, this time." He slid his seat sideways and turned on a CD player. A heavy, pulsing beat issued from the speakers.

She shook her head. "I don't dance."

Roarke patted his lap. "Don't make me ask again."

Mya glared at him when she stood up. "You never ask."

He shrugged and leaned back. "Ever done a lap dance?"

Her eyes widened. "Of course not."

He laughed. "That's about to change."

Mya walked behind the desk and hesitated. "I don't know where to begin."

"With the music. Feel the rhythm and pick it up. Move your hips." His voice got progressively huskier. "Sit on my lap."

She bit her lip and tried to focus on the music. The beat was actually rather simple, and she swayed her hips to the music in no time. She deliberately kept her eyes off Roarke's face and concentrated on the ceiling. Mya sashayed toward him before she swung her leg over his chair. She paused and waited for the courage to touch him.

She looked down from the ceiling and saw his hands were clenched around the arms of his chair. Sweat beaded his forehead, and he had a hard-on already. She hadn't even touched him yet.

Mya slowly lowered herself onto his lap. His erection pressed against her thigh. She flushed when she felt herself get moist.

"Don't forget to move with the music," Roarke bit out through clenched teeth.

She wiggled tentatively and felt him jerk in response. Mya grasped the back of the chair with her hands on either side of his head and rotated her hips in a circle. He groaned, and she pressed herself against him to grind her softness against his hard shaft. Wetness flooded her, but she was too into her performance to be ashamed.

"Take off the dress."

Mya obeyed his command without question. Her hands shook as she unzipped the dress, but she got the zipper down. She tossed the garment over her shoulder and returned her hands to the back of his chair.

Her breasts were inches from his face, and she sat on his lap and wriggled around. Mya frowned when she realized Roarke didn't wear an expression of bliss or even frustration. He looked irritated. "What?"

Roarke shook his head. "You didn't listen."

She lifted a brow. "I'm sorry?"

Roarke touched the strap of her bra, careful not to come into contact with her flesh. "I told you to wear just the dress."

Mya's eyes widened. "You meant without underwear?" Her mouth opened and closed. "That's indecent."

He grinned. "I prefer *naughty*." Roarke sighed. "And you were naughty for not listening." He reached for a pair of scissors from his pen organizer.

Mya's eyes widened when she saw the sharp shears. "Wh-what are you going to do?"

He ignored the question and slid the blade under one of her straps. He cut through it with one clean slice, then did the same to the other one. He felt her stiffen when he slid the blade between her breasts. "I won't hurt you," he grunted.

Roarke made short cuts through the white material. The bra was thin and cheap, and easily surrendered to the sharp edges of the scissors. When he cut through the band of the bra, he peeled it from her, still not touching her breasts.

Mya instinctively covered her breasts. "You're crazy."

He laughed. "Maybe, but only for you. Now, move your arms and climb on the desk."

She bit back a refusal and dropped her arms. Mya tried to pretend he wasn't watching her every move when she lifted herself from his lap onto the desk. "Ouch." She fumbled under her bottom and removed a pen. Her shoes fell to the floor with two muffled *thunks*.

Roarke took it and put it in the pen organizer. "Turn more on your left side."

Mya shifted so she lay almost on her left side. She braced her hands behind her on the desk and put her feet on the arms of the chair.

Roarke swallowed when he was confronted with an unobstructed view of the crotch of her panties. They were thin cotton and almost transparent because of the moisture between her legs. He reached out to caress her puffy lips, but held himself back. "I think you like dancing for me." He forced an easy grin, which became more natural when he saw her embarrassed expression.

He took pity on her and turned his attention to the waistband of the panties on her hip. He slid the scissors inside and cut through the material. His hand lingered on her hip for just a second, before he forced himself to peel the material from her body. "Other side."

She looked pissed as she rolled onto her other side and silently endured his removal of the other side of her panties.

"Lean back and spread your legs."

Her eyes gleamed with anger. "No."

Roarke met her eyes, keeping his expression firm. "You chose not to obey me, Mya. This is your punishment."

"You bastard." Tears swam in her eyes as she leaned back on the desk and propped her feet on each corner.

His fingers brushed against her wet lips, and he felt his erection harden until it hurt. Roarke had to clear his throat before he could speak again. "Lift your hips."

When she complied, he stripped off the ruined panties and dropped them in the trash. She started to get up, but he put his hand on her stomach. "Don't move until I tell you to."

She grunted, but lay down again.

Roarke opened his desk drawer and removed the package he had purchased at a small shop off Hollywood Blvd. They specialized in catering to women's fantasies, but they had treated him with respect and not as a pervert when he wandered inside last Sunday.

He opened the plastic and removed the thin vibrator. It was made from some green jelly material and might have been inspired from the phallus of some magical creature. It was anatomically perfect, except for the on/off switch at the base of the penis. He turned it on and saw her head lift. "Don't move," he said again, more forcefully, and she returned to her head to the desk.

Roarke parted her folds and teased her clit with the head of the jelly vibrator. He felt her stiffen and jerk, and watched as her hips began to arch up in tiny increments. He slid the vibrator lower and teased her opening before he returned it to her clit. Once again, she arched against it, but didn't seem to be trying as hard to mask her response.

"Do you like this, Mya?"

She moaned, but didn't answer.

He grinned. "Do you like how it vibrates against your clit?" He allowed himself to touch her thigh. "Don't bother answering. I can feel your response."

He rotated the vibrator around her swollen clit, then moved it down again. "Would you like to feel this inside you?"

She whimpered.

He could see the way her feet arched and her hands clenched on into fists as he pushed an inch of the vibrator into her slick folds. He pulled it out and pushed it in deeper, enjoying the way she gasped with pleasure. "More?"

She didn't say anything, but she tried to buck her hips.

Roarke moved his hand from her thigh to her pelvis, where he pushed down with enough force to keep her pinned to the desk. "You have to ask for it, Mya. Tell me you want it."

She hesitated, seeming to be at war with herself. The tiny tremors convulsing her body gave her away. She finally relaxed and whispered, "Please."

"What do you want, Mya?" He bit down hard on his tongue as his erection transmitted what it wanted. He longed to throw away the vibrator and take possession of Mya himself.

"I want it." The answer was strained, but clear. "Please put it in me."

"What is it?" It was more than a little fun teasing her, but also painful. She wasn't the only one longing for release. "Can you say the word?"

She lifted her head and glared at him.

"You're moving, Mya." He withdrew the vibrator and turned it off. "I guess you can go now."

"Damn you, fuck me with that vibrator."

He didn't know which of them was more shocked by her outburst. Her face was bright scarlet, but he imagined his was too. He took a deep breath and forced himself to sound amused when he said, "Since you ask so nicely, how can I say no?"

She voluntarily laid her head on the desk and spread her legs even wider.

Roarke pushed the jelly vibrator deep inside her, until she stiffened and gasped. He removed his hand and allowed her to thrust against the vibrator. She seemed not to want him to do anything, so he held it for her. He licked his lips as she thrust upward and rolled her hips. A tiny trail of her juices trickled onto his desk, and he groaned at the sight of the fluid.

He knew the exact moment she orgasmed by the way she stiffened and arched her back. He immediately turned down the vibrator and pulled it out partway as her legs shook and her thighs tightened around his hand. He let out the breath he had been holding and tried to maintain his tenuous self-control. Roarke was too old to come in his pants without the assistance of a partner—or so he told himself.

She slowly sat up and covered herself. She still seemed embarrassed by the way she had told him to satisfy her. Her eyes avoided his.

Roarke felt his erection diminish enough for him to move without pain, and he completely removed the vibrator. He patted her thigh. "First time?"

She nodded and kept her eyes averted. "I wanted one once, but Bobby—" She broke off.

"Felt threatened?" Roarke finished for her.

Mya nodded again and still did not look at him.

He put it back in the wrapping, and put the package in a plain brown bag. "Do you want to take it with you?"

She shook her head. "I don't ever want to see it again."

Roarke frowned and grasped her chin to pull her face around to his. "Why not? There's no shame in pleasure."

Tears streamed down her cheeks. "I begged for it. It's just a thing, but I begged for it."

He chuckled. "Actually, you ordered me to use it on you." Roarke could see her wince, and he dropped the vibrator into his drawer. "If you change your mind, let me know."

She nodded, but her expression revealed she would never ask for it. "Can I go now?"

He shifted as his erection throbbed, but nodded. "I'll see you Friday."

Mya didn't answer as she clambered off the desk and searched for the dress. She slid it on over her nakedness, pulled her shoes onto her feet, and fled his office. She didn't look back as she rushed into the ladies' room and washed her face. Then she locked herself in a stall and sobbed out her shame. She couldn't reconcile what she thought about herself with the wanton who had demanded Roarke fuck her with a fake cock. How could she have done that?

She sighed and unlocked the stall. She returned to the sink and washed her face again. She fixed her hair and met her eyes in the mirror. She had a flush on her cheeks, but also a sated look in her eyes. Maybe he was right, and it wasn't a big deal. He had teased her to a fever pitch. She couldn't blame herself if his manipulations overwhelmed her common sense.

She ignored the voice in the back of her head that accepted a full share of responsibility for the interlude. Mya left the restroom feeling considerably calmer. Roarke was to blame for her downfall, and she had no choice but to go along. She shouldn't be so hard on herself for getting a bit of pleasure from his twisted game.

## Chapter Nine

### *Shopping*

As Bobby had done frequently during the past three months, he shopped on Thursday evening. Despite his cool attitude, Mya decided to accompany him since she needed a few things herself. They went to Macy's where she could use her employee discount.

Once he had selected two new outfits and a \$600 leather jacket she had raised her eyebrows at because of the heat, they made their way to the ladies' department.

Bobby shifted the purchases he held. "You won't be long, will you? This stuff is heavy."

She scowled at him. "I just followed you around for an hour. You could do the same for me." She motioned to the baskets near the register. "You could get one of those."

He sighed and positioned his body stiffly to show his displeasure when he returned with the blue basket.

Despite her protest, Mya found herself rushing through her selections, not wanting to keep him waiting. He was already angry with her, and she didn't want to upset him any more. Her parents and sister were coming for a visit on Saturday, and Bobby should be his most charming. Not that it would matter to her family, since they didn't like him. Not that the feeling wasn't mutual.

"Aren't you done yet?" Bobby's tone was strident.

She blinked and realized she still held the same shirt as when she had drifted off. She bit her lip and looked at the price. Although money wasn't a big problem anymore, she wouldn't pay \$115 for that skimpy thing. She shoved it back on the rack.

"Can we go now?"

"I need underwear." Mya surprised herself with the statement. She had just bought several sets of white cotton briefs and bras about two months ago. Even subtracting the pair Roarke cut off her yesterday, she still had plenty of sets.

Bobby sighed more deeply, but followed her across the aisle to the underwear.

Her mouth twisted with a mix of amusement and irritation when he checked out the underwear models featured in the large posters on the back wall. She turned her attention to the matched sets, an area she generally skipped over in favor of plain bras

and packaged panty sets. She picked up an emerald set and held it against her. "Do you like this?"

Bobby's head jerked in her direction as he tore his attention away from the salesgirl he had been eyeing. "Yeah, it's fine."

His tepid response had her replacing the set and reaching for a more daring black pair. "What about these?"

"Nice." His tone lacked expression.

She heaved a sigh and reached for a scarlet set decorated with silver beads. "Do you like this one?"

He didn't even look at her. "It's great."

"Dammit, Bobby."

He turned back to her with a frown. "What?"

"I'm trying to get your input here."

He shrugged and shifted the basket in his left hand to the right. He threw the jacket over his left shoulder with a carefully measured move. "What do I care? No one sees your underwear."

"You do."

"So? Get whatever you want."

"Fine!" Mya grabbed the black set, and the emerald one. She was debating about the scarlet set when her eyes fell on a midnight blue pair. She lifted it from the rack, eyeing the plunging velvet bra and thong bikini panties. Could she wear something like that? It was really pretty. She smoothed a hand over the velvet cups. Roarke would like it.

Her head snapped up at the thought, and she shoved the set back on the rack. What was wrong with her? The ballroom dress came to mind, and she breathed a sigh of relief. Her brain had made an obvious connection between the blue velvet of the underwear and the blue velvet of that dress. Nothing more. She certainly wouldn't buy anything with Roarke's preferences in mind.

"Come on, Mya. I want to get out of here."

She put the scarlet set in the basket. The blue bra and panties beckoned to her, and she added them too before she followed Bobby up to the register. She ignored him when



he grumbled over the prices as the girl rang them up. Mya turned a blind eye to his flirtation with Shelley and focused her attention once more on the blue set. She suddenly couldn't wait to slip into it. She would feel sexy and decadent, even if no one else saw it. *Roarke will see it.* She quickly blocked that thought as she followed Bobby from the store.

Later that night, after dinner, Mya slipped on a black teddy Bobby really liked, then slid into the bed beside him. His nose was buried in a script, and he jumped when her hand fastened around his naked shaft.

"What are you doing, Mya?"

She frowned at his angry tone. "Touching you."

He pushed her hand away. "I don't like it when you do that stuff."

Mya sighed and collapsed against the pillows. "I was just..."

"I should be the one who instigates all that."

She wrinkled her nose at him. "Why?"

"Because I'm the man."

She couldn't hold back a laugh.

He dropped the script and crossed his arms over his chest. "What?"

"That's silly. We have an equal relationship. That should include the bedroom."

He curled his lips. "I don't like it when you get all aggressive."

She forced herself to become boneless. "Is this better?"

Bobby grimaced before he turned his attention back to the script he picked up from his lap.

"Bobby, I want you..." She trailed her fingers across his bicep.

He shrugged her off. "Not right now. I'm busy."

"Fine!" She turned away from him and pulled the blanket over herself with a jerky movement. She viciously turned the knob on her bedside lamp. They didn't speak. He was too busy, and she was too angry. His rejection stung, and she forced back tears. She refused to let him know he had hurt her. It was long after Bobby had turned off his light and almost immediately started to snore before Mya was finally able to get to sleep.

## Chapter Ten

### *Bubbles*

When Mya let herself into Roarke's apartment, she heard nothing but silence. She looked for him in the kitchen and living room, then edged her way down the hall. "Roarke?"

"In the bathroom."

His voice was muffled by the closed door. She entered the bedroom and stood awkwardly in front of the bed.

"Come in."

"Oh." Mya walked over to the black door and pushed it open. Her mouth dropped when she saw he had transformed the bathroom into a lovers' dream. Dozens of tiny tea light candles lined the lip of the Jacuzzi tub. Soft music issued from the stereo on the counter, and a bottle of champagne and two glasses were at Roarke's elbow where the wall and Jacuzzi met to form a nook.

Most of all, there was Roarke, already in the bubbles. Everything below the tops of his nipples was hidden under the water, and she wasn't naïve enough to think he wore a speedo. Dark hair lightly dusted his arms before it became more profuse across his chest. Mya stared at his nipples without thought, until she realized where her eyes rested. A blush swept across her cheeks, and she lifted her eyes immediately, while she tried to ignore the flush on her cheeks and the glint of amusement in his eyes.

"Come on in. The water's warm and slippery." Roarke's lips twitched as she got even more flustered at his suggestive words.

Mya crossed her arms over her chest. "You want me to undress in here?"

He sighed. "I've seen all of you now, Mya. Does it really matter?"

"Yes!"

"Okay." With exaggerated movements, he took a washcloth from the wall shelf to cover his eyes. "I can't see you."

"Don't peek," she hissed at him as her fingers fumbled with the buttons on the side of her wrap-around skirt. Then she pulled off the halter-top and paused for a long moment. She refused to acknowledge her disappointment when he didn't even try to steal a look.

She had worn the blue set for nothing. She had constantly pulled the thong out of her bottom for no reason. Well, it was her own fault. He would have looked if not for her instinctive protest about getting undressed in front of him. Mya sighed as she folded her shirt and laid it beside the skirt on the counter.

Roarke lifted his head in her direction without removing the washcloth. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"You sighed."

A wicked idea occurred to Mya. "Well, I got sticky from an ice cream cone on my way over."

He shrugged, and still the washcloth remained in place. "The bath will take care of that."

"I think I might need a washcloth." She blushed as she asked for it. It had been the only one on the shelf.

Roarke froze and wondered if he had misinterpreted something. He handed her the cloth and kept his eyes squeezed shut. Against his brain's instructions, his left eyelid peeled up. He watched as she washed her chest with the cloth. She seemed to be oblivious to his presence. His other eye opened, and he gazed at her body.

After his initial double take, he realized she didn't wear the usual white bra and panties. His body hardened at the sight of her flesh displayed in the blue thong and plunging bra. The material invited him to touch, and his mouth got dry as he imagined how it would feel to run his hands over the cups, then slide down her stomach to touch the velvet panties. He would start at the string waistband and touch the smooth skin at her hip before he moved his hands to her buttocks. Once he squeezed her cheeks, he would ease his fingers forward, until he touched her velvet.

She started to turn, and Roarke snapped his eyes shut. He heard the rustle of fabric against skin and barely managed to fight back a groan as he pictured the scanty panties as they dropped away to reveal her completely. It was a relief when she slid into the water, and he was able to open his eyes again.

When Mya turned around after she removed the underwear and pinned her hair up, she saw the flush on his cheeks. Obviously, he had seen her. She resisted the urge to

preen for a compliment and ignored the discomfort she felt because she had enticed him to look.

As she settled lower into the water and sat on the floor of the tub rather than a step, she realized it was indeed slippery. The water was perfectly warm and slid across her skin like satin. "What's in the water?"

"Bath oil."

She lifted a handful of bubbles. "Just oil?"

He nodded.

Mya sighed when she leaned her head back against the cushioned rim. The tub's lip made the perfect pillow. "It's wonderful."

"I buy it at a little shop on Fourth. They blend it for me." Although the clerk had been mildly surprised when Roarke asked him to add pheromones to the mixture, because he hadn't changed the ingredients since he first tried a sample. So far, he didn't notice a difference. He always wanted Mya, and he didn't need pheromones to stimulate his desire. It was impossible to tell if they had affected her in any way yet. "I'll give you the name and address before you leave, if you want."

She shook her head. "I'm sure I couldn't afford it."

He lifted a brow. "Sure you can, now that Bobby's career is taking off." His mouth twisted, and he was barely able to spit out her fiancé's name.

Mya couldn't hold back a sharp laugh. "I don't think he would buy it for me."

Roarke felt himself frowning. Instead of pursuing the obvious question—why not—he said, "You could always buy it for yourself."

She shook her head again. "Most of my check still goes to bills. A lot of Bobby's money was eaten up by...stuff."

Before Roarke could stop himself, he said, "He's used \$500,000 already?"

Her mouth dropped open. "It wasn't \$500,000. It was about \$100,000."

He could add liar to his list of reasons to hate Bobby. Roarke could reveal Bobby's duplicity that second. He had records to back it up. He could show her that her fiancé had hidden \$400,000 from her, and she was still slaved away in a menial job for no good reason. He could deal their relationship a crippling blow. He looked at her confused

expression, prepared to lay out the facts.

He could destroy her with the truth. Miserable, Roarke said, "Oh. I must be thinking of someone else." He averted his eyes to the champagne, because he knew he was a terrible liar. But she didn't know him, so she wouldn't be able to tell.

"Ah." Mya studied him as he opened the champagne with a pop. He barely lost any foam before he poured them each a glass. His shoulders were stiff, and he seemed to deliberately avoid her eyes. Had he lied to her? She pushed that thought away quickly, because she knew it would lead her to thoughts about Bobby she didn't want to explore. "Thank you." She took the glass he held out and sipped. Bubbles tickled her nose and caused it to wrinkle.

He stared at her and wondered if she knew how adorable she was. With her nose wrinkled, the freckles blurred together, and her eyes got crinkly, which gave her a giddy look. "Do you like champagne?"

She shrugged, but took another drink. "I've never really had it before. One glass years ago at my brother's wedding is all."

"Oh." Roarke watched as she drained the glass in four swallows. He almost felt wicked when he refilled it for her before he took a first sip from his glass.

Mya sat up, rolling her shoulders. "Does this have those jet things?"

"Yes." Roarke lifted a small panel on the wall to turn on the jets. Within seconds, the water bubbled around them, and the foam on the bath stirred agitatedly. He saw her roll her neck. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah." Mya took another sip of the champagne, allowing its bubbling warmth to spread through her, bringing a haze of relaxation with it. "It was a long day."

"Your neck hurts?"

"And my shoulders." Mya's eyes widened as he put his glass in the corner and slid toward her. "What are you doing?" Her voice emerged as a squeak, and she covered her breasts with her arms even though he couldn't see them through the thick layer of bubbles.

"I'm going to give you a massage."

She shook her head as he took her arm and pulled her up and away from the edge of the tub. As he brought her back with him to his corner, she said, "You don't have to."

Roarke settled on the step and pushed her down so that she sat on the bottom of the tub with her back to him. "I want to."

"Really, there's no need...ahh." She moaned when his hands settled on her shoulders and slid across her skin with ease because of the oily water. As he worked the muscles, she slowly relaxed.

Roarke couldn't concentrate when she made breathless little sounds in the back of her throat. They grew more frequent as he dug his fingers deep into her skin to loosen the tension. As she grew relaxed, she leaned against him until her back was pressed against his stomach. Her lower back was a mere inch from his groin, and he gave into temptation. He thrust his hips forward just a bit. He felt her stiffen when his erection touched her, and he redoubled his efforts with the massage.

Her eyes widened when he pressed into her back and Mya started to pull away, but the massage felt too good to stop. Her eyes grew heavy as the champagne and his touch made her too languid to move. Instead, she cuddled closer and left no room for Roarke to continue the massage. Her neck rested against his right forearm, and she rubbed her cheek against the wet hair. "That feels good."

"I'm not doing anything." His voice was husky, and he cleared his throat.

"Your hands..." She trailed off, unable to summon the energy to explain that the way he continued to apply pressure on a particularly painful spot caused it to relax.

Roarke lifted her and slid off the step so that he sat on the tub's floor. He settled her into his lap and held her against him. His arms were wrapped around her waist, and she didn't protest. To his surprise, she shifted so that she was closer to him and leaned her head back against his shoulder. She didn't mention his erection where it pressed against her bottom, and he tried to ignore the pleasure/pain of his erection's proximity to her folds, because he knew he couldn't make love to her yet.

When he slid his hand up her stomach to just under her breast, he held his breath. He waited for her protest for several endless seconds. When she still didn't say anything, he flicked his thumb across the turgid peak. She moaned a little, then shifted restlessly and brought his erection more fully between her legs. *You're not doing anything today*, he reminded himself even as he thrust his hips up to nestle his shaft nearer her folds.

Mya felt him move again and knew she should pull away, but she was too sleepy. Her

lids felt weighted, and she yawned. Besides, it felt too good to move. Why bother? They hadn't really done anything.

Roarke sighed when he heard her yawn. The explanation for her compliance became clear—too much champagne coupled with the hot bath and massage. "Are you sleepy?"

"Um hmm."

Despite his frustration, Roarke was able to smile at her hazy response. He moved away from Mya before he propped her against the side of the tub while he got out. His erection was painful, but he wouldn't do anything to relieve it while she was in this condition.

He wiped away the foam and some of the oil with one of the towels before he lifted her from the tub. They both needed to shower, but he didn't want to have to hold her up in the large shower stall while he washed both of them. She could remove the oily residue later, once she woke up.

She leaned against him, sweet and cuddly, while he dried her off. He lifted her again, and she sighed. Mya curled against him like she was made to fit in the cradle of his arms when he carried her into the bedroom. He balanced her with one arm while he pulled back the new cover, then laid her on the silver silk sheets. He put the blanket over her before he returned to the bathroom to blow out the candles, shower, and get dressed.

Roarke dropped his pants when he realized he was at least a little sleepy. He looked at himself in the mirror, traded wicked grins with his reflection, and lifted his pants to put them back on the shelf.

He reentered the bedroom and stopped to look at her for a moment. She slept peacefully, and tiny sighs issued from her every few minutes. He walked over to the bed and slid in on the free side. She rolled right into his arms and pressed her bottom against his groin as he wrapped his arms around her. As they spooned, Roarke realized he really was tired, and his eyes closed too, until they were both asleep.

## Chapter Eleven

### *After The Nap*

Mya stretched, and her legs tangled with another pair. They felt different from Bobby's. She opened her eyes slowly and felt disoriented. Roarke lay beside her with his eyes wide open as he watched her. He had a strand of her hair wrapped around his finger. A gentle smile teased his lips. "What happened?" She sounded hoarse, and her head ached.

"You took a nap. I joined you."

"Oh." She frowned, while she tried to remember what had precipitated the nap. She remembered the bath and massage; the two glasses of champagne; deliberately enticing him to look at her... She groaned.

"What's wrong?" Roarke touched her cheek.

"I feel a little sick."

"It'll pass. A shower will perk you up."

She bit her lip and mustered her courage. She didn't feel like they had, but she needed to ask. "Did we...?"

Roarke's eyes widened. "Of course not!" He winced at his sharp tone, but couldn't pretend she hadn't offended him. "You were in no shape, and I'm not into passivity."

Behind his anger, Mya could see genuine hurt in his eyes, and it gave her a pang in the pit of her stomach. "I'm sorry." Why had she apologized? It was a logical assumption that he would have taken her when she was passed out. It would have fit in with his ruthless personality.

But he wasn't really ruthless. She could see that from the way he treated her. For two weeks, the opportunity to force her into his bed had been open to him. Mya was in no position to refuse him, but he hadn't pressed her. He hadn't done anything but try to please her. She was always the focus of their encounters. Roarke seemed concerned only with her gratification.

He shrugged. "Do you want that shower?" His tone was still cool, although he hadn't meant for it to emerge that way. She had every right to assume he would take advantage of her. Hadn't he already?



She nodded and slid from the bed. When she stood up, Mya realized she was completely naked. She froze and scanned the room for her clothes.

Roarke's breath got trapped in his throat as he looked his fill of her nude perfection. When he had lifted her from the bath, his attention was focused on how to get her to the bed, rather than what she looked like. The lamp he had clicked on when he woke up served to illuminate the creaminess of her skin and cast shadows across her body, while it exposed other delectable parts. The oil from the bath left on her skin gave it a shiny, almost translucent quality. She was well proportioned, with pert breasts, and shapely legs. Her abs were defined, and muscles in her arms rippled under the skin as she reached for the sheet. She was lithe and toned. He could stare at her all day. He would love to touch her all night.

She broke his trance when she fastened the flat sheet around her, sarong-style. Most of her hair had come undone from the barrette, and it cascaded over her shoulders. He could easily imagine her as the queen of an island. He would gladly do her bidding; worship her always and get down on his knees to pray. He dismissed his fancies with a soft sigh. "There's a fresh towel for you on the counter by the sink."

Mya hurried into the bathroom to escape the hunger in his eyes—the hunger she suspected was mirrored in hers. Her body still tingled, as if his eyes had been hands and had stroked her most private places.

She turned on the faucets, then entered the spray. The water was almost hot enough to hurt, but it felt good too. As she washed away the traces of oil from the bath, Mya tried to wash away the uncomfortable truth that she wanted Roarke.

She touched the ring on her left hand. It was tangible proof she was Bobby's woman. Mya had no business thinking about Roarke the way she was. It was bad enough having to play his game, but she certainly shouldn't be enjoying it, or looking forward to the next round. She shouldn't imagine it was his hands washing her. She definitely shouldn't wish that she hadn't left that spacious bed. If she was still laying with him, he would be touching her. His hands on her body; not hers.

Her breathing grew ragged as she imagined Roarke's hands on her. She leaned her head against the warm tile and entertained thoughts of asking him to wash her back. She fantasized that he would throw open the glass doors, storm into the shower, pin her to the

wall, and make her his. There would be no time for protests. She would be caught in the onslaught of his passion—willingly, eagerly, even.

Time! Mya's eyes popped open, and her hand fell away from between her thighs. What time was it? The window in the bathroom was covered by a security shutter, so she couldn't see out. She was well-rested, and the shower had revived her. She felt like she had slept for hours.

Mya rinsed the remainder of the soap away and shut off the water before she stepped onto the bare floor. She took a folded towel from the counter and wrapped its fluffy folds around her. She lifted the other towel, which smelled faintly of soap and Roarke, and briskly dried her hair. She dropped it back on the counter and removed the towel around her. After a quick rubdown, she threw on her underwear, the wrap-around skirt, and the halter. She found her shoes under the sink.

Mya skipped all other grooming rituals and rushed back into the bedroom. Roarke sat in the recliner, wrapped in the comforter from the bed. She frowned at his nakedness. "Why aren't you dressed?"

"My clothes were in the bathroom."

"Oh." Mya frowned at her asinine question. "What time is it? I don't have my watch."

Roarke glanced down at his Rolex. "Three-twelve."

"In the afternoon?"

He almost laughed at her blatantly hopeful tone. "A.M."

"Shit!"

"Don't worry. I'll help you think of something to tell Bobby so he won't know."

She shook her head. "He already knows. It's my parents and sister I'm worried about. They'll be here in three-and-a-half hours. With the nightmare at the airports these days, we'll need to be there by five."

"He knows?"

Mya's head lifted at Roarke's cold tone. "What?"

"Bobby knows about our—arrangement?"

She lifted an eyebrow. "Yeah. Are you listening to me? I've been out half the night, and my family will be here soon." She went to the nightstand before she remembered he

had no phone. "God! How can you live without a phone? I need a taxi."

Roarke struggled to suppress his anger as he rose from the recliner. "I'll drive you home. Your apartment is on my way."

She frowned. "Your way?"

"I don't live here, Mya." Despite his preoccupation with thoughts of strangling Bobby, he was able to muster a small laugh. "This place isn't even Spartan. No one could live here." But if she was in his bed, day after day, he would be willing to try.

He saw her anxious pacing and sighed. Without waiting for a response, Roarke went into the steamy bathroom to put on his clothes. When reentering the bedroom a few minutes later, he found Mya standing by the door. "I guess you're ready?"

She nodded. What was Bobby going to say when she showed up at this hour? How could she have been so careless as to fall asleep? The champagne and massage had been too much relaxation, and she had been so tired. Would he understand that? Would he believe that nothing had happened besides a bath and a nap? She closed her eyes and bit back a sigh. She knew the answer already. The best course of action was to not tell him anything. She would just apologize profusely and hope he dropped the issue.

Roarke followed her from the condo and struggled to keep up with the pace she set as they hurried to the elevator. She didn't slow down until they were in the parking garage attached to the lower floor. She was forced to wait for him as he led the way to a black Lotus, which he unlocked with the remote on his key chain.

Once in the passenger seat, she fidgeted with her purse strap, chewed on her thumbnail, and stole peeks at the radio's clock. The yellow-orange numbers seemed to glow brighter with each passing minute. "He's going to be so mad."

"He'll understand." Bobby must be very understanding if he'd let Mya enter this ridiculous game. Roarke's mouth twisted. Or he was a selfish pig. How could he stand by and let Roarke coerce Mya into bed? If she was his fiancée, no man would ever touch her again. He would give up anything and everything for her. His career wouldn't have meant anything next to Mya. "Why are you with that bastard?" Roarke silently cursed himself when he blurted out the question.

Mya's attention had been focused on rehearsing what she would say to Bobby when she got home, so it took her a moment for his words to sink in. "What?"

He shook his head, deciding discretion was the better part of valor. "Never mind."

She frowned at him and wondered why he had abandoned the question. She chose to answer anyway. "I love him."

Her voice lacked conviction. He had no trouble detecting the note of uncertainty in her tone. "Why?"

Mya's reaction surprised her. Whenever her sister asked questions like that, she fervidly defended Bobby. Her hackles rose whenever her family criticized him. Now she found herself at a loss and searched for an answer that wasn't trite. She opened her mouth, but couldn't find the right words. She breathed a sigh of relief when the Lotus turned onto her street. "It's the pink stucco building."

Roarke stopped in front of the building. "Do you want me to walk you up?"

Her eyes widened. "No!" She quieted her strident tone to a normal decibel. "This neighborhood is safe."

He wanted to protest, but Roarke knew she would have a hard enough time when she faced Bobby without him appearing on the doorstep. He could only imagine Bobby's reaction. "You don't have to go up."

His urgent words surprised her. Mya's brow furrowed. "Why wouldn't I?"

"He won't get violent, will he?"

She bit her lip. Bobby might get violent, but not with her. When they argued, which was infrequently, he had sometimes thrown things, or yelled and cursed, but he wouldn't hurt her. "I'll be fine."

It wasn't the answer he wanted, but Roarke settled for it. He took his wallet from his pants and flipped it open. He rifled through the contents for a moment, then handed her a card. "That's my private phone number and home address. If things don't go well, you can call me."

The moment struck Mya as surreal. The man who had forced her into a sexual relationship now offered to protect her from her fiancé. Shouldn't it be the other way around? She slid the card in her purse before she lifted the door handle. There didn't seem to be anything else to say, so she opened the door.

He put his hand on her arm. "When are your parents leaving?"

"Friday."

"Did you take vacation?"

"Yes." Would he ask for an extra day? Would she object? The ambiguousness of her feelings gave her an answer, but it wasn't one she wanted to examine.

"Let's skip this week." He gritted his teeth as he made the offer. "You obviously miss them, and you can't see them enough with them living in Washington. You'll want to spend this week with them, focused on them—not thinking about...other things."

She refused to acknowledge the dart of disappointment. "Okay. I'll see you next Tuesday."

He almost blurted out that he would be counting the days, but Roarke restrained himself. She didn't want to hear that. "Goodnight."

Mya surprised them both when she leaned over to kiss him. She pressed her lips to his for a brief moment, then scurried from the car. She rushed up the walkway, idly noting her knees trembled, although it wasn't strictly nerves about the confrontation with Bobby that made her legs weak. She could still feel Roarke's lips against hers.

As she unlocked the entrance, Mya turned around in time to see Roarke pull away. She touched her lips and stared after him until his Lotus turned a corner. With a sigh, she entered the apartment building and trudged up the stairs.

## Chapter Twelve

### *Confrontation*

Bobby was sprawled out on the leather sofa, snoring loudly. Mya let herself in and quietly lowered her keys and purse to the table. She was almost tempted to just let him sleep until four-thirty, when they would leave for the airport. There would be no opportunity for him to yell at her for the time being. With a sigh, Mya walked over to the couch to wake him, because she knew it was better to get the discussion out of the way. Bobby wouldn't forget it. He would just get angrier as time passed, until he eventually exploded. The last thing she wanted was a serious fight in front of her family.

His eyes snapped open when she touched his shoulder. Mya held her breath as she waited for his reaction.

He yawned and stretched. "What time is it?"

She glanced at the clock on the VCR. "Three fifty-seven."

Bobby swung his legs off the sofa as he sat up. "What's going on?"

"Huh?"

"What were you doing all night?"

"I fell asleep."

He looked skeptical. "For twelve hours?"

She shrugged and dropped into the loveseat. "It's been a long week."

"I'll bet your afternoon with Thomas was exhausting."

Mya closed her eyes and let his bitter words wash over her. She knew if she retorted it would only prolong the argument. "I'm sorry I was gone so long."

"Sorry? You were gone all day and most of the night, and that's all you can say?" He crossed his arms over his chest. "You owe me an explanation."

"I fell asleep," she said again, this time with a hint of anger in her voice.

"That's not all. We both know it wasn't anything so innocent as sleeping."

Mya's hazel eyes took on a green cast as she got angrier. "Whatever I was doing, it was for you. I can't leave until he tells me to." She felt a flush of guilt creep up her neck as she said the words. It wasn't just for Bobby anymore, and Roarke hadn't kept her prisoner.

She had fallen asleep in his bed and slept in complete peace in his arms. She had even imagined him in the shower with her. Mya felt her face get hot as the blush crept upwards, and she tried to redirect her thoughts back to Bobby.

"You had better be home when I get here from now on."

"Or what?"

He glowered at her. "You won't like it."

Mya's lips thinned. "Here's the solution to me being gone. Grow some balls and stand up to Roarke."

His eyes turned glacial, and he lunged from the sofa. Mya cringed away from his quick movements, but he hurried past her. He was completely dressed and stopped only to grab a jacket from the closet as he strode to the door.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going out. Maybe I'll stay gone twelve hours, and you can see how you like it."

Mya rolled her eyes at his petulance until she realized he had scooped up the car keys from the table. "You can't take the SRX."

Bobby turned to frown at her. "Why not?"

"My family will be here soon. We need to pick them up."

"You can do it. Or maybe Roarke will help you." With a twist of his lips, Bobby tossed the keys at her before he opened the door and walked out. He made sure to slam it behind him.

Mya ducked as the keys flew through the air, aimed at her. They careened into the black lamp on the table and sent it crashing to the floor. A bubble of hysterical laughter welled up in her, which begged for release. The confrontation hadn't been as bad as she had expected.

Mya forced down the laughter and the tears that tried to follow. She got up from the loveseat to clean up the debris left from the lamp. She fished the keys from the ceramic shards, then got the dust pan and whiskbroom from the kitchen. After she cleaned the mess, Mya went into the bedroom to change into jeans and a warmer shirt.

As she brushed out her hair, she met her eyes in the mirror. They sparkled with unshed tears and repressed anger. Her skin was pale, and her mouth trembled. Her

parents would surely notice how upset she was. As usual, they would attribute it to Bobby, and she would have to let them. She couldn't explain the situation with Roarke. They would never understand why she let herself be used for Bobby's benefit. Her parents wouldn't understand that his success was their success.

As she laid the brush down on the counter, an uncomfortable thought popped into her head. She averted her eyes from the glint of knowledge in the mirror image's eyes, but the thought wouldn't go away.

Was she really doing it for Bobby, or had she become a willing participant in Roarke's game?

She tried to push the thought aside as she left the apartment and headed for the airport. She made good time through the moderate traffic and arrived a little after four-twenty. She stood in line for a while before she finally got back to the gate where their flight would arrive.

Mya sat in a chair and thumbed through a magazine without reading it. Instead, she found her thoughts once again on Roarke. Not Bobby, as they should be. She wanted to think of the perfect apology to smooth things over with her fiancé, but all her mind conjured were images of Roarke. His gentle hands as they moved over her body, or the way his muscles moved when he had walked naked from the bedroom to the bathroom. His taut buttocks...

Mya suppressed a groan, forcing her attention back to the magazine. The headline of the open page screamed *10 Easy Ways to Seduce Your Lover*. She scanned the article almost automatically. *Sexy lingerie: Check. Flirting: Uh... Touching him without a reason: Good idea*. When Mya realized she was mentally listing what she had done as opposed to what she hadn't, she closed the magazine with a snap and tossed it back on the small table beside her chair at the end of the row.

She got up for a juice from the machine and paced around the lounge for a while. When the plane finally landed, she walked over to the window to watch the ground crew direct it in. When the first passengers poured in, she dropped the empty juice bottle in a trashcan and turned her attention to the line.

Solidly in the middle of the crush were a tall man, plump woman, and beautiful girl. Mya raised her arm and waved to them wildly. Carly caught sight of her first and waved



just as enthusiastically. Mya worked her way through the crowd as her family did the same.

Then she was standing before them, and they were all talking at once. She was swept up into three sets of arms, and did her fair share of hugging. "I missed you," she said over and over. The tears in her mother's eyes brought tears streaming down her cheeks too. It wasn't long before Carly was joining in. Only Frank's eyes didn't tear, but his lips were trembling.

After the initial rush of greetings, everyone caught their breath, and they turned toward the exit and joined the crowd that struggled to get through LAX as quickly as possible. "Where's Bobby?" Patty's tone was polite, but lacked any warmth.

Mya shrugged. "He couldn't make it."

Frank grunted, but didn't say anything. Patty nodded, and Carly looked relieved. Contrary to her usual reaction, Mya found herself too apathetic to answer their unspoken criticisms. "Let's go back to the apartment and drop off the bags. After, we'll go have breakfast." Her stomach rumbled and Mya realized she hadn't eaten since lunch yesterday. With the upheaval of the last few hours, she shouldn't be able to even think about food.

"I'm starving." Carly rubbed her stomach. "That airline food's a killer."

Mya chuckled. "I remember a time when you scarfed it down."

Her sister shuddered. "Don't remind me."

They stopped at the baggage carousel before they made their way to short-term parking. Mya opened the rear door of the Cadillac SRX so Frank could load their luggage.

"Nice." Carly caressed the deep purple paint. "Spendy?"

Mya nodded, more than a little sick at the amount of money Bobby had put down on the vehicle. There had been no choice with his bad credit, and he had been determined to have it. When she had protested at the extra \$2,000 for a custom paint job, he had assured her there was more money where that came from. As always, he had been confident of his prospects. That was before Roarke and his ultimatum. Mya's lip curled. His future was secure, for only the bargain price of her body.

"I hope you put some back."

"We did, Dad." She avoided his eyes when she thought of the small amount left in the

checkbook.

"That boy will drain you dry..."

"Dad, don't start."

Frank slammed the back. "I'm just saying you have to be sensible about money when you're with a man like Bobby."

"Frank." Patty touched his arm while she shot him a look. "Remember what we talked about on the plane?"

"She needs to realize what she's getting into. And when they have kids..."

"Frank!"

He snorted as he walked around to the back passenger side.

Mya sighed as she walked to the driver's side and unlocked the door. She disengaged the other locks and slid inside. As she left the lot, she wondered at her lack of anger with her father's words. Maybe she had missed them too much to pay attention to the same old criticisms. Maybe she was finally mature enough to overlook their poor opinion of Bobby. *Maybe Dad's right.* Mya forced a smile for her sister when Carly handed her the parking slip, while trying to brush aside that thought. So what if Bobby was a little careless with money? It was part of his personality, and she loved him—warts and all.

Her stomach cramped. She frowned at her reflection in the mirror on the visor. She was just hungry. That was all. It had been hours since she had eaten.

## Chapter Thirteen

### *The Gym*

Bobby spent the first two days of her family's visit in near silence, when he was home at all. This seemed to suit Frank, and he was more cheerful than usual around her fiancé. By Monday, Mya was relieved when he went back to work. To her surprise, Patty and Frank decided to spend the day sightseeing alone and left the two sisters on their own.

Around six in the evening, Carly threw herself down on the couch. "I'm bored."

"We could go to a movie."

"Eh." Carly shrugged. "What do you normally do?"

Mya scrunched her brows together as she tried to remember the last time she had done anything on a Monday. "Well, I normally work until nine-thirty. When I get home Bobby and I go to the gym."

Carly's blue eyes sparkled, and she leaned forward so quickly her short, auburn, pixie-cut flipped up. "Cool. Let's go."

"You don't have a membership."

She lifted a shoulder. "I'll pay for a guest pass. I've been dying to work out."

"There's a small gym downstairs."

"No pool, and the machines suck."

"That's why we pay for a membership." She got up from her perch on the loveseat. "All right. I am stiff." She stretched reflexively. "I remember when I couldn't drag you away from your computer or video games."

A rueful smile curved Carly's lips. "That was me. No argument there."

"Did you bring your workout clothes?"

She shook her head. "Can I borrow something?"

"I don't know if I have anything that will fit you since you've gotten so skinny." Mya bit back a grin at her sister's blissful smile. She liked to praise Carly's accomplishment whenever the opportunity arose.

They rummaged through the closet, then took a taxi to the gym since Bobby had the SRX. Once inside, Mya watched with amusement as her sister flirted shamelessly. She left

Carly to her activities to do her workout. When Carly finally joined her, she made Mya exhausted as she watched. It was a relief when they were finally on their way out.

Until they ran into Roarke. Carly had her head turned to watch a guy as he pumped iron, and she ran right into a solid male body. She turned with a giggle. "I'm so sorry."

"No problem. Mya?" Roarke's eyes scanned her body in the form-fitting Lycra pants and bra-top. Why was she even sexier in the workout clothes than the teddy he had bought her?

She tried to suppress the excited quiver in her stomach as she smiled at Roarke. "Hi."

Carly's man-eater grin was in full force as she batted her eyelashes up at Roarke—not too far, Mya noted with a grimace. Unlike her, Carly was tall. Her head came to his shoulder. The perfect level for them to kiss. Her mouth twisted at the thought, and she tried to ignore the twinge of jealousy while she watched her sister focus her charms on Roarke.

"You know each other?" Carly had positioned herself just a few inches from Roarke after they collided.

"Roarke owns the studio shooting Bobby's movie."

Roarke held out his hand. "You must be Mya's sister."

Carly grasped his hand. "I'm Carly, the baby of the family."

He cleared his throat as she stroked her fingers across his palm. Roarke's eyes skimmed over her lithe figure in the shorty-shorts and t-shirt, knotted under her full breasts. "Could have fooled me." He disentangled his hand while he looked at Mya from the corner of his eyes just in time to catch her pouty frown.

Mya winced at her sister's girlish giggle. She sounded so fake and idiotic. Surely, men didn't really fall for that routine. Her eyes narrowed when she saw Roarke's smile widen.

"You're so sweet." Carly angled a bit closer to him. "Your wife must just adore you."

A blush crept into Roarke's cheeks, and his eyes locked with Mya's. "I'm not married."

"Your girlfriend..." Carly trailed off and blinked rapidly at him as she twined a short auburn strand around her long finger.

Mya glowered at the two of them as they made themselves spectacles. Roarke was much too old for her sister, and Carly shouldn't flirt with every man she met.

"I-I'm not seeing anyone." Roarke cleared his throat and bit back the urge to chuckle when he saw Mya's frown turn down farther.

"Really?" Carly hooked her arm through Roarke's. "Why don't you come with us to the Juice Hut, and we'll all commiserate our single status together?"

"Mya's not single."

Carly shrugged and leaned closer. In a pseudo-whisper, she said, "She should be."

He didn't even bother to refute her statement. "I really can't, but thanks." If Mya got any angrier, her eyes might pop out of their sockets. As fun as it was to tease a response from her, Roarke didn't want to hurt her or make her angry with her sister. Carly's lower lip, glossed in bright coral, protruded. "Why not?"

"I haven't worked out yet."

She trailed a finger down his well-defined arm. "With muscles like these, you can afford to skip one session."

Gently, Roarke pulled his arm from hers. "Not if I want to stay looking like this."

She heaved a sigh before she turned to Mya. "Well, I hope my sister has your number, because I need someone to show me around."

Roarke's expression was serious. "I'm not the right guy for that."

Carly studied him for a moment, then nodded. She lost her flirty expression, and her spine straightened. "Your loss."

He laughed at her confident tone. "I don't doubt it." *But my heart belongs to someone else.* He left the words unuttered, but couldn't resist one last look at Mya before he headed to the locker room. The only logical explanation for her anger was jealousy. He frowned as he ran up the stairs. Unless she was afraid he would try to play his game with Carly, and she wanted to protect her. He sighed as he pushed open the locker room door. He knew he still didn't have her figured out.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

### ***Confessions Over Carrot Delights***

"Try the Carrot Delight. You'll love it."

Mya read the ingredients listed on the board and grimaced. Carrots, zucchini, kiwi, and pineapple? "Yuck."

Carly bounced up to the counter and gave the clerk a bright smile. "Hiya."

"Hey." He was young, and he blushed as his eyes were drawn to her breasts. "What can I get you?"

"Two Carrot Delights."

"No, Carly..."

The boy looked up from the register and tapped his finger against the register to indicate he waited for the order to be completed.

"Two Carrot Delights," Carly said again.

"And one of those." Mya pointed to a chocolate chip biscotti.

Carly shook her head, which made the short hair fly around her face. "No, not the chocolate, Billy." She smiled at the clerk again and leaned across the counter a bit so he could look down her shirt. "Two of the honey, oat, and berry."

Mya faked a gag. "If I have to drink the carrot thing, I'm darn well getting some chocolate to choke it down."

Her sister heaved a sigh, but nodded to Billy. "Two Carrot Delights, a honey, oat, and berry biscotti, and one chocolate chip biscotti."

The boy bagged the biscotti in a white sack and slid it across the counter to Carly. As he turned to the blenders, Carly walked over to a table to put the bag down. She slid into a chair. "I'll get 'em when they're ready."

With a shrug, Mya sat down at the small table, noticing two of the male patrons at a nearby table were staring at her sister. She couldn't blame them. Carly was definitely the beauty of the family. She took the biscotti her sister passed, sinking her teeth into it with a crunch.

"So, who's that Roarke guy?"

She nearly choked on the biscotti. "I told you. He owns the studio where Bobby's working."

Carly lifted a brow. "Give me a break, sis. He's a lot more than your fiancé's employer."

Heat suffused her face. Mya used a napkin to blot at her cheeks and hoped it hid the color. "I don't know what you mean."

"It's obvious you're fucking." Before Mya could respond to that, Carly had bounded to the counter to get their drinks. When she returned with the slimy orange concoctions, she picked up where she'd left off. "There was a vibe between you two."

Mya rolled her eyes as she stared at the Carrot Delight with trepidation. "You're imagining things."

"I wasn't imagining that you were seething with jealousy when I flirted with him."

"What are you talking about?" Mya had meant her voice to be cool and level, but it sounded defensive.

"You were so pissed at both of us, and he was enjoying egging you on."

"Carly..."

"I'm young, not dumb."

"We aren't sleeping together."

Carly quirked a brow. "But you want to."

"It isn't like that."

"Well, how is it?"

To her shock, Mya blurted out the whole story. She didn't gloss over anything that had happened, not even their first encounter, or the way she had ordered Roarke to use the vibrator. When she finished, she waited for her sister's appalled reaction.

"What a jerk!"

She shook her head. "Roarke's really not that bad. When things first started, I thought I would hate him, but now..."

"I'm not talking about Roarke. Bobby, your bum fiancé, is the jerk. I can't believe he told you to go through with it." Carly's blue eyes had darkened with anger. She picked up her biscotti and broke it in two with a cracking sound. "Why are you still with that creep,

Mya? You could do so much better."

Mya sighed. "Can we focus on the main issue?"

With a snort, Carly bit into half of her biscotti. "Fine. What's the problem?"

"What do you mean, what's the problem? Any day now, Roarke's going to want to have sex."

Carly leaned closer and lowered her voice. "Go for it."

"Huh?"

"It's your last chance for a fling." Her mouth twisted. "Your precious fiancé even sanctioned it."

"It isn't right..."

"Mya, I can see you're hot for this guy."

Mya broke eye contact by picking up the Carrot Delight and taking a tentative sip. "Ugh! It tastes like cold vegetable soup."

"You'll get used to it." Carly waved her hand. "Don't change the subject."

"Okay, I'm attracted to him." Mya's face turned crimson, and she lowered her voice. "I have this fantasy of him just pinning me to the wall and taking me. I don't have a chance to protest or talk him out of it." She closed her eyes and waited for her sister to castigate her. Her eyes popped open when Carly laughed. "Why are you laughing? I'm dreaming of being raped, and you think it's funny?"

Carly shook her head. "First off, it isn't rape. You just want him to take control. It's not like you wouldn't participate if he did pin you to the wall."

Mya nodded reluctantly. It was no more than the truth.

"And it's so obvious why you want him to be in control."

"It is?"

She nodded. "Yep. If Roarke pushes the issue, you get what you want, but you don't have to feel guilty for betraying Bobby."

Mya slammed back against her chair and her head spun. She felt as if her sister had physically hit her with the truth. "My God. You're absolutely right." She ached for Roarke, but her persistent loyalty to Bobby wouldn't allow her to act on those thoughts. She had to believe he forced her or swayed her judgment before she could let it happen.



Otherwise... "I'm a slut."

Carly touched her hand. "You're a normal girl who has never had a decent lover."

"Bobby..."

"Sucks! You told me yourself that he doesn't do it for you."

Mya curled her arms around her torso. "I didn't say it like that."

Rolling her eyes, Carly said, "I can read between the lines. So, admit you want him, and you can have him. He'll dispense with the seduction and just fuck you until you can't stand up."

"Carly! Where did you get such a foul mouth?"

"Girls' locker room after softball practice." She was nonchalant.

"I can't do that to Bobby."

"He's giving you permission. You started out playing this game for him, but don't you think you should get something out of it?"

Mya nibbled on her lip. "Well..."

"Of course you should."

She squirmed at the thought of blatantly asking Roarke to make love to her. "I can't tell him I want him to..."

A wicked grin encompassed Carly's face. "Play him for a while."

"Huh?"

"Turn the tables on Roarke. Start seducing him. Wriggle your bottom, touch him for no reason, flutter your lashes at him, and dress like a 'ho.' It works every time."

Mya snickered. "Like you would know, Miss Cocktease. You're the eternal virgin."

"Hey! I'm only eighteen." A strange smile flashed across her face. "And I'm not a virgin anymore."

"What? When?"

"There's a TA at the college..."

"You don't go to college."

Carly sighed deeply. "I'm trying to tell you what happened, okay? Don't interrupt."

"Sorry."

"I was registering for my fall classes when we met. He's six years older than me, so he said he was too old to take me out."

"But you persisted?"

Carly nodded. "I seduced him." She lifted a shoulder. "Things are progressing."

"Do you love him?"

Carly's world-weary expression was replaced by a look of excitement. Her blue eyes shone, and her lips quivered. "Yeah. I think I do."

Mya laughed. "Why do we Langelles women always fall for older men? Dad's nine years older than Mom."

Carly shrugged. "Bobby's only a year older than you. It's not really the same thing."

"O-of course not," she stuttered out as her face got hot again. "I don't know what I was thinking."

Carly snorted, but let it pass. "You going to finish that Carrot Delight?"

"Hell no!" After shoving it across to her sister, Mya went to the counter to order a banana orange smoothie. For the first time since she had started playing Roarke's game, she felt buoyant. She was already planning ways to implement her own rules into the game. He wouldn't know what hit him.

## **Chapter Fifteen** ***Gifts and a Revelation***

Friday, there was a knock at the door a little after eight in the morning. Mya heard no one stir, and Bobby continued to snore beside her. With a yawn, she rolled out of bed, fumbled on a robe, and padded on bare feet to the living room. Carly was curled in a ball on the foldout leather sofa, with a thin line of drool running down her cheek.

Mya bit back a grin and peeked through the peephole. An impatient looking UPS man stood on the other side. She removed the security lock and eased open the door. "Hi."

"Good morning." He glanced down at his board. "I have a delivery for Mya Lang, uh, less?"

She winced at the mispronunciation. "I'm Mya Langelles."

"Sign here."

Mya took the board from him and signed her name in the electronic box. After she returned his reader, he lifted a large box from the hallway.

"Who's it from?" Mya tried to get a glimpse of the corner, but he held it too high for her to see.

"I don't know. Do you want me to set it down for you?"

She smiled. "Please." Once she had stepped aside, Mya led him to the kitchen table where he put it down. After he left the apartment, she took the shears from the wooden block and set to work on the box.

Her sister came into the kitchen, still in her pajamas. "Whacha doing?" Carly's yawn caused the words to be a bit garbled. She dropped into a chair. "Who's that from?"

Mya shrugged. "I don't know. There's no return address."

"Hmm." Carly lifted a corner of the tape with her acrylic nail and pulled it off the box in one smooth motion.

Between them, they had the large box opened in a few seconds. Mya frowned when she saw another, smaller box. She lifted it out and grunted at the unexpected weight.

"Pretty." Carly caressed the light pink and cream marbled box. "There's a card." She lifted the envelope from the box and slipped a nail inside to open it.

Mya snatched it from her sister's lean fingers. "Do you mind? It is for me."

Carly shrugged. "Fine." She turned her attention to untying the ribbon on the pastel swirled box.

The glue on the pink envelope resisted Mya, so she ripped the side. A thick cream card fell onto the table, and she lifted it.

*Pamper yourself.*

*R*

"What does it say?" Carly abandoned the ribbon to snatch the card from Mya's fingers. "Oooh. I wonder what he sent you?"

Mya's hands shook with excitement as she snipped the ribbon Carly hadn't gotten to, then lifted off the top of the box. "Wow."

Carly peered into the box. "What is all that?"

Her movements were careful when she lifted out a wire basket filled with glass jars of varying sizes. "It's bath oil, shampoo, and lotion." Mya unscrewed the bath oil to sniff it and instantly recognized the scent. "He has this specially made."

"What else is in the box?"

Mya laid the basket aside and lifted out a portable spa unit. "Oh, my God. I've been dying for one of these."

"I have to try that before we leave tomorrow." Carly reached for the box to take it from her.

Mya slapped at her hand lightly. "Wait your turn."

"There's more."

"Yeah." Next in the box was a satin black robe with midnight blue piping. The matching slippers invited her feet inside, and Mya slid them on. "Oh, these are amazing."

"Is that everything?"

"Yes... No." Mya pulled out a smaller box. "You want to open this?"

Carly nodded and reached for it eagerly.

Mya delved into the box once more and found only a card inside. When she held it up to the light, she saw it was actually a day-pass for Rendezvous Spa. The subtitle said 'Where Lovers Come Together'. The pass was valid for Tuesday only, and she could arrive

anytime after ten. "Look at this."

"Look at this," Carly said at the same time.

They both giggled as they looked up. Mya handed her the card after she took the hairbrush from her sister. The white bristles were softer than any she had ever touched, and Mya didn't doubt the back and handle of the brush were real silver. Abstract swirls were etched into the brush, and her initials were engraved on the handle. Mya ran a finger across the M.I.L. "How did he know the initial for Isabelle?"

Carly giggled. "I have no idea."

Something in her tone caused Mya to raise her head. "Did you...?"

"I might have answered a few questions for him when he called here Wednesday night."

Mya shook her head. "He just happened to get through to you?"

"No. Roarke said he had to hang up three times before because Mom answered."

"Oh." She and Dad had gone to pick up dinner on Wednesday night. They had left Mom and Carly—who claimed to be too tired from shopping to move—at the apartment. Bobby, as usual, had worked late. What would Roarke have done if she had answered the phone? Or if Bobby had?

"So, it looks like you've got a date with him for Tuesday." Carly tapped a peach nail against the thick spa pass.

Mya sank into a chair and wriggled her toes in the satin slippers. She felt decadent. "I'm not sure I can go through with what we talked about."

"Sure you can."

She bit her lip. "I can't get past what I'll be doing to Bobby."

Carly sighed. "He'll never know the details. It's not like you're going to tell him if you enjoy fucking Roarke."

"But I'll know! How can I pretend like I don't or ignore what I've done?"

Carly's eyes wrinkled, and she fidgeted. "You know I don't like Bobby, right?"

Mya's eyebrow raised by itself. "Well, duh. None of you have ever bothered to keep the animosity under wraps."

"But you don't know why I hate him."

"Hate?"

Shrugging, Carly began putting the items back in the box. "When I was a freshmen, a lot of people were mean to me since I was so fat."

"You weren't fat. You just hadn't outgrown it all yet."

With a snort, Carly said, "I was fat, but that's not important to the story."

"Okay."

"Some of the boys used to tease me by asking me out. I was no fool. I knew it was a big joke, so I ignored them." Carly's eyes dropped to the table. "A few took their games a step farther. They would touch me."

Mya frowned. "Touch you?"

"My boobs, mostly. They were a lot bigger then."

"I'm so sorry, Carly. Why didn't you say something?"

"It was your senior year. You were busy with your own stuff."

"I would have done something."

Carly's eyes shimmered with unshed tears. "What could you do?" She swallowed. "Besides, it was the impetus I needed to make changes."

"What does this have to do with Bobby?" Mya's stomach clenched with dread.

"He was one of those guys."

"Bobby used to touch your breasts?"

Carly looked ill. "That wasn't enough for him. When I stopped crying and trying to get them to leave me alone, most of the guys lost interest in their cruelty. Not Bobby." Her mouth twisted. "One night at a football game..." She blinked. "I even remember which one. The Serpents were beating the Eagles fourteen to two. You were cheering and everyone loved you."

Mya shifted in her seat. "That's not true."

Her sister nodded. "It is. People were always drawn to you. I used to hate you for that."

Mya's head dropped forward. "Oh." She looked up when Carly touched her hand. "I never meant to hurt you."

"I know. It wasn't your fault I wanted to be like you. I outgrew all that petty crap a

long time ago." Carly heaved a sigh. "Anyway, that isn't part of what I'm trying to tell you."

"What happened?"

"He and two of his buddies—Ryan Peters and Chris Cahill—cornered me by the bleachers. He kissed me."

Mya felt a wash of relief that it wasn't anything worse, but Carly continued before she could say anything.

"He pushed up my shirt, and one of the guys put their hand down my pants..." Carly wiped at a tear on her cheek. "They didn't rape me or anything, but the three of them left some bruises on my breasts. I was sore for a while and had an aversion to boys touching me at all for months."

Mya shook her head unconsciously. She wanted to deny what her sister had said. "Why would he do that?"

Carly shrugged. "He's an asshole?"

"That was years ago..."

Her mouth twisted. "Yeah. I'm sure he's outgrown it." Her tone held an edge. "Anyway, shortly after that, you two got serious and I started working out. He never bothered me again."

Mya's mouth dropped open. "We were dating at the time?"

Carly nodded. "So, it's not like he's innocent, Mya. Enjoy your fling with Roarke. Then, if you must, marry Bobby."

"I don't know what to say."

Carly shrugged. "It was years ago, and I'm over it now. I just thought it was time to tell you."

"So I can do an eye for an eye?"

"No. So you can realize that Bobby isn't as great as you think, and that you owe it to yourself to explore other options before settling down with him. You've never had anyone else, Mya." Carly's eyes shone with unshed tears. "I don't want you to make a mistake."

Angry words rose to her tongue, but she swallowed them. It pained her, but she no longer felt the urge to defend Bobby as she had in the past. Her sister's revelation was just

one more incident in a pattern that had started to emerge. Her eyes dropped to the ring on her finger, and she was briefly tempted to pull it off.

That thought scared her and Mya tore her eyes from the small diamond. Things hadn't been great lately, but she still wanted to marry Bobby. Didn't she?

Her eyes drifted to the day-pass for the spa, and her heart rate increased with anticipation. Carly was right. She deserved to get something out of the mess her life had become. Bobby had even encouraged her to participate in Roarke's game.

The thought of another lover caused Mya's stomach to clench with excitement and nervousness. What if she liked it so much that she didn't want Bobby anymore? But if she didn't do it, she would never know. That could be worse than anything else that might happen. How would things be with her and Bobby if she always looked back with regret and wondered what-if?

Carly cleared her throat. "Can I try out your spa?"

Mya pulled the box closer. "Not until I do."

"Hurry up, sis. I'm leaving tomorrow."

With a laugh, she rose from the table and carried the box with her down the hall. Once more Carly had persuaded her to see both sides. Mya only hoped her confidence wouldn't fade with her sister's departure.



## Chapter Sixteen

### *Rendezvous*

Mya arrived at Rendezvous a little after eleven on Tuesday morning. She had been delayed by the need to run a few errands for Bobby, then pay some bills. As of yet, she hadn't found the time or opportunity to ask him about what Carly had told her and anxiety shadowed her hazel eyes.

The spa was located in a small white brick building amid upscale shops, a wholesale makeup supplier, and a wig manufacturer's outlet. Mya pushed on the golden bars of the clear glass door to open it and caught her breath when she stepped into the interior.

Pale pink walls and bright fuchsia carpets pleased the eye. A richly polished reception desk was tucked into the corner, almost hidden by a mass of greenery that sprouted from wicker pots. A gorgeous woman sat behind the desk. She had shiny dark hair, glossy red lips, and a perfectly proportioned body.

The corner of Mya's mouth quirked as she wondered if she was supposed to believe a visit to Rendezvous would transform her into that? She shook her head and walked to the desk.

"Good morning." The receptionist's voice was as perfect as the rest of her.

"Hi." Mya clutched the pass in her hand.

"How may we help you?"

Mya resisted the urge to look around for the others that made up 'we'. Instead, she handed the woman her pass. "I have a reservation."

With one brisk nod, the receptionist took the card and consulted a book beside her. "Welcome, Ms. Langelles."

Mya's eyebrows shot up as the woman actually pronounced her name correctly. "Thanks."

"Mr. Thomas is waiting for you in the lounge."

Mya swallowed hard. "He's here already?" Hadn't she expected him to be though? Why else had she hurried through the morning's schedule and gotten more impatient with each delay?

The woman nodded. "If you'll follow me, I'll show you the changing rooms."

"Changing rooms?"

"Our clients generally prefer a more relaxed state of dress while undergoing a session."

Mya nodded and tried to look knowledgeable as she followed the receptionist, whose impossibly high heels sank into the thick carpet without a sound. They went down a hallway that featured the same wall coverings and carpet before they stopped before a light-pink door labeled Women's. "Now what?"

"There are robes or terry sarongs to choose from." The woman pushed open the door. "There's also a selection of slippers and flip-flops."

"After I change, where do I go?"

"Inside is a door marked Lounge. If you go through it, you'll find Mr. Thomas."

"Thanks." Mya's smile felt wobbly as she walked through the door the receptionist still held for her. She surveyed the room and looked for the robes. Her eyes slid past the pink marbled floor and wall tile, pink lockers, and shower stalls to a large closet against one wall.

She walked over to examine the choices. The robe selections were varied—from a crimson silk robe that might have fallen two inches below her hip, to a full-length light-blue terry robe. The sarongs were fashioned like a wrap-around towel, but secured in place with Velcro.

She flipped through the selections and chose an emerald silk robe with a hood. It would be thin enough to allow Roarke a view of her body, but wasn't completely see-through. She slid it from the hanger and picked up a pair of cork thongs, which she took to a locker. She dropped the robe and shoes on the bench and removed her slacks and vest top quickly. She had worn her hair up in a clip, and she left it that way as she slid on the robe. She dropped the shoes on the floor before she pushed her feet into them.

The silk slid across her bare skin with every step she took, and the sensation made Mya shiver. She stopped in front of the wall-length mirror to admire herself. The emerald went well with her hair and brought out green glints in her eyes. Her nipples poked through the thin fabric because they had hardened from the sensuous sensation of the robe as it slid across her flesh. The hem ended mid-thigh and exposed the length of her legs to their best advantage.

With a smile to herself, Mya walked out of the dressing room, through the door marked Lounge. She froze three steps into the room when she saw another couple waited. They looked up at her, then returned their attention to magazines.

Roarke sat in a leather recliner with his feet propped up, as he sipped from an espresso cup. He wore a thin black robe that ended just above the knee. When he saw her, he lifted a hand to wave her over.

Mya walked across the burnt umber carpet and tried to ignore the presence of the other man and woman. They seemed oblivious, which alleviated some of her self-consciousness. She resisted the urge to tug on the robe's hem, because it would only cause the bodice to drop lower. It was a relief to stop beside Roarke, who got up from the recliner. "Hi." Mya's voice trembled, and she didn't know if it was from nerves or the sight of his body revealed through the silk robe that molded itself to him.

"Good morning, Mya." Roarke touched the three-quarter sleeve of her robe. "Beautiful color on you."

She smiled up at him and ducked her head slightly. "Thanks." She wanted to compliment him, but her tongue felt too thick.

"Would you like to start with a massage, manicure and pedicure, or a mud bath?"

Her forehead furrowed. "Mud bath? What is that?"

"I've never tried it, but Lisa said it's very relaxing. Apparently, they immerse you in this tub full of mud with a gel mask over your eyes. They use aromatherapy to scent the air and play soothing music.

Mya couldn't keep a grimace from her face. "I'm not anxious to climb into a vat of mud."

He laughed. "Then what shall we start with?"

"Manicures?"

It was his turn to grimace. "That will be a new experience for me, but Lisa said this was a—nice place." Roarke winced, realizing he had almost revealed exactly what Lisa had said—a romantic place.

Mya's stomach clenched at his repetition of the name Lisa. Who was she? An ex-girlfriend, maybe? Or maybe someone who had played Roarke's game in the past? Maybe she still played it? He did have five other days in the week when he didn't see her. Who

knew what he did with all that time? Mya tried to sound casual when she asked, "Who's Lisa?"

Roarke bit back a grin as he saw her eyes darken and hands clench. Her tone had bordered on glacial. Jealous? He certainly hoped so. He was tempted to let Lisa play a different role, but it wouldn't be fair—especially if she ever met Mya. "She's my brother's wife."

"Oh." Mya refused to acknowledge her relief.

A side door opened, and Roarke waved to the woman entering. She wore a long red dress with gold flowers. A tiger lily was tucked behind her ear, and her eyes looked exotic. They were a vivid green, lined with dark kohl, and edged by thick lashes.

Another product of the Rendezvous regimen, Mya thought with uncharacteristic cynicism. Was that the kind of woman Roarke wanted her to be? Her stomach churned at the thought. She could never be exotic or alluring.

She smiled as she came over to them. "Yes, Mr. Thomas?"

"We're ready now."

"Where did you want to begin?"

"With manicures and pedicures."

She nodded. "Follow me, please."

"That's Claudia," Roarke said softly to Mya as they left the lounge and entered another hallway. This one had beige walls and blonde hardwood floors. "She's our personal attendant for the day."

"Oh." Was he attracted to her? Mya's eyes narrowed as she watched Roarke's face and searched for any sign of attraction to the blonde. His expression remained bland, and some of her anxiety dissipated.

They passed into a small room where Roarke and Mya were seated in chairs with their feet elevated. Two other attendants joined Claudia, and they set to work on the manicures while she did Mya's pedicure, followed by Roarke's.

Mya watched him from the corner of her eye. She grinned as he eventually relaxed his stiff posture. She couldn't imagine Bobby being so extravagant as to take her to a spa and sit through a manicure/pedicure. He would scoff and call it girly or worse. But Roarke

seemed to enjoy the experience.

After the attendants had finished, Claudia led them back into the hallway, to another room. Two massage tables stood side by side, and a petite Asian girl in a white cotton dress sat in a chair. She flipped through a magazine with an air of boredom.

"Miko, will you please see to Ms. Langelles?"

With a nod, she rose from her seat. Miko laid the magazine on the chair and patted the table on the left. "Lay down on your stomach, please."

Mya's fingers trembled as she undid the bow on the sash. From the corner of her eye, she saw Roarke's eyes drop to her hands, then shoot up as she pulled the robe off. She ignored her nudity as she laid on the table.

Miko draped a towel across her buttocks before she lifted a bottle from the rack nearby. Before she put her face into the opening of the massage table, Mya watched Roarke shed his robe and lay on the table beside hers. There was a flush along his cheeks, and she wondered if it came from her nakedness or from his own nudity. When Claudia draped a towel over Roarke's rear, Mya sighed. She turned her face into the hole in the table and tried to imagine she was boneless. As Miko's fingers began to work their magic, she couldn't bite back the occasional groan of pleasure. She had never had a massage before and suddenly understood why they were so popular.

Roarke gritted his teeth with each sound of pleasure she made. His hands were clenched into fists, and freshly manicured nails dug into the flesh of his palms. He tried to enjoy Claudia's ministrations, but he wanted her hands to be Mya's. He was still tense when the massage ended thirty minutes later.

"Would you like lunch before the mud bath?" Claudia asked them as they rose and slipped back into the robes.

Mya's stomach rumbled to remind her she had skipped breakfast. "Please."

"We have a sushi bar, or we can have items delivered if you would prefer?"

Roarke shrugged to indicate the decision was Mya's.

"The sushi is fine."

Claudia led them into a small room with one table and two chairs. She brought menus, and they ordered. Within minutes, plates of marinated sushi chunks and handrolls were before them. Hot oolong in delicate bone china cups accompanied their

meal.

"How do you feel?" Roarke tried to wield the chopsticks to pick up a roll, but dropped it every time.

"Wonderful. I'm so relaxed."

With a growl, Roarke laid aside the chopsticks and picked up the sushi handroll to pop in his mouth. "Me too." His shoulders were still tense though. He had been unable to truly enjoy his massage because his attention had focused on his attempts to incorporate Mya's groans and moans into a different sort of scenario that still played out in his head.

Mya bit back a giggle as she watched him eat the sushi. She laid aside her chopsticks and picked up the rolls with her hands to make him feel better. The sushi disappeared quickly, and her stomach felt pleasantly full fifteen minutes later.

Almost as soon as they had finished, Claudia returned. "Are you ready for a soak?"

Suppressing a shudder, Mya got to her feet. "I guess."

"Yeah." Roarke tried to sound enthusiastic, but the thought of a mud bath didn't appeal.

She ignored their reluctance as she escorted them from the private dining area. Through the last door on the left, they entered a large room with a tub sunk into the floor. What looked like brown slime churned lazily. It was thinner than traditional mud, and there was no foul odor in the air.

Mya breathed in deeply and recognized jasmine and lavender from the myriad aromas. They blended together to form a fragrant cloud that was spread by humidifiers in each corner of the room and sent out as a barely visible mist. Low-pitched Spanish guitars serenaded them through discreetly placed speakers.

"If you would like to wear something into the tub, there's a selection of swimwear." Claudia pointed to a rack with men's and women's accessories.

Before Roarke could answer, Mya smiled. "I want to try it *au naturale*."

Roarke's eyes widened when Mya winked at him. He blinked and tried to determine if she really had winked. Had she tried to flirt with him? Did she want to tease him? He frowned and dropped the robe with an air of challenge while he waited for her to do the same.

Mya struggled to appear nonchalant as she untied the sash to remove the robe. Claudia took it from her and bent down to pick up Roarke's. Mya kept her expression bland as she turned to him. "Are you ready for this?"

"Uh..." He cleared his throat. "Yeah."

"You can go in." Claudia handed them each a gel mask. "This will relax you, but if you prefer not to wear them..."

Mya took hers and slipped it over her head. She was careful not to snag the elastic strap in her hair clip as she positioned it on her forehead. With the knowledge that Roarke's eyes rested on her, she sashayed to the steps of the tub. With a grimace, she took the first step into the mud.

She stopped as it began to ooze around her toes. It was warm and smooth, rather than slimy, as she had expected. She took a deep breath for courage and walked down the other three steps until the mud was at mid-thigh. She felt her way around the side and dropped onto a bench. The mud surged to her neck. The mud squelched when she pulled an arm free to push the mask down over her eyes. The mask was cool and tingly, while the parts of her immersed in the mud were warm. "Coming in, Roarke?"

He swallowed. "I guess." Roarke took a mask from Claudia before he strode to the steps. His first couple were confident, before the mud engulfed his legs. He shivered at the not-unpleasant sensation and forced himself to walk deeper into the pool. The mud resisted him slightly, and he forced his way through so he could take a seat beside Mya. Once settled, he pushed the mask over his eyes and leaned his head against the pillowed ledge. He gradually let the rest of his body sink into the thin mud.

"I'll be back in awhile," Claudia said cheerfully. A second later, the door closed behind her.

"This is amazing." Mya sighed and scrunched down until the mud touched her chin. "It looked so..."

"...disgusting," Roarke put in.

"But it feels so..."

"...relaxing."

"Yes." Mya slid closer to him as she leaned her head against the ledge of the tub. "How do you think they make this?" She felt him shrug.

"You probably don't want to know."

She tried to imitate Carly's girly giggle. "Yeah. Once you remove the mystique, what's left?"

"How it feels?" His voice was husky.

Mya slid her hand from her thigh to his skin. Her flesh glided smoothly over his as she brought her hand up higher. "It feels great to me," she said in a throaty whisper.

Roarke froze as her hand brushed his stomach and hesitated. What did she plan to do? Was she...? His breath hissed through his teeth as her hand wrapped around his shaft. "Mya..."

"Hmm?" She struggled to sound innocent as she stroked him from head to base. The mud squished through her fingers and eased her way, but also interfered with her ability to feel him. In case he had the same problem, she squeezed her hand and tightened her grip.

Roarke gasped as she increased the pressure of her cupped hand. She continued to stroke him and circle the head of his erection with her thumb with each upward stroke. His manhood grew rigid in her grasp, and his hips bucked as the muscles in his groin tightened. He had never felt anything like it. The mud slithered between them to fill in the gaps between her fingers and clenched hand. She seemed to completely engulf him, and he knew he would come if she didn't stop. "You shouldn't."

Mya's grin was wicked, and she was glad he wore a mask. "Relax. Enjoy the mud."

"But..." Roarke trailed off as she flicked her finger across the very tip of his erection. This wasn't part of his plan. She wasn't supposed to touch him at all yet. He wasn't supposed to touch her either—not today, anyway. That would come later.

His mind went blank as she increased the tempo of her strokes. Roarke tried to focus on his seduction scenario, but soon his body's response overwhelmed his ability to think. He relaxed completely and gave into the urge to thrust.

Mya slowed down her hand as he began to participate. She continued to caress him and apply pressure as she stroked up and down his shaft, but he did most of the work. She grew wet as she imagined the expression on his face. With her free hand, she slid the mask aside so she could see him at the moment when he reached satisfaction.

His forehead furrowed and his lips drew back to expose gritted teeth as he spasmed in



her hand. Warm liquid splashed onto her fingers, and she knew he had come—as if his blissful expression couldn't have told her that.

With a satisfied smile, Mya lowered her mask so he wouldn't know she had peeked. She relinquished her hold on him as he leaned against her. His face was buried in her hair, and the corner of his mask touched her ear. His lips pressed against her cheek.

"Why?"

Mya searched for an answer, but nothing sounded right in her head. Rather than answer, she rubbed her cheek against his mouth and received a small kiss.

"Come home with me." Roarke abandoned his carefully thought out plan. He needed to have her today. He couldn't wait any longer. Not days and certainly not weeks.

She hesitated over her response. She had expected him to ask, but hadn't given much thought to her answer. It was what she wanted too, but it was irreversible. Once she gave in to her desire, she couldn't undo her deeds. She would have to live with the consequences for the rest of her life.

"Mya?"

The pleading in his tone cut through her confusion. "Yes. I'll come home with you."

## Chapter Seventeen

### *Making Love*

Mya stared out the window of Roarke's black Lotus, lost in her thoughts. It was some time before she noticed they weren't headed in the direction of his condo. "Where are we going?"

"My house."

She bit her lip and wondered if she should protest. The condo was their meeting place. His home seemed almost too intimate. Too personal. She closed her eyes as her body tingled with desire. It didn't matter where they made love, as long as it was soon. "Okay."

He turned down a quiet street lined with large homes, but nothing that was too ostentatious. The Lotus turned into the third drive on the left and stopped before a two-story Mediterranean with terra-cotta tiles. Roarke opened his door, but didn't get out. "Are you coming in?"

She knew this was the last chance he would give her to back out. Mya moistened her dry lips, then grasped the handle of the door. She let it speak for her as she opened it and slid out. "This is your house?"

Roarke got out of the car, and they walked up a set of wide, shallow steps made of textured cement and painted white. "For about six months."

"Why did you move from the condo?"

He took time to unlock the door and let her precede him into the deliciously cool interior before he answered. "I got tired of living in a building where there was no privacy." He grimaced as he recalled the neighbor who always dropped by—sometimes to borrow something or invite him for dinner. In reality, she had consumed him with her eyes on each impromptu visit. Never mind the huge rock she had worn on her hand.

The irony didn't escape Roarke as he caught sight of the diamond on Mya's finger. He dropped his keys on the standing table near the door with a twist of his lips. How his ethics had plummeted.

Mya eyed the spacious interior—white floors, white walls, and black furniture—with round eyes. She had never been inside a house like it. A step separated the entryway from

the rest of the house, and she stepped up and walked into the living room. A massive entertainment center dominated one wall of the room. She recognized a flat-screen television and small speakers in the corners of the room that provided surround sound. Bobby would love this place.

But he wouldn't love what she planned to do here. A sudden chill seized her, and Mya rubbed her bare arms.

"Would you like me to turn down the air conditioner?"

She shook her head and licked her lips again. "I'm thirsty. Could we get something to drink before...?" Mya trailed off, unable to say the words even though she had been the one to bring them to this point.

He nodded. "Follow me." Roarke led her into the bright kitchen and walked to the fridge. "What are you in the mood for?"

Mya shrugged. "Water?"

He pushed aside a bottle of juice to take two bottles of water from a flat on the second shelf. After he had handed it to her, they stood in the middle of the kitchen to drink. Once their thirst was quenched, an awkward silence hung between them. Roarke racked his brain for something to say, but drew a blank. All he could think about was her naked form sprawled across the crimson silk sheets on his bed upstairs. How did he get her from here to there though?

Mya sat the bottle on the counter and cleared her throat. "Can I see the rest?"

His eyes widened for a moment before he realized what she meant. "Sure." He took her hand to lead Mya through the rooms on the lower level. They climbed the curved staircase together and emerged onto the second floor. He showed her the guest rooms and his office before he stopped in front of his bedroom door. "This is where I sleep."

Mya swallowed audibly as he pushed open the white door. She still held his hand, and she could feel the moisture between their palms. Was it his sweat or hers? Maybe both.

She followed him inside and caught her breath. A huge, four-poster, black lacquered bed took up most of the middle of the room. Black furniture that matched the decor was stationed strategically around the walls to maximize space. Highly polished hardwood absorbed the thunk of her sandals' heels as she walked farther into the room and stopped before the fireplace. A luxuriant black rug stretched across the floor in front of the hearth,

and she almost knelt to touch it. Only the knowledge of how gauche her actions would be restrained her.

When she turned around, she found Roarke's solemn eyes on her. "It's beautiful." Mya kicked off her sandals as she walked over to the bed. It rested on a pedestal, so she didn't have to bend down to touch the satiny red comforter draped across the bed. She turned back to look at him again and saw the hunger in his eyes that she knew was reflected in hers. She forced a smile as she sat on the bed. "This is so comfy."

He nodded as he walked over to her. "You should try laying down on it."

Mya stretched out until she lay completely on the bed. Her stomach chittered with nerves as he sat down beside her. "Heavenly."

Roarke ran a finger down her bare arm. "Absolutely." He moved his hand to the top button of her vest shirt where it met at the valley of her breasts. The lacy cups of her red bra were just visible from this angle.

Mya put her hand on his. She wasn't sure if it was to stop him or urge him to continue. He must have taken his cue from the desire that burned in her eyes, because he flicked open the top button, then the next and the next, until all five had been undone. Mya closed her eyes as his hand settled on her stomach to rub back and forth in slow circles.

Roarke's breath caught in his throat as he eased open the vest shirt to stroke her stomach. His hand traveled up to her left breast, and he rubbed the nipple through the lace of the padded cup. He groaned as she squirmed against his hand. Her lips were moist and invited him to kiss her. He shifted positions so he could lean down to press his lips against hers.

Her eyes flew open as he brought his lips against hers. They had only shared one kiss, and it had been almost platonic. As his tongue traced her lips, Mya moaned low in her throat. When he pulled his hand away from her breast, she protested wordlessly.

Roarke chuckled as he buried his hands in her hair and pulled her closer. Their tongues met, and she stroked hers across his, which made him shudder. He lay on his back as he brought her up to rest on top of him. Her mouth was instantly more accessible, and he pushed his tongue in deeper and elicited a moan from her.

Mya's eyes widened as he explored the interior of her mouth. His erection pressed

into her thigh and strained against the confines of his clothing. She was so hot. Had she developed a fever? She didn't think she had ever felt like this before—not even in the throes of an orgasm.

Roarke pushed her away slightly to smile up at her. "You're so soft."

"And you're so hard." Mya couldn't hold back a giggle. She wriggled on top of him and pressed her thigh against his shaft.

"I'm amazed after the incident at the spa." He winked at her. "You inspire me to new heights, love."

As Roarke kissed her again, Mya wrapped her arms around his shoulders and held him tightly. His tongue traced a path from her mouth to her ear, where he nibbled on the lobe. Their eyes were inches apart, and she got lost in his deep brown depths. It was like she had drowned in an ocean of... What? There was a vulnerability to his eyes that she saw beneath the heat of passion. Approval, joy, and tenderness mingled with his obvious desire. Did he see the same things in her eyes? Was her love for him blatantly obvious?

She gasped at the thought, which drew a concerned look from Roarke. He immediately stilled his mouth on her lobe. How could it be? When had it happened? Did she really love Roarke?

He looked up at her with an uncertain expression. "Are you alright?"

Mya nodded, unable to speak. The gentle expression on his face was like nothing she had ever seen from Bobby. It was obvious he cared for her and was compassionate. Both qualities Bobby lacked in his makeup. This man was everything her fiancé should be, but wasn't. She should be feeling guilty, but all she felt was the joy that swept through her when she realized she was finally in love.

"Mya?" His eyes had darkened. "Are you okay? Do you want to stop?"

She shook her head. If she opened her mouth, the words would fly out. That could ruin everything. What if Roarke didn't feel the same? It was a game to him, and any declaration of love might send him away. She couldn't lose him—not yet, anyway. While she couldn't keep her emotions hidden forever, she could for an afternoon.

Roarke pushed the shirt off her shoulders and unfastened the front clasp of the bra. As her breasts spilled free, he pressed his face to them and basked in the moment. He'd had a few lovers, but didn't think he had felt this way before. But he had never been in

love before now. He didn't shy away from the revelation as he had done in the past. This time he embraced it, determined that she would feel the same way about him. Someday Mya would be his, not Bobby's. If he had patience. In the meantime, he had her body if not her heart.

A groan ripped from his throat as Mya pushed her hands under his shirt and flicked her nails across his nipples. He moved his face to take possession of one of her plump pink nipples. He grinned around the bud in his mouth when she groaned and ground herself against him. Maybe now wasn't the time for patience.

"Roarke."

"Hmm?" He laved the nipple as he squeezed her right breast.

"Roarke!" Her tone was more insistent, and Mya slid her hands down his stomach to the fly of his white pants. She stroked the length of him through the cotton material, pleased to feel him jump under her hand.

He moved his lips from her nipple. "What do you want?"

"You."

He grinned. "Soon." Roarke pushed her off him and stood up to remove his clothes. As Mya started to undo her slacks, he said, "Let me."

She paused and stared up at him. He joined her on the bed, clad only in a pair of black silk bikinis. Mya ran her hand across his buttocks. "Nice underwear."

Roarke fumbled with the button and zipper on her pants and finally got them open. He touched the lace of her red panties and flirted with the lips of her mound. "Yours too."

She shrugged. "I had some advice about underwear."

His chuckle turned to a gasp when her hand traveled around to grasp his shaft. He pulled her away. "Not yet."

"But..."

"In awhile. This time I want to be inside of you."

She lay back as Roarke pulled off her pants. Mya's eyes felt heavy, but the rest of her body tingled with desire. She held out her arms as he knelt on the bed, but he ignored the invitation.

Instead, Roarke settled down more toward the foot of the bed, between her thighs. He

pushed them apart to make a nest for himself, then stroked her warmth through the lacy red panties. She arched against his finger and moaned. He propped his chin on his elbow so he could see her eyes. "Do you like that?"

She rolled her eyes at him and hissed as he plunged his finger inside her shallowly. She could feel the warmth of his digit surrounded by the lace, and the sensation made her tighten her thighs.

Roarke gently slapped her left thigh. "Relax."

Mya's mouth dropped open when he did that, but she wasn't offended. It was obvious he wanted to play with her, and she found she liked it. "You like to spank?" Her voice was a throaty whisper.

Roarke shrugged. "Only naughty girls." He blushed at the lie. He had never spanked a woman in his life.

A grin teased at the corners of her mouth. "I'll have to see how naughty I can be."

Roarke's eyes widened at her words, and he wondered if she really wanted him to spank her. With an air of experimentation, he pulled on her hip so one of her cheeks was exposed. He lightly tapped his hand against the flesh revealed by the thong. To his surprise, she giggled and purred at the same time. "You like that, don't you?"

Mya held up her thumb and forefinger to indicate a little. She was too breathless to speak as he pulled down her underwear. His hand came down on her butt again, with just a bit more force. As he did that, his other hand went to explore her folds. The combination left Mya a confused mass of sensations. When she arched against his fingers, his hand hit her buttocks with more force, which caused a sting to linger. It was impossible not to rub herself against his fingers though. Surely her cheeks were pink now, but she didn't care. It felt too good to ask him to stop.

He bit back a laugh as she turned into a babbling, giggling hedonist before his eyes. He watched carefully until her eyes closed, and she clenched her hands together. He moved quickly and rolled her onto her back to bury his face between her thighs.

Mya screamed as his tongue invaded her. She felt him jerk, before he stopped. "Keep going," she forced out through clenched teeth.

"Are you okay?" His voice was muffled.

She nodded before she realized he probably couldn't see her. "It surprised me." She

wriggled against him and waited for his heavenly tongue to begin its conquest. When he flicked it over her clit, she cried out again, unable to care if there were servants in the house or neighbors who could hear her cries of passion.

As Roarke continued his velvety kisses, he felt her body shudder and twitch with each flick of his tongue. She sobbed with pleasure, and moisture flooded his mouth. Right before she was about to come, he withdrew.

Mya's eyes popped open. "What are you doing?"

He grinned at her angry tone. "I want us to go together."

She shook her head. "I can't...not during... Please?" She wanted to scream as he slid up her body, farther and farther away from her mound. "Don't do this, Roarke. I need to..."

"Explode," he finished for her as he positioned his shaft at her entrance. "You will. I promise."

She sighed. It would do no good to protest. She resigned herself to another disappointment as he slowly filled her. She moaned at the length of him, and her body adjusted with an ease that surprised her.

Buried inside her wet folds felt like Heaven. Roarke let her moisture flood him as he stayed in her and didn't move. As her hips started to buck, he let her body persuade him to move. He withdrew almost completely, then filled her again. Mya's harsh breaths expressed her pleasure more than any words could, and Roarke did it again.

Mya trembled on the edge of climax, but she knew that he wouldn't last long enough to push her over the edge. She closed her eyes and gritted her teeth as he plunged into her again. She felt his finger stroke her clitoris, and her eyes popped open. She stared into his brown depths as he continued to thrust into her while he manipulated the nub. She threw her head back as shockwaves washed over her from the epicenter between her thighs. Mya buried her hands in his hair as she orgasmed and thrust against him with a sob as her body convulsed.

He couldn't wait any longer. With her first shudder, as her muscles tightened around his shaft, Roarke let his climax sweep over him. He pulled her closer, and she strained against them. For a moment, it was as if they were one person as their satisfaction pulsed through them. Their heartbeats were simpatico, and a mingled cry came from both of



their throats before Roarke collapsed on top of her and held her against him. He rubbed his face in her soft hair as her hands moved to his back. He never wanted to let her go, and he pulled her even closer.

Mya held onto him as if he was her lifeline. Maybe he was. She wanted to stay with him forever, but she knew she would have to leave. First, she had to settle things with Bobby before she could think about a discussion of the future with Roarke.

"Are you sure you want to take a cab? I can drive you."

Mya shook her head as she did up the last button on her vest top. "A taxi is fine. You look too comfortable to move."

A rueful grin curved across his face. It was true he didn't want to move. The only thing that would make the moment more perfect was if Mya stayed with him. He almost asked her to, but knew she would refuse. Bobby expected her at home, and the afternoon's events hadn't changed that. She was still Bobby's girl—for now.

She hesitated at the doorway and looked back at him. She half-hoped he would ask her to stay. When he didn't, Mya sighed and twisted the knob. "I'll see you Friday?"

Roarke put his hands behind his head and snuggled against the pillow. "Unless you want to see me sooner?" He kept his tone deliberately light in an attempt to mask the serious undertones.

She wanted to, but Mya was afraid of his reaction to her sudden enthusiasm. She couldn't handle a rejection right now until she sorted things out with Bobby. Either way, she knew she couldn't stay with her fiancé—not after she had realized she loved Roarke. Even if it was all just a game to him, it had become serious to her. It wouldn't be fair to Bobby to pretend that she still loved him just to have a safety net in case things ended badly with Roarke. "I can't. Work and all..."

Roarke sighed. "Friday it is. Do you want me to walk you down?"

She shook her head. "I'll be fine." Mya wanted to say so much more, but in the end she turned and left the bedroom. She was halfway down the stairs when she heard him call out to her. Her heart stuttered and she hoped he was about to ask her to stay. She gripped the banister and turned around. "Yes?"

He stood at the top of the stairs in the nude. "You left your earrings on the night

stand."

A horn honked in the driveway to indicate the taxi had arrived. "Bring them with you Friday." Mya hurried down the stairs and out the door before she blurted out a confession or begged him to let her stay. It was too soon, and she was too uncertain. Besides, she owed Bobby an explanation before she stayed overnight with Roarke—if he wanted her to.

## **Chapter Eighteen**

### ***Dinner With The Producer***

When Mya entered the apartment, her eyes fell on Bobby. He stood in the entryway in a suit and tie. His blonde hair was secured into a slicked-back ponytail, and she could smell his cologne from the door. "What's going on?"

"Jesus Christ, Mya. It's almost seven. You have to get dressed."

"Why?" Mya pulled her hand away as he reached for her. "What's going on?"

"We're having dinner with Tony Scarpeti."

She raised her eyebrows. "Why didn't you tell me sooner, and who is Tony Scarpeti?"

"He's doing a movie, and I might get the lead." Bobby's blue eyes sparkled with excitement. "Tonight is about striking a deal—maybe."

She shook her head. "Why didn't you give me some warning?" Mya winced as her shoulders grew stiff. Already the relaxation of the afternoon spent with Roarke had dissipated.

He frowned at her. "Mr. Scarpeti invited us today. I couldn't say no."

Mya knew their discussion would have to be postponed until after the dinner. "What time are we meeting him?"

"Eight."

"Eight!" She looked down at the slacks and vest she wore. "I'll never make it."

"Hurry." He took her arm to push her toward the bathroom. "And make yourself beautiful."

She put her hands on her hips, frowning up at him. "Why?"

Bobby's eyes shifted away from hers. "I've heard he has an eye for the ladies. It can't hurt if you impress him."

With a disgusted sigh, Mya marched down the hall to the bathroom. Thank goodness she had taken a shower at Roarke's before she left. She applied makeup and twisted her hair into a loose bun. Afterward, she stripped off her clothes and dashed down the hall to their bedroom.

She locked the door behind her so Bobby couldn't walk in. It was crazy when she

considered how many times they had seen each other naked, but she no longer wanted to be exposed in front of him. It would feel like she had cheated on Roarke.

After she put on underwear and stockings, Mya took a black dress from the closet and grimaced at the thought of wearing it. The heat that enveloped the city would transform the frock to a furnace, but it was her only formal dress, so she had no alternative. She slid the simple silk sheath over her head while she shoved her feet into black pumps. When she hurried from the bedroom, she found Bobby in the hall, where he leaned against the wall. "Zip me?"

He grunted and set aside his drink as Mya turned around. Bobby lifted the zipper, then put his hands on her hips. "There's something different about you."

"Huh?" Mya fought back a blush as she turned back to face him.

His eyes narrowed as they examined her. "You're different."

She rolled her eyes. "We don't have time for this. There's traffic..."

Bobby shook his head. "You look different."

Was it an afternoon of great sex or the knowledge she was in love that made her look so different? Mya shrugged unconsciously and tried to divert Bobby's attention from her. "Mr. Scarpeti won't like it if we're late."

He nodded. "Yeah, we should go." He eyed her critically. "Take your hair down."

"What?"

"You should wear your hair down."

"That style doesn't suit this dress."

His lip curled. "Mya, the fashion guru."

Her spine stiffened. "I prefer economy over fashion. It's something you could learn about."

Bobby glared at her. "I want you to wear your hair down. I said you had long hair, and I want you to show it off."

"Too bad. It's hotter than hell out there." Mya turned from him and scooped up her purse and car keys on the way to the door. "Coming?"

"Yeah." Bobby snatched the keys from her hand and strode from the apartment. He didn't seem to care if she kept up.

Rather than run after him, Mya walked at a sedate pace. When she got to the parking garage, she found him behind the wheel. He glowered at her when she opened the door. With a cool smile, she climbed into the SRX and slammed the door as he accelerated from the space. Mya shook her head at the way he drove and fastened her seatbelt without comment.

The ride to Cīrqué was laden with a tense silence that she felt no inclination to break. Once she opened her mouth, Mya knew the truth would fly out, and she didn't want to ruin Bobby's deal with Tony Scarpeti. Their breakup was imminent, but she didn't want it to be acrimonious. Not that she wanted to be friends with Bobby either.

Bobby left the SRX with a valet and took her arm. He wore a charming smile, and Mya tried to keep the frown off her face. Always the consummate actor, her Bobby. A small smile found its way through her lips. Not really her Bobby for much longer. Was she a terrible person to feel so relieved? No longer would she have to pander to his ego or give in to his wishes. She sighed quietly and received a warning look from him.

The maitre 'd greeted them with a sneer, but quickly humbled himself when Bobby gave the name Scarpeti. "Ah, yes. Mr. Scarpeti waits for you in the lounge."

They followed him into the small lounge where a handful of people waited. Mya saw a dark-haired man and woman at a table and assumed they were the Scarpetis. Instead, the maitre 'd led them to a lone man. He was in his forties, with thick black hair, intent dark eyes, and olive skin. He was on the chubby side, but still handsome.

"Bobby," she hissed at him.

"What?" he asked out of the corner of his mouth.

"Why did you bring me? This is obviously a business dinner, or he would have a date too."

Bobby shrugged and disengaged his hold on her to extend his hand to Mr. Scarpeti. "Hello, sir."

"Bobby." He spoke with the tiniest trace of an accent. Mr. Scarpeti shook his hand and flashed three shiny gold rings. Then he turned to smile at her. "You must be the fiancée."

Mya held out her hand. "Mya, Mr. Scarpeti."

He took her hand, pressing a kiss to the palm instead of shaking it. "Call me Tony."

Did you want a drink, or shall we go to our table?"

Mya left Bobby to answer as she discreetly wiped her palm on the dress and followed them across the restaurant to a round table in a quiet alcove. She remained quiet as they discussed the movie and concentrated first on the menu, then on her food. She tried to hide her boredom, but a yawn escaped her.

"Look at us." Tony shook his head. "We're discussing business when we could be discussing pleasure." He winked at Mya.

She frowned at him and automatically pressed her back against the linen of the chair. "This is a business meeting, so please don't feel like you have to entertain me."

He frowned at Bobby before he regarded her intently. "It is just business for you?"

She shrugged. "What else would it be, sir? This is about Bobby's career, after all."

He stroked his chin and suddenly laughed. "Ah, I see." His mirth disappeared when he turned to eye Bobby. "You have not represented this arrangement honestly, Mr. Waller."

"I'm telling you she'll do it." Sweat beaded Bobby's forehead.

Once more, Tony's eyes studied Mya. "I think not. There is nothing about the girl to suggest she is accustomed to these sort of games."

Bobby shook his head. "What about Thomas?"

Mya's mouth fell open. "What does Roarke have to do with anything?"

Tony shook his head and laid aside his napkin. "I have had enough of this, and I think you will be busy explaining long into the night, Waller." He opened his wallet to peel off a few bills and tossed them on the table. He rose and nodded to both of them. "Goodnight."

Before Bobby could say anything, Scarpeti had walked away from the table. "Bastard!" He slammed his hand on the table and turned to glare at Mya. "This is your fault."

She bit back a retort as she pushed away from the table. Most of the Mandarin Quail remained on her plate. "We need to leave. Now!" She didn't look back to see if he followed as she marched from the restaurant. She stood on the curb near the valet and waited for Bobby to emerge.

He stopped beside her, obviously angry. Bobby took the keys from his pocket and tossed them to the valet. "The SRX."

The red-jacketed valet nodded, then hurried to the lot. When he pulled up with the SRX a minute later, Bobby tore around to the driver's side. As the valet got out, Bobby pointed to a tiny scratch on the bumper. "Look what you've done to my car."

The young man shook his head. "No, sir. I didn't..."

"You incompetent moron! I'll have you fired for this." Bobby grabbed the lapels of his red jacket and shook him vigorously. "You're going to pay for that."

Heat filled Mya's cheeks as she hurried forward. She wrenched on Bobby's arm. "Stop it. You know that scratch was there before. You made it on the way home from the dealership."

The kid pulled himself free and hurried back to his kiosk on legs that trembled.

Bobby glared down at her. "Don't contradict me."

"Don't act like an ass in public. You're taking your anger out on that kid." She scowled at him before she walked around to the passenger side. Bobby had already climbed inside, and Mya's mouth dropped open when he locked her side. She glared at him, but refused to plead for entrance. She turned on her heel to reenter the restaurant, where a bank of payphones lined the wall.

By the time she emerged into the heat again for the taxi that stopped at the curb, Bobby and the SRX were gone. Mya almost directed the cab to take her somewhere besides their apartment, but she had nowhere to go at the moment. Besides, she wanted to toss Bobby's ring back at him.

## Chapter Nineteen

### *Moving Out*

Bobby didn't arrive at the apartment for several hours after Mya got home. By the time he sauntered in, as if nothing had happened, she had moved her things to the guest room. She was curled up on the couch under a throw and wore the robe and slippers Roarke had given her. She could almost pretend she was back on his silk sheets again.

He stopped in the entryway when he saw her on the couch. "You're still up?"

She shrugged. "We need to talk."

"I'm tired." There was a petulant cast to his lips.

"You shouldn't have stayed out until three in the morning." Mya resisted the urge to ask where he had been, because she really didn't care anymore.

"I'm a grownup. I can do what I want." He tossed the car keys on the table with a thunk.

Mya shrugged again. "What was the dinner with Scarpeti about?"

"Never mind."

"Tell me."

Bobby strolled into the living room and propped his hip against the couch. "I told him you would be very nice to him if he gave me a role in his movie."

Her mouth dropped open. "You were trying to pimp me out?"

He shook his head. "Just furthering my career."

"At my expense!"

Bobby scowled at her. "You don't seem to mind trading your body for my benefit."

If he had been closer, Mya knew she would have slapped him. Instead, she curled her hands around the blanket. "I wouldn't have done it."

"Yeah, right." Bobby sneered at her. "I'm sure Scarpeti's gifts are even nicer than Thomas'. Your mercenary little heart would have gone pitter-patter for him."

"I'm not avaricious." Mya gained her feet. "And I'm not the one hiding \$400,000 either."

He blanched. "So Roarke told you about that?"



She shrugged. A tiny part of her had hoped he would deny the heated accusation, but she had known Roarke hadn't lied to her. "Where is it? I'm entitled to some of that."

"You didn't do shit for it."

"I put up with you, and I bartered my body for your success."

Bobby strode toward her and grabbed a handful of her hair. "It wasn't anything you didn't enjoy, now was it?"

A cold smile curved across her face. "Absolutely right. I've enjoyed every minute with Roarke. He's fabulous in bed."

Bobby's hand curled into a fist, but he slammed it against the couch. "I'm going to bed."

"We haven't finished here."

"Finish yourself, babe." He strode down the hall and slammed the bedroom door behind him.

"I should be good at that after having fucked you for four years," she screamed after him. Mya had the urge to follow and tell him that they were through, but her heart still pounded with fear. She had seen the rage in his eyes and knew he had almost hit her. She would let his temper cool, then confront him when he got home from work tomorrow night.

Mya let herself into the apartment after work the next day. It was almost four, and she knew Bobby would be home within a couple of hours. That gave her plenty of time to get everything packed that she hadn't gotten to last night so she could be ready to leave. Not that she knew where she would go yet. The money in her purse wouldn't see her through more than a few days at a hotel, and she had already emptied the joint account she shared with Bobby. It seemed unlikely that she would see any of his hidden \$400,000. She racked her brain for a solution as she walked down the hallway to the guest room.

She frowned as she passed the partially opened door to the master bedroom. She could hear voices and heavy breathing. Her heart stuttered as she slowly pushed open the door, somehow unsurprised by what she saw.

Bobby was in between the legs of a brassy blonde woman several years older than he was. Her large, round breasts jiggled as she thrust against his face. Moans came from her,

punctuated with, "Fuck me, love."

Tears stung Mya's eyes at the casual betrayal she saw before her. It didn't matter that their relationship had died. How could he bring some woman into the bed they had shared together? Her eyes narrowed as the blonde tossed back her hair. Mya gasped when she recognized Roni Sherwood, Bobby's agent.

They jumped apart at the sound, and Bobby turned to face Mya. "You're home early." He sounded defensive, but there was a note of satisfaction in his voice.

Their movements had been stiff and obviously rehearsed. When she looked in his eyes, Mya realized the scene was a setup. She was supposed to walk in and catch them while they fucked. She felt sick. "How long?"

"Three years," Roni said with a giggle. "I'm the reason Bobby moved you here. We met in Seattle..."

"...she saw potential in me..."

"...and here you are." Roni shook her head. "How could you not know, Mya?"

She shrugged. "I was an idiot?" Mya turned her head to look at Bobby. "Why keep me around if you want to be with her?"

Bobby, stark naked, stood up. "I brought you along so you could support us while I acted. When I got the role in *Wilder Hearts*, I thought I could finally get rid of you."

"He's going to marry me." Roni held out her left hand to show off a large diamond.

Mya's nausea increased. Part of Bobby's advance had gone to that ring. No wonder Roni never talked about her fiancé. "So, why didn't you?"

"Thomas wanted you, so you were useful for a while longer."

His words hurt, but not as much as she would have expected them to if she had ever imagined he could say something so cruel. She was angrier at her own naïveté than Bobby's manipulation. "Is the money all gone?"

He nodded. "Most of it, anyway. We bought a condo, and I got Roni the ring. With planning the wedding and settling a few debts, there isn't much left."

Mya's grin was cold. "I hope it lasts awhile longer since I just cleaned out the last couple thousand in the checking account."

His expression darkened. "You bitch! I want half of that."

"Most of it came from my hard work."

He started toward her, but Roni's voice stopped him. "Let her have it, darling. You've got fantastic prospects. We don't need two Gs. And what else does she have to keep her warm now that she won't have you?"

"You're right, babe." Bobby sneered at Mya. "Get out of my apartment."

Mya giggled, either because she was hysterical or giddy. "I had already planned to. I packed most of my stuff last night."

He frowned. "You're leaving me?"

She nodded. "Yep."

"Why?"

"It turns out Roarke is better at a lot of things than you are. Foremost, he knows how to love me."

Bobby's eyes widened. "You're in love with him?"

"Oh, yeah. And he's in love with me." Mya resisted the urge to cross her fingers. As her pinkie brushed against the tiny diamond on her finger, she was reminded of one more thing she wanted to do. She wrenched the ring off her finger and flung it at Bobby. Her lips twisted into a smile when it nailed him on the cheek. "Maybe you can return that to the crackerjack box where you found it." Then, head held high, she marched from the room to gather her things.

In the guest room, Mya locked the door and threw the rest of her stuff into a case. Before she left, she picked up the phone to call Carly. When her sister answered, she blurted out, "I'm leaving him."

"Finally." Carly seemed unsurprised. "Where are you going?"

"I don't know. A hotel, I guess." Mya bit her lip because she knew how expensive apartments—even a shithole like she had shared with Bobby for eighteen months—could be. "I don't know where I'll go after that. Wanna move to L.A.?" she asked, half-hopeful that her sister would agree.

"Sorry. I'm moving in with Troy."

"Wow! Dad must be blowing a gasket." Frank hadn't accepted it well when she moved in with Bobby, not even when they got engaged. Mya could only imagine his reaction to

his baby's plans to move in with an older man.

"He likes Troy, but he's not thrilled." Carly sighed. "Anyway, where will you go? Are you coming home?"

"I can't yet."

"Why not?"

"I'm in love with Roarke."

"I know," Carly said easily. "It was all over your faces."

"His too?"

"Uh huh."

Mya bit her lip, not so certain. "I don't know."

"Trust me."

"Well..." She trailed off so she wouldn't voice her doubts. She hadn't thought beyond the end of things with Bobby and had no idea how she would confess her feelings for Roarke. She chuckled suddenly.

"What? What's so funny?"

"I just realized I have a place to stay." If she was careful, he would never know she was there. Roarke had said he never used the place—only for their meetings. "You have my cell number, right?"

"Somewhere. Why?"

"The place I'm going doesn't have a phone." All it had was a bed and bathroom. When she and Roarke got together, that was all they needed.

## Chapter Twenty

### *The Balcony*

Mya had carefully hidden her things in the guest room because she figured Roarke wouldn't venture in there. She had risked the addition of a few items to the cupboards and fridge and hoped her luck would hold. When Friday arrived, she was satisfied she had removed all traces of her occupation. She had even washed the silk sheets that morning, then returned them to the bed when she got back to the apartment after work. She was sprawled across them when she heard Roarke's key turn in the lock shortly before two-thirty. She held her breath as she heard his tread on the carpet. To her relief, he bypassed the kitchen and living room to enter the bedroom.

Roarke froze when he opened the door to find Mya draped across the bed. The silver of the sheets lent her skin a pearly sheen, and her hair, spread out across the pillows, contrasted sharply with the silver. "Uh—hi."

She smiled up at him. "Hi." Mya trailed a finger down her bare hip.

"You're early."

She shrugged. "I got off early."

He entered the room and stopped before the bed. She was absolutely gorgeous as she lay before him with one knee curled up to shyly obscure the triangle between her thighs. When she licked her lips, he groaned. "So..."

"Yeah?"

Roarke shook his head, unable to think when she was spread so temptingly before him. What had he planned for today? He couldn't remember now. His eyes widened when she stood up from the bed, trailed fingers through her hair, and made her breasts jut up.

Mya rolled her hips as she walked over to him and ran her hands down the smooth cotton of his short-sleeved white polo. She stopped to rub a nipple and press herself against him. "You're wearing too many clothes."

He cleared his throat, thrown off-kilter by this side of Mya. "You think?"

She nodded.

"Okay." To Roarke's surprise, her busy hands moved across his body to pull and push at his clothes until she had removed his shirt and unfastened his pants. "Mya." He tried to

push her hands away as they moved to his waistband.

"Surely you don't have a problem with this?" She looked up at him through the veil of her lashes. "You aren't old-fashioned, are you, Roarke?"

He shook his head as he swallowed audibly. His hands dropped to his sides, and Mya pushed his trousers down. She paused to allow him to kick off his shoes and have him step out of the pants. They were quickly followed by navy briefs.

She was on her knees before him and looked up at him with an uncertain expression. An impish grin teased Mya's lips as she tossed his slacks and underwear into the corner near his shirt. She touched the head of his shaft with the tip of her tongue to catch a dewy drop of his arousal.

Roarke groaned when Mya's mouth slid down around him. She didn't take him in completely, but she tortured him with quick flicks of her tongue and intermittently applied suction. He arched forward and pushed himself deeper inside the moist recesses of her mouth as she swirled her tongue around his erection. He paused to see if he had gone too deep. He looked down and saw she was a bit surprised, but didn't seem to mind. "Are you okay?"

Mya couldn't speak or nod, so she used her thumb and forefinger to form an OK sign. She continued her ministrations. She worked her tongue around the circumference of his erection as she sucked rhythmically. When she felt his body start to quiver, Mya pulled her mouth away.

He groaned, and the lines of his face contorted into a grimace. "Why did you stop?"

A wicked grin curved her mouth. "I want to be with you when you come."

Roarke bit back a sigh. It was no less than he deserved since he had done the same thing to her last time. He pulled Mya into his arms and nestled his face at the bend of her neck and shoulder where he nibbled softly. She pressed closer and pushed her nipples into the light dusting of hair on his chest. He heard her moan and moved his head to swallow the sound with his lips on hers.

He kissed her until she went limp in his arms, then pushed her back onto the bed. Once again, Roarke knelt between her parted thighs to kiss the damp tangle of reddish-gold curls that hid her femininity. Mya shuddered and twitched, but pushed him away when he would have continued. "What's wrong?"

"I had something else in mind." She stood up and took his hand to lead him outside to the balcony.

Roarke resisted as they got to the sliding glass door. "What are you thinking?"

"It's such a nice day. I just want to go outside." She turned to bat her lashes at him as she had seen her sister do a hundred times. "Please, can't we *come* outside?" She licked her lips.

Who could see them so high up? Would anyone care if they did see a couple as they made love in the middle of the afternoon? Roarke's body tightened as he realized the thought of an audience didn't repulse him. He didn't drag his feet as he followed her out onto the patio. He winced as the soles of his feet touched the hot cement. There was a moment of vertigo as he realized he stood on a balcony fourteen floors up, stark naked. When it passed, his gaze fastened on Mya, surrounded by a halo of bright sunlight that kissed every inch of her. Not a bad idea, he decided with a twitch of his lips.

His eyes widened as he saw the chaise lounge that hadn't been there before. "Did your...?"

"I picked it up after work." Yesterday, Mya added silently. She lay down on the floral-print cushion and held out her arms.

Roarke gingerly lowered himself on top, careful not to crush her. He balanced his weight on his arms. He grunted when she pulled him down to rest on top of her. The tip of his manhood pressed against her moist mound, and she wriggled her hips. "Mya," he said in a warning tone.

She giggled, not at all repentant. Mya lifted a breast to offer him a taste. She moaned as he dipped his head to accept her invitation. As he suckled on the turgid peak, Mya shifted slightly until they were aligned. She thrust her hips upward to take him inside her.

Roarke's eyes popped open, and his mouth fell away from her nipple. "You can't be ready." But her body confirmed she was, and he pushed himself deeper into her softness.

"I think I could always be ready for you," Mya whispered as she arched her neck to press her lips to his. She tried to maintain control of her emotions as Roarke thrust in and out of her, which caused the lounge to groan in protest. When sweat beaded her forehead—not from the sun, but from the willpower it took to hold off her orgasm—Mya pushed him away.

"What the hell?"

She laughed at his stunned expression. "So cranky." Mya grasped his erection in her hand.

"Why are you torturing me? Haven't you made up for Tuesday yet?"

She shook her head. "I want to try something."

He groaned and wondered if he was too old to keep up with Mya. His climax was perilously close, and she seemed barely affected. Roarke's eyes narrowed as he caught sight of the perspiration on her face and the way her chest heaved with each breath. Or maybe she was just a great actress? "What did you have in mind?"

She couldn't find the words to tell him what she had in mind, so Mya took his hand to lead him to the wrought iron railing. She turned to look down at the city. "Stand behind me."

His eyebrows rose when he realized what she wanted. "Are you sure?"

Mya nodded.

"Well..." They could always return to the bedroom if she didn't enjoy the position. With a shrug, Roarke stood behind her and lifted her hips as he thrust his forward. Once she was positioned, he released her slowly until she had taken all of him. He looked over her shoulder and saw the way she gripped the railing with a white-knuckle grasp. To his surprise, she wrapped her legs loosely around his thighs. Her toes pressed into his buttocks. "Do you do yoga?" he joked.

"Aerobics that require a lot of stretching." Mya lifted herself, then sank onto him again. "Move, Roarke."

He obeyed the command in her tone and thrust into her as deeply as he could.

"Faster."

"You sure are bossy," he teased, but complied.

Mya groaned as she felt his shaft push against the walls of her womanhood and rub near her clit with each thrust. She had never felt anything like it. Eagerly, she returned his thrusts and ground herself against him in small circles. It was difficult to maintain her hold on the railing and at some point, his arms wrapped around her stomach to hold her against him, while she braced her forearms on the railing. As an orgasm tore through her,



Mya gasped, too drained to cry out or speak. She continued to convulse around him, and Roarke thrust into her again and again.

He bit his lip and hoped the small dart of pain would help him prolong the moment. Roarke wanted to make her come repeatedly, until she was about to pass out, but when she tightened around him for the second time, he gave in to his body's demand and released wave after wave of satisfaction into her.

It was only when the pleasure passed that he realized his legs and arms trembled, and she shook with mingled exhaustion and pleasure. With a gentle movement, he disengaged their bodies and lowered her to the cement. Once she was steady, he put his arm around her waist, and they stumbled into the bedroom to fall across the bed.

With a small reserve of energy, he was able to bury his hand in her hair. "Where did you get the idea for that?"

She shrugged. "I was staring down at the city, and it just came to me."

He frowned. "When?"

Mya struggled not to blush as her mind worked furiously. "Uh, the last time I was here. That's when I got the idea."

"That long ago?"

She nodded quickly. "Now that we can, I decided what the hell?"

He chuckled. "If you keep throwing caution to the wind, you'll be the death of me. I think I'm too old for the sexual Olympics."

Mya snuggled closer. "You were in fine form, sir. I don't think you're ready for the senior events yet."

He put his arm around her and pulled her even closer. A fine trace of sweat dotted her skin and heat poured off her. Her back was already red. "You're going to have a sunburn."

"Small price to pay," she said around a yawn.

"You should take a bath to get some of the heat out."

Mya laid her head on his chest. "I don't think I'll lose any heat if we get into a bath together."

He stroked her hair as a pang hit his stomach. Time grew short, and moments like these would soon be only a memory he could use to torture himself. He wondered if

Bobby had told her yet? "Have you and Bobby talked about the movie?"

She shook her head. "Not lately."

He struggled to concentrate as her hand moved across his stomach and slid lower to flirt with his semi-hard shaft. "Lenny told me yesterday that it's nearly in the can. Two or three more scenes at most."

Mya's hand froze, and she struggled to remember how to breathe. "Really?"

"Yeah. Apparently they've made a lot of progress in the last three weeks." Damn his brother. He was always a screw-up—even when he did something right for a change.

"I see." Her lips wobbled, and she was glad her face was pressed against his chest. "When will it be done?"

"Probably by Friday. The cast has agreed to work through the weekend if necessary, so Monday at the latest."

Mya slowly lifted her head and tried to read his expression. "Our deal is near the end?"

He nodded and tried to keep his expression bland. "You'll soon be free of me." He silently pleaded for her to protest or declare she never wanted it to end.

His light-hearted tone cut through Mya's heart, and she blinked back tears. "Yes. This is probably our last meeting."

He cleared his throat. "Yeah."

She pulled away from him. "I think I'll take that bath now."

By the set of her shoulders, he could tell she wasn't in the mood for him to join her. "After I take a shower, I should be going. I have plans..." To sit home alone and wallow in despair.

Mya put a hand on his arm. "Stay with me tonight."

"Here?"

She nodded. "It's our last night together." He obviously didn't want to continue their liaison. She drew in a ragged breath to hold back a sob. While it humbled her pride to ask, she didn't want to miss her last chance to hold him.

He swallowed back the uncomfortable lump of moisture in his throat. "Okay. What about Bobby?"

Mya shrugged. "He can live without me tonight."

There was a sadness in her eyes that he wanted to ask about, but Roarke knew he was the last person she would want to confide any relationship problems to. He had ruined his chance to ever be more than her lover when he had forced her into this game. Lucky for her, it almost over. She would be able to move on to her role as Bobby's wife and put the ordeal behind her. Unlike Roarke, she wouldn't be haunted with what-ifs for the rest of her life.

## Chapter Twenty-One

### *Mya's Fantasy*

The sting of the sunburn woke Mya sometime late in the night. She lifted her head from Roarke's shoulder and rolled out of bed. She looked back to make sure she hadn't disturbed him, then padded into the bathroom.

She opened the shower stall and turned on the water as cold as she could stand it. Mya wasn't burdened with clothes, so she stepped directly under the spray after she adjusted the head to make it a softer stream. She gasped as the icy water pelted her, but it felt too good against her sunburn to move away from.

She leaned against the shower stall and let the water fall over her naked back. Mya felt tears prick the back of her eyes and tried to swallow them back. She didn't want to turn into a blubbering mess in Roarke's presence. The only thing worse than to lose him would be to have him to stay because he pitied her.

Mya lifted her head when she heard the door slide open. Roarke stepped in with her and shivered at the cold water. She hoped the tears on her cheeks would be dismissed as water droplets. "I didn't mean to wake you."

He didn't speak. Instead, he lifted her and pushed her against the wall.

"Roarke, what are you..." Mya's eyes widened as he entered her with one quick thrust. Her body was ready for him and welcomed him eagerly. She melted against him and clutched his shoulders.

He grunted and thrust into her as he moved one hand to play with her clitoris. He wore a grim expression, as if determined to force an orgasm from her.

Mya couldn't believe the feelings that coursed through her. She felt out of control and primitive. She wanted to completely lose her conscious self in his flesh, and she concentrated on her orgasm, consumed solely with her needs. She dug her nails into his back and ground her hips against his, equally determined to come.

She leaned forward and pushed herself down hard on him. His hand was trapped between their bodies. Her entire body convulsed as an orgasm washed over her. She clenched around his shaft and heard him moan, but he didn't come.

When Mya could breathe again, she relaxed against him and laid her head on his

shoulder. "That was wonderful."

"Be quiet."

Her eyes widened at the command, and Mya frowned when he turned off the shower and stepped out. "What's..."

He frowned at her, but didn't answer.

She gasped when he pressed her against the bathroom wall and entered her again. She could only cling helplessly to him and match his thrust for thrust as he slammed into her until he elicited another orgasm. He continued to thrust. "Please, no more," she whimpered. "I'm too tired."

Roarke ignored her whispered words and lifted her higher.

She pushed against his chest. "I want to stop now."

He grasped her wrists and pinned them to the wall on either side of her head. The only thing keeping her in place was his lower body as he thrust in and out of her. There was a feral gleam in his eyes when he threw his head back and cried out. She felt him fill her, and she came again, although she had been certain she was too exhausted.

As their trembling subsided, he released her wrists and lowered her to the floor. He put his arms around her and held her close to his pounding heart. He sounded out of breath when he asked, "Did I hurt you?"

She hesitated. Her wrists stung from his tight hold, and she felt sore and achy between her thighs. Blotting out those tiny pains was the flush of satisfaction that swept across her body. "No." She pressed her face against his chest. "I liked it." She felt him chuckle.

"It looks like Carly was right."

Mya's head whipped up so quickly her neck popped. "What?"

He pushed hair off her face and smiled down at her. "Carly told me you had a particular fantasy. I waited for the right moment—"

"She told you about that? When?"

He nodded. "She called me yesterday. After complaining about how difficult it was to get through to my office, she told me about your fantasy. "

She froze. "What else did she tell you?"

"Nothing except this fantasy." He grinned. "Why? Is there more?"

"I can't believe she told you about that!" She felt anger welling up inside, but it was mixed with gratitude and relief—a peculiar combination. She owed Carly gratitude because Mya knew she wouldn't ever have had the courage to tell Roarke she wanted him to just take her without asking her first. She was relieved her sister hadn't said anything about where she was staying.

He faltered. "I'm sorry if you wanted it to stay just a fantasy. It started out as role-playing, but I lost control."

Mya touched his face. "So did I. I'm glad she told you. "

He looked relieved. "You enjoyed it?"

Mya giggled. "Three times. Even when I was sure I couldn't take anymore."

"I know the feeling." He turned around to show her his back. "I thought you had dug into my spine a couple of times—not that I didn't enjoy it."

Mya gasped at the red marks on his back and blushed. She was pleased to have marked him. He would have a reminder of her for at least a few days. It would have to be enough.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

### *Bobby Pays a Visit*

Saturday morning, Mya had a visitor. When the doorbell rang, she froze. No one knew she was here except Carly. Who could it be? She walked quietly to the door and looked out the peephole to see an elegantly attired blonde that stood on the other side of the door. She wasn't familiar. Maybe a neighbor?

"Miss?" she called.

Mya's heart stuttered, and, for one crazy moment, she wondered if the woman could see her through the door.

"Are you home? The security screener said she thought you were here."

Mya reluctantly opened the door. "Sorry. I was in the back room."

The blonde nodded and extended a perfectly manicured hand tipped with bright pink nails. "I'm Katie Winslow, Mr. Thomas' real estate agent."

"Oh?"

"I came by to see if I could arrange a visit. I have a couple dying to view the place." When Katie laughed, she flashed straight, white teeth. "I know Mr. Thomas temporarily took it off the market, but they really want something around this neighborhood. They've seen the pictures, and they love it."

Mya stood aside. "Come in, please."

"No time. Sorry." Her blonde hair never moved an inch when Katie shook her head. "Would Monday work for you—assuming Mr. Thomas is willing?"

"I'll be gone by then." Mya swallowed the lump in her throat. "I'm going home later today."

Katie's dazzling green eyes sparkled. "Excellent. So your lease is only temporary?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. I'll contact Mr. Thomas."

"Okay."

"Have a nice day." With a sunny smile that was nearly as bright as the yellow of her shorts suit, Katie hurried off down the hall.

Mya closed the door behind her and had made it halfway to the guest room before she realized she had to stop the realtor from calling Roarke today. She sprinted across the room and into the hallway to arrive at the elevator just in time for the doors to close in her face. She leaned her head against the cool metal and accepted she wouldn't be able to catch up with Katie Winslow in time.

She trudged back to the apartment with her shoulders slumped. She had to be out within the next couple of hours. Thankfully, most of her things were still in cases. She had only to finish up with her things and arrange for transport to the airport. She hoped she could move up her flight, or she would have a four or five hour wait at LAX.

An hour later, Mya had nearly finished packing her bags when the doorbell rang again. Her stomach jumped with nerves as she anticipated an angry Roarke on the other side. Maybe just a puzzled one. The best she could hope for was the realtor had forgotten something.

She walked to the door and looked through the peephole. Her mouth dropped open, and she fumbled with the lock to open the door a couple of inches. "How did you know where to find me?"

Bobby shrugged. "I followed you the first time you met with Thomas. I took a wild guess that you'd be here."

She frowned at him. "Shouldn't you be on the set?"

"We finished early this morning." His mouth twisted. "Going to invite me in, or does your sugar daddy not allow visitors?"

"I don't want you in here." Mya started to close the door.

Bobby pushed against the wood and gained an inch at a time until he had forced his way inside. He took the door from her grasp and slammed it. "You bitch!"

Her eyes widened. "What?"

"What did you tell Scarpeti?"

She shook her head. "I don't know what you're babbling about. Now get out of here before I call the police."

His smile was cold. "You can't 'cause there's no phone here."



"I have my cell phone."

"I deactivated your service a couple of days after you left me."

"You told me to leave." Mya pushed the hair out of her eyes and wondered why she had bothered to counter his statement. It wasn't like she hadn't wanted to leave him. "Whatever. Just go."

He grabbed her upper arms in a tight grip. "What did you tell that bastard?"

"Nothing." Mya tried to pull away, alarmed by the anger that emanated from him.

"Liar." He shook her. "You musta told him something. He said he didn't like how I treated you, and he'd heard shit about me."

"You didn't get the part?"

"No."

Mya wrenched her shoulders free. "I've only met him once. He figured out what your game is, Bobby. You can't blame your failure on me. I won't let you anymore."

Bobby slapped her. "I didn't fail," he screamed at her. "This is your fault. You're going to fix it."

"I can't. I had nothing to do with it." Mya cradled her stinging cheek. She backed away when Bobby lunged at her. "I'll scream this place down."

"These condos have thick walls." He smirked at her. "Roni and I viewed an empty one in this building a couple of weeks ago. The realtor was quick to point out the level of privacy. We really considered it, but in the end, I decided I couldn't live in the same building as you and your lover."

Mya whimpered as she tried to put more distance between them. When her back hit the wall, she cried out. Bobby lunged forward and pressed his face into hers. "Let me go."

"You have to fix things. I need that role."

"I didn't do anything."

"Stop lying." Bobby slapped her again. "I'm not leaving until you undo whatever petty thing you've done." He pinched her arm. "And you may not leave at all unless you get this sorted out. I've got hours."

"My parents are expecting me. Carly knows where I am."

"Nice bluff, but I know you wouldn't go back to that hellhole with lover boy here in

L.A., waiting in the wings." Bobby pulled a cell phone from his pocket and punched in a series of numbers with so much force the phone warbled. "Talk to Scarpeti." He thrust the phone at her.

She took it reluctantly. Nothing she could say would change the director's mind. Her only hope was to dial Roarke's number instead. She whimpered when Bobby pressed his cheek against hers so he could hear the conversation, making it that much more difficult to reach Roarke.

Roarke had just gotten out of the pool when he heard the phone in the house ring. He dripped water behind him when he padded into the kitchen to lift the receiver of the nearest extension. "Hello?"

"Mr. Thomas, this is Katie Winslow."

"Hi, Katie."

"I wondered if I could show a couple around the condo on Monday?"

He forced back a twinge of regret. It was time to put it back on the market. He had no further use for the place, and the memories would be too bittersweet to revel in. "Yeah, that's fine."

"Excellent. Can you be there at one?"

"You need me present?"

"I think this couple will make an offer on the spot. It will facilitate the process if you're there. I like to have someone around anyway, but the current tenant said she would be gone by Monday."

Roarke frowned. "Current tenant?"

"Yes. She said she was going home today, and the rental term was ending."

"What did she look like?"

There was a pause before she answered, and she sounded uncertain. "She had long red hair. Quite pretty. Young..."

"Mya." Roarke's mouth moved, but no sound emerged. "She was going home? Did she say where?" To Bobby's or back to Washington?

"No, Mr. Thomas. Just that she would be gone later today."

"I have to go."

"What about Monday?"

"I'll call you back." Roarke dropped the phone back onto the cradle, then hurried upstairs to slide his feet into sandals and throw on a t-shirt. He didn't even bother to change out of his swim trunks before he rushed from the house and slid onto the cloth seat of the Lotus. He didn't notice the unpleasant dampness from his shorts as he sped through the afternoon traffic. He focused on his arrival at the condo before Mya left for good. He had to know why she had stayed there, and why she wanted to go home. Most of all, he had to know if they had a chance.

When he screeched to a stop at the curb in front of the building, Roarke yanked the keys from the switch and slid from the car. He didn't remember to engage the alarm as he ran into the building.

"Mr. Thomas." The security attendant smiled at him.

He nodded at the young lady. "Do you know if the tenant in my apartment has left yet?"

She shook her head. "Not that I know of. Her visitor hasn't come down either."

"Visitor?"

Her smile turned feral. "Sexy guy with long blond hair and a ripped body."

"Bobby," Roarke snarled as he hurried to the elevator. Why was he here? Had he come to plead with Mya to take him back? Had Roarke wrongly assumed Mya had left the jerk?

The elevator seemed to creep up the floors, and Roarke barely resisted the impulse to continuously press the 14 button. When the doors finally opened, he sprinted down the hall to his apartment and fumbled with the key as he ran.

To his surprise, he found the door unlocked. His anger and confusion started to fade as he grew concerned. Roarke pushed opened the door and entered the living room. He froze, and his eyes widened at what he saw.

Mya lay on the floor. She appeared to be unconscious. Her face was covered with blood, and her hair was sticky with crimson splashes. Bobby paced around her while he sobbed into his cell phone and babbled about Mya's scheme to ruin him, then begged the other person to stay with him anyway.

A red haze passed over Roarke's eyes, and he threw himself at Bobby. He knocked the phone from his hand as they both fell onto the carpet, inches from Mya. He grabbed a handful of Bobby's tank top to lift him. "What did you do to her?"

Bobby's eyes darted around. "Nothing. I found her like this."

Roarke's fist slammed into his face. "I should kill you."

Tears spilled from Bobby's blue eyes. He pressed a hand to his the cut on his mouth in an attempt to staunch the flow of blood. "Don't hurt me," he mumbled through his hand and swollen lip. "I have an audition Monday."

Roarke fumbled for the fallen phone and grasped the edge of it to pull it closer. He heard a frantic voice on the other end of the line and hung up on her. His hands shook as he dialed 9-1-1.

"What are you doing, man?" There was an edge of panic to Bobby's voice.

"Calling an ambulance and the cops."

He shook his head at Roarke. "No, please don't. They'll put me in jail."

Roarke hit him again. "You're lucky I'm letting them deal with it." As Bobby sagged against the carpet, the operator picked up. "I need an ambulance at 1427 Flower de Boliva. My girlfriend has been assaulted."

Once he had hung up Bobby's phone, Roarke knelt by Mya and felt her neck. A sob ripped past his throat when he found a strong pulse. "Mya, baby, open your eyes."

She blinked up at him. "Roarke?"

He pulled off his t-shirt to gently wipe the blood from her forehead and eyes. "What did he do to you?"

"Hit me." She felt weak and half-wondered if he was really there. Her hand trembled as she lifted it to touch his sable hair. "You're here?"

"Yeah. Katie Winslow called me." A shaky smile split his face. "She inadvertently let it slip that I had a tenant."

Mya's eyes closed as dread swept through her. "I'll leave. I have a flight..."

He touched his finger to her lips as he heard sirens. "We'll talk later. Right now you need a doctor."

Within minutes, someone pounded at the door, and Roarke reluctantly left Mya to let

the two firemen in. "Where's the ambulance?"

One of the firefighters said, "They'll be here soon. We all answer calls."

"Oh, yeah."

Thirty seconds after their arrival, two EMTs entered through the opened door. They were quickly followed by two cops, who insisted Roarke speak to them rather than stay with Mya. He gave a quick statement, but broke away from them as he saw one of the EMTs head for the door. "What's going on?"

"We're going to take her to the hospital for x-rays. You can ride along if you'd like."

One of the cops came up behind Roarke. "Have you checked out the other guy?"

"Yeah. He's groggy, but there's no need for him to go to the hospital."

"It's okay to arrest him?"

"Knock yourself out." He hurried from the apartment before they could ask any more questions.

Roarke started to go to Mya, but the officer put up a hand. "We'll need a formal statement..."

"Tomorrow," Roarke said brusquely. "I'm going to the hospital with her right now."

The cop sighed. "First thing tomorrow, right?"

"Yes, sir." Roarke hurried to Mya and the other EMT. "How is she?"

"She'll be okay. Maybe a broken cheekbone though."

Roarke's rage bubbled up once more as he glared at Bobby. A surge of rage filled him, and he wished he had done worse than a couple of punches. "Will she need to stay in the hospital?"

"I doubt it."

The other EMT arrived with a stretcher, and they carefully loaded Mya onto it. She opened her eyes and reached for Roarke as they pushed her across the carpet. "Don't leave me."

He took her hand. "I won't." Not ever, he swore silently.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

### *The Game Ends*

Roarke ignored Mya's protests and carried her into his house from the car. He lowered her onto the leather sofa and winced once again at the white bandages on her forehead and across her cheek. Both covered stitches, but Bobby hadn't broken any bones. "Do you want more pillows?"

She was propped against two of the throw pillows on the couch. "Less, please." After he removed one, she touched his hand. "I haven't had a chance to say thank you."

"You don't have to."

She yawned, winced at the pain in her face, and tried to fight off the effects of the pain medication for a while longer. "I do. You rescued me." A small smile formed across her lips, which made her wince as the abraded spot at the corner of her mouth stung with the movement. "And you haven't yet demanded an explanation for why I was squatting in your apartment."

Roarke grinned at her. "Squatting? What a charming phrase."

Her eyes turned serious. "I should have asked you, but I was afraid you'd say no. I didn't have anywhere else to go."

"We can do this later."

"No. I need to tell you now." Her forehead wrinkled. "Did you call my family for me?"

"You only asked four times." He squeezed her hand. "Yes. I told them you would call tomorrow."

She bit her lip, then winced as her teeth raked across the split area. "I hope I can get my flight changed."

"You're in no shape to leave yet." He let go of her hand and moved to the loveseat. "If you must go, at least wait a few days."

She swallowed back tears, because she knew if she started to cry she wouldn't be able to stop. "I have to go."

"Why?"

"My reason for being here is gone." She dropped her head. "It probably never existed."

He frowned. "You must have a life here outside of the one you shared with Bobby."

"Not really. He didn't like me to make friends." She grimaced. "Oh, he always found something wrong with anyone I introduced him to, but I knew he was just too insecure for me to have friends that weren't part of his life."

"Your job?"

She shrugged and felt a sharp pain shoot down her spine. "I can do that anywhere. I think I want to go back to school. I never got a chance to go to college because I was supporting Bobby's career."

"Go to UCLA."

A sharp laugh escaped her lips. "I can't afford that."

He raked a hand through his already mussed hair. "I'll pay for your tuition."

Mya studied him intently. "Why would you do that?"

He slid his eyes from her piercing gaze. "It's the least I can do after ruining your life."

"You didn't ruin anything. You freed me from my own stupidity."

Roarke's eyes widened, and he met her gaze once more. "What?"

"I would have stayed with Bobby, forcing myself to ignore his faults, because I thought I loved him." She bowed her head so that her hair covered her face. "It wasn't until I met you that I realized what love really is."

His throat grew tight, and Roarke's voice emerged as a squeak. "Huh?"

She trembled with vulnerability. Once she said it, the words couldn't be withdrawn. "You never meant for me to, but I fell in love with you." A rueful grin tugged at her mouth, but she forced it away because she didn't want the flash of pain that accompanied it. "How could I not when you so enthusiastically set about seducing me?"

"Do you mean that?" His heart pounded in his chest, and Roarke struggled to breathe.

"Yes."

He shook his head. "You can't know for sure. We know so little about each other."

Mya lifted her head. "We know so much about each other," she corrected. "The rest will come in time. I know I love you."

"How can you be so certain?"

"I've never felt this way before. My heart races when I'm with you, and I think about

you all the time when I'm not. I can't wait to see you..."

"...and hate leaving you when our time ends," he said.

Her eyes widened, and she held her breath. Did his words mean he felt the same? "How do you feel about me?"

Roarke stood up. He came closer and knelt on the floor beside the sofa so he could put his arms around her. He didn't squeeze her into a hug because of the bruised ribs, but he pressed a soft kiss to her mouth. "I love you."

She threw her arms around him, then stiffened at the pain that shot through her. "How long have you loved me?"

"I'm not a romantic fool..."

Mya snorted.

He gave her a repressive look before continuing. "But I think I loved you the moment I laid eyes on you. I didn't admit that romantic notion to myself, at first. It took me a while to realize that it wasn't just lust, and by then I couldn't live without you." He frowned. "When did you realize you loved me?"

"The first time we made love. You were so gentle, and you cared so much about pleasing me. I think I recognized your love, and it forced me to acknowledge my own. I just didn't realize it at first." She touched his face and smoothed her finger across his mustache. "I was terrified."

"Why?" He shook his head. "Dumb question. You were engaged to Bobby..."

"Mostly it was because I didn't know how you would react. Obviously falling in love wasn't part of your game." Mya's frowned at him. "Exactly how long have you been playing this stupid game anyway?"

Roarke held up one finger. "Just with you."

Her mouth fell open, then closed with a snap. "But you seemed to know exactly what you were doing." She glared at him. "Like you'd done it many times before."

He laughed. "I got the inspiration from a screenplay on my desk. The playboy seduces a naïve innocent. He ends up falling for her. Hard."

Mya didn't know whether to laugh or hit him. "You started all this because of a script?"



He nodded.

She shook her head. "What if the author had never written it?"

His stomach clenched at the thought, but he tried to smile. "I still would have stolen you from Bobby."

She smoothed a hand through his hair. "You didn't steal anything, Roarke. You didn't sneak your way into my heart or bed through seduction or coercion. What I gave to you was given freely."

"What's that?"

"My heart."

He closed his eyes and leaned his forehead against hers, careful to avoid the bandage. "Will you stay here in L.A.?"

"Do you want me to move in with you?"

Roarke shook his head, then nodded. "Yes, but I want you to marry me too."

"Really?" Her eyes sparkled. It was more than she had dared to hope. Mya had vaguely thought he might keep her around as his mistress, but she had never expected a proposal. "I'll probably say yes."

His eyes darkened. "Probably?"

She grinned at him. "As long as my family likes you. They hated Bobby, so they must be excellent judges of character." She giggled at his pained expression and brushed her lips against his. "My sister likes you. That's good enough for me."

"Is that a yes?"

"Yes."

## **Epilogue** ***Happily Ever After***

Several months later, Mya entered Roarke's home office to find him deeply engrossed in a dog-eared script. She plopped her robe-covered fanny onto the corner of his desk. "Whatcha doing?" She twisted the gold bands on her finger absently. It was still difficult at times to believe she was his wife. Some days, she still couldn't believe she had married him a little over a month ago. The new definitely hadn't worn off.

He lifted *Playing His Game* to show her the title. "Debating about whether to option this. I don't want my secret weapon to leak out."

"I think you should. It could be a very romantic movie."

He frowned. "The ending is unrealistic."

Mya nodded sympathetically as she scooted her bottom to move closer to him. "Who would believe something like that could have a happy ending?"

Roarke dropped the script onto the desk and slid her in front of him to wrap his arms around her waist. "You don't think anyone would believe that?"

"Nah. You should probably ask the writer to change the ending."

"It is for Hollywood. People are a sucker for love stories with a happy ending."

Mya giggled as he moved his hand from her waist to venture under the white silk robe she wore. She could tell the exact instant when he realized she wore nothing under it by the way his eyes widened and his breath grew ragged. "You should leave it as it is. I know I'm a sucker for a happy ending."

**The End**