

Unlawful Identity

A novel by

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So, it begins

Samantha Lange stared down at the man, hanging over the side of the building. “Hold on,” she cried. “I’ve got you.”

“Don’t let go,” he cried.

“Kyle, don’t let go,” she cried.

“Sam, help me, please.”

“I won’t let you fall...” she tried with all her might but his hand slowly slipped away. “Kyle!” she screamed as his body fell the ten stories to the ground. Tears streamed down her face, as the door behind her was kicked open.

“Don’t move!” he shouted. “FBI!”

Samantha slowly put her hands up and turned around. “I didn’t do anything. I’m NYPD.”

“I know who you are, Detective. Put your hands behind your back. You’re under arrest!” the man grabbed her arms and handcuffed her wrists.

“What am I under arrest for?” she asked, as he put the gun that was on the ledge in his pocket.

“Murder of an FBI informant,” he said, as he dragged her towards the stairs.

“I didn’t kill Kyle. I swear, I didn’t kill my brother,” she cried, as he and the other agent walked her down the ten flights of stairs.

She stared over at the tarp that covered Kyle’s broken and battered body. “I’m sorry, Ky,” she cried, as the man shoved her into the back seat of the car.

She stared out the window of the dark sedan as the coroner and his assistants slowly lifted Kyle’s body on the gurney and placed him in a dark van. She closed her eyes and relived that moment in her head.

Sam woke up when she heard a banging on her door. “Kyle, what’s wrong?”

“Sam, you have to help me. They’re after me.”

“Who?”

He hurried into her apartment. “The FBI. They want me.”

“Ky, what did you get yourself into,” she cried.

He hurried to the window. “The roof. It’s not safe here.”

“Kyle, what is going on? Do mom and dad know that you’re in trouble?”

“They can’t help. I’ve been working for the FBI, informing on a few men, but I ... I started using again. I can’t go back to jail. I can’t let the FBI or Jack catch me.”

“Jack? You’ve gotten messed up with Jack again?”

“I have to go,” Kyle rushed out of the door.

Sam walked out to the hallway and noticed a man following her brother to the elevator. Sam grabbed her gun off her table, and beaded towards the roof. As she opened the door to the roof, she looked around carefully. “Kyle?”

“Help me,” he cried.

Sam ran over to the edge and saw her brother hanging by his hands over the side of the roof. “Jack did this?”

“His men. We struggled and he pushed me. Sam, I’m sorry. Please, help me,” he cried.

Sam shook her head as the agent got into the car and pulled out to the road without saying a word.

The man pulled into a warehouse as the garage door opened.
“Where *are* we?”

“Silence, *you*,” he said, as he turned off the car.

Sam looked behind her and noticed the garage door closing.
“What *is* going on?”

He opened the car door and pulled her out. He led her over to a table that sat in the middle of the empty room. “Sit,” he said.

“Easy. You don’t have to be so handsy.”

“What? *Handsy*?”

“Yeah, keep your damn hands off of me. No one touches me unless I say so.”

“I apologize. Please, sit,” he said.

Sam slowly sat down. “What is going on? Why *am* I here?”

He pulled a chair next to her. “Tell me what happened on the roof?”

“I don’t know. No one was there when I got there, but my brother was hanging over the edge. He slipped. I couldn’t hold on. I *didn’t* kill him,” she cried.

“I know,” he unlocked the cuffs.

“Tell me. Who *are* you?”

“Agent Parker Carlisle. I know who you are, Detective.”

“So, now what? My brother is dead and you arrest *me*? I don’t get it.”

“Your parents. They were found murdered this morning. We went to get your brother and tracked him to your apartment.”

“My parents are dead? Oh, god,” she cried, as she buried her face in her hands. “What the hell is going on here?”

“Ma’am, I know your life has just been turned upside down, but you are *now* going to work for me!”

“*Excuse me? Who the hell do you think you are?*”

He put his hand on her shoulder. “Sam, you need to do *whatever* I say.”

She pushed his hand off her. “What the hell does that mean?”

“I want you to work for me. I want you to go undercover with me to help bring Jack Morrison and the rest of his entourage down.”

“He’s *untouchable*.”

“Does he know you personally?”

“Yes, he does. He knows I’m a cop. There’s no way he’ll let me join his crew.”

“You have just turned *rogue*. I’m sorry but this is the way it’s going to be.”

“What if I don’t *want* to do this?” Sam ran her hands nervously through her black hair.

“You will be sent to prison and your *other* brother will be without his entire family. You don’t want that, *do you?*”

“You leave Dylan alone.”

“He’s, um, slow, isn’t he?”

“He’s being taken care of. Please, don’t do *anything* to Dylan.”

“I wouldn’t do that. Listen, Sam. I know this is a lot, but you will learn to trust me.”

Sam leaned back. “May I smoke?”

“Go ahead,” he said.

She pulled out her pack of cigarettes and tapped it on the table. She pulled out a cigarette and put it in her mouth. Parker pulled out his lighter and lit it for her. “So,” she inhaled and then blew out the smoke. “How do I become this rogue cop?”

“You start *killing* people,” he said.

“What?”

“I’m sorry, but this is the way it’s going to be.”

“I *can’t* kill people. I’m a cop. I’m supposed to *uphold* the law, not break it.”

“Rules have changed,” he grabbed her arm. “You’re *stuck* now.”

You are no longer a detective. You are a *hit woman* and you *will* perform your duties.”

Sam stood up and looked at Parker as he stood up. “So, if I don’t, you’ll put me in prison?”

“Yes.”

“What do I have to do?”

“You’ll still be Samantha Lange, however, you’re a killer... an *eliminator*. First, you’ll do a few kills and then, you’ll be hired as a hit woman for Morrison.”

“What are *you* going to do?”

“I will be posing as your *lover*.”

“Oh, I don’t *think* so,” she shook her head.

“Yes, and that’s the way it’s going to be. We won’t be real lovers, just posing as them. I have a penthouse in the *Williamson* building. That will be our home. You will also train under me. I will show you how to be a killer.”

“I *know* how to shoot a gun,” she spat.

“Yes, I know how good you are, but you also need sharp shooter training. How long has it been since you’ve done *range* shooting?”

“Years, I guess, since the Marines. What else?”

“I know you have a third degree black belt in martial arts. You are familiar with a multitude of weapons, correct?”

“Yes, will I *ever* get my life back?”

Parker walked over to her and shook his head. “No. Even when this is over, it *won’t* be over. Your kills will be erased, but you can’t ever step back into your old life.”

“Why is this happening to me?”

“You are the best one for the job. I know what kind of officer you were, what kind of Marine you were, and what kind of detective you are. You can do this. Sam, your family and your job was all that you had. You now have a new job and your only remaining family will always be protected.”

“He *is* protected, right?” she asked as she threw her cigarette on the floor and crushed it into the cement.

“Yes, he’ll always be safe.”

“I want to see Dylan before we begin.”

“I don’t know about that,” Parker shook his head.

“I *want* to see my brother. Take me to the *Felthousen Institution*.”

“All right. We’ll go this afternoon. Right now, we have to get prepared.”

“What do we need to do?”

“You’ll need all new clothes and things. I have the weapons needed at our penthouse. Let’s go shopping, Sam.”

She shook her head and followed him to the car. She leaned back in the front seat and sighed, as she put on her dark sunglasses.

Dylan

Sam took a deep breath and opened the door. She walked over to the man in the chair and kneeled beside him. “Dylan? It’s me, it’s Sam.”

He gazed over at her and smiled slightly. “Sam...” he slurred.

She took his hand. “Yeah, I’m here. Do you like it here?”

“Pretty,” he said.

She looked out the window at the sunrise and smiled. “Yes, it is pretty here.”

“Sam stay?” he reached out and touched her hand.

“I have to talk to you. I have something sad to tell you. I don’t know if you’ll understand.”

“Sam stay?” he asked again.

“I’m here for a little while. Dylan, look at me,” she touched her older brother’s face.

Dylan slowly looked at his sister. “Ky come?”

“No, Dylan. I’m sorry. He can’t come. I have to tell you about Kyle, Mom, and Dad.”

“Mom come here?”

“Dylan,” she held his face in her hands. “Mom, Dad, and Kyle died. They’re in heaven right now.”

“Dad come?”

“I’m sorry. They *can’t* come anymore. They died. Do you know what that means?”

“Angels?”

“Yeah, honey, they’re angels now.”

“Sam sad?”

“Yes, I’m very sad. It’s OK to be sad. Do you understand that they can’t come anymore?”

“Kyle come?”

She wiped her tears and hugged her brother. “Now, you’re in a very safe place. I love you, Dylan, but I have to go away for a little while.”

“Stay,” he said.

“Oh, I forgot. I brought you something,” she said, as she pulled a small teddy bear out of her bag. “It’s for you.”

Kyle took the bear and hugged it tightly. “Sam bear.”

She smiled. “It’s for you to hug whenever you need me.”

“Need Sam,” he smiled.

“I know. I need you, too. Now, Dylan, you be brave for me. I’ll come back to visit you as soon as I can. I’ll always be here for you.”

“Mom come?”

“Not today,” she stood up and hugged him again. “I have to go. You take care of your bear, OK?”

“OK. Bye, Sam,” he said, as he hugged the bear and stared back out the window.

Sam walked out the door and over to the nurses’ station. “How has my brother been?”

She looked up and smiled. “No recent outbursts. He’s been very calm lately.”

“Keep an extra eye on him. I had to tell him about our parents and our brother’s death. I don’t know if he understood. If he needs me, call me on this number,” she handed her a piece of paper.

The nurse stood up and smiled. “He loves you.”

“I know. I’m just glad he doesn’t remember how he ended up that way,” she said, as she rubbed her scar on her forehead.

“He doesn’t. He may not have the capacity to think like he used to, but he does love, with all his heart.”

“Thank you. I appreciate it. Oh, also, I am the only next of kin that he has. Please, don’t give his information or whereabouts to anyone unless it’s me or Captain Ford.”

“Don’t worry. Your lawyer sent all the paperwork for your guardianship over this morning. I am sorry about your family.”

“Thank you. I’ll be back when I can,” Sam said, as she headed down the long corridor.

Sam stared at the front doors and closed her eyes. “Dylan, I know it wasn’t your fault. I hope you never remember,” she cried.

“Sam, I’m so proud of you,” Dylan said, as he opened the car door.

“Thanks. I really appreciate you coming home just because I got promoted,” she smiled, as she got in the passenger seat.

“Of course, I would. I love you so much. You’ll make one hell of a Detective. I know it.”

"I'm glad you came home. I enjoyed dinner," she said, as she buckled her seat belt.

"I'm glad, too," he said, as he started the car and pulled into the road. "Did I tell you ... next week, I head to Dallas?" he grinned.

"You're going to Texas?" she smiled.

"Yeah, it's very cool. I get to train with the Cowboys. How cool is that?"

"Is it because of the cheerleaders?" she laughed.

"No, of course not. It's a bonus, but it's not the reason why," he said.

"Dyl, slow down. The roads are still slippery," she said.

"I've got it under control," he said as the oncoming lights blinded him. He slammed on the breaks.

"No!" Sam screamed as the sound of crumbling metal echoed in her ears and the burning pain turned her inside out.

Sam rubbed her stomach lightly and took a deep breath. "No, I hope you never, *ever* remember that day. I remember it enough for both of us," she cried, as she headed out the doors.

Comfort

Sam took a deep breath and walked over to the waiting sedan. She got in the passenger seat and looked at Parker. “Where to next?”

“Time to get a new car,” he said. “Is everything all right?”

“Yes, he’s been calm,” she leaned on the window and rubbed her scar.

“What *did* happen to your brother?”

“We were in a car accident. He was driving but wasn’t wearing his seat belt. A car crossed into our lane and hit us. He flew through the windshield. He has brain damage. His IQ dropped almost 100 points. Me, I have this lousy scar,” she said, as she rubbed her forehead.

“I’m sorry. You’ve been taking care of him?”

“We all were, but now it’s all up to me,” she sighed.

He patted her leg. “I know it’s hard on you. I *am* sorry.”

“No, you’re *not*. My *life* just got taken away.”

“*Some* life.”

“What’s *that* supposed to mean?” she snapped.

“You’ve lived in the same apartment for fifteen years. You only work and go home. I don’t even know if you sleep. You don’t have a life except for your job. No lover, nothing.”

“My love life is none of your business.”

“Sam, you *don’t* have one. Now, *why* is that?”

“After Ed died a few years ago, I just wasn’t looking for it. Why do you have to know *everything* about me?”

“We’re going to be working together. I know your strengths. I need to know your weaknesses,” he said, as he pulled into the parking garage.

“Well, that should go both ways,” she said.

“I’m an open book. What do you want to know?” he asked, as they got out of the car.

“Hey, I thought we were going car shopping.”

“Those,” he pointed, “are *our* cars,” he grinned.

“Which one is mine?” she smiled.

“Which one do you want?”

“The black *jag*. You don’t mind, do you?”

“No, I can take the red *Porsche*. Are you sure?”

“Yeah, black is less conspicuous and since I’ll be doing all the ... well, you know,” she said.

“Whatever you want,” he threw her the keys. “We should get upstairs and start planning.”

She followed him to the elevator and took a deep breath as the doors closed behind them.

He led her to the penthouse and opened the door. “So, what do you think?”

“Wow, never been in a penthouse before.”

“I thought your parents were rich?”

“They live, lived in a modest brownstone,” she walked over to the large windows that overlooked the city.

“Sam, I’m so sorry about your parents.”

She turned and looked at him. “Parker, why me?”

“You’re the *only* one.”

“This isn’t FBI funded, is it?”

“Yeah, they have our backs. Don’t worry. I know you don’t like this, but it’s the only way.”

“I want to see.”

“What?”

“My parents.”

“You can’t. I’m sorry.”

“Let me see the crime scene photos.”

“Sam, are you sure you want to see that?”

“I have to. I’m ... I mean, I was a cop. I can handle it.”

He opened his briefcase and took out a file folder. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” she sat down on the large, leather sofa and took the folder from his hand. She sighed heavily and tears streamed down her face as she reviewed each photo. “You’re sure that Jack Morrison did this? It looks a lot like a rage killing, not ... well ... elimination.”

“Well, not personally. But, it was his men. He left his calling card. Photo number 10,” he sat next to her.

She skimmed through the photos. “The yellow rose. Damn that bastard. Why did he kill them?”

“I don’t know. We’re thinking it was to get to Kyle. I’m sorry about your parents and your brother. You have to think about yourself

and Dylan. Sam, your room is down the hall to your right. Take your time and get settled in.”

“Thanks, Parker,” she said, as she headed down the hall. She opened up the door and dropped on the bed. She wiped the tears from her eyes as she stared at the ceiling. “I hated my life before, but this is the worst. How could it get worse?” she cried. “Jack, why’d you have to drag my family into this? How could you do something this horrible... to *me*?” she whispered, as she curled up with the pillow.

“Sam?” Parker asked, as he knocked on the door.

She sat up quickly, “Oh, sorry. I must’ve dozed off. What is it?”

“I know that you’re just getting settled but we need to get started.”

“Where do we start?”

He sat next to her. “Well, our cover is that we’re lovers. So, we have to learn to get comfortable around each other.”

Sam stood up. “So, we’re going to have *sex*?”

“Um, that’s not what I was talking about, but is that what you want?”

“I don’t even *know* you. I haven’t been with anyone since Ed died.”

“I understand. No, I’m not asking for sex right now. Maybe we’ll *have* to do that, but we need to get comfortable just being with each other. We need to get to know each other and be ... well friendly.”

“I agree. Stand up,” she said.

He stood up and walked over to her. “OK.”

She took his hand and placed it against her heart. “Well, I think I know what we should do.”

“What’s that?”

“Well,” she smiled. “When we look at each other, we have to make it real. We have to make it like we love each other. When we gaze into each other’s eyes, it has to be like we’re the only ones in the room.”

“We *are* the only ones in the room.”

“You *know* what I mean,” she leaned up and ran her hands through his dark hair.

“I get it. Well, Sam, you are a beautiful woman,” he lightly touched her scar on her forehead. “So, it won’t be *so* difficult for me to look at you.”

“Thank you,” she said. “I haven’t felt like that in a long time.”

He lightly touched her face and pulled her into a soft kiss. She gave into his passionate kisses. “Sam, it’s all right.”

“Is it?” she whispered. “Well, yeah, this is going to be kind of strange... but it’s the only way I can see how to do it.”

“What is it?”

“I think we should see each other ... well ... you know ... without our clothes *off*.”

“I thought sex was off limits right now.”

“We’ll see...” she started to loosen his tie. “I know you’re nervous. So am I. You’re right. We have to be comfortable with each other. If we get this first part, the intimacy over with, we’ll be so comfortable with each other. The rest will come to us, naturally.”

“Are you *sure* about this?” he smiled, as he took off his suit jacket.

“I *am* nervous. But, it was *your* idea,” she smiled.

“I guess. Wow, you know, I didn’t realize I would be so nervous being alone with a beautiful woman.”

“To be honest, I never have sex with men that I just met. We have to get to know each other. I am a little nervous. Right now, it’s not even about sex. It’s about comfort. We have to get this discomfort out of the way. I don’t mean just looking at each other nude, but our own self-consciousness about standing here in the nude.”

“I get it. Even when I’ve had sex, we didn’t stand in the middle of the room and get naked, and then stare at each other.”

“We’re not staring. We’re ... um ... well... we’re noticing things. It will help with the comfort. Please, don’t be embarrassed.”

“I’ll try, if you try.”

“I have to warn you, I do have a few other scars. I hope that doesn’t scare you away from me,” she sighed.

He lightly touched her shoulders and leaned in and kissed her again. “I think you’re right. This will work. I do like kissing you. You’re a very passionate and sexy kisser,” he said, as he started to unbutton her blouse.

She grabbed his belt and loosened it. She slowly pulled it from his waist. She unzipped his pants, as he unsnapped her jeans. Both of them stepped out of their pants. She stepped back and smiled. “Feels weird, doesn’t it?”

He laughed slightly. “Yeah, just a little.”

She ran her hands down his legs and slipped off the boxers. “That’s why we’re doing it. I mean, it’s not like we’re going to have sex in public, but we need to know each other’s body and how to read it,” she lightly ran her hands over his chest and outlined his tattoo with her finger. “I like the tattoo,” she kissed the sword that was wrapped with a

rose. She slowly removed her panties and kicked them on the floor.

“Thanks, it stands for strength and love. I don’t have love, but I hope I have strength.”

“Some day, you may have both,” she smiled.

“So, are *you* hiding any tattoos?” he smiled.

“Two,” she turned around and pointed to her left shoulder.

He gazed at the rose that was surrounded by daggers. “Kind of similar, huh?”

She turned around and smiled. “Yeah, I guess, and this one,” she touched her lower back. “It’s barbed-wire. It was a gift ... from an old friend.”

“Sam,” he whispered, as he lightly ran his hands down her body.

“Parker, it’s all right. You have soft hands,” she whispered, as she leaned into his touch.

“Your body is so soft and sexy,” he smiled, as he kissed her shoulder.

She ran her hands up his large, tanned biceps. “Bullet wound?” she asked, as she fingered the circular scar on his upper arm.

“Yeah, it was a through and through. Nothing serious. Have you ever been shot before?”

“Yeah, twice. The rose tattoo covers one of the scars. The other bullet wound scar is located here,” she lightly pushed him on the bed and set her foot on the bed next to him. She took his hand and ran it up her thigh. “Right here,” she flirted.

“What are the other scars from?” he lightly touched the long, thin scar across her stomach.

“From the accident. When I hit the dashboard, the glove box opened up and it cut open, right there.”

“Sounds painful,” he said.

“It was. But, back to us,” she gently laid him on the bed and laid on top of him. “I think sex should *wait*.”

“Well, we both *are* naked,” he laughed slightly.

“I think we should hold each other. We need to feel that comfort.”

“I think I can handle that.”

“Oh, don’t worry. I’m not *trying* to tease you,” she smiled. “Are you...”

“Um, yeah, can’t you tell?” he smiled.

“Hold me and I’ll take care of you, if you’ll take care of me, too.”

“I’ll take care of you. I promise and I don’t mean just about this.

I'll always have your back, Sam," he held her close to him as they covered up with a blanket.

"I don't know why I'm starting to trust you," she whispered.

"The job is going to get harder," he said. "No pun intended."

She laughed slightly. "I know. One thing at a time," she said, as she laid her head on his chest.

"Have you ever killed anyone before?"

"Yes, have you?"

"Yes, in the line of duty."

"Same here. I guess that's like self defense."

"Did it affect you?"

"I think it did. You know, I went through all the psychobabble crap with the department shrink, but, yeah, it did affect me. It made me feel better that I was alive. I know it's strange."

"No, I felt the same way. Do you think that you can kill someone and have it *not* be self defense?"

"Only if I'm *not* killing a family of five or a cop."

"No, I swear, anyone you kill will *not* be innocent."

"Do you have a first mark in mind?" she said, as she ran her hands down between his legs.

"Not at this moment," he leaned back, as he breathed heavily.

"Oh, wow," he gulped. "Oh, I can't believe I just did that already."

She leaned up and kissed him softly. "It's all right."

"It's been so long. I'm sorry," he said, embarrassingly.

"Don't be, now just return the favor," she smiled.

"I can do that," he said, as he ran his hands down her body.

Focus

Sam sat across the kitchen table from Parker and watched as he spooned six sugars into his coffee. “Like a little coffee with your sugar?” she laughed.

“I guess. Sorry. I was thinking about something else,” he said, as he sipped his coffee. “Perfect,” he laughed.

“Well, I guess that’s the next step,” she smiled.

“What’s that?”

“Observing and learning about each other,” she lightly touched his hand.

“And I thought *I* had to teach you a few things,” his dark eyes smiled at her.

“I’ve been on undercover assignments before, but nothing this elaborate and I didn’t have to have a *fake* lover.”

“I know it will be difficult, but I think, after last night, that we can do this.”

“I know this is where we’ll be staying, but is it like a safe house, or will others be coming here?”

“I don’t know. After we get the hang of this and are comfortable, we’ll start being in public. Why’d you ask?”

“Well, this place needs to look a little *lived* in. There aren’t any pictures on the walls. We’d at least have our pictures on the wall. We’d also need to make one bedroom like a master. Lovers don’t usually have separate bedrooms.”

“Oh, I guess we should take care of this place, too. You’re right. You’re so smart,” he lightly touched her cheek.

“So, what *were* you thinking about?” she leaned in.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” he said, as he stared at his coffee cup.

“You can tell me. I know it’s something,” she said.

“I guess I’m still embarrassed about what happened last night,” he said.

“Why?”

“It happened, well, rather *quick*,” he said.

“Like you said, it’s been a while. Don’t be embarrassed. You have nothing to be embarrassed by.”

“I just thought ... I don’t know ... it would’ve taken a little longer. I mean, I was enjoying ... and then ... I’m sorry,” he sipped his coffee.

“*Don’t* be embarrassed. Did you enjoy touching me?” she asked.

“Definitely. I’m sorry it took a little while for you... you know... it’s been ... well... I never had to satisfy a woman *that* way before. Usually...” he cleared his throat.

“Usually, you have sex for the ultimate satisfaction, right?” she smiled.

“Yeah,” he grinned.

“Well, now you know what I like. It didn’t take as long as you think it did, I was just enjoying it,” she smiled.

“Oh, as long as you were,” he grinned.

“I *was*,” she smiled. She stood up and cleared the table and set the dishes in the dishwasher. “What did you have planned for us today?”

“The shooting range.”

“Where’s my weapon?”

“*Weapons*,” he took her hand and led her down the hall towards the den. He walked over to the desk and opened the large case. “Now, we have a high-powered rifle with a scope. There are also four side arms. Not sure what you’re comfortable with. I have a nine, a .38, a .45 and a .22 caliber.”

“What do you carry?” she asked, as she sat on the desk.

“I carry a .45 in my side holster and a .22 in my ankle holster.”

“I’ll take the nine and the .38 for my garter holster,” she smiled, as she lifted her skirt and exposed her thigh.

“You have thought this out, haven’t you?”

“Yup. Usually, I’m a jeans and T-shirt kind of person. I’m not girly, but I am and can be a Lady, too.”

“I can see that about you. So, this is a new wardrobe?”

“Yeah, it’s OK. I can get used to it. I’ve dressed up a few times, like for *court*,” she laughed. “I do feel weird without the badge, though.”

“I know. I’m sorry about that. I understand. I feel weird without mine, too.”

She hopped off the desk and picked up the nine. “Untraceable, right?”

“Yup, no serial numbers.”

“Good,” she walked over to the window and touched the glass. “Um, I know that I can’t be in my old life, but I still have an apartment

full of my stuff.”

“Your apartment has been packed up and all your things are in storage. Did you need anything specific?”

“Yeah, I do. There are sentimental things that I want to have with me. If this is going to be our home for a while, we should personalize it.”

“I’ll have those things sent here, later, after the range,” he said. “There’s something different about you, though.”

“What do you mean?”

“You were so angry about your life being changed and now, you just seem calm and focused.”

She turned and faced him. “At first, yeah, I was angry, but then I thought about what you said. You were right. I didn’t have much of a life. My life was about the job, ever since Ed died. I worked 18-hour shifts and then went home for a few hours. That was it, unless I was working out or shooting something. Parker, have you *ever* seen my shots?”

“No, I did hear you were a good sharp shooter in the Marines.”

“Yes, I was. I was a sniper. I killed a lot of people for the good of our country.”

“I understand. Just think of this job that way.”

“How do I know that any kill is not going to land me in prison?”

“Trust me,” he said.

“I’m learning to. I guess we’ll have to prove to each other that we can trust each other.”

“We will. Now, let’s go to the range. We’ll take your car,” he walked over to the desk and closed the gun case. “Ready?”

“Yeah, let me grab my jacket,” she said, as she headed down the hall towards her bedroom.

Training

Sam took aim at the target with her nine-millimeter handgun and shot until she emptied the clip and the chamber. She smiled at Parker as she pressed the button to release her target towards her. She pulled down the target and smiled. “So, what do you think?”

“Head shots?”

“And two heart shots. Don’t forget those,” she smiled.

“You *are* good,” he laughed.

“Damn right I am.”

“Have you figured out your calling card yet?” he asked.

“Yup, I know the perfect thing. I’ll show you later once I *prepare* my bullets,” she laughed. “Just to prove to you how good I really am...” she said, as she pressed the button and loaded another target.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Just watch and learn,” she grinned, as reloaded her gun. She took aim on the target and emptied the clip. She pressed the button and he stared at the target as it moved slowly towards him.

“What the *hell*?” he stared at the smiley face bullet holes in the target’s head.

“Have a nice day,” she laughed.

“Oh, that was *too* good,” he laughed. “Very cool. You won’t do that to real people, will you?”

“No, *too* sloppy. I was just showing you my *proress*,” she smiled. “So, where do we go to do the long range?”

“Follow me,” he said, as the two of them headed down the long corridor. Parker opened the door and they both went outside. “This is a training field for the army.”

“Targets?”

“Over there,” he pointed to an abandoned makeshift town. “All I have to do is work the controls and you can let off your shots. Your target will be all who are not civilians.”

“I can do that,” she looked around. “I want to get up on this building. Is there a way up?”

“Why don’t you figure that out? After all, you’ll be scoping out

the areas around the mark.”

She looked into his eyes and smiled. “So, if I’m this great hit woman, what will you be doing?”

He lightly touched her face. “First, I’ll be trying *not* to get turned on by your *proves* with that rifle,” he cleared his throat.

“So, I turn you *on*?” she flirted.

“Definitely.”

“What’s the second thing?”

“I’ll be your back up. Your way out. Your *wheelman*.”

“Can you shoot?”

“Yeah, I can shoot, but I damaged my left hand a little,” he held up his left hand and exposed his small scar.

“What happened?” she asked.

“Nail gun. I don’t want to get into it right now.”

“Well, later, I want to see what you can do. Can’t you shoot with your right hand?”

“I’ve been working on it. It’s very awkward.”

She leaned up and kissed his cheek. “Well, get on those controls. I’ll take my position. In exactly five minutes, start popping up those targets,” she leaned down, picked up the silver case and headed around the building.

Parker looked at his watch as the time dragged on. He looked around at the tops of the buildings that surrounded the training range, but he didn’t see her. He took a deep breath and started pressing the buttons for the electronic targets.

One by one, the targets stood up, in conjunction with several shots that echoed throughout the range. He looked around but still he couldn’t see where the shots were coming from. As the last of the targets were shot, he crossed his arms and shook his head.

“So, how’d I do?” she asked from behind him.

He turned around quickly. “Well, let’s go see.”

“Oh, you’re *impressed*, aren’t you?” she asked, as her eyes looked him up and down.

“Um, yeah, *very*. Let’s go check out the targets,” Parker took her hand and led her to the makeshift town. “Head shots? All of them? Wait, what’s with the red ... what *is* that?”

“Nail polish,” she laughed.

“*Nail polish*?”

“Yeah, I painted the nail polish on each bullet and let it dry. When the rifle heats up the bullet, it softens it and it leaves the red splatter around the wound, and probably inside it, too.”

“So, *this* is your calling card?”

“Yeah, I was thinking *passion red*, because it stands out more. Why not? I’m a hit *woman*, right?”

“You are definitely *all* woman,” he grinned.

“Turned on again, huh?”

“Yup.”

“So, what’s next? We know *I* can shoot. Wait, I know,” she took his hand.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

“I want to see *you* shoot.”

“I’m *not* good anymore. I told you.”

“Hey, if I can turn *you* on, you’re going to have to repay the favor,” she laughed.

“I’ll try,” he said, as he followed her to the shooting range. “Where were you anyway?”

“What do you mean?” she asked, as she opened the door.

“I couldn’t tell where the shot was coming from.”

“Oh, see that tree over there?” she pointed.

“That tall one?”

“Yeah, I figure it was about 1000 yards, so I climbed up to the top of the tree,” she laughed.

“In your skirt?”

“I’m a woman of *many* talents. You’ve only seen a few of them,” she kissed his cheek. “Come on, show me what you got.”

The two of them went into the building and walked down the long corridor to the shooting range. “Now what?”

“Here, take this .38,” she placed it in his left hand.

“I can’t...”

“Yes, you can. The .38 is small and easy,” she stood behind him and took his left hand as she helped him aim the gun. “Just point and shoot. It’s a lot lighter than the .45 that you use,” she smiled, as he pulled the trigger.

“You’re right. Thanks.”

“If you have to use your right hand to steady the shot, it’s all right to do that. The goal is to hit your target by *any* means necessary.”

He turned around and faced her. “I thought I had to teach you and *you’re* teaching me.”

She gazed into his dark eyes. “We’ll learn from each other. I know we have to do this one day, one moment at a time.”

He leaned into her breath and smiled. “So, did that turn you

on?”

She shook her head. “*Not* really,” she laughed.

“Oh, well,” he lightly touched her cheek. “Time to spar,” he said.

“Do you know *how*?” she asked.

“Yeah, do *you*?” he grinned.

“You know *I* do. What if *I* kick your ass?”

“Doubt it,” he laughed. “Let’s get our stuff. We’ll go back to the penthouse and practice.”

“Sounds good,” she said, as they left the building.

As they walked into the penthouse, she looked around the room. “Let’s use the empty room down the hall.”

“All right. You get changed, and I’ll do the same. I have some equipment in my bedroom.”

“Oh, um, about that...”

“Right. We can use yours for the master. Mine will be the guestroom.”

“Later, I want to my stuff, too,” she said.

“Don’t worry. We’ll get everything you need,” he said, as they headed in different directions to their rooms.

He watched as she sauntered into the empty room, dressed in a black sports bra and tight spandex shorts. He instantly dropped the bag he was holding and licked his lips nervously.

“Is something wrong?” she asked, as she gathered up her long, black hair into a ponytail.

“No, I’m sorry. I’ve got all the sparring gear that we need.”

“Great. Now, just because I’m a woman, I don’t want you to go easy. I do have to warn you, though, I haven’t sparred in quite a long time.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he smiled.

“*As if*,” she laughed, as she put on her headgear and gloves on her hands. She took her fighting stance and focused on Parker. “Come on, show me what you got!”

He tightened his gloves and took his fighting stance. Together, they kicked and punched each other. Sam leaped into the air and kicked Parker in the chest, and he flew across the room. He quickly stood up and shook it off. As he went to punch her, she blocked the hit with her forearm, and then spun around and kicked him. Parker fell to the ground *again*.

He took a deep breath and stood up. He went to grab her by the waist and she flipped him over her shoulder. She sat on top of his body as he stared up at her from the floor.

“Are you all right?”

“I think I’m getting old. I got my butt kicked by a *girl*,” he laughed.

“You’re not old, you just need *practice*.”

“I thought *you* needed practice,” he said, as he leaned up.

“I do. I was a bit rusty,” she lightly touched his face.

“If *that* was rusty...”

She smiled. “Why don’t you take a shower now? I’ll take mine after. I want to do a few workouts.”

“Sounds fine, um, can you get up?”

She slowly stood up and took his hand and helped him to his feet. “Are you sure you’re all right?” she tried to hide her laughter.

“Um, I’m *fine*,” he muttered as he stood up. He headed out of the room and down the hall towards the bathroom.

Sam walked over to the boom box and turned on the CD player. She walked into the middle of the room and started practicing her punches and kicks.

Parker wrapped a towel around himself and stood in the doorway to watch her work out. He watched as she spun around and practiced her kicks and air jumps. He ran his hands through his wet hair and smiled.

He walked down the hall towards his bedroom and sat on the bed. He opened the drawer and took out a photo and gazed at it. “I found her,” he whispered, as he gazed at the older woman’s photo. “Gram, I found her and I’m *not* letting go,” he placed the photo back in the drawer and proceeded to get dressed.

Arousal

Sam got out of the shower and wrapped a towel around her body. She walked out to the living room and noticed how Parker was staring out the window that overlooked the city. “Parker?”

He turned around. “Oh, I didn’t see you there.”

“Is something wrong?” she asked.

“No, just a little sore,” he said quietly.

“Are you *mad* at me?” she asked.

“No, I was just thinking. That’s all.”

“Oh, well, um, OK. I’m going to get dressed and then I want to get out of here for a little while.”

“Where are you going?”

“There’s something I want to do for myself. I’ll be back in a little while. Don’t worry,” she turned around and headed down the hall towards her bedroom.

As Parker watched Sam leave the penthouse, he picked up the phone. “It’s me. You know that list I sent you? I want it here now,” he said.

“What about the other stuff?” Drew asked.

“All the things that seem personal, paperwork, photos, and things like that.”

“Parker, are you all right?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. I want it perfect. Her life has been disrupted. I want her to be comfortable in her new life.”

“So, you’re sleeping with her?”

“No, I’m not,” he cleared his throat.

“Take it slow, bud,” he said. “He’ll *kill* you if he finds out.”

“I’ve got it taken care of. Don’t worry. I’ll see you soon,” Parker said, as he hung up the phone.

As Parker shut the door, he noticed Sam strutting down the hallway. “Wow. You cut your hair,” he smiled.

“Do you like it?”

“It looks great.”

“I needed it. The long hair gets in the way and this is so much easier to handle,” she said, as she walked into the apartment. “What did you do?” she smiled at the newly decorated penthouse.

“I incorporated all the things that you told me. I also had your personal things from the storage unit sent here. They’re in your, um, our bedroom. You can go through them. If there isn’t anything you want here, we’ll send it back to storage.”

“You did this for me?” she asked, as she sat down on the new leather sofa.

“I want you to be happy here.”

“I am, *PK*,” she said.

“PK?” he smiled.

“I was thinking ... if you’re offended, I won’t call you that, but I should have a special name for you. I like PK.”

“Oh, and you don’t like *Parker*?”

“It sounds ... no, it’s fine. It is kind of ... I don’t know ... *stuffy*,” she laughed slightly.

“My mother liked *The Hardy Boys*. What can I say.”

“Oh, well, I’ll call you Parker if you want me to,” she said.

“PK is fine. I’m going to have to think of something to call you,” he said.

“Sam is *just* fine,” she said.

“Have you ever been called anything else?”

“Well, my mother called me Sammy. My brothers always called me Sam, and my father, always called me *Samantha*. When I was undercover, I used the name *Lee*. That’s my middle name.”

He sat down next to her and took her hand. “Um, you are a beautiful, sexy woman. I, um, I think...”

“What is it?”

He stood up quickly and headed down the hall.

She stood up and followed him. “What is it?” she asked, as she saw him sitting on the bed in her room.

“I’m sorry, it’s *nothing*.”

She walked over to him and lifted his head with her finger. “You feel it, too. Don’t you?”

He stood up and walked over to the window. He lightly touched the cool glass and didn’t say a word.

“Tell me,” she said, as she placed her hand on his shoulder.

He turned around and faced her. “I’m sorry. It’s just been so long...”

“Since what?”

“That I’ve been this attracted ... this *aroused* ... by someone,” he said.

“Is that *all*?” she smiled.

“It’s *embarrassing*. All I have to do is touch you and ... well ... *you know*. It is *embarrassing*. I feel like I’m fifteen or something.”

“Don’t be embarrassed. I feel the same way towards you. I feel comfortable with you.”

He took a deep breath and gulped heavily. “I’ll keep my body in check. I promise.”

“*Don’t*. Don’t hide anything from me,” she whispered, as she leaned in and kissed his mouth softly.

He grabbed her head carefully and reciprocated with soft, sexy kisses. He picked her up as she wrapped her legs around his body. He leaned her body against the wall as he removed her blouse. She ripped open his shirt and ran her hands all over his chest.

He carried her over to the bed and laid next to her. She looked up and shook her head. “No,” she whispered.

“*No?*” he said sadly.

She slid on the floor and took his hand. “Here,” she said.

He laid on the floor next to her and pulled the blanket off the bed. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” she said, as she rolled on top of him. “Let me start...”

He reached up with his hands and gently caressed her breasts as she slowly made love to him. She leaned down and kissed his mouth and then made her way down his body. He grabbed her close to him and gently rolled over on top of her as he kissed her passionately.

She curled up in his arms and laid her head on his chest. “Um, how was *that*?” she whispered.

“It was *amazing*,” he said, as he lightly ran his fingertips over her back.

She looked up. “I guess we’re *officially* lovers,” she laughed slightly.

“Is that what *you* want?” he asked.

“At first, I didn’t because I didn’t know you. I know that we’re still getting to know each other, but the attraction is *definitely* there,” she smiled.

“And, I think we’re pretty compatible, well, you know, here,” he said.

“Oh, I definitely think we are,” she rolled over and gazed into

his eyes. “The next time, *you* can lead first.”

“*That ... I* can do,” he kissed her mouth.

“See, there was nothing at all to be embarrassed about. Anytime you feel aroused, you know just what to do to get yourself *relieved*.”

“Um, then we’d be in here *all* the time,” he smiled.

“Is that a *bad* thing?” she whispered, as she brought his lips to her.

“No, not really,” he said as he held her close.

Knowledge

Sam looked up from the stove as Parker walked into the kitchen. “I’m not much of a cook, but I’ve made breakfast,” she said, as she set the plates on the table.

“This looks... well, *eatable*,” he laughed. “I think I’ll do the cooking from now on,” he said, as he took a bite and then spit it in his napkin.

“I know, it tastes like *crap*. I do make a mean cup of coffee, though, and I can do toast.”

“That sounds better,” he smiled, as he pushed the dish away. “What *was* this supposed to be?”

“Eggs,” she laughed.

“Oh, it kind of looks like...”

“I know, *spaghetti*,” she said, as she poured them both a cup of coffee.

“So, if you can’t cook, how’d you feed yourself?”

“Well, take-out and my mom,” she stopped. “My mom used to make a lot of meals and send them over. All I had to do is reheat them.”

“You miss your parents, don’t you?”

“Um, yeah,” she said, as she sat down. “Mom and I were very close. She worried about me, not because I was a girl, but because I’m the youngest.”

“What about your father?”

“Well, he was closer to Dylan and Kyle. When Dylan and I had the accident, he didn’t leave Dylan’s side. He devoted himself to my brother. Even when Kyle made all his mistakes, he didn’t care. He was always there to bail him out. I guess I was, too. I love both of my brothers and will always take care of them,” she wiped the tears from her eyes. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” he said, as he poured the sugar into his coffee.

“So, what about you?”

“What about me?”

“Any family?”

“I was raised by my grandmother. My parents died in a car accident when I was five. My grandmother took care of me. She died last year.”

“Oh, any brothers or sisters?”

“Nope, I’m an only child. So, tell me about Ed,” Parker said.

“Well, Ed and I were together. We never married, but we were together for about three years. He was killed in the line of duty at a robbery.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. You loved him?”

“Yeah, I did. He was a good man. To be honest, he died a couple years ago and I haven’t been with anyone since. I devoted myself to my job. My mom, though, she was always trying to fix me up with someone from the country club,” she laughed slightly. “So, what about you? Anyone special in your life?”

“Not really. I mean I dated a few women, but it never really went passed the second date. I don’t know why ... maybe the job, or they just weren’t ... *compatible*.”

“So, how long has it been since you’ve had sex?” she grinned. “*Not* counting last night.”

“*Alone* or with someone?” he laughed.

“With someone,” she shook her head slightly.

“A few years. I have to admit, even though it was been a long time, last night was ... *amazing*. I never had anyone take the lead before and it was...”

“Well, I thought we’d both enjoy it.”

“Oh, I certainly did,” he lightly touched her hand. “So, we are *officially* lovers?”

“If that’s what you want,” she smiled. “Another thing...”

“What’s wrong?”

“I think that we should both be totally honest with each other.”

“I agree. What’s this about?”

“We should be honest about the job, but also how we feel. If you need space, let me know. I’ll do the same. I know we’re both devoted to getting this job done and we don’t know what will happen when its over. I want you to know that I didn’t have sex with you yesterday for the sake of training or the job. I did it because I wanted to. I am *very* attracted to you,” she smiled.

“That’s how I feel about you. I wanted to make a move before you did, but I didn’t know how you were feeling about it. You are very sexy and beautiful. I was so turned on by you and I *wanted* you.”

She smiled and stood up. “I know we have to start this soon. Do

you have any ideas?”

“Well, I have an outside contact. His name is Drew Ralston. He’s the one that got your stuff here.”

“He’s FBI, too?”

“Kind of,” he smiled.

“Well, I’m going to get dressed. Um, where are we going?”

“Why?”

“I need to know *how* to dress,” she smiled.

“Oh, wear your best *hit woman* clothes. We’re going to the *Razor’s Edge*.”

“Jack’s bar?” she asked.

“Yup,” he gulped down his coffee. “I have to get dressed, too.”

First

Sam and Parker got out of her black *Jaguar* after she pulled into the parking lot. She looked at him and took his hand. “Is this all right?”

“Yes, you look great,” he kissed her cheek.

“You look pretty good in jeans,” she said, as she ran her hands over his behind.

“Thanks,” he said.

“Yeah, you’re not so *stiff*, like you are in those suits,” she laughed.

“I think I proved I’m *not* stiff,” he grinned.

She leaned in to his breath and smiled. “Stiff is *not* always a bad thing,” she said, as she straightened the collar on his leather jacket.

“I guess not. Are you ready for this?” he said.

“Yeah, what are we looking for?”

“A mark. We have to make an impression on Morrison.”

“Is he here?”

“Usually, he sits in his office. He does have a one-way window that overlooks the bar. He can see everything from office,” Parker said.

“So, what about us? How do we act?”

He lightly touched her cheek. “Like we’re the only ones in the room.”

“I get it,” she kissed him softly.

The two of them headed into the *Razor’s Edge* and sat down at the bar. The bartender walked over to them. “What can I get you, Parker?” he asked.

“Steve, I’ll have a vodka, straight up,” Parker said.

“And your lady friend?” he looked at Sam.

“I’ll have a beer, thanks,” she said.

“Bottle or tap?”

“Bottle, please,” she smiled.

“Coming right up,” he said, as he walked away.

Sam pulled out her wallet and placed the money on the bar. She

looked around and noticed several men staring in her direction. She laid her head on Parker's shoulder as the drinks were put in front of them. Steve walked away and went into the backroom. "We're being watched," she whispered.

"Let's see where that leads us," he stood up. "I'll be right back," he said, as he headed towards the men's room.

Sam sipped her beer as a tall, blonde man approached her. "Can I help you?" she asked.

"We *don't* like cops in here!" he said.

"I'm *not* a cop," she said.

"Since *when*?" he grunted.

She set her beer on the bar and slowly stood up. "Since I killed my brother. Do you have a problem with me?"

"Prove you're *not* a cop!"

"I'm sleeping with an independent, and you're telling me to prove I'm *not* a cop."

"This isn't about who you have between your legs. If you're not a cop, prove it!" he said, as he put his hand on her shoulder.

"*Don't* touch me," she whispered harshly.

"Oh, what are *you* going to do about it?" he snapped.

She grabbed his arm and wrenched it around his back. She pushed him to his knees and wrapped her arm around his throat. "I could kill you right now."

"Let me go!" he struggled.

She pulled him to his feet and spun him around. "Don't *ever* touch me!"

He put his hands up as she pulled her .38 from her garter belt. She aimed it at his head. "Don't shoot," he said, as three men walked out of the office.

"*You!*" one of the men said.

She looked at the three men and shook her head. "He *touched* me. I *don't* allow that."

"Scott, back off and leave the lady alone," one of the men said.

Scott slowly backed away and headed back to his seat as Parker came out of the bathroom. "What's going on?" he asked.

"*You* are with this woman?" the man asked.

"Tom, I don't have to explain myself to you, but since I'm sure you're all just curious, she's *my* woman."

Tom smiled. "Prove it!"

"I don't have to prove *anything* to you," Sam spat.

Parker put his arm around Sam and kissed her softly. "Don't

mind them. Just finish your drink.”

She lightly touched his cheek. “If you’re sure,” she said.

“I am,” he focused on the three men and walked over to them.

“Jack *isn’t* going to like this!” Cal said.

“So, what is the issue with *my* woman?”

“She was a cop,” Lloyd said.

“She’s not anymore. She’s my woman. If I were any of you, I wouldn’t bother with her.”

“Threatening us?” Cal said.

“Nope. Not me. You saw what she did to Scott. She can take care of herself.”

“We saw that. So, what *is* it with you and her?”

“She’s not *just* my lover, but that’s all I’m saying right now.”

“*Tell* us,” Cal said, as he crossed his arms.

“I may be retired, but she’s *not*. She’s my new partner in every way.”

“Oh, so now she goes around and...” Lloyd stopped.

“Yeah, like I said, she’s my *partner*. I need to get back to her before any of your thugs bother her again,” he turned to walk away and then he turned back around. “Oh, one thing...”

“What’s that?” Tom asked.

“I’m not always responsible for what she does. *I* know better than to piss her off. Scott got off *easy*,” he laughed, as he sat down next to Sam. He picked up his drink and swigged it down.

Sam drank down her beer and placed the empty bottle on the bar. “Can we *go* now?” she asked.

“Yeah, let’s get out of here,” he took her hand and the two left the bar. He opened the door for her and she got in the passenger seat. “You did great, babe,” he said.

“*Babe?*”

“Yeah, is that all right?”

“It’s fine, PK,” she laughed. “Where to?”

“Your first kill,” he said.

“Do you think I’m ready?” she asked.

He leaned over and kissed her cheek. “Oh, I definitely think you’re ready. Can you do it?”

“Yup, I’ve got a better idea,” she said, as she got out of the car. She strutted into the bar, as Parker followed behind her. She walked over to Scott, who looked up.

“Now what?”

She aimed her gun at him and pulled the trigger. “Like I said, *no*

one touches me,” she placed her gun in her waistband and strutted out of the bar.

Cal, Lloyd, and Tom walked over to Scott’s body as the blood poured from the bullet wound in the head. They looked at each other and shook their heads. “You better tell Jack,” Cal said.

“Yeah, we need this woman on *our* side,” Lloyd said.

Tom turned around and looked at Parker, who was standing in the doorway. “You want me to clean up that mess?” he asked.

“We’ll take care of it,” Cal said. “Where’s your woman?”

“Why?” Parker asked.

“Jack may want to talk to her.”

“We’re going home right now. If he wants her, he can call me later.”

Cal walked over to him. “What if he wants to talk to her *now*?”

“*Can’t*. Sorry,” he grinned coldly.

“Why?”

“We have a procedure ... *after*...”

“*Procedure*?”

“Well, it’s ... well ... it’s *private*. If Jack really wants to meet her, he can call me tonight,” Parker walked out of the bar. He got in the driver’s seat and looked over at Sam, as she stared straight ahead. “Sam?”

“Just take me home,” she whispered.

Cal looked at Tom and shook his head. “*You* tell Jack,” he said.

“No way in hell,” Tom said as Jack stood in the doorway.

“Clean up this mess,” Jack said.

“Yes, sir,” Tom said.

“Was that *Parker* with her?” Jack asked.

“Yes, sir, it was,” Cal said.

“What is going on with him?” he asked.

“Don’t know. He said that she was his partner and lover. They’re going home to have sex,” Tom said.

“*What!*” Jack asked, angrily.

“That’s what he said. Don’t blame the messenger,” Cal said.

“He *can’t* change the plans. I’ll *kill* that little bastard,” Jack said, as he stormed into his office.

Procedure

Sam didn't say a word when she entered the penthouse. She headed straight for her bedroom.

Parker followed behind her and sat next to her on the bed. "Sam, talk to me," he whispered.

She quickly wiped the tears that streamed down her face. "I just *killed* a man," she wept.

Parker wrapped his arm around her. "Let it out, babe," he said softly.

"I ... I don't want you to think that I'm weak," she cried, as she buried her face in her hands.

"You're not weak. I know how hard that must've been for you. It's not going to get any easier. I will be here for you. I'll help you through this," he wiped her tears and gazed into her eyes.

Sam pulled him into a long, passionate kiss. "Make the pain go away," she cried.

"Are you *sure*?"

"I want you, PK, and I want you *now*," she said, as he laid on top of her.

He lightly kissed her face and then her neck. "I never wanted anyone like I wanted you," he whispered, as he unbuttoned her blouse.

She looked up at him. "PK?"

"What is it?"

"How do you feel about what I did?"

"Well, I was very proud of you. I know it's very hard on you, as it is me, but you made quite an impression. Morrison wants to meet you."

"Oh, why didn't we go?"

"I told them that we have a *procedure* after a kill," he grinned.

"Which is?"

He leaned in and kissed her softly as he ran his hands down her body. "This."

"Oh, so, you *planned* this?"

"No, I figured you would need some time to yourself after each

kill. I knew it'd be hard on you. I thought if I told them that you always have sex after each kill, it would be the perfect cover. We *don't* have to. I didn't plan this, honest," he smiled.

"I do want you. Please, make me feel better," she cried.

He wiped the tears. "No more tears, babe," he kissed her softly as he made gentle love to her.

Sam curled up next to Parker and ran her hands down his chest. "I need to know something..."

"What's that?"

"When this is over..."

"Sam, if we become something more than just part of the job, we *will* continue, no matter *what*."

"Do you *want* something to become of us?" she whispered.

"I do. I have a lot of feelings swirling around in my heart for you. I am so attracted to you, not just physically, but emotionally. You've *touched* my heart," he kissed her forehead.

"I guess ... I was afraid."

"Of what?"

"Having feelings for you. I am attracted to you, too."

"I'll always be here for you. I know this is the hardest job you will ever have to do. When this is all over, we may have to leave the state or even country. We can only see what happens. Sam, don't be afraid of your feelings. I know on the job you have to hide your feelings, your fear, but, babe, when you come here, alone with me, I want you to let them out. Don't hide them when we're alone," he said.

"I won't. I am kind of hungry, though," she whispered.

"I'll order us a pizza," he sat up.

She put on her robe and followed him into the kitchen. He picked up the phone and headed into the other room.

She opened the cooler and pulled out a bottle of wine. She set two glasses on the table and opened the wine, as he came back into the kitchen. "Pizza is on its way. Hope you like the *works*," he said.

"Yeah, how'd you know?" she smiled, as she handed him a glass of wine.

"I have to tell you something," he sat down.

"What is it?"

"For about six months, I kind of watched you," he smiled.

"*You* were my *stalker*?" she asked.

"You knew about me?"

“I didn’t know it was you, but I knew *someone* was following me. I am a detective, you know. So, why were you following me?”

“We were first tracking your brother, and then, I started watching you. I knew you’d be perfect for this assignment.”

“Why’d you wait so long? Were you waiting for my family to *die*?” she stood up quickly.

“No, I wasn’t sure if you could do this. I learned all I could about you, but I’m *still* learning about you. If I had known that Morrison would go after your parents, I would’ve protected them. I am so sorry about your loss,” he placed his hand on her shoulder.

She turned around and hugged him tightly. “At least you told me the truth,” she said, as there was a knock on the door. “Probably the pizza,” she said.

“I’ll get it,” he left the kitchen and came back a few minutes later with the pizzas. “Sam, I’m sorry I didn’t tell you before,” he said, as he sat down.

She sat next to him and smiled. “It’s all right. You don’t know *everything* about me and I still have a lot of learning about you,” she picked up the pizza and took a bite.

They ate in silence and then Parker cleared the table. Sam stood up. “I think I’m going to take a hot bath, if you don’t mind.”

“No, that’s all right. Drew is supposed to stop by with a few more things.”

“Oh, all right,” she said, as she quietly walked down the hall towards the bathroom. She turned on the hot water and watched the steam rise as she poured the bubble bath into the tub. She removed her robe and slowly stepped into the hot soapy water.

After an hour, when Sam didn’t come out of the bathroom, Parker knocked on the door. “Sam?” he said, as he opened the door.

Sam looked up and sighed. “Oh, what is it?”

“I got worried, you’ve been in here over an hour,” he said.

She slowly stood up. “Yeah, I guess the water is kind of cold now,” she said, as she wrapped a towel around her.

“I got a call.”

“Jack?”

“Yeah, he wants to meet with us tomorrow at the bar,” Parker said.

“Tomorrow? Oh, all right,” she said quietly.

“Um, are you sure you’re all right?”

“Yeah, you did make me feel better,” she put on her robe and followed him into the living room. “How do I play this with him? I don’t want to be too anxious about being hired if that’s what he wants with me.”

“Be cold and direct. He likes that in his employees. Also, don’t become an employee, just a *contractor*.”

“Is that what you were?”

“Yes, since I lost the use of my hand for killing, I told them that you were not only my lover, but my partner.”

“How does Jack treat women?”

“Oh, I know that he has a wife and a mistress. He treats them like property. You need to always stand firm with him. I don’t know if he’ll try to make a pass at you or get you into bed, though. I don’t think he’s ever had a hit *woman* on his payroll.”

“Well, I guess it will be interesting. Can you tell me if you can handle watching me be a bitch?”

“I know that you’re not. I think it’s interesting how you can act like a cold-hearted woman, when I know that you’re not. You play your role so well,” he said.

“I’m glad you know that I’m playing. I don’t want this job to get to me,” she sighed.

He put his arm around her. “Babe, I’m here for you. I will always back you up. I promise.”

“Thanks, you know, I think I’m going to head to bed. I am quite tired,” she said, as she stood up.

“Go on. I have a few things that I need to do. I’ll be in later, if you don’t mind,” he said.

“No, we’re going to share the bed, right?”

“If that’s what you still want,” he smiled.

“It is,” she said, as she headed down the hall towards the bedroom.

Encounter

Sam took Parker's hand and the two of them headed into the bar. She took a deep breath and walked into *The Razor's Edge*. They walked over to the bar and Parker nodded to the mirror that was behind the bar.

Soon, the door to the office opened and Cal walked out. "He wants to see her, only."

Sam looked at Parker. "No."

Cal turned around and looked Jack, who was sitting behind the desk. "She said no. *Now* what?"

He nodded to Cal. Cal turned around and looked at Parker and Sam. "This way," he said.

Sam and Parker followed Cal into the office. She crossed her arms and looked around the room. Jack looked at his men and nodded, the men left the room without saying a word.

"Please, sit," he pointed to the chair in front of his desk.

"I'll *stand*. So, what do you want from me?" Sam asked.

Jack stood up and ran his hands through his dark hair. His blue eyes stared coldly at her. "*Lee*?" he asked.

"Um, no. It's *Sam*. You must be *mistaken*," she said nervously. "I'm Kyle's *sister*," she glared at him.

"*Right*," he cleared his throat. "So, *Sam*. You killed one of my men."

"*And*?" she said.

"Why?"

"He *touch*ed me. What's it to you?" she asked.

"He was one of my men!"

"And now he's dead. I'm sure he's not the first one and he *won't* be the last," she said.

"Parker, *this* is *your* woman?" he asked.

"No, he's my man! *No* one owns me," she spat.

"I *beg* your pardon," Jack said.

Parker smiled slightly. "We're partners, Jack. So, we're here. What did you want?"

“I know that you’re a cop. I want to know why you two are together.”

“I *used* to be a cop. That’s not who I am anymore. So, why *am* I here?”

“I have a job for you, Parker,” he said.

“I don’t do jobs anymore. Sam does them.”

“I see. Now, *why* is that?” Jack crossed his arms.

“You *know* why. I’m not out of the business. Sam is my partner. We’re in this *together*. That’s all.”

“I understand. I have a job that I’d like to discuss with you. Please, both of you, have a seat,” Jack said, as he sat down.

Sam and Parker sat down. “So? What kind of job?” Sam asked.

“First, I need to know that I can trust you both,” Jack said.

“Well, I haven’t killed *you* yet,” she smiled.

“I guess that is *something*,” he smiled lightly.

“What do you need me to do?” she asked.

“First, what is your fee?”

“Depends on the job. I don’t take anything less than \$25,000. That’s my minimum. Also, I have rules and I do *not* bend my own rules,” she said.

“What are your rules, *Allure*?”

“First, call me *Sam*. *Don’t* call me anything else,” she glared at him and shook her head. “I am not your *Allure*.”

“All right, *Sam*, what are your other rules?”

“No one, and I mean, no one touches me, except for Parker.”

“I understand.”

“I don’t eliminate children and I don’t eliminate mothers of children.”

“What about women?”

“I have no problem eliminating a woman or a man,” she said, as she crossed her legs.

“Why did you stop being a cop?”

“Personal reasons. I *don’t* share my personal life either.”

“All right. I do have a job for you.”

Sam stood up and leaned over the desk. “I will hear the job tomorrow. From now on, anytime you want to speak to us, you meet us at our home. I don’t trust this place. How do I know that one of *your* men isn’t an undercover?”

“I do *not* hire cops,” he stood up quickly.

“Maybe, maybe not, but *I* can’t take that chance. You want to talk with us, you call and then show up. That’s it. As far as money, half

up front and the other half when the job is completed. I only accept cash. No checks and no wire transfers. Any questions?"

"I still need proof that you're no longer a cop," he cleared his throat.

"Which man do you want dead?" she crossed her arms.

He pointed at Parker. "Him. I want *him* dead."

"I don't kill my lover. I will never kill him *unless* he betrays me, but I can *always* eliminate you," she smirked.

"I will call you tomorrow," Jack said, as he sat down in his chair.

"Until then," she said, as she took Parker's hand.

Jack watched as she held Parker's hand. "Sam, wait. I want to speak to you alone."

She nodded to Parker and he left the office. "What?"

"Don't you have *anything* to say to me?" he asked, as he crossed his arms.

"More than you'll ever know, but now is *not* the time. Just you wait," she smirked and left the office.

Jack leaned back and smiled, as he opened his desk drawer. He wiped off the dusty photo and smiled. "I *knew* it, *Allure*."

Sam walked over to Parker and led him out of the bar.

He opened the car door for her and helped her into the car. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Let's go," she said, as he closed the door and walked around to the driver's side of the car.

"Any place special?"

"Yeah, I want to go to the cemetery. I need to see my mother," she sighed.

"All right," he said, as he started the car.

"Do you want me to go with you?" he asked, as he pulled down the dirt road.

"I need to do this myself, if you don't mind," she said softly.

"Go ahead. I'll wait here," he said, as she got out of the car.

She looked at the bouquet of flowers in her hand and slowly walked towards the large stones. *Anna Lange, beloved mother and wife, Gerald Lange, beloved father and husband*. "Mom, Dad, I'm so sorry about this. I doubt that Kyle knew he was putting you in danger. Please, don't blame him. I hope you don't blame me. I tried to save him," she looked over at her brother's stone. "I will get this man. I will bring him and his men down. I know I'm doing all the wrong things. I feel trapped. I don't

know what's going on in my life anymore," she cried, as she put the flowers against her mother's stone. "Mom, forgive me for everything that I've done and that I'm going to do. I will always take care of Dylan. I promise," she looked towards the car, and watched as Parker sat on the hood. "I found someone, Mom. I don't know what's going to happen, but out of this whole mess, he makes me feel good. That's good, right?"

She laid her hand on the stone and put her head down. "Oh, Mom, I hope wherever you are, you're still with me," she cried, as she stood up.

As she solemnly walked over to the car, she glanced at the small headstone next to her mother's, *Jack Edward Lange*. "I'm sorry, now is not the time. No one knows about you but Dylan. I'm so sorry. Someday, I'll explain *everything* to you," she cried, as she kneeled down and kissed the stone. She walked over to Parker. "I'm ready to go now."

Parker took her hand and he stood up. He looked around. "I think we're being followed."

"I know. I saw the sedan when we pulled in," she took his face in her hands and kissed him softly. "If they want a show, let's give them one. Come on, let's go home. I have a feeling they will be watching us until they're all dead," she sighed.

He kissed her again and then they got in the car. Parker drove out of the cemetery and back to their building.

Lines

When he parked in the garage next to his car, he looked around the garage. “Come on, babe,” he said, as he led her to the elevator.

He opened the door to the penthouse. She smiled when she saw all the roses. “What did you do?”

“I didn’t know if you liked roses or not.”

“I love red roses, thank you. Why?”

“To give you something that would make you smile. I know today must’ve taken a toll on you.”

“I just wanted to kill him right there. How *dare* he tell me to kill you!” she said, as she dropped on the sofa.

“My guess it was to see if you had loyalty,” he said, as he sat down.

“I do. I am loyal to you. I hope you know that you can trust me.”

“You proved that today. I knew it, though. Hungry?”

“A little.”

“I’ll fix something to eat. Why don’t you check out our new workout room?”

“What’d you do?”

“The room that used to be empty, go check it out and see if it’s up to your standards.”

She headed down the hallway and stood in the doorway of their new work out room. “Wow,” she said, as he came up behind her.

“What do you think?” he whispered.

“It’s very cool. Weights? Mats? A body bag? I love it. It’s great,” she said.

“Well, there’s also a dart gun set. You can practice shots without using bullets.”

She turned around and hugged him. “You know you are spoiling me,” she said.

“I like doing it,” he kissed her cheek. “I’ll go get dinner. You like steak, right?”

“Yeah, sounds great. I can help.”

“Oh, um, no, you *don't* have to.”

“I can make a salad. I do know how to do that,” she said.

“Oh, that’s fine. I’ve never seen you use a knife before,” he laughed.

“Very funny,” she laughed, as they headed into the kitchen. “I’m very adept with a knife,” she smiled.

“I like it,” he smiled.

“What do you *like*?” she asked, as she pulled some vegetables out of the refrigerator.

“Your laugh. It’s great,” he said, as he turned on the stove.

“Thanks. I guess I don’t laugh very often. I think this is the most I’ve laughed in a long time.”

“Well, keep it up.”

“It’ll be hard, you know, this job is so serious.”

“I know, but, babe, when we’re together, the whole other world will disappear,” he said, as she chopped the vegetables. He pulled out a bottle of wine and poured the glasses. “So, you never said anything. Why did Morrison want to talk to you alone?”

“I swear I thought he knew I was Kyle’s sister, but he acts like he knew me as someone else. I don’t know. I don’t even care. I’m not hiding who I am.”

“That’s good. He didn’t say anything about us being together, did he?”

“No, why *would* he?”

“I don’t know. Never know what kind of crap he’ll try to pull. We *can't* trust Morrison.”

“I know that,” she gathered all the vegetables, threw them in a bowl, and then tossed them around. “There, salad is done.”

“Great, the steaks need a few more minutes,” he said, as he flipped them. He handed her a glass of wine and lifted his glass. “To you,” he smiled.

“To *me*?” she asked.

“The most beautiful woman in the world,” he said.

“Do you use that *line* all the time?” she asked.

“It’s *not* a line ... if I were going to use a line ... I would’ve said ... your legs must be tired because you’ve been running through my mind all day,” he laughed.

“Oh, wow, that is pretty *bad*. So, you’re a *liner*, huh?”

“Liner?”

She walked over to him as she sipped her wine. “Someone who

uses *lame lines* to pick up *chicks*,” she laughed.

“*Chicks?*”

“Yeah, I know, so fifties or whatever. So, do you have any more lines?”

“I don’t use lines.”

“So, *that’s* why you don’t date?”

“No,” he laughed. “Well, I guess I have been known to use a few lines. They’re pretty lame, but at least they get a laugh,” he smiled, as he sat down.

“So, what was your worse line?” she asked, as she sat down and leaned in for his answer.

“Um, you first, what was the worse line you ever heard?”

“Oh, that’s easy, it was *what’s your sign?*” she said.

“What did you say?” he smiled, as he lightly ran his fingertips over her hand.

“*Stop*,” she laughed. “So, come on, tell me. If you saw me in a bar and you didn’t know me, what would you say to me?”

“Oh, well, I don’t know,” he blushed.

“Oh, come on. You’ve had to had a line you used all the time,” she kissed him softly.

“Oh, well, I’ve never used this, but I think it fits the way I feel about you,” he smiled.

“What?”

“I think I can die happy now, cause I’ve just seen a piece of heaven.”

“Oh, that is *so* bad,” she laughed.

“Well, I could walk up to you and say, if I told you that you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?” he said, as he stood up and took the steaks off the stove.

“Hmm, that *could* work,” she laughed, as she dished out the salad.

They sat down at the table and started to eat. As she was eating, she watched him intently. He looked up and noticed her staring at him.

“*What?*”

“I was just thinking...”

“What is it?”

“I think that since we’re partners here, we should have some kind of signals or something. You know?”

“Oh, right, like a shorthand that only we understand.”

“Yeah, you know, body signals or phrases to tell each other things.”

“What would we have to tell each other?”

“If we’re being watched out in public...”

“Hmm,” he looked into her eyes. “I can see heaven in your eyes, babe. How’s that?”

“I like that,” she smiled.

“I think as we go, we’ll figure it out. I think we’re slowly figuring things out about each other.”

“I agree,” she said, as she took a bite of her food.

They continued their dinner in silence. When they were finished, Sam cleared the plates and put them in the dishwasher. “So, what now?”

“Well, tomorrow we get the first job. Tonight we could just relax in front of the fire and talk.”

“Sounds good,” she said, as she grabbed another bottle of wine. “Why don’t you get the glasses?”

Together, they walked in the living room and sat down. He poured them each another glass of wine. “Are you all right?” he said, as his watch started to beep. “Hold on, and come with me,” he said, as he took her hand. He led her down to the bathroom and turned on the water.

“What is it?”

“They’ve bugged the apartment,” he whispered in her ear.

“All the rooms?” she asked.

“I don’t know. I don’t think they did in the kitchen. My watch would’ve beeped. It’s set to detect frequencies of bugs and transmitters. As soon as we started talking, the bug started recording and the watch beeped.”

“So, what do we do now?”

“We’d just have to be careful. I don’t think we should get rid of them. We should check the rest of the rooms so we know which is safe. The kitchen is safe.”

“OK. Well, from now on, we make calls from the balcony, unless they’re not important. We talk about the job or our relationship in the open.”

“We can do this. We can. Let’s just be careful about talking about our relationship. I don’t want them to try to use that as a weakness against us.”

“I hope they didn’t bug the bedroom,” she said.

“Well, tomorrow, I’ll have the room painted.”

“What will that do?”

“I can have it painted with specialized nano technology paint

that will prohibit any electronic devices from recording. If there's a bug in our room, it won't transmit, but neither will cell phones."

"Oh, that's all right. That sounds good. Have it painted light blue."

"You don't like the white?"

"No, it's too ... well, blue is more calming and *sexy*," she kissed him and held him close to her. "Um, what if we got a ... I forgot what they call it. That thing where we can shut off electronic devices at will."

"Oh, right, we could get one of those, but we'd have to hide it. It's obvious they were in the apartment."

"Let's check out the rest of the place. We could have it hidden as a light switch or something. They'd never know as long as we turned it back on," she said, as she opened the bathroom door and he turned off the water. They headed into each room and waited for his watch to beep.

He took her hand and led her into the kitchen. "Sam, I'm sorry that I've interrupted your life. This is not what I wanted to do, but it's so important."

"All I want is to bring this bastard and his men down. I swear, I will do my job. I'm sorry how I reacted yesterday."

"I'm glad you did. You have real feelings. You're a wonderful person and I know that you cherish life," he lightly touched her cheek.

"Yeah, I do. OK, let's go sit and watch TV. Maybe there's an old movie on or something," she said.

"We have a collection of DVDs. Pick one."

They walked out to the living room and she walked over to the armoire and stared at all the movies. "Oh, wow, there is a lot," she laughed.

"What's your favorite?" he asked.

"Um, what's *yours*?" she grinned.

"I asked you first."

"Oh, all right. I really, *really* love *Steven Seagal*. I can't help it. Anything with him in it, but I like *Under Siege*."

"You're kidding, right?" he laughed slightly.

"No, I like his *bad boy physique*. Why? What do you like?"

"I like his movies, too."

"Oh, I was expecting something like ... I don't know ... *Star Wars*," she laughed.

"*Very* funny. I like *Clint Eastwood* or *Harrison Ford*. I really like *Air Force One*," he smiled.

"Well, looks like we have every movie they ever made," she

laughed.

“How about we watch *Under Siege* and then *Air Force One*?”

“Good. I’ll put the movie in and then I want to get comfortable,” she put the DVD in the player. “Play it until it starts. I’ll be right back,” she said, as she hurried down the hall. She came back out, wearing just a T-shirt and underwear. She sat on the sofa and draped her legs over his lap. “Is this all right?”

“Oh, definitely,” he picked up the remote and pressed play. Then he handed her the glass of wine. “Enjoy, babe,” he whispered.

Deals

Sam woke up next to Parker, who was sleeping soundly. She carefully got out of bed and headed into the kitchen. She walked over to the window and stared out at the night stars. “I can do this. I hope I can do this. I want it over with. I have to get Jack out of my head. Why am I so drawn to Parker? Could this *really* work out?” she sighed.

“It will,” he said from behind.

“Oh, did I wake you?”

“A little,” he walked over to her. “Sam, tell me.”

She turned around and faced him. “I know we have to be focused on the job ... but ...I find myself wanting to focus on you ... on us. I know. It’s not professional. I should be worried about getting this job done. All I keep thinking about is you...”

“What do you think about?” he held her face in his hands and gazed into her eyes.

“You. Making love to you. Holding you. Watching you. Being with you. I enjoyed just us sitting on the couch, watching TV. I know it’s weird but I haven’t felt this good in such a long time. I know that tomorrow,” she looked at her watch, “or should I say later, that I’ll have more people to kill, but I...”

He softly kissed her bottom lip. “I’ve been thinking about you, too. I love being with you. I can’t explain what’s in my heart, but I want to continue to explore us. I know that we have this job to do, but when we’re not working, we will concentrate on each other.”

She pulled him close to her. “I’m a little confused. I feel like I’ve known you forever, but we haven’t been together that long.”

“I feel the same. Some kind of connection. If we just feel our way through this, we’ll be just fine,” he placed his hand on her heart.

“I do feel it,” she whispered, as he scooped her up and carried her into the bedroom. He laid her on the bed and laid next to her. “Just hold me.”

“Whatever you want, babe,” he said, as he covered them up and wrapped his arms around her.

They woke up a few hours later to Parker's cell phone ringing. "Hello?" he answered it. "Ten o'clock is fine. You know where," Parker hung up.

"Jack?"

"Yeah, he'll be here at ten," he said.

"Oh, all right. We better get dressed," she said.

"Hold on, a sec," he rolled over and laid on top of her. "I just want to kiss you for a little while, is that all right?"

She reached up and pulled his head towards hers and softly kissed him. "How was that?"

"Wonderful," he grinned.

"You are quite a man, you know that," she said.

"You're a beautiful and sexy lady, but we should get dressed."

"All right, if you *insist*," she sat up as he climbed off of her.

"Later, babe," he grinned as he started to get dressed. "You get dressed and I'll make coffee."

She walked over to the closet and opened it. She stared at all her outfits to figure out which one to wear to a meeting like the one she was about to have. She opted to wear her black jeans and black tank top. She placed her .38 in her ankle holster and put her nine in her back waistband. She put on her leather jacket and walked over to the mirror. She took a deep breath and put on her makeup. She brushed her shoulder length hair and smiled. She placed her fingers on her lips and smiled. "This seems to be happening so fast, but I do so enjoy him, even if it doesn't last forever," she said.

She stared in the mirror and gazed into her own eyes. "No, he's not a replacement. Um, no, he can't be. There *is* no replacement," she lightly touched her lips. "Things change and there's nothing I can do about it. I wish ... I wish I could go back..." she wiped her eyes and sighed heavily.

She walked out to the kitchen and smiled, as she watched him flip the pancakes into the air. "I didn't know you *sang*," she laughed slightly.

"Oh," he turned around embarrassingly. "I didn't know you were there," he said.

"You sing quite nicely," she said. "I thought you were just making coffee."

"Well, I'm in the mood for blueberry pancakes, how about you?"

"Sounds good," she said, as she poured them both a cup of

coffee.

“So, *do* you?”

“Do I what?”

“Sing?”

“Maybe in the shower or in the car, but not when I cook. Actually, I don’t cook too well, so, no, not when I cook,” she laughed.

“Well, enjoy. Don’t worry, babe, I’ll keep you fed well,” he smiled, as he placed a plate in front of her.

“How did *you* learn how to cook?” she asked.

“Um, my Gram. She taught me how to cook and bake.”

“Really? My mom tried to teach me, but I guess I didn’t listen too well,” she laughed.

“You’ll never go hungry with me around,” he said, as he sat down. “Enjoy. Did you want syrup?”

“Yes, please,” she said, as he handed her the pitcher of syrup.

After they finished eating, they stood up, as there was a knock on the door. “I’ll get it. It’s probably him,” Parker said.

“I’ll put the dishes away and I’ll be right in,” she said.

“Take your time,” he kissed her cheek and headed towards the front door. He opened the door and stared coldly at Jack. “Come in.”

He walked in the room and looked around. “Nice place,” he said. “You must have a lot of clients,” he said.

“Why?”

“Looks like this cost a fortune,” he said.

“Not a lot of clients, just good prices,” he said. “Please, have a seat anywhere. Sam will be out in a minute.”

“That will give you and I a chance to talk,” he said, as he sat in the leather chair.

“What about?”

“You and Sam? How long has *this* been going on?”

“We met before she quit the force. It didn’t take long for us to get involved,” Parker’s eyes shifted towards the kitchen.

“Don’t *lie* to me, Parker!” he spat.

“Jack, let it go right now. She’s in the kitchen,” he said.

“Oh, I see. Hmm, you’re in a lot of *trouble*.”

“I don’t think so. I got what I wanted.”

“Did she know your type of work when she was a cop?”

“Yeah, and I’m still around, so, obviously she didn’t bust me. What are you getting at?”

“She is a lovely woman.”

“Yes, and she is *mine*.”

“I understand that things change. Are you a one woman man *now*?”

“Yes, I found the one I want. She understands me and I understand her. We compliment each other. After I lost the use of my hand, she requested that she take over for me.”

“Why would she go from a cop to an *enforcer*?” he asked.

Sam walked into the room. “Why don’t you ask me that?” she said, as she sat next to Parker.

“OK, what is the answer?” he asked.

“I was a cop who got tired of watching scumbags get away with rape and the abuse of women. Before I met Parker, I took care a few them. Once I fell in love with Parker and knew what he was doing, he made it sound so interesting. I’m not a vigilante, but I don’t like it when others do wrong to the innocent. That’s why I don’t kill mothers or children. I also *don’t* kill cops. So, if you plan on having any officers of the law eliminated, you can find someone else.”

“Why not? Because *you* were one?”

“No, because for good or bad, they protect the innocent. Some times, they are the only option for protection. Our laws suck. So, I will take the name of your target. I will eliminate that person, but on my time and my own way. I also don’t do *sloppy*.”

“Sloppy?” he said.

“My head shots are always clean.”

“I saw the wound in Scott’s head. Very clean. Very little blood. Is there a *trick* to that?”

“Yes, but it’s *my* trick. I have two separate fees. One for the elimination and the other for the removal, if you require that. Also, I need to know what *you* require for proof.”

Jack pulled out an envelope from his jacket pocket. “This has all the information for the person. It also contains the token, which you will take. You do not need to remove the body. It does need to be clean,” he handed her the envelope.

She opened the envelope and nodded as she read the print. “All right, this is in order.”

“What is the fee?” he asked.

“Thirty thousand dollars. I want fifteen *now*.”

“When will it be done?” he asked.

“In less than 72 hours. I need to get a handle on her schedule. She is not a mother, is she?”

“No, she’s not.”

“Fine. I will contact you when it’s finished,” she said.

“Is that *it*?”

“What else is *there*?” she asked.

“Don’t you want to know why?”

“That’s not my business. It’s one thing if you want to share, it’s another thing for me to ask,” she said. “Oh, but there is one more thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Tell your men to stop following us.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” he said.

“If they don’t stop following us, I cannot guarantee the completion of the job. My skills and talents are private. I do it alone and do *not* need an audience. If I find any of your men or anyone following me, they *will* be killed and I will *charge* you for it,” she said.

“I understand,” he said, as he stood up. “I’ll be right back with the money,” he walked over to the door and opened it. A man, who was waiting in the hall, handed him a briefcase and he came back in. he set the case on the table and opened it. He pulled out large stacks of money and set them on the table. “Fifteen thousand,” he closed the case and picked it up.

“Good. I’ll be in contact,” she said, as he left the penthouse.

Parker took her hand and led her into the bedroom. He removed the painting off the wall and opened the safe. “Six, nine, eight,” he said.

She nodded and went into the other room. She grabbed all the cash off the table and brought it into the bedroom. She carefully stacked the cash and he closed the safe. “So, what do we do with it?”

“It’s *ours*, babe,” he said.

“PK, there’s something you’re not telling me, isn’t there?”

“Yeah,” he held her close and whispered in her ear. “We can’t talk here. Let’s go scope out this new mark.”

“All right,” she said, as she curiously watched him grab his coat. She followed him out of the penthouse and to the elevator.

Truths

Darker pulled the car over to the side of the road. “Where are we?” she asked.

“The park. I thought we’d take a walk,” he said, as he got out of the car.

She got out and held his hand as they walked towards the park entrance. “Where to?”

“Over there, by the lake,” he said, as he led her to the bench that sat in front of the small lake.

She sat down next to him. “So, what is it you’re hiding from me?”

“I *don’t* have plans to arrest him,” he said.

“I don’t understand.”

He looked into her eyes and sighed. “I want Jack Morrison and all his men, *dead*.”

“Then, why don’t I just kill them?”

“We’re not close enough yet. Every where he goes, he’s surrounded by his men. He also has been known to wear body armor.”

“He doesn’t wear it around his *head*.”

“I know, but we have to get *closer*.”

“Does he have kids?”

“No. Can’t really picture him being a father,” he said.

“No, me either,” she sighed.

“He’s never without anyone around him, except when he’s at home. He does have guards, but they aren’t in the house. I’ve only been to the house once.”

“So, this is a covert op? Can we do whatever we need to in order to get it done?”

“Yes, it’s totally off the record as far as officially at the FBI. My only contact is Drew. When he comes to the apartment, he’s just a friend of mine. That’s it.”

“So, the money is ours to *keep*, right?” she said.

“Yeah. I should’ve told you all this before.”

“Why *didn’t* you?”

“I didn’t think you’d accept the job. Our goal is to bring him down, but not send him to prison. Only to *hell*.”

“PK, there is something else, isn’t there?”

“What do you mean?”

“Something about this is personal to you.”

“I told you that my Gram died last year,” he sighed.

“Yeah, what did he do? Did he kill her?”

“Yes, it wasn’t get to me, though. She was in a store and there was a shootout. His men were trying to shake down the owner. He tried to protect himself and all of them were shooting. One of the men, *Lloyd*, killed my grandmother.”

“Oh, dear god. PK, I’m so sorry.”

“I understand all too well your anger against these men.”

“Lloyd ... he was in the bar, right?”

“Yes, those three are always with Morrison, but there are at least ten others, plus his driver.”

“Can’t even drive his own car?”

“Nope,” he said.

“So, I have to kill this woman, don’t I?”

“If there was any other way...” he said.

“I know. Well, her name is Alyssa Marshall.”

“His mistress.”

“Oh, he must have another one, if he wants this one dead,” she said.

“Must be. Well, we should stake her out,” Parker said.

“We will. I guess we should get started,” she said, as she stood up.

“Sam?” he said, as he grabbed her arm.

“What is it?”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you everything,” he whispered.

“Do I know *everything* now?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“I’m not mad. I understand why you didn’t tell me. From now on, neither one of us keep things from each other.”

“Morrison did talk to me before you walked into the room.”

“I know. I was listening at the door. I guess we should’ve thought about a cover story for when we got together.”

“I think we covered that,” he said. “Oh,” he took her hand and kissed it. “You told him that you fell in love with me.”

“Oh, right. It ... it was for the *cover*.”

He lightly touched her cheek. “Was it *really*?”

She gazed up into his eyes. “I think ... I think I am falling in love with you. This past week, I’ve never been happier. Yes, I’m scared. I am so attracted you. Your body, your heart, and your soul. If it’s not love now, I think that it will be.”

He leaned in and kissed her softly. “I’m definitely falling in love with you.”

“Are you afraid, too?” she asked softly.

“Yeah, I am a little. I know it seems like it’s so fast, but ... I can’t explain how it feels,” he said.

“I know how it feels. I love how it feels. We do what we promised. We focus on our job when it’s time and us, when we’re alone.”

“I think that’s a perfect plan,” he kissed her again. He wrapped his arm around her and they walked back to the car.

Second

For two days, Sam and Parker followed Alyssa Marshall, their latest mark. Sam documented every single move this woman made, even when she went to the *Razor's Edge*. Sam and Parker headed into the bar and sat down. Steve came over and handed them their drinks. Sam looked down at the end of the bar, where Alyssa was sitting.

She looked up when Alyssa got up and headed towards the ladies room. Sam soon followed.

Jack came out of the office and walked over to Parker. "What are you two doing here?"

"Having a drink," he said.

"She's not doing it *now*, is she?"

"Don't know. Why don't you ask *her*?" he said, as Sam joined them.

"What's the problem?" she asked.

"What *are* you doing?" he asked, as Alyssa sat down at the bar again.

"You were *saying*?" she asked.

"Never mind. I will see you both soon. Only twenty hours to go," he said.

"It'll be done," she said, as she sipped her beer.

After Alyssa drank down her beer, she left the bar. Sam and Parker soon followed. "Where'd she go?" Parker asked.

"There, that's her red convertible. Follow her," she said, as they got in the car.

"Do you have a plan?"

"Yeah, I do. You'll see when the light turns red," she said.

They pulled behind Alyssa's car at the stoplight. Sam got out of the car and pulled out her nine millimeter. She screwed on the silencer and shot out one of the tires. She got back in the car and waited.

Alyssa drove off and suddenly pulled to the side of the road to check her tire.

Sam looked at Parker. "Pull in front of her car," she said.

"All right," he said, as he pulled in front of Alyssa's car.

Sam put on her sunglasses and got out of the car. "Do you need some help?" she asked.

"Oh, thank you. I have a flat and I'm late for work," she said.

"We can help you. Do you have a jack?" Sam asked.

"Yes, it's in the trunk," she said, as she opened her trunk. Sam walked over to her and looked around. She pulled her gun out of her belt and hit Alyssa in the head with it, causing her body to fall into the trunk. Sam pulled the necklace off her body and aimed the gun at her forehead. "So, you're *sleeping* with Jack?"

Alyssa looked up at her. "You. I *know* who you are," she cried.

"Who do you think I am?" she spat.

"The woman in the photo. The one he keeps in his desk," she cried with fear.

"Are you *sleeping* with Jack?" she asked.

"No. No. I swear. I'm not. Not anymore. Please don't kill me," she cried.

"I *don't* believe you," Sam said. She closed her eyes and let off one shot. She carefully picked up the casing that fell into the trunk and then closed the trunk. She kneeled down by the tire and looked for the bullet hole. She pulled out her pocketknife from her back pocket and carefully dug out the bullet.

She stood up and walked over to the car and got in. "*Drive*," she demanded.

Parker drove in silence until they reached their parking garage. She looked over at him and sighed heavily. "Can we deal with Jack tomorrow?"

"Yeah, he knows that we have a *procedure*. I'll call him and let him know that it's done and we'll meet with him tomorrow."

"Good. PK, time for our *procedure*," she smiled.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I need to feel better. I need to feel *alive*," she said, as she got out of the car. She took his hand and they walked to the penthouse.

She walked into the bedroom, where Parker was sitting on the edge of the bed. "It's too much, isn't it?"

"You're the one that has to do it. I feel that it's unfair to you."

She took his hands. "I hate doing it. I just closed my eyes and shot. I don't know how many more I can kill, but when I kill Jack, I *won't* be shutting my eyes."

"It wasn't any easier, was it?" he whispered.

"No. God, I'm killing people that this man wants dead. I feel so

... dirty ... angry ... *dead* inside. I don't want to feel that way."

He pulled her close to him and held her tightly. "I don't want that either. I feel your pain. I wish I could take it from you."

"You can," she flirted, as he laid her down on the bed. "I did mean what I said the other day."

"Which was?" he whispered, as he kissed her neck.

"That I'm falling in love with you. I just hope that this job doesn't get in the way of that," she said.

"I won't let it. I promise," he said, as he laid on top of her. "I want to hold you like this all night."

"Oh, please, do," she whispered, as she covered them up with the blanket.

Proposition

Sam answered the front door and there stood Jack. “Come in,” she said.

“Why did you wait until today?” he asked, as he walked in the living room.

“I have a *procedure* that I need to follow,” she said, as Parker came into the room.

“Oh, you do that after *each* job?”

“Yes, I do,” she looked at Parker. “The job has been completed,” she said, as she closed the door. She sat down on the sofa. “Have a seat,” she said, as Parker sat next to her. “Where’s my money?”

“Where’s my proof?”

She opened the wooden box that sat on the table and pulled out the necklace that she removed from Alyssa’s neck. “Here. This is what you wanted, right?”

“Yes,” he took it from Sam’s hand.

“Like I said, *where’s* my money?” she asked.

He stood up and laughed. “Oh, you think I’m going to pay you for something I could’ve done myself?”

She pulled out her gun and aimed it at his head. “I think you will. If you wanted to do it yourself, you would’ve *already* done it.”

He stood up and smiled. “You are quite a woman. Maybe I will take *you* instead.”

Parker stood up. “I *don’t* think so.”

“I’ll be back with the money,” he said, as he headed towards the door.

Sam put her gun back in her waistband. “I’m getting tired of his stupid games.”

“So am I,” he said, as Jack came back in the room with the money.

“It’s all in here. I do have another assignment for you, Sam,” he said.

“Now, what?”

He dropped an envelope on the table. “Read it later. First, I

want to speak to you in *private*.”

Sam nodded to Parker and he left the room. “So, what is it?”

“I have a proposition for you.”

“What could that be?” she said, as he moved closer to her.

“I want *you*. You could do so much better than a damaged hit man.”

“What? You’re out one mistress and need another one?” she asked.

“That’s not what this is about,” Jack sighed. “If you have sex after every kill, I could be the one you have it with,” he grabbed both her arms and pulled her into a hard kiss.

She smiled at him and kned him in the groin. He quickly let go. “You are *so* lucky.”

“Lucky?” he asked, as he groaned.

“Yes, I usually kill those who touch me. First, it’s not sex with Parker. It’s making love. With you, it wouldn’t be *anything*. I know how you are *now*.”

“I *won’t* stop trying,” he laughed.

“I won’t stop pushing you away. As for Parker, he can still kill if he has to. I wouldn’t underestimate his devotion to me.”

“I see *why* he is devoted to you.”

“Oh, and if you touch him, I won’t think twice about killing you, only I’ll make it extremely messy!” she spat.

“Take the money and do the next job!”

“I want the up front money.”

“I added an extra fifty thousand to your pile. That’s the up front money.”

“You can *leave* now. I’ll be in touch.”

Jack headed out the door and joined his men in the hallway. He looked at Simon. “I *want* that woman.”

“Dead, sir?”

“No, *definitely* alive.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“I haven’t decided yet. She’s very shrewd and very smart,” he said, as they headed down the hall. “I have to decide what to do about Parker.”

Sam walked into the kitchen and sat down.

“Sam? Is everything all right?”

“No. Unfortunately, this bastard wants a *new* mistress.”

“You?”

“Yeah. I almost killed him, right here.”

He put his arms around her. “It’s all right.”

“I don’t know. I’m a little worried now. It’s gotten to be more than just being his hit woman.”

“You think he’ll come after you?”

“Definitely. He may even try to get rid of you.”

“Well, we’ll make sure that doesn’t happen. Every where we go, we go together.”

“I think we should up the security here.”

“Oh, right,” he said.

“And we get rid of the bugs. I don’t care if he knows. I want them out of here. I don’t want *anything* to touch us,” she said.

“I’ll call Drew and he’ll take care of it.”

“Good. Um, I think I’m going to work out. I have some steam to let off right now.”

“All right. I’ll get a hold of Drew. I’ll be on the balcony if you need me,” he said, as he kissed her cheek.

She headed into the bedroom and changed her clothes. She noticed one of her boxes sitting on the floor of the closet. She sat down on the floor and opened the box. Slowly, she pulled out the photos that were neatly stacked. “Mom? I don’t know what I’m doing anymore. Help me figure this out. I remember ... I remember what it used to feel like ... and it’s still with me ... but the anger...” she stood up quickly when she heard a gunshot echo throughout the penthouse.

She ran down the hall and found Parker lying on the balcony. “PK!” she screamed. She leaned over his body. “PK, please, open your eyes.”

He looked up at her. “What happened?”

“You were shot. What the hell happened?”

“I don’t know. My shoulder... it’s killing me.”

“Can you get up?” she cried.

“I think so,” he grabbed his shoulder as he stood up. She put her arms around him and led him down the hall to the bedroom.

“I’ll take care of you.”

“Don’t I need a doctor?”

“I can do this. I was a trained medic.”

“You were?”

“Yeah, see? You don’t know everything about me. Now, let me take off this shirt,” she said, as she unbuttoned his shirt and removed his T-shirt. “Oh, it’s really bleeding. I’ll be right back,” she hurried down the hall to the bathroom. She grabbed the first aid kit and went back in the

room. "PK, stay with me. Please."

He opened his eyes. "Is it over yet?"

"I have to clean it and get the bullet out. I'll take care of you. I promise."

"I know you will," he said, as he closed his eyes again. He winced at her every touch of his wound.

"There. I did the best I could. I don't have anything to sew the wound up with."

"What kind of bullet was it?"

"A nine mill. You must've turned right after the shot. A little closer and you'd be dead."

"I think maybe I should wear the Kevlar."

"I think we both should."

"I taped it up the best that I could. Damn. He is trying to get rid of you. PK, I don't know what to do."

He reached up and touched her face. "Lie here with me."

"I can do that, but we really need to decide what to do."

"We'll figure something out. I swear, we will," he said, as she laid down next to him.

"You scared me, you know."

"I'm sorry."

"*Don't* do it again," she kissed his cheek. "I just found you. I *can't* lose you."

"You won't lose me, babe," he whispered.

"Did you get to call Drew?"

"Yeah, he'll be over in a few hours to take care of everything."

"Good," she laid her head on his chest.

Betrayal

Sam woke up the next morning and noticed that Parker wasn't in bed. She got out of bed and put on her robe. As she was walking towards the kitchen, she heard his voice on the phone. She was about to turn around when the words coming out of his mouth made her listen.

"Why the hell did you have to shoot me?" he was saying. "Plans changed ... that's all. I don't know what you want from me. I got her *here*, didn't I? Yeah... I know... don't worry about it. I have it handled. No. I told you things have changed. The plan is not the same anymore. Jack, you can't do that... You *can't* have her. She's *mine*... damn you. I told you what I was going to do... all right... soon..." he hung up. "Damn it!" he said to himself.

Sam quietly walked down the hall to the bedroom. She pulled a dufflebag out of the closet. She quietly opened the safe and pulled out all the money. She grabbed her weapons and tossed them in the bag. She pulled a few clothes out of the closet and packed up the bag. "I knew it was too good to be true. How can I trust my heart again? I can't. I have to live in the moment. Damn. I wanted to forget and move on, but I can't. I have to ... I have to get him ... on my *own*." She shoved the bag under the bed. "How do I get out of here?" she whispered.

Parker walked into the bedroom. "Oh, you're getting dressed. I didn't mean to interrupt."

"It's fine. How's your shoulder?"

"Sore, but I'll live, thanks to you," he kissed her cheek. "So, are we going to scope out the next mark today?"

"Um, you know. I'm not feeling too well today. Do you mind doing it?"

"You're going to stay here alone? Maybe *I* should stay, too," he said, as he sat on the bed.

"No, that's all right. Your friend already upped security, right?"

"Yeah, this morning. Are you sure you're all right?"

"I feel sick to my stomach. I think I'm just going lie down for a while. Don't worry. I'll be all right."

He touched her cheek and kissed her lightly on the mouth. She tried to hold her anger and kissed him back. "I hope you feel better. Do you need me to bring anything home for you?"

"No, just be careful. You don't want to hurt your shoulder any worse," she said, as she climbed into the bed and covered herself up.

He leaned over and kissed her forehead. "Be well, babe," he said, as he left the room.

She sat up when she heard the front door close. She got out of bed and pulled out the bag. She put on her jacket and headed towards the front door. "Something isn't right here," she whispered. She turned around and headed down the hall towards the workout room.

She opened the door to the balcony and walked out. She looked all around and noticed the fire escape. She placed the bag on her back like a backpack. She took a deep breath and stood on the ledge of the railing and leaped to the nearest fire escape. She took the ladder down to the next one and continued on until she reached the bottom. She headed towards the back alley and hurried to the next street, where she hailed a cab.

She got out on East Fifty-first Street and went inside a nearby grocery store. She bought a cup of coffee and a disposable cell phone. She walked out to the street and looked up and down. Thousands of people running around on the street, trying to get to their destination quickly, however, she knew not was her destination was.

She walked down the street in a great daze of wonder of what her next move should be. Her heart was breaking and she hated it. Parker had *betrayed* her. No, he lied about *everything*. She trusted him and yes, she felt love for him, and it was all *a lie*.

She walked into the clothing shop and bought a new jacket and hat. She changed quickly and continued her journey on the street. She stopped and sat on the bench and stared out at the abundant traffic jam. Her eye's teared as she watched the patrol car speed up the street. She carefully sipped her coffee and stared at her new cellphone.

She dialed his number. If anyone could help her, if there was anyone she could trust, it would be him. "Um, Captain Ford please," she waited until he answered.

"Hello, this is Lucas Ford," he said.

"Luke, it's Samantha," she sighed.

"Samantha? Oh, god. Where *are* you? I haven't heard from you. I was afraid you were killed along with Kyle and your parents."

"Luke, I need your help. I'm in *big* trouble and it just got worse."

“Honey, where are you?”

“Can you meet me?”

“Of course, where?” he asked.

“The safe house.”

“Samantha? What’s going on?”

“I’m on the street right now. I can’t really talk. Can you bring your laptop? It’s very important.”

“Of course, I’ll be there in ten,” he said, as he hung up.

Sam stood up and put the phone in her pocket. She hailed another cab and drove to the safe house to meet Luke.

She paced back and forth in the apartment and jumped when there was a knock on the door. She opened it carefully. “Oh, Luke, thank god you’re here,” she hugged him tightly.

“Samantha,” he closed the door and locked it. “Where have you been? I’ve been *worried* sick.”

She dropped down on the sheet-covered sofa. “My life is such a mess.”

He sat down next to her. “Samantha, what did you do?”

“I *killed* two people,” she shook her head, as she cried.

“Tell me what happened,” he said.

“I can trust you, Luke, can’t I?”

“Always,” he kissed her cheek. “Tell me. Please.”

“After Kyle died, I was approached by a Parker Carlisle from the FBI. He said I had to work for them as a hired hit woman.”

“A hit woman?”

“Yes. I trained with him and then, I had to prove myself to his boss, Jack Morrison.”

“*Morrison*? Samantha, do you know what kind of man that is?”

“Yeah, he killed Kyle and my parents.”

“I didn’t know Morrison was involved. Samantha, who is this Parker Carlisle?”

“I *thought* he was an agent. Luke, I was starting to trust him. I was starting to ... fall for him.”

“What changed your mind?”

“I think he’s really working for Jack. I heard him on the phone. For some reason, he was *ordered* to get *me* involved. I’m not sure what they want from me, other than being an enforcer.”

“So, you killed two?”

“Yes, a man named Scott. I don’t know what they did with his body and the other an Alyssa Marshall. Yesterday, I was given orders to

do another hit, but I haven't done that yet. As soon as I heard that Parker was using me, I snuck out of the penthouse when he left."

"Samantha, what can I do? You just *admitted* to killing two people."

"I know, Luke. I don't know what to do or who to trust. Parker told me that if I didn't go along with his plan, that I'd go to jail and Dylan would be unprotected. I can't let anything happen to Dylan. He's my brother," she buried her face in her hands.

Luke opened his laptop and plugged it in. "Are you going to stay here?"

"I don't have a plan yet, so I guess, at least for now. You and I are the only ones that know about this place, right?"

"Yeah, and we'll keep it that way," he tapped on the keys. "Parker Carlisle, you said?"

"Yes," she said. "What'd you find?"

"Parker Carlisle used to be an FBI agent but fell off the grid about a year ago. Wait, here's a picture. Is this him?"

She shook her head. "No, that's *not* him. Who is the man I know as Parker?"

"I don't know. Give me a description and I'll see if it matches any agent in the FBI."

She leaned back and rubbed her eyes. "Oh, all right. Dark black hair, dark eyes, six foot three, about 190 pounds. Oh, he does have a tattoo of a heart surrounded by swords," she said, as he typed the description into the database.

"It'll just take a few minutes," he lightly touched her cheek. "I'm glad that you called me."

"Luke, you were there for me when Ed died. You were always there for me. I know, you probably have to report this. I mean, I *am* a murderer."

"Sounds like you did it under duress."

"The hardest part was trying to act so cold when I did it. I had to close my eyes when I shot that woman."

"Did you leave a calling card?"

"Red nail polish on the bullet."

"*Interesting* choice," he smiled.

"Yeah, well, I had to think of *something*. Oh, and Parker knows the calling card," she said, as the computer beeped.

"Here it is, one match, a Perry Kelvin Lyons. Is this him?"

"Yeah, that's *definitely* him. What does it say about him?"

"His file is flagged as confidential. My guess, it usually means

he's in deep cover or he's a bad agent."

She laid her head on his shoulder. "I don't get this."

"Samantha, what did he tell you was the goal of this plan?"

"First, he said it was to bring down Jack and his entourage. However, yesterday, he told me that the goal was to *kill* all of them. I had to keep doing the jobs until we were invited into his home. I guess that's when he's off-guard."

"Samantha, you had *sex* with this man, didn't you?"

"At first, it was because he said we were supposed to pose as lovers. You know, we had to be comfortable. Then, yeah, we did. Luke, I'm sorry. I started listening to my heart and I got *betrayed*," she cried.

Luke gazed in her eyes. "You know, *I'll* never betray you."

"I know. Luke, you're my best friend in the whole world and I should've come to you *first*. I'm so sorry. I just don't know what to do anymore. My head is spinning and my heart has broken."

He lightly touched her face. "I'll take care of you. I promise," he said, as he lightly kissed her.

"Make me better, like you always do," she smiled.

"Of course, honey. I'm always going to be here for you," he took her hand and led her into the other room. "Lie down and I'll hold you for as long as you need it."

"Don't you have to get back to the precinct?"

"I took the afternoon off. It's just you and me, Love," he laid next to her.

She leaned up and kissed him tenderly. "I do love you, you know."

"I know. As I do you," he kissed her forehead. "If you want *more*, just tell me. I *do* know you," he smiled.

She touched his cheek. "Yes, I want *more*."

"Anything for you," he said, as he rolled on top of her. "Samantha, are you sure this is what you want?"

"Best friends are forever. You *always* know what I need."

"I need it, too," he smiled, as he slowly made love to his best friend. It wasn't uncommon for the best friends, to have sex, now and then, but to them, it was just another part of their friendship.

Strategy

Sam gazed over at Luke. “You are so wonderful.”

“So are you, sweetie,” he kissed her softly. “So, do you know what you’re going to do?”

“I’m not sure. I have to get my life back, but I’ll never be able to do that with Jack and his men out there.”

“Do you have a plan?” he said, as he sat up and put on his shirt.

“Not, but I think I should carry out the plan ... without Parker or whatever his name is.”

“What if you confronted Parker?”

“I don’t know. I’m so hurt by him. I thought about faking it, but I’m not there anymore. I’m sure he knows I’m gone by now.”

“He will look for you.”

“I know. I don’t know if he lied about his feelings for me or what. I just know that I can’t trust his words.”

“Does he know that you heard him on the phone?”

“No. I told him I was sick and told him to go out without me.”

“What was he going to do?”

“Oh, he was scoping out the next mark.”

“Do you remember the name of the mark?”

“Luke, I’m sorry I involved you with all of this,” she said, as she got dressed.

“I know you didn’t call me here for just sex. I know you want my help, don’t you?”

“Yes, I bought a disposable phone. We can be in contact on that. I know that you’ll probably have to arrest me but can’t you wait until it’s all over.”

“I don’t *want* to arrest you, Samantha. I just want you to be careful,” he kissed her softly. “I don’t want to lose you.”

“I’ll do my best,” she said.

“I should go. Are you staying here?”

“Yeah, at least for the night. I have a lot of thinking to do, as well as planning.”

He kissed her again. “Do you want me to come back later?”

“Um, no, that’s all right. I’ll be fine. I’ll go downstairs and get a slice or two, then I’ll be right back up.”

“OK. Take care of yourself and keep me informed. Call me on my cell if you need anything ... *anything* at all.”

“I will. I promise,” she said, as he walked out the door.

She got off the bed and went into the other room. She opened the bag and took out her clothes. She stared at the pile of money in her bag. “Time to go shopping,” she said, as she grabbed a stack of cash and put it in her purse, that she pulled out of the bag.

She put on her hat and sunglasses and headed out of the apartment. She headed down the street to the local *Army Navy* store and walked inside.

“Can I help you?” the elderly man asked at the counter.

“Yes,” she smiled. “I need three rifles and six boxes of ammo. I also need night vision binoculars and a digital camera.”

“Coming right up.”

“Oh, great. I see a few things. I’m going to look around. I’ll be right back,” she said. She walked over to the telescopes and pulled a small one off the shelf. She headed over to the clothing department, and grabbed a khaki jacket, boots and several shirts and pants. She took a deep breath and placed the items on the counter. “Oh, is there a hardware store around here?” she asked the man.

“Yes, ma’am. What did you need?”

“Duct tape and rope. Oh, you don’t happen to have any steel handcuffs, do you?”

“Preparing for war?” he laughed.

“War games,” she laughed. “Oh, do you sell air darts?”

“Yes, they’re on the back wall.”

“They don’t kill, do they?”

“No, but I have several that are high velocity. They will subdue someone if they’re shot with it. You can also control the velocity with a knob on the side of the gun.”

“Great. I’ll take one,” she said.

He walked away from the counter to get the rest of her supplies. She looked around and noticed a display on the counter. “What’s this?” she asked, as he came back.

“Oh, those are bullet etchings. A lot of the hunters use these.”

“How do you use them?”

“You pick out the design you want. You slide the sheets of metal in the barrel and heat up the rod. This adheres the sheets to the barrel.

When a bullet is fired, the design, such as the star or a cross, embeds itself on the bullet. The hunters use them to designate their kills.”

“Hmm,” she said. “Star? No. Cross? No. Wait. That I like *that*.”

“The rose?” he asked.

“Yeah, the rose. Are the instructions in the package?”

“Yup, all you do is heat the rod on a stove or open fire and slide it in. It’s very cool. Here, I’ll show you a bullet,” he opened the drawer from behind the counter. “This is a .50 caliber. The gun was installed with a cross etching. See here?”

“I like that. Thanks,” she said. “I’ll take the rose... three of them. Also, do you have any red paint?”

“I have modeling paint. I think I have some red.”

“Great, bag them all up and I think I’m set.”

He bagged all her items. “Oh, I do need your license for the rifles.”

She opened her purse and took out her wallet. She showed him her police detective’s badge and her driver’s license. “Will this do?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he rang her up. “You total is one thousand forty six dollars and fifty nine cents.”

She handed him the cash. “Oh, keep the change. I’ll be reimbursed by the station,” she smiled.

“Great, thank you and have a nice day,” he said.

She headed down the street and walked into the hardware store. She walked inside and bought rope, duct tape, a portable tool kit and several round large files. She left the building and headed back to the safe house.

She dropped on the sofa. “I can’t keep taking a cab. I need to do this,” she picked up the phone book that was on the table. She thumbed through it until she found a local dealership. “Time to get some wheels,” she said, as she touched her stomach. “And some food,” she said.

She headed back out of her apartment and went inside the pizzeria that was downstairs from her apartment. She ordered a few slices of pizza and quickly ate them down.

She hailed a cab and had it drop her off at the dealership that was just outside the city. The minute she got out of her car, one of the salesmen came running over to her.

“Looking for something in particular?” he asked.

“Yes. Not too flashy, but it needs *speed*. I also want it to be black, with a large trunk.”

“We have a lot of cars that fit that description here. Let me take

you around. How much are you looking to spend?”

“Money is not a problem. I just need a set of wheels.”

“Well, over here, we have an SUV, black.”

“Too big,” she said. “What kind of sedans do you have?”

“Well, we just got in a fleet of *Mustangs*.”

“Let me see,” she said.

“Right this way,” he said, as he led her to the back of the dealership.

She looked at the black and silver car and smiled. “I’ll take this one.”

“Great, when do you want to pick it up?”

“I want to take it with me... *now*,” she said.

“That’s a *fifty thousand dollar* car,” he said.

“I assume *cash* is acceptable,” she said.

“Cash?” his eyes widened.

“Yes, *cash*. Sir, I’m a police officer and I need to have this car. I’ve been properly funded for my, um, case and I need this car *now*.”

“Let’s go inside and we’ll take care of the paperwork.”

“Let’s do this,” she smirked, as she followed him into the dealership.

A little while later, she hopped in the car and drove away. She drove inside the parking garage that was next door to her safe house. She went next door to the liquor store and bought a few bottles of wine. She went to the pizzeria and ordered a few more pizzas, and salads.

She headed upstairs and dropped on the sofa.

“Samantha?” she heard his voice.

“Luke? What are you doing here?”

“I was worried about you, so I came back,” he said, as he came out of the bedroom. “You’re preparing for war, aren’t you?”

“Why’d you ask that?” she said, as she opened the pizza box.

“You *can’t* live off pizza,” he said.

“I can. I’ve done it *before*,” she laughed. “Luke, I don’t want you to get into trouble. You’re a police captain. I can’t do that to you.”

“I *want* to help you.”

“Honey, you can’t help me with this. I don’t want you to lose your job, freedom, or life for helping me.”

He sat next to her on the sofa and grabbed a slice of pizza. “Tell me what I can do,” he said.

“Keep your eyes and ears open. The truth is I don’t know where those bodies are. Do you know if they found Alyssa’s body?”

“I went back to the office and checked. There were no bodies that match either of the ones you described. I do know, through rumors, and I checked with vice, that there’s that construction site out on the edge of the city. Morrison owns that. If there is anyway to get rid of the bodies, that would be a perfect place to do it. All that concrete.”

“So, they could be buried?” she shook her head. “Parker must’ve told them where I killed her. I know *I* didn’t. I just showed him the token he wanted.”

“What was that?”

“Some cheesy necklace. I don’t even think it was real gold. She was his mistress.”

“Sam, who is next on the list?”

“A Thomas Barker, I think he’s a lawyer or something,” she said, as her other cellphone rang. She looked at the caller ID. “Oh, Parker must realize I’m not there. It’s *him*.”

“Are you going to answer it?”

“Nope. I’ll *let* him worry,” she said.

“You obviously have a plan now,” he said.

“Yup, tonight, it’s me, this pizza and wine, and *you* ... if you want to stay,” she smiled.

“I’d love to stay,” he said.

“Good.”

“What happens tomorrow?”

“I have a few ideas. The first one is that I’m going to find the truth about Parker.”

“Samantha, you fell in love with him, didn’t you?”

“I thought I did. I really was feeling things for him. Different from what I felt with Ed. I did love Ed.”

“I know, sweetie,” he put his arm around her. “The cable is still hooked up here. Let’s just watch TV and relax.”

“Will you stay over?”

“Of course, I’ll hold you for as long as you need it. What are best friends for?” he smiled, as he turned on the television.

Planning

Sam rolled over and gazed up at Luke, who was sleeping next to her. She lightly touched his cheek. “Luke?” she whispered.

“Good morning,” he smiled, as he kissed her cheek.

“Morning. Can I ask you a question?”

“Of course,” he smiled.

“How come you and I never fell in love?”

“Oh, I do love you, but *you* never fell in love with me. Sweetie, that’s why I don’t mind making love to you.”

“You *don’t mind*?” she laughed.

“You know what I mean. I know that we’re best friends and, yes, we make love. It’s a closeness thing. If you ever fell in love with me, I’d be right here. If you don’t, I’m still right here. I will *always* be here with you.”

“Even when you find the perfect man for you?” Sam smiled.

“Even then. We never let anyone we were with ruin our friendship and we never made love with each other if we were with anyone else.”

She sat up and smiled. “I do love you, you know. With you, it’s never about sex. It’s *always* about making love and feeling better.”

“I know. So, have you figured out what to do?”

“Yeah, I think so. I may need your help.”

“What’s that?”

“Will you be my *lover*?”

“You know the answer is *yes*, but this isn’t about us, is it?”

“No, it kind of is, but I think I’m going to confront Parker. I also am going to tell him or maybe show him that I have another lover.”

“Oh, you want to use me to make him jealous, so that you can see if he really loves you?”

“You’re right. It’s stupid.”

He touched her cheek. “No, it’s not stupid. But, if we’re going to be lovers...” he rolled over and laid on top of her. “We should *practice*,” he said.

“I’m all for it,” she kissed him softly.

They both climbed out of bed and got dressed. “Luke, I don’t know how you put up with me,” she sighed.

“Sweetie, we were always close, since we were ten. You and me. We were always best of friends and that will never change. We will *always* be together. You know, we always made love well together,” he grinned.

“Definitely,” she hugged him. “You should get to the station. I promise that I will call you later.”

“So, when do we perform for Parker?”

“I know the perfect place. Wait, can you take the morning off?”

“Yeah, why?”

“You’ll see,” she picked up her regular cellphone and dialed the number. “Parker?”

“Sam, where the *hell* are you? I’ve been going out of my mind with worry.”

“I had to take care of something.”

“Sam, you can’t just take off on me.”

“Actually, I *can*, but ... well ... I’m sorry. I want to meet you in the park. I don’t think our penthouse is safe.”

“Sam, are you sure you’re all right?” Parker asked.

“Meet me in the park in an hour,” she hung up. She looked up at Luke. “He’s going to be there soon. Let’s go.”

“Whatever you say,” he said.

“Oh, Luke, I don’t know what is going to happen, but whatever does ... play along.”

“Samantha?”

“I don’t know what Parker has to say for himself, but I will never ... *never* trust him again ... even if you think I do ... believe me ... I *don’t*. I won’t allow any man to *ever* lie to me again.”

“Just don’t kill him... you may be able to use him to get what you really want.”

“I just wish I knew what that was,” she said.

“You’ll figure it out. Don’t worry. I’ve got your back,” he kissed her cheek and they headed out the door.

Sam and Luke sat down on the bench in the park. “Samantha, what are you going to do?”

“After I introduce you to him, you leave. Go to the station and wait for my call. I don’t know how this is going to go, but you need to take care of yourself.”

“All right. You *better* call me.”

“I will. I’ll be staying at the safe house. Call me on the disposable,” she said, as she noticed Parker’s car pull up. She touched Luke’s face. “Show time,” she whispered, as she pulled him into a long, passionate kiss.

Luke gazed in her eyes. “I enjoyed this morning with you.”

“I did, too. You’re an *amazing* man,” she kissed him again as Parker approached the two.

“I always did know how to make you feel good, didn’t I?” he smiled.

“Always,” she touched his cheek.

Parker cleared his throat. “What the *hell* is going on?” he grabbed Sam’s arm.

Sam smirked at him. “PK, this is Luke. He’s ... well ... he’s a friend of mine. I was with *him* last night,” she kissed Luke again. “I’ll call you,” she whispered.

Luke smiled at Sam and nodded to Parker and then he walked away.

Parker crossed his arms. “You’re *cheating* on me?”

“*Cheating?* It’s *not* cheating. It’s pure unadulterated *hot* sex with a man *better* than you! How *dare* you! You’re the one who betrayed me. I know who you *really* are,” she spat.

“Not here. It’s too public.”

“You’re right. We have a lot to discuss.”

“Follow me. I know where it’ll be safe,” he said.

She followed him to his car. She looked around to make sure no one was watching and then she hit him over the head. She dragged his body to the back seat of her car. She got in the driver’s seat and headed towards the safe house.

As she pulled in the parking garage, Luke ran over to her. “Samantha? Need help?”

“Yeah, thanks. Hey, I thought you were going to work.”

“I like watching how your mind works,” he said, as they pulled Parker’s body out of the car. Together, they carried him into the apartment. “Where?”

“In the extra room. I’ll be right there.”

As he carried Parker to the other bedroom, she rummaged through her bags and pulled out the duct tape, handcuffs, and rope. She headed into the bedroom. “Lie him on the bed,” she said.

As he plopped Parker on the bed, she walked over and handcuffed Parker’s hands to bed. She put duct tape over his mouth and

then tied his feet to the bedposts with the rope. “Um, in one of the bags is a can of red paint. Can you get it for me?”

“Sure,” he left the room and then came back. “Samantha, you have an arsenal in there,” he said, as he handed her the paint. “What now?”

“Oh, it has to look real. Wait,” she hurried out of the room and grabbed one of the air guns. “Hmm,” she examined the gun and turned down the knob for a low velocity speed. She poured some of the paint in the gun and aimed it at Parker’s chest. *Splat*, the paint spread out across his chest. She looked up at Luke. “Does he look dead to you?”

“Yeah, looks good.”

“Good. Let me grab my camera,” she hurried into the other room and came back with a digital camera. She took several pictures of Parker’s body. “There.”

“Sweetie, he’s starting to wake up.”

“Good,” she hugged Luke. “I need to take it from here. I promise, I’ll call you.”

He kissed her softly. “I’ll see you soon. I *will* be back tonight.”

“For more *lovin*?” she laughed.

“Yup, you’re not the *only* one who wants to feel better,” he kissed her cheek and left the apartment.

Prisoner

Sam sat down on the edge of the bed and watched as Parker opened his eyes. He grunted when he tried to move and realized that he was bound.

She ripped the duct tape off his mouth.

“OW!” he yelled.

“So? What do you think?”

“I want to know what the hell is going on? What did you do to me? Why?”

“Me? *You’re* the one who set me up. All you’ve been doing since we were together is lie to me.”

“I, um, I didn’t lie.”

“Your name isn’t even Parker,” she stood up. “I must be the most stupidest person alive.”

“Let me explain.”

“Why? So, you can *lie* to me?”

“No. My name *is* Parker.”

“No, I saw the FBI file.”

“I switched photos and descriptions before I went undercover. Sam, please, let me out of here.”

“*No way*,” she said, as he looked down at his chest.

“What the *hell* is that?”

“I *killed* you,” she said.

“What?”

“To the world, you are *dead*.”

“What are you going to do with me?”

“Keep you here until I decide what to *really* do with you.”

“You have to let me out of here. We both have a job to do. Remember?”

“No. *I* have a job to do. You are *dead*. Your job is to *stay* dead or you will be dead for *real*.”

“Sam, please, sit down and talk to me. What happened between us? You’re sleeping with this friend of yours? What happened to us?”

“I know that you were *using* me. I just don’t know why. You’re

not FBI, your some hired gun for Jack. Nice trick, having him shoot you.”

“Let me tell you the truth, please,” he said. “Sam, I love you.”

“Don’t you *dare* say that. My heart broke because of you. I have a job to do and until it’s done, you are my *prisoner*.”

“Who is your lover? Come on, I thought we had something special. I meant what I said, I do love you.”

She slapped him across the face. “You’re a bastard and a *liar!*”

“I’m *not* lying. I *do* love you,” he cried.

She angrily wiped the tears that streamed down her face. “You’re such a liar. How I wish you were telling the truth, but you’re *not*. You just want me to release you, well, *too bad*.”

“All right. I *will* tell you. I promise, just *untie* me.”

“No,” she leaned in closer and kissed him hard on the mouth. “You know, I loved you and you broke my heart. You *never* loved me. Once you had me in your bed, your plans were set in stone. You knew I’d fall in love with you if you said and did the right things. You stalked me for months. You know what I like and what I don’t.”

“Please, kiss me again. I do love you. I was out of my mind when I came home and you weren’t there.”

Sam leaned in and kissed him. “I can’t ... take the chance...”

“What chance? I love you so much.”

“I just hate what you did. I want the truth and I want it *now*.”

“All right, when I first approached you and took you, I had orders from Morrison. He wanted to get Kyle’s sister under control. I do work for the FBI, but under deep cover. My superiors changed identities with Peter Barker. He’s an agent who died last year. When I got the order from Morrison, I figured it’d be an easy way to get you into the loop. I wasn’t lying about anything I told you about him.”

“Why didn’t you tell me the truth from the beginning?”

“I didn’t think it mattered. I know it was wrong. The other thing, all the passes he made at you, he wanted you as one of his trophies. He got rid of Alyssa so that he could have *you*.”

“Oh, I think I could use that,” she said.

“What are you planning?”

“My plan is already in motion. I don’t know *who* you are. You hurt me. You *betrayed* my trust.”

“Me? You’re the one who’s sleeping with this *new* guy!”

“The truth is, and now listen closely, because this is what the *truth* sounds like,” she said. “Luke and I have been best friends since we were kids. Yeah, *sometimes* we *sleep* together. We’re friends and that’s it.

Yes, today, I used him to see if you'd get jealous. He knew it."

"I thought you loved me. How could you cheat on me?"

"I don't even know who you are anymore. I don't think I ever did. Now, I don't know if you love me. I *really* don't. I needed a shoulder and much more and Luke was there for me. I never slept with him if I was involved with someone else. PK, you have no idea how hurt I am because of you."

"What can I do? Please, I don't want to lose you. Sam, in the beginning, I didn't plan on loving you. I didn't plan on us making love *night after night*, but I don't regret any moment we spent together."

"At this moment, I *do*."

"Don't say that. We have something special."

"Not anymore. PK, I don't know what to do about you."

"Untie me."

"I can't. I can't trust you right now."

"What can I do to prove to you that I love you? That you can trust me?"

"I just don't know. I don't know anything, anymore. All I do know is that I'm going to finish what we started. If Jack wants me, then I'll play that card."

"You're going to sleep with him?" Parker wept.

"If I have to. I slept with *you*, didn't I? Usually, I only sleep with men I *love*."

"You *love* this Luke person?"

"Yeah, but not like you think," she cried, as she lovingly touched his face. "I love you. I wish I didn't. I wish my heart were as cold as I pretend it is, but it's not."

"Please, what can I do to prove it to you? Let me love you. Let me prove to you that I love you," he said.

She sat on top of him. "If you really love me, you'll let me do this *my* way."

"Whatever you want. Do I have to be tied?"

"For now, *yes*. You are still my prisoner."

"Sam, please, let me make love to you."

"Not now. I can't. I can't allow my heart to be hurt anymore," she kissed him gently and he kissed her back. She knew ... something about him ... she knew he loved her, but that didn't excuse the lying. It didn't even make her want to untie him. She climbed off him. "Enjoy your stay," she said, as she closed the door. She stared at the door and knew that there had to be more to this than what he explained. She always knew he was hiding something ... she felt it was something big

... but it was like all the feelings she was hiding inside herself. Her past was catching up to her head and she had to block it out and focus on her *new* plan.

She walked into the living room and sat down on the sofa. Luke walked out of the kitchen. "I thought you left."

"I'm not going to leave you right now. I know you need me."

"Did you hear?"

"Yeah, I think maybe he does love you," he said.

"I feel it, too. I just don't know if it's enough to trust him."

"You have a plan?"

"Yeah, and right now, he needs to remain tied to that bed. Just remember what I told you."

Luke wrapped his arm around her and held her closely. "I guess I won't be getting some *lovin'* from you."

"Oh, I think we both need it," she smiled.

"Even with your lover in the next room?"

"He's not anything to me right now. I don't know what will or won't happen, but he's not *my* lover ... I don't know if he ever will be again," she said. "And, if he is again, it'll only be for show. I can't ever trust that man again."

Luke pulled her into a strong kiss and laid her down on the sofa. "I love you and you can *always* trust me," he whispered, as she leaned into his breath.

"Now, Luke," she smiled.

Plans

Sam woke up in her bed and noticed she was alone. She called for Luke, but there was no answer. As she got out of bed, she noticed a note on her bedside table. *"Sweetie, I had to go to work. I have an idea that will help you with everything you told me. Continue with your plan, I have your back, as always. Another thing, I enjoyed last night, but I think you need to come to terms with how you feel about Parker. I will always be here for you. By the way, whatever you're hiding from me, you can tell me. I'll always be here for you. Call me later-Luke,"* she read to herself. She folded up the letter and put it in the drawer.

She stood up and walked down the hall to the bathroom. She took a hot shower and draped a towel around herself.

She headed into Parker's room. "Wake up!" she said.

He opened his eyes. "Oh, I'm still here. I thought it was a dream."

"Are you hungry?"

"Yeah, starved. I haven't eaten since yesterday morning."

"Well, all I have is cold pizza, so, you'll have to deal with it," she untied his legs and uncuffed his hands from the bed. She cuffed his hands to each other. "Get up and don't try anything stupid."

"I won't. I promise," he said, as he slowly stood up. "Can I get something else to wear?"

"Yeah, I have clean clothes that will fit you. Don't worry," she said, as led him into the living room. She pushed him into the hard wooden chair and cuffed his hand to the arm. "Don't move. By the way, that chair is nailed to the floor, so you *can't* walk around."

She walked over to one of her bags and pulled out a shirt and pair of pants that she bought from the *Army Navy* store. She also grabbed her nine-millimeter out of her dufflebag. She uncuffed his hand. "Stand."

He stood up as she pointed the gun at him. "Now what?"

"Strip and put these on," she tossed him the clothes.

"Here?"

"Yes, now, *do* it!" she demanded, trying to keep her feelings

hidden.

“Sam, you don’t have to hold that gun on me. I won’t hurt you and I won’t try to leave.”

“I said *strip*. NOW!” she said.

“All right,” he said, as he unbuttoned his paint-covered shirt. He gazed into her eyes and sighed. He removed his pants and kicked them off his feet. He stood there in his boxers. “Sam, come here, please.”

“I can’t,” she cried, as her hand that was holding the gun, started to shake.

“What are you afraid of?”

“You breaking my heart again.”

“I just want to be with you. I didn’t plan on falling in love with you. I just wanted to get the job done. I couldn’t help what I was feeling. I fell in love with you. The first time we made love, I knew I was making love and not *just* having sex. Didn’t you feel it?”

“It was *sex*, you bastard. That’s *it*,” she spat.

“Oh, it was more than that, you know it. You feel it!”

“Of course, I felt it. Why do you think I hurt so bad?”

“Please, come here. Let me hold you. I swear, I’ll never hurt you again.”

Sam put the gun in her front waistband and slowly walked over to Parker.

He lifted his hand up slowly and lightly touched her cheek. “All I want is for this to be over, so you and I can be together. I’m sorry that I lied to you. I should’ve told you the truth. I’m so sorry. Please, it’s all right to love me.”

She gazed in his eyes. “How do you do that?”

“What?”

“Make me love you when I *can’t* even *trust* you?”

He pulled her into a passionate kiss and ran his hands down her back. “Sam, please, I won’t hurt you. I just want to love you. I want to be with you.”

“After everything I’ve done...”

“After everything *I’ve* done,” he said. “Let me show you.”

“No, I *can’t*. Please, get dressed,” she backed away.

“Why?”

“I can’t sleep with you when I had sex with Luke last night. I can’t do that to you ... to us. I don’t plan on being with Luke anymore, but he is my best friend. That is something...” she sighed, “that *if* we’re together, you’ll have to deal with.”

“I can deal with it. I need to know ... why *did* you sleep with

him?”

“Get dressed,” she said.

He picked up the shirt and pants and put it on. Then he sat in the chair. She handcuffed his hand back on the arm of the chair. “Sam?”

“I need your attention. As of right now, you’re dead. I even have pictures to prove it. We’re going to do this my way. PK, you need to trust me.”

“I do. I’m sorry about...”

“Just *stop* apologizing. Now, as far as Luke and I, we’re only together when we need to feel better. The first time, it just happened. After that, it was only when we both needed something. To be honest, I’m the *only* woman he’s ever had sex with.”

“He’s *gay*?”

“Yeah, but that’s between you and I. The precinct *doesn’t* know.”

“He’s a cop?”

“He’s the Captain of Computer Crimes at the four six precinct.”

“Does he know everything?”

“Yes, I can trust *him*. Now, I thought I could trust you. I need to find out if I can trust you again.”

“So, what do you have planned?”

“Small things. First, I’ll take care of the next mark, then I’ll have a heart-to-heart with Mr. Morrison.”

“You need to watch your back.”

“I know, but I think I’ll get better results if he thinks you’re dead. You *will* remain here until I say.”

“But what about the penthouse or the money?”

“I have the money. After all, I’m the one that earned it, not you. I’ll still use the penthouse, but *this* is where *you’ll* be.”

“So, I’m going to be tied up here the entire time while you’re playing hit woman?”

“First of all, I don’t play ... anything anymore. No more games with you. If you escape or leave here, everything will be ruined. I can’t take the chance.”

“I’ll remain dead if I need to. Sam, I just don’t want you to be hurt. You need someone to back you up.”

“I can handle Jack. Don’t worry, Luke knows where you are, so if I get killed, he’ll release you.”

“You can’t be serious. You *can’t* do this alone.”

Sam stood up. “You *don’t* get to decided! I do. You played with my life. You took me out of my real life. You lied to me. You made love to me and made me fall in love with you.”

“I *made* you?”

“Yes, you and your damn heart. How could I fall in love with you?”

“Sam, please, uncuff me,” he said. “I won’t leave. I promise.”

She shook her head. “Today, you’re cuffed. We’ll see what happens when I get back. Help yourself to some pizza. I’ll bring some real food back here when I come back.”

“You’re leaving now?”

She walked over to him and sat on his lap. “PK, if you really love me, you’ll just sit here. You won’t move,” she kissed him tenderly. “I mean it when I say I love you, but if you ever hurt me again ... I *will* kill you.”

“I know,” he sighed.

She moved the coffee table closer to him. “You have the remote and the food if you need it. If you escape, I will never forgive you and you probably will be signing my death warrant.”

“I won’t leave. Do what you need to do,” he said.

She picked up her dufflebag and zipped it up. She put on her jacket and headed out of the apartment, as Parker picked up a piece of pizza.

Protection

As Sam left the apartment, Luke walked into and sat down in front of Parker. “What do *you* want?” Parker asked.

“I need to talk to you about Sam.”

“What about?” he asked.

“How do you really feel about her?”

“I love her. I fell in love with her and I just want to be with her.”

“You do know everything that she’s been through, don’t you?”

“She shared a lot of her past with me, but what do you mean?”

“Did she tell you about Ed?”

“Yeah, I know they were together a while before he was killed.”

“Yes, that’s true, but before there was Ed, there was Tyler. I think there was someone between Tyler and Ed, but she denied it. She’s very good at keeping things to herself, if they’re private. She doesn’t like broadcasting her private life. As for Tyler, she dated him throughout high school. On her twenty-first birthday, they were walking home from a party that he had set up for her. It was also the night that he proposed. On the way back to her house, a drunk driver’s car jumped the curb and hit Tyler. He had seen the car coming and pushed her out of the way. She loved him for a long time and he *died* on her. She wore that engagement ring for years after that. She never dated. The only person she had in her life was me. We’ve been best friends since we were ten.”

“She told me about your friendship. So, you two sleep together a lot?”

“She’s the only woman that I’ve ever been with. I love her with all my heart, but she’ll never love me more than she does now.”

“If she did, would you love her?”

“Yes, of course. She’s the *only* woman I ever loved. My whole point is the two men in her life that she truly loved *died* on her. After Ed died, she shut down. She focused on the job. I think what made her accept your job offer so easily is that it was adventurous and exciting. She probably was also attracted to you at first. I heard you two did a lot of training together.”

“Yes, and she taught me more than I *ever* taught her,” he smiled.

“I figured as much,” Luke laughed. “Parker, if you do love her, let her do things her way. Somehow, prove to her that you really do love her. You don’t have to protect her, because she can do that herself, but she may try to protect you.”

“She did really freak out the other night when I got shot. She took care of me and fixed up my shoulder.”

“I’m not surprised. She’s like that. She always wants to fix things for other. She takes care of others. She can be very controlling, but it’s just her way. You’ll *learn* to do what she says. I’m not saying that in a relationship, she’s the boss, but she likes to take control.”

“In *everything*?” he asked.

“Yes, but she’s willing to give up some control if it makes the other person happy. Parker, she grew up with a well-off family. She joined the Marines and stayed with them until she was twenty-two. She was a sniper and a medic. She then joined the police academy. She will take care of you and those around her. Don’t try to stop her. When she gets things in her head, she has to play it out or you’ll be in her way. *Don’t* get in her way.”

“I’ll try not to. She was really close to her mom, wasn’t she?”

“Yeah, they were like sisters, rather than mother and daughter. She lost everyone except for you, Dylan, and me. Have you seen Dylan yet?”

“No. I took her to see him, but I didn’t go in. She told me what happened to him.”

“He was a great athlete in college. He had a football scholarship and scouts were trying to line him up for their *NFL* teams, but then, he came home. He wanted to take his little sister out for dinner to celebrate her promotion to Detective. He’s ten years older than she is. He loves her very much. He was always so protective of us.”

“Us?”

“Yes, Samantha, Kyle, and I. Her parents practically raised me.”

Parker shook his head. “I knew stuff, but I guess I didn’t know everything. I do so care about her. I feel like she’s been in my heart my entire life. I don’t want her to lose her life and I don’t want her out of my life.”

“If you want to hold on to her ... *don’t* lie. Don’t keep secrets. Don’t *ever* betray her. Also, don’t hold me and her sleeping together against her. It was something that we both agreed to, but it was more of how we are together. Yeah, we’ve had sex three times in the past few days, but that’s it. If she and you work things out, it will stop between us.”

“I guess I understand. I’m glad that she has a friend like you. I know it’s weird, considering you’re *sleeping* with the woman I love,” he laughed slightly.

“So, will you stay here?” Luke asked.

“Yeah, she has me set up pretty good. I think she’s bringing real food over later.”

“Yeah, she *can’t* cook.”

“I know, I tried her eggs.”

“Oh, *yuck*.”

“I know, they were pretty disgusting, looked like...”

“*Spaghetti?*” Luke asked.

“Yeah,” he shuddered.

“No matter how hard Anna tried, Samantha never learned how to cook,” Luke said, as he stood up. “If you’re here when she gets back, she’ll know that she can trust you. Let her learn it all over again if she has to.”

“I will. I’m not leaving. She did say that if I left, she’d hunt me down.”

“Oh, she *will*,” he said. “I’ll see you later. I just thought that you and I should talk. Oh, and, Parker?”

“Yeah?”

“If you do hurt her, she won’t be the only one to hunt you down.”

“I understand. You won’t have to. I promise.”

“Good,” Luke left out the apartment door.

Motion

Sam got out of her car and followed Simon Elders into the café. She sat down at a table that had direct line of sight to his. She looked up as the waiter came over. “Yes, I’ll just have a coffee. Oh, does that man over there come here often?”

“Yes, he’s in here every morning at this time. Why?”

“Oh, he’s just attractive, that’s all,” she smiled.

“Well, you’re pretty *hot*, you could do better than him,” the young waiter smiled.

“Thanks. Coffee will be just fine,” she said, as her eyes met Simon’s.

He smiled back at her and lifted his cup of coffee. She returned the favor when the waiter brought back her coffee. Slowly, she sipped her coffee as she read her newspaper. She never let her eyes off of Simon.

Once Simon left the café, she followed him. He headed into the large office building. She followed a safe distance behind him. She watched as he hit the elevator button. She looked at the business directory and noticed the name *Simon Elders, attorney at law, suite 609*.

She watched as Simon got on the elevator and the door closed. She took the next elevator to the sixth floor. She got out and looked up and down the hall. She headed to suite 609, when she noticed that suite 611 was an empty office. She picked the lock and entered the office. She walked over to the window and stared at the building across the street. She took her telescope out of her dufflebag and used it to carefully examine the building across the street. She took a deep breath and headed out of the door. She walked to suite 609.

The receptionist looked up. “Yes, can I help you?”

“Um, I’m looking for a new attorney and I was wondering if I could schedule an appointment with Mr. Elders.”

“Yes, that would be fine,” she opened her schedule book. “Yes, he has an free hour tomorrow at ten. Is that all right?”

“Yes, the name is Janet Dow.”

“What is this regarding?”

“I’m sorry, that’s private. What is his initial consultation fee?”

“Five hundred dollars,” she said.

“That’s fine. Oh, may I have one of his cards?”

“Yes, just a minute,” she left the room and went into the office. She came back a few minutes later, followed by Simon.

He walked over to her. “I heard you made an appointment,” he said. “Hello, beautiful. You were at the coffee shop. Did you follow me?”

“Um, no, you were recommended by a friend of mine,” she said, as she glanced at the schedule book. “A Robert Rogers.”

“Oh, yes, I see,” he said. “So, I have some time right now.”

“Um, I have another appointment. Tomorrow at ten will be fine.”

“That’s fine,” he shook her hand. “Here’s my card. I wrote my home number on the back in case you want to ... talk or have dinner...” he said.

She looked at the back of the card. “This is great, thanks. I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said, as she picked up her bag and left the office.

Sam headed across the street to the apartment building. She took the elevator to the last floor. She walked down the hall until she found the exit to the roof. She climbed the stairs and walked out on the roof. She walked over to the edge of the roof and dropped her bag. She pulled out her telescope and held it to her eye. She scoped out the building across the street until her eye met the sixth floor, suite 609. She took a piece of chalk out of her pocket and placed an X on the ledge of the roof. She put the scope back in her bag and headed towards the stairwell.

She got in her car and took a deep breath. She drove to the other side of town and pulled in the parking lot of the *Razor’s Edge*. She put her gun in waistband and put on her jacket. She grabbed an envelope out of her bag and put it in her pocket. She got out of the car and headed inside.

She sat down at the bar and Steve walked over to her. “Alone?”

“Yeah, can I get a beer?”

“Sure,” he said, as he handed her a bottle. “Anything else?”

“Tell Jack I need to see him,” she said.

“Will do,” he said, as he went into the office.

A few minutes later, Jack came out of the office and sat down next to Sam. “Steve, give me a scotch, please,” he said.

“Yes, sir,” he said, as he handed Jack a glass.

Sam stood up and grabbed her beer. “Over there,” she said, as she walked to a table in the far corner of the bar.

Jack sat down in front of her. “What’s this about? Is it done?”

“It’ll be done tomorrow.”

“Then why are you here?”

“I have something to show you,” she said. “I was thinking about what you said the other day.”

“Oh, about me *wanting* you?” he smiled coldly.

“Yes.”

“You turned me down. You said you *loved* Parker.”

“I did until he betrayed me.”

“What did he do?”

She pulled the envelope out of her pocket and handed it to him. “The *what* doesn’t matter. The end result was that,” she said.

Jack opened the envelope and stared at the pictures of Parker’s *dead* body. “*You* did this?” he smiled.

“Yes. I tied him up and killed him. He betrayed me. Usually I don’t like messy, but he broke my heart, so I *broke* his,” she said coldly.

“So, are you saying you want me now?” he leaned in and lightly touched her hand.

“After my job is done.”

“Oh, can I be part of your *procedure*?” he smiled.

“You *know* about that?”

“Parker couldn’t help but brag about how good you really were. I wanted you from the minute you killed Scott in my bar. Sam, you have looks and strength. I like that about you. I’m sure you feel so good. I *know* that you put your entire body into having mad, passionate sex.”

She leaned in and smiled. “You have no idea *anymore*,” she flirted. “Do you want a *sneak peek*?”

“Here?” he smiled.

“Your office, unless it’s *occupied*,” she said.

“Follow me,” he said, as they walked into his office. Jack nodded to his men to leave the room and he sat down behind his desk. “What did you have in mind?” he said.

She locked the door and sauntered over to him. She straddled his lap and rubbed her body gently on his lap. She licked her lips and ran her hands over his chest. “How *bad* do you want me?”

“Bad,” he whispered.

“Really bad? *How* bad?” she breathed hard.

“Worse than *ever*,” he grinned.

“What does *that* mean?” she whispered harshly.

“I would’ve killed Parker myself. That’s how bad. Oh, come on, let me have you,” he ran his hands down her chest and gently squeezed her breasts. “Now.”

She carefully licked his lips and kissed him long and hard. She ran her hand down between his legs and squeezed gently. “Later,” she said, as she stood up.

“Oh, no, *Allure*, I want you now,” he grabbed her and set her on the desk.

“I *don’t* mix business with pleasure.”

“What does that mean?”

“I *don’t* do sex in offices,” she ran her hands over his chest. “You and I have a business deal. If you want sex, it’s *separate*.”

“I understand. It doesn’t stop me from wanting you.”

“Oh, I know. I can feel it,” she grinned. “I can relieve that for you,” she said.

He kissed her long and hard. “*Relieve* me,” he breathed heavily.

“Whatever you say, boss,” she said, as she unzipped his pants.

He zipped up his pants and sat down in the chair and looked up at her as she sat on his desk.

“Feel better?” she grinned.

“You are quite a woman. I can just imagine how it will feel inside your body again,” he straightened his tie.

“You need to know one thing, though,” she said, as she crossed her legs.

“What’s that?”

“I won’t become some submissive mistress to you. I will still do my job. I won’t be some kept woman that you eventually have killed like you did with Alyssa.”

“Oh, that’s *not* what I want you for. You and I could be great together. We could accomplish so much together.”

“I think you’re right. So, you trust me now?” she smiled.

“Oh, I’m getting there. Believe me,” he stood up and placed his hands on her shoulders. “When can I *have* you?”

“Meet me at the penthouse at six PM tomorrow. The job will be done and you can pay me. Then, you can see how I *really* am,” she leaned up and kissed him hard. “I like it *hard*, is that all right?”

“Whatever makes you happy,” he said.

She got off the desk and ran her hands down his legs. “Oh, I do so like it hard,” she said. “Tomorrow,” she said, as she headed out the

door.

Jack sat down behind his desk and smiled. “God, I have to have that woman *again*.”

Sam got in her car and sped to the penthouse. She hurried up to the penthouse and ran down the hall to the bathroom. She stripped completely and leaned over the toilet to make herself throw up. She wiped her mouth and then brushed her teeth frantically. She turned on the hot water in the shower and got in the tub. She sat down in the tub as the hot water poured on her body. She buried her face in her hands and cried to herself. Once the water turned cold, she got out of the shower and dried herself off.

She walked down the hall to the bedroom and got dressed. She pulled out her mother’s photo. “Mom, I hate this. I don’t want to do this. I don’t know what to do. I have to kill this bastard. He has to pay for what he did to you. I can’t believe I used to... No, I can’t think about that anymore. That was a *long* time ago,” she dried her tears. She took her picture and put it in her dufflebag. She combed her hair and headed out of the penthouse.

Trust

Sam stared through the windshield of the car as she pulled into the parking garage. She grabbed her bag and headed towards the apartment building. “Damn, I forgot food,” she said, as she looked up and down the street. She headed for the Chinese restaurant and ordered two family meals. She then took a deep breath and headed back to the apartment.

She opened the door and found Parker, asleep in the heavy wooden chair and still cuffed to the arm. She shook her head as she dropped the bags on the table.

He woke up quickly. “Oh, what time is it?”

“Six,” she said. “I forgot to get groceries, so I picked up *Chinese*. Is that all right?”

“It’s fine. As long as it’s *not* pizza. I’ve been eating that all day.”

“I’m sorry about that,” she said, as she dropped on the sofa.

“Sam, I do have to use the bathroom. I’ve been sitting here all day.”

“Oh, right, I didn’t think of that,” she said, as she unlocked his cuffs. She followed him to the bathroom. “Well, go on,” she said.

“Are you going to *watch*?” he laughed.

“Um, no, I’ll be in the other room,” she said, as she closed the door. She sat on the sofa and watched the bathroom door.

Suddenly, he came out and sat down next to her on the sofa. “Please, don’t cuff me right now,” he whispered.

“I won’t if you behave,” she said.

“I won’t screw us up,” he said.

“Let me get some plates and we can eat,” she said, as she went into the kitchen.

“So, what is this place anyway?”

“It’s a safe house. The department doesn’t use it anymore, but the entire building is owned by my father’s company. I guess I own it now.”

“Sam, what happened today?” he said, as he dished them each out a plate.

“I scoped out the mark. He’ll die tomorrow.”

“There’s something else, isn’t there?”

“I met with Jack today.”

“Oh, what happened, if I have permission to ask?” he said, as he took a bite of his food.

Sam took his face in her hands and made him face her. “I think you’re going to hate me after I finish this job. I couldn’t bear to have you hate me. You’re welcome to leave, if you want.”

He lightly touched her hand. “Sam, does Jack think I’m dead?”

“Yes, I showed him the pictures,” she pulled the envelope out of her pocket. “These,” she handed them to him.

He looked at the photos. “Wow, if I didn’t know any better, I’d say I was dead, too.”

“It’s not funny,” she stood up and walked over to the window.

Parker stood up and walked over to her. “Sam, tell me. What do you think you could do that would make me hate you?”

“Tomorrow ... I have to have sex with Jack.”

“Sam? You *can’t* sleep with Jack.”

“See? I don’t deserve you. I *have* to do this. I have to kill that lawyer and I have to have sex with Jack. I don’t know any other way. That’s what he wants. It was bad enough that I had to kiss him and ... you know ... *relieve* him.”

“Where?”

“In his office. He told me that if I hadn’t killed you, he would’ve. He wants me and he’s like a rabid dog. I don’t know how to get out of this. If I turn him down, he’ll kill me.”

“What if he only *thinks* you slept with him?” Parker took her hand.

“What do you mean?” she asked, as she followed him to the sofa and sat down.

“Drug his drink. Get him into bed and have him wake up next to you, naked or whatever. We can do this together. Let me go with you to the penthouse. Let me help you pull this off.”

“But, um, how? Couldn’t he, um, tell if his ... I mean, his body had sex?”

“There are ways,” Parker said. “I can help you. You do what you need to do and I’ll be your back up. I’ll be there at the penthouse, waiting for you.”

“Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Yes, I want to help. I’m not just helping so you don’t have to sleep with him. It’s because I can see how bad you don’t want to have

sex with this man.”

“He *repulses* me. I drove right to the penthouse and threw up. I scrubbed my teeth and took a long, hot shower. I didn’t want you to see me that way.”

“Babe, please, I just want to help you. I won’t let Morrison hurt you.”

“How do we get you out of here?”

“Disguise. I’m sure we’ll figure out away. Come on, finish eating,” he handed her the plate of food.

“I don’t know why you are so good to me after what I did to you,”

“You tied me up. You faked my death. You slapped me. You didn’t kill me, you didn’t even punch me,” he grinned.

“I wanted to, though,” she smiled slightly as she took a bite of her food.

“The *slap* said it all, babe,” he poured them both a glass of wine. “Just enjoy. We’ll figure out a plan later.”

“How the hell am I going to drug him?” she asked. “Oh, wait, I know.”

“What’s that?”

“Oh, that will *never* work. It has a taste. I was thinking cough syrup, but that would leave a taste in his drink.”

“Not if he drinks port wine. That’s a very robust drink. It should hide the taste and smell. You could also get a flavor enhancer from the pharmacy.”

“What’s that?”

“They use it to add to drugs so that kids will take the medicines easier. If you tell the pharmacists that you have an elderly parent who won’t take his medicine, and ask if they could add a flavor to the bottle, they just may do that.”

“You’re pretty smart.”

“Thanks,” he blushed as he set his empty plate on the table.

She looked over at him. “I can trust you, can’t I?”

He lightly touched her cheek. “Yes, you can,” he whispered, as he leaned in and kissed her. “Sam, let me love you, please?”

“I slept with Luke for the past two days and then I got Jack *off* today and you want me to make love to you?”

“Are you saying no for me or for you?” he asked.

“For *you*. It’s not right,” she cried. “I betrayed you. You should hate me,” she stood up and hurried into the bedroom.

He followed her and found her sitting on the bed, with her

knees curled up to her chest. He sat next to her and put his arm around her. “Sam?”

“I’m a *slut*. I never ... um, I never did this kind of thing before. I mean, I’ve only been with, um, five men in my life, Luke, Tyler, Ed, and you. I never slept with anyone else.”

“*Five?* Who’s the *fifth?*”

“No one. Not important *anymore*. Forget I said it.”

“Whose Tyler?” he asked, not letting on that Luke already told him the story.

“He was my fiancée, he died when I was twenty-one. We dated through out high school. Luke took care of me after he died and years later, I fell in love with Ed. He was a good man and a great cop. Then, *he* died on me. I’ve been in the Marines and then I was a cop. All I knew was how to be a cop and in love with someone who ends up dying on me. Luke was the only one who *never* left me that way,” she wiped the tears from her eyes. “Even when I went undercover, I *never* used my body to get the job done. Sometimes, to avoid it, I had to pretend that I was gay, but other times, it was about doing the job. Now, here I am ... I’m a slut.”

“No, no, you’re not. What you and Luke share was friendship. I don’t know if I should tell you, but he came back here after you left. He explained your relationship. I understand it. He also said if you and I got together, that your friendship would be *minus* sex.”

“I never cheated on anyone with Luke. We were only together when I *wasn’t* with anyone and neither was he.”

“Sam, we’ll figure out a way to get Jack to believe you two are sleeping together, but it won’t be forever. Yes, you may have to touch and kiss him, but you won’t have to sleep with him.”

She laid her head on his shoulder. “How come you’re so understanding?”

“I fell in love with you. No, I didn’t plan it, but I did. As I was cuffed to the chair, I kept playing the last few weeks in my head. Honey, I never have been happier with anyone than I am when I’m with you. I will do whatever I can to keep you. I want to make you as happy as you make me.”

She leaned up and kissed him softly. “No more lies?”

“No more lies,” he smiled.

“No more *hiding* details?”

“Nothing like that. Does the same go for you?”

“Yes, I will share with you. I promise.”

“Sam, are we all right now?” he whispered.

“Yeah, we are. I’m sorry I didn’t just confront you.”

“Well, it seems to have worked out for us. Care to sleep with a dead man?” he raised his eyebrows up and down.

“Are you sure?” she wept.

He wiped the tears from her dark eyes. “Babe, I’ve missed you,” he whispered, as he laid down next to her. He ran his hands down her body and held her close to him. “Let me show you how much,” he whispered.

She held him tightly. “I do love you, PK,” she said, as she closed her eyes.

“And I love you,” he said, as he kissed her passionately.

Tricks of the Trade

Darker woke up and noticed that Sam wasn't in the bed. "Sam?" he got out of bed and found her staring out the living room window. "Sam?"

She turned around and hugged him tightly. "I'm so sorry."

"Why are you sorry, babe?"

"That I ever doubted you," she buried her face in his chest. "I don't want to lose you."

"Anything you have to do for the job, I won't hold against you. I love you. I know we don't have a normal relationship. Hell, we found ourselves together under very unusual circumstances. I just want to love you. That's all. I know ... when this is all over, we will continue to be together."

"Yes, we will. I *hope*."

"I promise you, babe," he kissed her softly. "So, what do we do now?"

"Well, I have a hat and sunglasses you can wear. My *Mustang* is parked in the garage that adjoins this building. You can use the catwalk and I'll use the street. It's level B-6. I have some clothes you can wear and we'll go to the penthouse. I just don't know how you'll enter the building."

"How'd you get out?"

"I used the fire escape. I jumped from the balcony to the fire escape. I don't think you can jump up to the balcony."

"I could use the service entrance. If you drop me off down the block, I'll take the back alley."

"Oh, then I meet you up in the penthouse?"

"Yeah, is that all right?"

"Yeah, that's fine. I have my, um, appointment at ten."

"How far is it from the penthouse?"

"About twenty minutes," she said. "Let's get dressed. We should get going."

"All right," he said, as he followed her into the bedroom.

Sam sat down on the sofa in the penthouse and opened her dufflebag. She pulled out the telescope and one of the rifles. She grabbed the duct tape out of the bag as Parker came out of the kitchen.

“What are you doing?”

“It’s a trick,” she said. “Watch and learn,” she laughed, as she pulled out the etching of the rose and placed the steel plates into the barrel of the rifle. “I’ll be right back,” she said, as she left the room with the metal rod. She came back a few minutes later, with a red hot metal rod. She slowly inserted the rod into the barrel. “There,” she said, as she pulled it out.

“What’s that thing?” he asked.

“It embeds roses on the bullets once they’re fired. I saw it at the store and thought it was cool.”

“Hmm, it is pretty cool. A new calling card?”

“Yeah, well, *you* knew my old one and that was before I knew if I could trust you. Can you hand me the red paint in that bag?”

He rummaged through the bag. “How did you get all this stuff in this bag?”

“I pack very well. I did spend some of the money, but just a little over a thousand.”

He pulled out the red paint. “No nail polish?”

“No, I figured I needed red paint anyway,” she smiled.

“Oh, blood, right?”

“Yup, I figured it was better than *really* killing you,” she smiled.

“Yeah, it *was* better,” he kissed her cheek. “So, now what are you doing?”

“I needed a make shift scope. I just tape this to the rifle,” she said, as she opened the box of ammunition. “If I empty out a third of the gun power in the bullets, they will travel faster.”

“Wow, I didn’t know that. You are so smart.”

“Well, in the marines we had to improvise sometimes. Today’s mark is going to be a long range shot and it has to penetrate glass,” she said, as she filed the tip of the bullet. “Can you hand me that screw driver?”

He handed her the screwdriver and watched in awe as she prepared her bullets. She, then, painted each bullet with the red paint and let it dry, she then reassembled it into its casing. She looked at her watch. “OK, it’s eight now. Two hours. I can do this.”

“Yeah, you can. Oh, one question, what about the token?”

“I got his business card and because he thought I was *cute*, he wrote his home phone on the back of it. Extra points for that one,” she said.

“Anyone could get his business card,” he said.

“No, not really. He only keeps him. His secretary doesn’t even have them to give out. You have to make an appointment or meet with him directly.”

“You *have* done your homework, haven’t you?”

“Well, *you* were supposed to scope him out. What did you find out?”

“That he likes the ladies,” he said.

“That’s what I figured out, too. I walked into his office and made an appointment.”

“Why?”

“I didn’t use my own name. I figured that way, no one would be in his office if he had an appointment.”

“You are so smart,” he laughed.

“Just experienced. Whatever I do, please, forgive me.”

“There is nothing to forgive. How many times do I have to tell you? I just hope you forgive me.”

“I do. Oh, crap, I forgot to stop at the pharmacy.”

“I know. That’s why I did. I stopped at the one around the corner from here. Don’t worry. After your job, come back here. He thinks that you have a procedure after kills, remember?”

“Yeah, *he* wants to be the procedure. What if he decides to come early?”

“I’ll be in the bedroom. There’s a hidden panel in the closet. All the drapes here are all ready closed. Don’t worry. He won’t know I’m here. You just come back here and if he shows up early, we’ll deal with it. I won’t let you use yourself.”

“I know. I hate having to touch him.”

“I know, but, babe, just pretend it’s me. You do like touching me, don’t you?”

“Definitely,” she kissed him softly. “I love touching you.”

“And I, you,” he said, as he lightly touched her chest. “I wish...”

“Later, PK,” she grinned. “I need to get ready.”

“You’re not wearing that?”

“No, I’ll be on the roof of a building. Work boots and pants. It’s more comfortable.”

“Oh, I all right. I’ll just sit here and behave. I’ll also fix the drink for tonight.”

“Oh, what do I do? *I* don’t want to be knocked out.”

“Don’t worry. The glasses will be poured in the kitchen. His will be the port and yours will be the white wine. The Port bottle will be on

the counter. I'll also put a charm on your wineglass. That way you know not to drink it."

"Sounds like a plan," she said, as she headed down the hall.

Third

Sam stood on the roof and leaned on the edge. She peered through the scope and watched and waited. Her watch beeped to indicate it was ten o'clock. She waited and waited until his secretary left his office. She watched as he sat down at his desk and sipped his coffee. He then stood up, looked at his watch, and walked over to the window.

With him in her line of sight, she slowly squeezed the trigger. She stared at the speeding bullet as it flew towards her target. The glass slowly shattered as the man flew backwards and landed on the ground. She stared through the scope and watched as the blood slowly seeped out of his forehead. She took a deep breath and wiped the tear from her eye. She disassembled the rifle and wiped it down. She placed it in a plastic bag, and then put it in her dufflebag. She put on her baseball cap and headed towards the stairs.

She sat in her car and stared out the window. She placed her hand on her heart. "God, please, forgive me," she cried, as she started the car. She drove down the street as police cars, with sirens blaring, sped down the road in the opposite direction.

She slowly walked into the penthouse and dropped her bag on the sofa. "Sam?" she knew that was *not* Parker's voice.

"Jack? Where are you?" she asked.

He came out of the kitchen and walked over to her. "Is it done?"

"Yes, but what are you doing here?"

"Helping myself to a drink. Want one?"

"What are you drinking?"

"You had a bottle of Port on your counter, so I helped myself."

"Oh, I don't like Port. That was Parker's. I'll have a glass of white, if you don't mind."

"No, whatever you need," he grabbed her arm and pulled her into a long, hard kiss. "Is it time for procedure?"

"Business first. I thought you were coming at six?" she said, as they went into the kitchen.

He sipped his wine. “Mmm, this is good. I came because I thought by six, you may not be in the mood anymore. I didn’t want to miss my next opportunity to get a *taste* of you,” he grinned.

“Are you *always* so rude?”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to sound rude. I don’t want to be rude or crude to you,” he said, as he moved closer to her.

She got a bottle of wine out of the cabinet and poured herself a drink. She swirled it around and smelled it. She slowly took a sip. “Like I said, *business* first. Want some white?” she asked.

“No, this is good,” he said.

“Wait, um, don’t drink that...” she said.

“Why?”

“Um ... that’s not a good year,” she said.

“It’s fine,” he said as he guzzled the wine down and poured himself another glass. “I have the money in the brief case in the other room.”

“Good,” she reached in her pocket. “Here’s his business card, even has his home number on it.”

“Did you sleep with him?”

“Nope, didn’t have to, *thank* god. I hate lawyers,” she laughed slightly.

“That’s why I had you eliminate him,” he said. “Now that business is taken care of, I want you to show me this procedure,” he moved closer to her as she drank down her wine. He drank down his wine and pulled her close to him. He ran his hands down her body as he kissed her hard and passionately.

She took his hand and led him into the bedroom. “This is how I do it and since it’s *my* procedure, we do it *my* way!” she said, as she pushed him on the bed.

“Whatever you want, *Allure*,” he grinned.

“I want your mouth to water,” she flirted.

“Oh, I like this,” he said.

She slowly unbuttoned her blouse and let it slide off her shoulders and drop to the ground. She unhooked her bra and dangled it around her finger and tossed it on the floor. She moved closer to him as she removed her pants. She took his hands and allowed him to touch her body. “Can you feel it?” she whispered harshly.

“Oh, let me...”

She loosened his tie and threw it on the floor. She unbuttoned his shirt and took it off him. She ran her hands down his chest and unbuckled his belt. She pushed him to lie down on the bed and slowly

removed his pants. She slowly removed her panties and allowed him to touch her as she straddled his naked body. “How bad do you want it?” she whispered.

“I want you now. I can’t take it anymore,” he said, as he slowly dozed off.

“Jack? Jack?” she called, but he was out. “PK?”

He came out of the closet. “I’m here. Are you all right?”

“Yeah, it was close. *Too close*, but he finally passed out. How long do you think he’ll be out?” she said, as she put on a robe.

“A few hours maybe,” he said, as he pulled Jack’s body up to the head of the bed.

“I better stay in here with him, in case he wakes up,” she said.

“Sam, let’s do it,” he said.

“What? *Next* to him?”

“Yeah, we need to make it real, don’t we?” he grinned.

“After what *I* did?” she cried. “No, I can’t. I’m sorry. I *can’t* do it.”

“Please, you are so beautiful. I am so turned on right now. You are so sexy. I love you,” he begged.

She slightly pushed him away from her. “No, I *can’t* do it. I’m sorry.”

“Oh, well, all right,” he said. “You better get in with him.”

She slowly climbed into the bed. Parker covered her and Jack’s body up. “Where will you be?”

“I’ll be around, unseen. Don’t worry. I love you, Sam,” he said, as he kissed her mouth.

She rolled over and curled up next to Jack and waited, as Parker left the room. She closed her eyes and cried to herself, *and, to think if he wasn’t here, I would’ve made love to you. Why did you drink the damn wine?*

Hidden

As Jack began to stir, Sam straddled his body and gazed down at him. “So, how was it?”

He looked confusingly up at her. “Um, what *happened*?”

“You don’t know?” she said, as she slowly laid down next to him.

“I’m sorry. My head feels like it weighs a ton,” he rolled over and looked at her.

“You probably drank too much. It was ... to say the least, *incredible*,” she said.

“You are so beautiful. You were amazing, you know that.”

“Oh, so *now* you remember?” she grinned.

“Oh, yeah, I remember,” he said, as he ran his hands down her body. “I take it you enjoyed yourself, too.”

“Definitely,” she leaned over and kissed him. “Um, we’ve been making love for *hours* and I’m kind of tired.”

“I understand,” he said, as he slowly sat up. “I should get dressed and go.”

“Oh, you *can’t* stay?” she asked.

“No, sorry. Someday, I may be able to stay.”

“Um, Jack, where *does* this leave us?”

“What do you mean?” he asked, as he put on his pants.

“You and me. Was this it? Do I still work for you? Do I still sleep with you or was this the end?” she asked, as she got out of bed and put on her robe.

“This, *Allure*, was only the beginning.”

“Why do you keep calling me *that*?”

“What?”

“*Allure*,” she sighed.

“You *know* why, even if you *won’t* admit it,” he smiled. “Allure, you are better than *ever*. I thought what you did for me at the office was great, but I feel so ... well, wonderful. Better than I have in a long, long time.”

Sam walked over to him and helped him button his shirt. “How

long has it been for you?"

"Not long, but the sex was never this good. My head is so foggy, you made one hell of an impression on me," he kissed her softly.

"I'm glad. So, when do I see you again?"

"Stop by the bar tomorrow. I want to keep seeing you, *both* for business and for pleasure," he said.

"Until then," she said, as he walked out of the room.

She watched as he left the penthouse. She opened the briefcase and pulled out all the money. She hurried to the safe in the bedroom and put it inside.

Parker walked into the room. "So, he fell for it?"

"Yeah, he said it was the best sex he ever had," she laughed slightly.

"I told you it would work," he smiled.

"Now, I need a shower and I want those sheets changed or burned or whatever," she said.

"Consider it done. Go take your shower."

She closed the safe and looked at him. "I'm sorry."

"I told you, don't apologize," he grinned.

"I just don't know if I can keep drugging him. He thinks because his head was foggy that I did that to him because of *great* sex."

"Well, you do that to *me*," he said.

"I'm taking a shower. Maybe you can figure out how I can not sleep with him the next time," she laughed, as she headed out of the room.

"Oh, I'll make sure you never have to sleep with him again," he whispered, as he started removing the blankets and sheets from the bed. He bundled them up and put them in a garbage bag.

Edge

Sam took a deep breath and headed into the *Razor's Edge*. She walked over to the bar and sat down. Steve walked over to her. "Um, Mr. Morrison wants to see you in his office," he said.

"Oh, all right," she said, as she headed to Jack's office. She knocked and then walked in. He wasn't sitting at his desk. Just as she was about to turn around, he came up behind her and placed a cloth over her nose and mouth. She struggled into unconsciousness.

Parker, driving Drew's car, followed Sam to the bar. As he was pulling down the street, he noticed Jack carrying Sam's body to the large building behind the bar. He pulled down his baseball cap and put on his sunglasses and pulled over to the side of the road. He picked up his cellphone. "Lucas Ford, please," he said.

"This is Captain Ford," he answered

"This is Parker. I think Sam's in trouble."

"Tell me."

"I just saw Morrison carry her body out of the bar and into the building behind it."

"Where are you?"

"I'm watching the building, but I want to move in closer, but they think I'm dead."

"All right, I'll be there soon. Don't move in unless you absolutely need to."

"All right," he said, as he hung up.

Sam woke up and found herself bound on a bed, in an unfamiliar room. Jack sat down on the bed next to her. "I'm sorry about this."

"Why did you do this to me?"

"Fair Samantha, I want us to be together," he lightly touched her hair.

"That's why I came here. You didn't have to do this to me."

"We played your game last night, so, today, we're going to play

my game.”

“Jack, I didn’t sign up for this. I thought we were going to be something special.”

“Lovely *Allure*, I don’t want to hurt you, I just want you.”

“You can have me. I’m not fighting you on this. Please, untie me.”

“I don’t know. You know, *Allure*, I was thinking about last night and I can’t remember some parts of making love to you. I wonder why that is?”

“I don’t know. You did have a few glasses of Port.”

“Well, the next time, I *want* to remember. Don’t you?”

“Of course, I want you to remember. Jack, I want to be with you. You didn’t have to play this game.”

He untied her from the bed and she rubbed her wrists. He grabbed her and pulled her close to him. “I want you now.”

“Where are we?”

“Oh, this is my private apartment,” he slowly unbuttoned her blouse and led it slide off her shoulders. He grabbed her arms and forced them behind her back.

“What are you doing?” she cried.

“Oh, baby, *this* we will both remember,” he said, as he tied her hands behind her back. “Now, just stand there,” he said, as he placed a blindfold around her eyes.

“Jack?” she could feel his hot breath on her body. She could feel his hands down her body as her clothes were removed. She felt herself standing in the middle of the room and then his touching stopped. “Jack?”

“I just want to look at you. I want to memorize every inch of you,” he said, as he started to touch her again. He took her hand and placed it in his pants. “Can you feel me?” he whispered harshly.

“Yes,” she gulped.

He licked her breasts and ran his tongue down her body. All of a sudden, she felt herself fly onto the bed. “Come on, baby, fight me.”

“Jack? I don’t want to fight you. I said I’d give myself to you willingly.”

“It may have been fun for you, but it’s not fun for me. Come on, fight me. I like my women to give in fighting.”

She could sense that he was coming closer to her so she lifted her leg and kicked. Jack flew across the room. He stood up quickly and punched her in the face. She listened for his movements and then spun around and kicked him again. “Done?”

“Not even close,” he grabbed her arms and threw her on the bed.

She could feel his heavy body lay on top of hers. “This is not what I want,” she cried, as she tried to get out from underneath his body.

“It’s what *I* want. *Allure*, I own you now,” he said, as he unzipped his pants.

“NO!” she cried. “You didn’t have to...”

“It’s all right, *Allure*. Don’t you *remember?*” he said.

Jack leaned over and kissed her mouth softly. “Soon, Samantha, it will be soon,” he whispered.

“Jack ... I need to tell you ... just not now...” she cried.

“*When?*” he whispered.

“Soon. I promise,” she said.

“I’ll let you do what you need to but I won’t wait forever. You know that I’m *not* a very patient man,” he said, as he walked out of the room and closed the door.

Sam rubbed her face against the bed until her blindfold was removed. She looked around the room and walked over to the desk. She turned her back and opened the drawer with her bound hands. She searched the drawer until she found a letter opener. She grabbed the opener with her bound hands and tried to angle it against the ropes that tied her hands. Finally, her hands were free. She hurried to get dressed.

She walked over to the door and noticed it was locked from the outside. She went into the bathroom and searched for a window. The frosted glass glistened with dew from an earlier shower. She tried to open it and when she realized it was glued shut, she kept hitting it with the handle of the toilet plunger to break the glass.

Parker got out of his car when Luke pulled in. “Where is she?”

“I don’t know. Somewhere in that building. Jack came out and he was alone. I think she’s still in there.”

“Damn, we have to get in there,” he said, as they noticed Sam climbing out the window. “I’ll get her. You stay here.”

Parker got in the car and started it. He watched as Luke ran over to Sam. When Sam stood up, she collapsed in his arms.

Luke looked at her, “Sam, what did he do to you?” he cried, as he carried her body over to the car. He set her in Parker’s back seat. “Take her to the safe house now. I’ll meet you there.”

Parker sped off and Luke followed. Parker picked up his

cellphone. “Drew, it’s me. Sam’s car is outside the *Razor’s Edge*.”

“I know. I’m right outside now.”

“I need it brought back to the penthouse.”

“Is that where you’re going?”

“No, I’ll be in contact soon. Keep an eye on them. I don’t know what he did to her, but it’s not good.”

“Keep me informed,” Drew hung up.

Parker laid Sam’s body on the bed and held her hand. “Sam?”

She slowly opened her eyes and then moved away from him.

“Don’t touch me.”

“Sam, it’s PK. I won’t hurt you,” he said.

“*Don’t* touch me. Please,” she cried.

“I won’t. I promise. Babe, what did he do to you?”

She buried her face in her hands and cried. “He ...um... raped me. I told him I was willing, but he likes it rough. He tied me up and made me fight him, so he could force himself on me. He didn’t care that I was willing. He said he liked women to fight him back. PK, it hurts really bad,” she said.

“You’re bleeding. You need to get to a hospital,” he said.

“I can’t ... I can’t ... I did this. It’s my fault,” she cried.

Luke came into the room. “Sweetie, it’s not your fault.”

“Yes, it is. I should’ve never ... I should’ve never made him believe that I wanted him. I didn’t know he’d do this to me.”

“Did he say anything else to you?” Luke asked.

“He said he had to break me in. He said he was coming back for me to do it again. I had to get out of there. Oh, god, my stomach hurts,” she looked down at her blood soaked shirt. “I must’ve cut it on the glass.”

“I called an ambulance. You’re going to the hospital,” Luke said, as sirens were heard in the distance.

“I’m coming with you,” Parker said.

“No, you’re supposed to be dead,” she cried. “Again, my fault.”

“I don’t care about Morrison. We’ll deal with him and his entourage later. You come first,” he said, as the EMTs came into the room.

They slowly placed Sam on the stretcher and covered her up. They rolled her out of the apartment. Luke looked at Parker. “Don’t go after him yet.”

“I won’t. She comes first. That son of a bitch raped her just because he wanted to. What kind of monster does that?”

“I don’t know, but he will pay. Right now, let’s go see Sam. I’ll

drive,” Luke said, as the two men headed out.

Trauma

Luke and Parker paced back and forth outside of Sam's exam room. They stopped in their tracks when the doctor came out of the room. "Doc, how is she?"

The woman sighed heavily, "I'm Dr. Elise Lewis. Well, she has a bruise on her face. She has severe lacerations on her stomach. They had some glass particles in them. We stitched her up."

"She was raped, right?" Parker asked.

"I don't know. She *refused* the rape kit, but we gave her some antibiotics to prevent any infection."

"When can she go home?" Parker asked.

"I want to observe her for an hour and then she should be ready to go home."

"Can we see her?" Luke asked.

"Not yet. The crime victim's advocate is in with her now. Sir, you're police, right?"

"Yes, I'll be taking care of her case."

"I'll finish up my report," she said.

"Good. Just let us know when we can see her," Luke said.

"Oh, she is very traumatized by what happened to her. She was very skittish about being touched. I wouldn't recommend touching her at all, unless she says otherwise."

"Will she get better?" Parker asked.

"Are you close to her?"

Parker nodded. "I'm her lover. How do I act? I don't want to hurt her any worse than she already is. How do I handle this?"

"I've seen this before. It will go away, but it will take time. Each victim is different. Just listen to what she says. I mean really listen. It's so important that you listen and observe her. She may not want to be alone, but she may not want to be touched either. Some don't even allow other's to touch her hand. I also gave her a script for pain and antibiotics. Warm baths may help."

"Thank you, Doctor," Parker said.

"Here, you both may want to read this," she handed them a

brochure. "It's for family members of rape victims. Once the advocate comes out of the room, you two can go in," she said. "I'll be back in a little while to check on her."

"Thanks again, Doc," Luke said, as he and Parker sat down in the chairs that lined the hallway. Luke looked over Parker's shoulder as the two read the brochure.

Parker looked up when the woman carrying a clipboard walked out of Sam's room. "I guess we can go in now," he said.

"We'll get her through this," Luke said.

"I know. I will do anything for me. How could he do that to her?"

"I don't know. I heard what she told you. I heard what happened."

"I should've barged right in there and saved her."

"If I had known what he was doing to her, I would've let you. Come on, let's go see Sam."

The two men slowly walked into the exam room. Sam was lying on the bed, wrapped up with her blanket and she was crying.

"Sam?" Parker said, as he and Luke sat down.

"I'm ... I just want to go home," she cried.

"The doctor said soon," Parker said.

"I'm so sorry. You don't need a broken woman," she cried.

"Babe, it's not your fault. I will take care of you. I promise."

She sat up. "I can't make love anymore. I can't be touched. I want him *dead!*"

"I am going to be here for you and I want him dead, too. First, before we do anything, you need to get better. You need time," Parker said. "I love you, Sam, and I'm not going to let him ever hurt you again."

"But..."

"No buts, I love you. I will take care of you. I promise."

"But now I'm going to die, too."

"Why?" Luke asked.

"Once he finds out that Parker is alive, he'll kill me for lying to him."

"We will take care of him and all his men. Right now, you need to get better. We'll go back to the safe house," Parker said.

"I don't know. It's still in the city," she cried.

"I have a better idea," Luke said. "Your parents' cabin. It's a three-hour drive from here. You'll be safe there. No one knows about

that place.”

“Oh, all right. We would need a lot of things,” Sam said.

“Parker, you stay here with her. I’ll go back to the safe house and pack up. I’ll get everything you two will need. Don’t worry.”

“Luke, don’t you have to work?” she cried.

“Sweetie, I’m a captain. I can take a day or so off. I’ll be back and then we can go. You will be safe. No matter what.”

“Thanks, Luke,” she cried, as he left the room.

“I’m sorry. I should’ve saved you,” Parker said.

“Don’t. You didn’t know.”

“I saw him carry your body in the building. I didn’t know he was going to do that to you. I called Luke, but he said to wait until he got there. I should’ve just barged in there.”

“He would’ve killed both of us. I’m glad you didn’t. I didn’t want you to see me that way,” she cried.

“What way?”

“Please, don’t. I’m sorry I was weak.”

“You’re not weak. He hurt you. It wasn’t your fault.”

“Yes, it was. I should’ve never done this stupid plan. We should’ve just continued to be lovers, not have you be dead. I’m so sorry. I screwed everything up,” she cried.

“No, you didn’t. You did not screw up. *He* did. He killed too many people and he hurt you. He will *not* get away with it. I swear, I’ll kill him if I have to.”

“PK, don’t get killed over me,” she cried.

“I won’t die on you. I promise. I will always be here for you. Like I said, babe, I love you. You’re my life.”

“I’m sorry that I’m such a mess,” she cried.

“I wish I could hold you and make it better.”

“I’m sorry. I just feel so dirty right now but you can hold my hand,” she said, as she reached out her hand.

He took it and held it gently. “You rest until Luke gets back,” he said, as she closed her eyes. “No one will ever hurt you again,” he cried to himself.

Peace

Parker pulled into the driveway of the cabin, as Luke pulled in behind him. Sam slowly got out of the car and headed inside. Parker looked at Luke. "This place is nice," he said.

"I know. It's the safest place I know of. If you want to unpack the cars, I'll gather some firewood. There's also a lake down that trail. It's been quite a long time since we've been here, but I know there is a caretaker that keeps it up."

The two men headed into the cabin, where Sam was removing all the sheets from the furniture. "Luke, will you be staying, too?"

"Just overnight. There's three rooms, right?"

"Yeah, I'm going to open all the windows and air this place out," she said.

"I'll get the firewood and Parker is unloading the car," he said, as he headed out.

Sam looked at Parker. "Thank you," she said quietly.

"For what, babe?"

"Being here. I know this is not what you planned. I'm sorry this isn't so fancy."

"This place is beautiful," he walked over to the mantel. "Is this Dylan?"

"Yeah, all-star football player. Oh, Damn, Dylan. He is all right, isn't he?"

"Yeah, babe, one of my men is keeping him safe. He went in as an orderly at the institute. He's fine. You can even call him if you want to check on him."

"Thanks. I doubt we get reception up here."

Luke walked in the room. "I bought an extended wave antenna so the cellphones will work," he said, as he dropped the firewood into the box near the fireplace.

"Oh, good," she said, as she loaded some wood into the fireplace and opened the flute.

Parker and Luke left the cabin and Sam opened all the windows. She walked into the kitchen and started to wipe down the counters. She

stared out the window and sighed. “Mom, I wish you were here. I need you,” she closed her eyes as tears streamed down her face.

“Sammy?” Anna called.

Ten-year-old Samantha hurried into the kitchen. “What is it, Momma?”

“I’m going to make some cookies. Do you want to help?” she smiled, as she wiped her hands on her apron.

“I can’t do it.”

“You can help. Don’t worry.”

“Momma, I’ll never learn,” she said, as she sat at the table.

“It’s all right. Someday, you’ll marry a man, who can cook for you,” she smiled.

“Is that why daddy married you?” her dark eyes lit up.

“Partly,” Anna laughed. “Now, we need chocolate chips, eggs, butter and flour.”

“I can get them,” she hopped off the chair.

“Where are your brothers and Luke?” she asked.

“Playing by the lake with Daddy.”

“Why aren’t you with them?”

“Because they said I was a girl,” she frowned as she opened the cabinet.

“Yes, you’re a girl, but you can do whatever boys do.”

“Do you do what boys do?”

“Well, let’s see,” she smiled, as she placed the large mixing bowl on the counter. “I do things that people do. I cook and clean and take care of you kids, but I also work, when we’re not on vacation.”

“You do everything, Momma.”

“Yeah, I guess I do,” she kissed her daughter’s cheek. “And when you grow up, you decide what you do and don’t want to do. Don’t let anyone make you do what you don’t want to.”

“I won’t. I want to be strong like you.”

“You will be. Stronger. One day, you’ll be able to kick your brothers’ butt,” she laughed.

“You said butt, Momma. That was funny,” Sam laughed.

“Let’s just make the cookies,” Anna said.

Sam wiped her tears. “Mom, I failed you. He made me do what I didn’t want to do in the first place ... at least not *that* way. Maybe at one time I did, but, Mom, you know the story,” she cried, as she dropped to the floor.

Parker stood in the doorway and watched as she cried. He

wanted to take her in his arms and make her better, but he didn't want to crowd her. "Um, Sam?"

She looked up quickly. "Oh, I'm sorry. Did you need something?"

"Where do you want these?"

"Just set them on the counter. I'll start putting the food away," she said, as she slowly stood up.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"Just thinking about my mom, that's all. It's nothing. We used to come here every summer for a month or so, well, until I was about nineteen or so," she smiled slightly.

"I am here if you need me. You know to talk or anything."

"I know and I'm sorry I've been withdrawn. I still need a little time to myself. I'm not trying to push you away," she said, as she walked over to him. "I really just need a little time."

"I understand. I'll give you as much as you need. I love you," he said.

"I love you, too," she lightly kissed his cheek. "Well, we better get to work. Do you want to start in the kitchen? After all, you're the cook. I'll go get the bedrooms ready," she said.

"Oh, about the bedrooms..."

"We can share our room if that's what you're asking."

"Um, yeah, I didn't want to crowd you. If you change your mind, I can sleep in one of the other rooms."

"Well, Luke will have the boys' room. We'll take the master. The third room was mine, well, when I was little," she smiled, as she went into the other room.

Luke was stoking the fire in the fireplace. "Hey, how's the kitchen turning out?"

"I have PK doing it now. I'm going to make the beds," she said.

"Why don't you just relax? I already made the beds. I didn't know if you and Parker are sharing a bed or not but I put both of your stuff in the master."

"That's fine. He'll be sleeping with me, yes," she smiled. "Thanks, Luke, for everything."

"You are so welcome, honey," he smiled, as he sat down on the sofa. "So, what do we do now?"

"I smell something good..." she grinned.

"He must be cooking. You know, you found the *perfect* man," Luke said.

“What do you mean?”

“A man who will love you and *cook* for you?” he laughed.

“Yup, love his food. He did *try* my cooking...”

“I heard. How many times did Anna tell you *not* to make eggs?” he laughed.

“I guess I thought if I kept trying, I’d finally get it,” she laughed.

“You know what I found in your old room?” he smiled, as he opened the drawer under the coffee table.

“My album?”

“Our album, remember that summer, I think we used fifty rolls of film that summer,” he opened the book. “Best friends forever,” he laughed.

“Yup and we still are,” she said, as Parker came into the room with three plates.

“I just made hot sandwiches. Hope you don’t mind. The steaks are still frozen,” he said, as he set the plates in front of them.

“Wow, hot sandwiches. Could’ve just had cold,” Sam said.

“Cold is what you can make. I’ll do the hot stuff,” he laughed.

“Very funny,” she laughed.

“So, what’re you two looking at?”

“Oh, it’s an album of us ... I found it in Sam’s old room. We took pictures of everything that year,” Luke showed Parker the page of photos.

“How old were you?”

“Sixteen,” Sam said. “We were the coolest,” she laughed.

“Hmm, nice bikini,” he laughed.

“Hey, it was cool ... back then.”

“Yup, red and yellow polka dots,” Luke laughed.

“Well, look at your plaid shorts,” Sam laughed.

“Yeah, such a fashion statement,” he said, as he took a bite of his food.

Parker smiled at Sam and knew that she was slowly healing. This trip would do wonders for her and hopefully, the two of them.

Sam noticed him looking at her. “What?”

“Nothing. The smile looks good on you,” he beamed.

“Thanks. I do feel a little better. After we eat, I’ll take you for a walk and show you the lake. It’s beautiful out here.”

“It sure is. I’ve never really been out of the city.”

“Oh, you grew up in the city?” Luke asked.

“I grew up in Long Island. My main apartment is in Manhattan now.”

“Manhattan?” Luke asked.

“Yeah, the penthouse that we have was not my real home. I haven’t really been back home in a long time.”

“Sounds better than my dumpy apartment,” Sam laughed.

“Yeah, that’s what I don’t get. Your parents were rich and you lived in that building. I mean, it wasn’t *horrible*,” he laughed.

“My parents were rich, not me. They didn’t act rich, though. They had a nice brownstone on the Upper East Side,” she said.

“Well, since they’re gone now, aren’t you and Dylan rich?” Parker asked.

“And Luke. My parents practically raised Luke. Oh, we all are, I guess. I never talked to the attorney or anything.”

Luke smiled. “I took care of that already for you. Your mother named *me* executor. Remember?”

“Oh, right. I can’t even balance my checkbook,” she laughed. “I’m not good with money. I can *spend* it, I just don’t budget too well.”

“You’re kidding, right?” Parker asked.

“Nope, she’s not. I go to her place every month and help her pay her bills,” Luke laughed. “So, Parker, you have money?”

“Not really. I mean, we do have the money we got from Morrison, but as far as I know most of that’s in the safe at the penthouse.”

“Part of it is,” Sam said. “The other money is in my bag. So, if you’re not rich, how’d you get an apartment in Manhattan?”

“My gram and I lived there. She always had it. It’s bought and paid for, I just have to pay the co-op fees and my other bills. That’s all. Yeah, I lived with my Gram until she passed last year.”

“You two must’ve been close,” Sam said.

“Probably like you and your mother were,” he said. “Um, how about that walk now?”

“Sure,” Sam stood up.

“I’ll clean up here. I’m kind of tired. I’m going to lie down for a while,” Luke said, as he picked up the plates.

Sam took Parker’s hand and the two of them headed out the door.

Shame

Sam led Parker down to the dock on the lake. She sat down and he sat next to her. She took off her shoes and let her feet soak in the cool water. “Come on, try it,” she smiled.

He took off his shoes and socks and let his feet soak. “It’s cold.”

“You’ll get used to it,” she said, as she laid her head on his shoulder.

“It’s so peaceful out here. How long has it been since you were here?”

“Years, a lot of years. I think we should come here more often,” she sighed.

“We?”

“We’re still a couple, aren’t we?” she asked sadly.

“Oh, yes. Definitely. I meant what I said. I love you, Sam.”

She looked up and gazed into his eyes. “I’m sorry that I pushed you away. I love you. I’m just ashamed of myself.”

“You have nothing to be ashamed of. I didn’t know he treated his women like that. I’m so sorry.”

“I guess he only does it in private. There were no guards or anything. It’s something ... the only thing he’s done on his own ... by himself, with no one else around.”

“Once you’re better, we’ll figure out how to bring him and all his men down. I promise, they’ll never hurt anyone ever again.”

“I don’t know if I can face him again. I can’t get out of my head what he did to me. PK, I was blindfolded and I’m glad I didn’t have to see, but I could feel it.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“Do you want to hear about it?”

“Only if you want to tell me,” he said.

She leaned up and kissed his mouth softly. “I do. I just hope you don’t see me differently.”

“Nothing could change the way I look at you. I promise.”

“When I woke up, I was tied to the bed. I told him he didn’t need to force me, that I was willing. He untied me and made me stand in

the middle of the room. He undressed me and then just stared at me. I didn't know what to think at first. I'm not usually self-conscious about my body, but it was kind of creepy. He kissed me and then forced my hands behind my back, where he tied them again. Then he blindfolded me. He said since I had my way with him, he was going to have me his way. He said that he *owned* me. He threw me on the bed and starting ... licking me all over. All I could smell was his hot breath. He then told me to fight. So, I lifted my leg and kicked at him. When I stood up, he punched me. I spun around and kicked him again. He hit me and threw me on the bed and then he got on top of me. At first, he was just touching me. Then ... I don't want get into that anymore. I wish I didn't remember... ”

“What did he do after that?”

“He said I still needed to be broken in. He said he'd be back. I guess he got dressed and left. After he left, I managed to get the blindfold off and cut my ropes. I escaped out the bathroom window. Then you and Luke found me.”

“I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I wish I could've saved you,” he cried.

“It's not your fault. It's not even my fault, I think. I don't know. I don't understand why he had to do that. I told him I was willing. PK, just because I said that, doesn't mean that I really wanted to have sex with him. I just thought if I said it, if I had to have sex with him, it would be uneventful. I could just lie back and pray for it to be over. But...” she buried her face in her hands.

“I know, babe, I know. It's all right to cry. Just let it out,” he said, as he gently rubbed her back.

“I'm kind of tired,” she said, as she pulled her feet out of the water and put on her shoes.

He put on his socks and shoes and helped her stand. “Why don't you take a nap. It's been a long day.”

“Do you mind sitting with me?”

“No, if you don't mind, I think I'll lie down, too.”

“No, I'd like that,” she said, as she took his hand and led him back to the cabin.

Closeness

Luke looked up as Parker and Sam came into the kitchen. He poured them both a cup of coffee. “We must’ve all been tired. It’s morning all ready,” he laughed. “Sam, I’m going to head back to the city. I’ll keep my eyes and ears open and will call you if anything goes down.”

“Thanks,” she said.

“Oh, Luke, you can contact Drew directly. Here’s his number. I called him last night and told you him you’d be contacting him. He did take Sam’s car back to the penthouse parking garage.”

“OK, great,” he kissed Sam’s cheek. “You’re in good hands, Love.”

“I know, and thanks for everything. Oh, when you get back, will you check on Dylan?”

“Definitely. I’ll see you two soon. Let me know when you two decide to come back,” he said, as he picked up his bag.

“I will,” she said, as he left the cabin.

“Are you hungry?” Parker asked.

“Not really. Coffee is good,” she said, as she sipped her coffee.

Parker shoveled the sugar into his coffee and stirred his spoon around the cup.

She shook her head and laughed slightly. “Quite a sweet tooth, huh?”

“I guess. I don’t really like coffee that much,” he said.

“Then, why *do* you drink it?”

“I like the caffeine in the morning. Gets me going,” he laughed.

She touched his hand lightly. “There are other sources for caffeine,” she said.

“I know, but I don’t drink soda. I don’t like tea, coffee is bearable, with enough sugar.”

“You should try flavored coffee,” she said, as she stood up. “You won’t need much sugar. Do you like vanilla?”

“Yeah, why?”

She took his cup of coffee and dumped it down the sink. She

rinsed out the glass and poured another cup. Then she scooped a teaspoon of vanilla flavoring to his coffee. "Here, try this," she said.

He stared at her and then the cup. "OK," he said, as he sipped it. "Wow, this is good."

"I may not know how to cook, but I can make a great cup of coffee," she said, as she added it to hers.

"Very impressive. I could get used to this," he said.

"So, we never talk about it. I mean, it always comes up, but we never really discuss it."

"What is it?" he asked, as he set his cup on the table.

"What's going to happen once Jack and his crew are gone?"

"To be honest, I don't know. I know that Luke said he was working on helping ... you know, getting the kills you did off the record."

"Yeah, he put me on assignment, as an undercover, so this won't backfire on me," she sighed.

"Good. That's good."

"It still doesn't help that I murdered *three* people," she said.

"I hope you know that you are very brave and strong. These kills won't come back to haunt you."

"Just in my mind," she said. "I'm sorry. I'm slowly dealing with it. It's not easy taking someone's life, whether they deserve it or not."

"I know. I wish I could've been the one to do it for you."

"You just need more practice with your hand. That's all. Does it hurt when you grasp anything?"

"Small things. Like a pen. I hate it because I'm left-handed. I try to write with my right, but it doesn't work too well. My handwriting is bad as it is," he laughed.

"I've seen your notes," she laughed. "I could help you, you know."

"You want to help me learn to shoot again?"

"Yeah, if you wanted to. There's a lot of trees out here and we could practice."

"If that's what you want," she said.

"Yeah, I do want. We'll use the handguns first. Parker, I'm sorry that I killed you," she smiled.

He leaned in and kissed her mouth softly. "It's all right, but soon, I'll be returning from the dead."

"All hell is going to break loose," she sighed.

"Yeah, but I'm more worried about you. If you can't face Morrison again, I'll take care of it for you."

“I don’t want to think about it yet. I’m not up for going after any criminals right now.”

“Me either. I want you feeling totally better,” he said, as he kissed her cheek.

“I’m sorry that I can’t make love right now,” she whispered.

“Don’t apologize. You need time to heal. Not just your body, but your mind, too. I’ll be here. No matter what,” he said. “Now, let’s grab our weapons and see what you can teach me,” he grinned.

She stood up and hugged him tightly. “I do so love you,” she whispered.

“Let’s go, babe,” he took her hand and they walked out to the living room.

She rummaged through her dufflebag until she found the handguns. “OK, let’s do this,” she said.

Retraining

Darker gazed into her eyes and smiled. “OK, now what?”

“Turn and face that old maple tree.”

“The one with the holes in it?”

“Yeah, that’s our target tree. Just hold on,” she walked over to the tree and pulled out a piece of chalk from her pocket. She drew three circles within each other. “OK, that’s your target,” she walked back over to him. “First, I want you try to shoot with your right hand.”

“I’m so clumsy with it,” he said.

She placed the .38 in his hand. “This is lighter than the nine. Now, feel it and grasp it. Put your finger on the trigger,” she stood behind him and held his arm. “Aim and gently squeeze the trigger,” she said.

He pulled the trigger and the bullet flew towards the tree and hit the edge of the largest circle that she drew.

“Damn,” he said. “See? I can’t do it.”

“Yes, you can. Use your left hand to steady your right,” she wrapped her arms around him and helped him grasp his right hand. “Now, steady. OK, go ahead,” she said, as he fired again. “See? Much better.”

“I can do this. I know I can,” he said, as he aimed again. “All I need is you always to have your arms wrapped around me and I can shoot,” he laughed.

“Very funny. Come on, try it a few more times.”

He fired off four more shots. “Not so bad, I guess.”

“Good. I’d keep the .38 in your ankle holster. Now, the nine is going to be much harder. I know you usually use .45s but lets try the nine first,” she took the .38 from his hand and handed him the nine-millimeter handgun.

“It’s really heavy,” he said.

“I know. Now, we’re just going to repeat what we did with the .38. Your hand will have to get used to the weight.”

“All right,” he said, as he followed her instructions and let off six shots in a row. “All over the place,” he shook his head as he aimed the

gun at the ground.

She looked into his eyes. "You're doing fine."

"Sam, I haven't fired a gun ... I mean before this ... in a year. I used my words or my fists to get out of a jam. I'm a useless agent and hit man. I can't even do either job."

"Listen to me, it's not about the gun. It's about you. You can do this. We'll work at it together. Until I got with you, I haven't been behind the rifle in ten years. I always had my sidearm, but it had been a while since I've used it other than to clean it. Can't have a dirty gun."

"I know. I'm sorry I'm like this. It's just so frustrating."

"Does your left hand hurt?"

"Not right now. It did steady the right pretty well."

"Well, do you want to try to shoot with it?"

"I don't know. It's still stiff," he said.

She took his left hand and started to massage it. She kissed the back of his and rubbed his palm lightly. "I'll be right back," she said, as she hurried to the cabin. She came back a few minutes later with a bottle. She gently squeezed the lotion on her fingers and slowly rubbed it on his scar on the palm of his hand.

"What is that?"

"It's a special lotion. I mix it up myself," she said. "Does it hurt?"

"No, it feels tingly," he opened and closed his hand a few times. "It's not so stiff," he smiled.

"I know. I discovered that if I mix a few of my lotions, it helps relieve stiffness, and it does help scars fade and softens skin. Here, you can have it."

"Thanks," he kissed her cheek.

"So, are you ready to try again?"

"Yeah, I think I can do this," he smiled, as she got behind him.

"I know you can do this," she said, as she wrapped her arms around him.

He placed the gun in his left hand and used his right to steady the shot. He fired once, took a deep breath, and fired off six more shots. "Wow, I did it," he laughed.

"Yes, you did. Bulls eye," she hugged him tightly.

"Thanks, babe, you helped me more than you realize," he kissed her cheek.

"You helped me, too. Now, I'll step back and you continue to practice. If your hand starts to hurt, take a break. We don't want you to overdo it on your first day."

“I’ll be all right,” he said, as he aimed and fired.

They spent the morning practicing shooting the target on the tree. Parker couldn’t believe how much better his hand was starting to feel. He never thought his hand would be or even feel normal again, and thanks to Sam, it was. She saved part of him, and she’d never realize how much. He just was determined to save her. All his practice, he just pictured Jack Morrison’s face. He knew that was the ultimate target. The man who brutalized his lover. Yes, he loved her and she was the love of his life. He never knew what love was really about until he found himself with Sam and he was never going to let that go ... even if she discovered all of his secrets ... he was still going to keep her.

Tenderness

Every day for a few hours, Parker and Sam practiced shooting the target. Parker was getting comfortable with the gun and owed everything to Sam. He loved her so much and all he could do is watch as she suffered internally. He wished that he could help her as she had helped him.

A couple of weeks went by and Parker still watched her struggle with nightmares and fear. He could tell by the look in her eyes when she stared at the flames of the fire, that she was thinking about what that Jack had put her through.

He sat on the sofa and watched her as she sat on the floor, staring at the fire. He poured them both a glass of wine and handed her a glass. "Sam?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. Please, sit here with me," she patted the floor.

He sat down next to her. "What're you thinking about?"

"How I haven't been fair to you," she sighed.

"Sam, I don't understand. You haven't done anything wrong to me," he said.

"Well, you know, I kidnapped you. I tied you up. I slapped you. I faked your death. I left you handcuffed all day to a chair."

"I got over that. I wasn't even mad about it. I know why you did that. I'm still sorry that I didn't give you all the details about it," he said.

"I forgave you. Then, all this week, you and I ... we haven't made love. I want to ... but ... I'm scared."

"Tell me. Why are you scared? I won't hurt you, but I won't push you either."

"I'm scared. I want to make love to you. I want to show you that I love you. I want to feel you close to me. I need to feel that. I don't know if I'll be able to handle it. I don't know if we started ... and I had to stop ... if you'd..."

"If I'd stop?"

"Yeah," she put her head down.

"I would. Sam, if you want to try to make love, we can try. If you can't handle it, I'll stop. I promise. It's all right."

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, you know, we could always do our first experiment,” he grinned.

“What was that?”

“You know, the one where we were getting comfortable with one another and see where it leads us. If you have to stop, then we’ll stop.”

“I think I could handle that. Could you? I mean... even if I wasn’t up to ... you know ... *relieving* you...” she smiled slightly.

“If I have to do that myself, I can. Believe me, I’ve done it *plenty* of times,” he laughed. “Can I just hold you here for a little while?”

“Yeah, I’d like that,” she said, as he wrapped his arm around her.

“You’re safe here and I’ll always take care of you, just as you do for me,” he kissed her cheek.

“You’re the best, you know that,” she grinned.

“I try,” he said, as they gazed at the fire together.

She took his hand and led him to the master bedroom. “OK. Time to get comfortable with each other,” she said, as she unbuttoned his shirt.

He smiled at her and never took his loving eyes off her. “Yeah, like we’re the only ones in the room.”

She leaned up and ran her hands through his dark hair.

“Sam, you are a beautiful woman,” he lightly touched her scar on her forehead.

“Thank you,” she said.

He lightly touched her face and pulled her into a soft kiss. She gave into his passionate kisses. “Sam, it’s all right. Close your eyes and feel it.”

“I know,” she whispered. “OK, now... clothes off.”

“Um, do we undress ourselves or each other?” he asked.

“Each other,” she nodded. “I’ll start with you,” she smiled, as she slipped his T-shirt over his head. She lightly ran her hands down his chest and unzipped his pants. “OK, step out,” she smiled.

“My turn?” he asked.

“Um, yeah, go ahead,” she said nervously.

“If you don’t want me to...”

“I do. Please,” she said, as she took his hands and placed them on her chest. “You do feel good.”

He slowly unbuttoned her blouse and slid it down her shoulders. He unhooked her bra and let it fall gently to the ground. He lightly ran

his hands down her hips and zipped her jeans.

Slowly, she stepped out of him. He never took his eyes from her eyes. She gazed at him and hugged him tightly.

“Are you all right?”

“Yes, can you hold me this close to you for a while?” she cried.

He scooped her up and carried her over to the bed and held her closely. “How’s this?”

“*Tighter*,” she said, as she held onto his arms that were wrapped around her.

“Is this better?” he asked.

“Yeah, oh, are you *sure* you can wait?” she said.

“Well, you turn me on, sorry. Yeah, I can wait,” he said. “I want you to get comfortable with me again. I don’t want to do anything wrong.”

“You aren’t. Believe me, you aren’t. You feel so good,” she turned and faced him. “Do you think I’m damaged?”

“No. Never. I just don’t want to hurt you.”

“You’re not,” she leaned in and kissed him passionately. “PK?”

“Yeah, babe?” he asked, as he kissed her forehead.

“Make love to me,” she whispered.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes,” she said. “Please,” she cried.

He wiped the tears from her eyes. “No tears, babe. If you change your mind or it hurts, tell me and I’ll stop.”

“All right,” she pulled him on top of her. “PK, you feel so good,” she moaned as he made love to her long and gentle. She was healing and he made her better. She had to get rid of her past feelings and move on, and she hoped that deep inside, she’d be able to do so. She knew one day that she may have to confront them ... but she wasn’t ready to do it ... yet.

Parker held her tightly, as she laid her head on his bare chest. “Rest my love,” he said, as he ran his fingers through her hair.

“Thank you,” she whispered. “Thank you for loving me.”

“Thank you for letting me,” he kissed her forehead.

Homeward Bound

Parker woke up to the sound of his cellphone ringing.
“Hello?”

“Hey, it’s Drew.”

“What’s the problem?”

“I just got word. Morrison put a bulletin out on Sam,” he said.

“Damn, all right. Do you know anything else?”

“No, but Jack has been camped out at the penthouse. He put the word out to bring her to him alive and then he said he’d take care of her. He wants her for himself and wants everyone to keep their eyes out for her.”

“Son of a bitch.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’ll let you know. I have a feeling we’ll be back in the city soon. We have to make this end once and for all.”

“Are you sure?”

“It’s the only way I can keep what is *mine*. It’s the only way...”
Parker whispered.

“Let me know,” Drew said, as he hung up.

Sam slowly sat up. “Was that the phone?”

“Yeah, it was Drew. There’s a problem,” he sighed.

“What?”

“I don’t know how to tell you this,” he said, as he got out of bed and started to get dressed.

“Just say it,” she said, as she got out of bed.

He took her hands and they sat on the bed. “Morrison put a hit out on you, however,” he lied.

“*However?*”

“He wants you brought to him alive so he can take care of you himself.”

“Oh, where is he?”

“Drew said he’s been camped out at our penthouse.”

“What?”

“I guess he’s waiting to see if you’ll show back up. I don’t think he just wants to kill you. I think...”

“I think so, too. He never does the dirty work himself, unless it’s personal.”

“Nope. I’m sorry. I think we should go back to the city and take care of him once and for all. I just don’t know how to go about doing it.”

“Oh, we could use me as bait.”

“I don’t want him to hurt you again. The last time he knocked you out.”

“Yeah, but after that I didn’t realize what he was going to do, so I didn’t fight as hard as I should’ve.”

“Don’t blame yourself.”

“I don’t. I know what we have to do. First, we have to take out his men. Then, we’ll deal with Jack ourselves.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“Kind of. We’ll need a list of all his places, you know, where all his men are located.”

“I’ll have Drew get that to us. I know of a few places. At the bar, it’s usually Steve, Lloyd, Cal, and Tom. There are others that come in and out but only to drink.”

“We hit the bar *first*,” she said.

“OK. What’re you thinking?”

“We need to take them by surprise. I have an idea and I’ll need your help.”

“Whatever you need,” he said.

“I’m going to take a shower. Can you call Luke and tell him we’ll be in the city this evening?”

“Tonight?”

“Yeah, we’ll eat and pack up the car. We’ll be heading back to the safe house.”

“I’ll call him. You take your time,” he kissed her cheek as she headed into the bathroom.

“Oh, tell him I’ll need my *backup supplies*,” she said, as she stood in the doorway.

“Backup supplies?”

“He’ll know what I mean,” she smiled, as she closed the door behind her.

“Hmm, this is going to be interesting,” he said, as he picked up his cellphone.

Sam looked over at Parker, who was driving. “Do you think you’re ready?”

“Yeah, you taught me a lot. I can now use my hand. Don’t worry. I won’t let you down.”

“I know you won’t, and I’ll try to not let you down,” she leaned back in the seat.

“You never could,” he said, as he patted her leg. “So, what’s these backup supplies?”

“Nothing much. A few grenades, three automatic weapons, and some C-4.”

“You’re going to blow up something?”

“Only if I have to. First, we’ll focus on the bar and the building behind it. We also have to make sure that Jack is at the penthouse when this all goes down.”

“How do we do that?”

“I’ll call him and tell him I want to meet him,” she smiled.

“*Sam?*”

“I have to do this. We will also need to cut communications off at the penthouse after I make the call.”

“I think Drew can do that remotely.”

“Good. You know, someday, I’ll have to meet this Drew.”

“Yeah, you’ll like him, but not as much as you like me,” he laughed.

“He’s your partner?”

“Has been for ten years. He’s a level 3 with the bureau. He knows almost everything that goes on. His specialty is communications, all that electronic and computer stuff, but he knows how Morrison’s organization works.”

“Sounds like you have a great partner. I haven’t had a partner in a long time. You know ... I really miss being a cop. I wish...”

“I know. You wish you could go back to it, don’t you?”

“Yeah, but no more undercover work. I’m tired of trying to be something I’m not. I wouldn’t mind working with Special Victims or something.”

“You’d be perfect for the job. How come you never worked under Luke?”

“Computers and I aren’t exactly on a first name basis. I barely know how to check my email. Yeah, I know weapons and people, but computers aren’t my thing. I always try to con Emily to type up my reports for me.”

“Emily?”

“She’s the clerk at the station. She just can do it much faster,” she laughed, as he pulled into the parking garage.

“Did she always do it for you?”

“No,” she shook her head. “I had to learn to do it myself,” she said, as they got out of the car.

“We can unpack later. Let’s go upstairs and wait for Luke,” he said.

“What time did he say he’d be here?” she asked.

“Around six. It’s only four now,” he took her hand and led her upstairs to the safe house.

Conspirators

Parker stood up when there was a knock on the door. “Oh, Drew, come in,” he said.

Drew walked in and smiled at Sam. “So, this is the lovely Samantha,” he said, as he ran his hands through his blonde hair.

She stood up and smiled and extended her hand. “It’s Sam. Nice to finally meet you. Luke should be here soon.”

“Good,” he said.

“Have a seat,” Parker said. “What’d you find out?”

Drew opened his folder and placed a few pieces of paper on the table. “I have surveillance on the penthouse and he’s still there, waiting for *you*.”

“Great,” she rolled her eyes.

“There are four business, his house, the building behind the bar and a housing development under construction. His men are dispersed between the four businesses and the development.”

“The building behind the bar, are there any men there?”

“No, it’s a bunch of empty apartments.”

“Well, one *isn’t* empty. I think he used it for his trysts with his mistresses,” Sam said.

“Oh, all right. Does he have a new one?”

“Yeah, me,” she said.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realize...”

“It’s fine,” she said, as there was a knock on the door.

Parker answered it and there stood Luke. “Come in. Drew just got here.”

Luke walked into and sat next to Sam. He kissed her cheek. “I see you’re better.”

“Yeah, did you bring everything?”

“Yup, all in this bag,” he tapped the dufflebag that laid at his feet.

“Good. Drew, do you have the blueprints for the building?”

“Yeah, hold on,” he opened his binder and took out several pages. “This is what I have.”

“This is perfect,” she said, as she examined each blueprint.

“Do you have an idea now?” Drew asked.

“I think we’ll need to sync up the take down. Do we have any other men?”

“Yeah, I can pull in some agents.”

“Sam, I’m here for you, too,” Luke said.

She took Luke’s hand and led him into the kitchen. “I don’t want you to be involved anymore.”

“Samantha? Why?”

“I don’t want to lose you. I can’t risk you being hurt.”

“Samantha, I’m a cop. I do know *how* to handle myself.”

“I can’t lose you,” she cried.

“I can’t lose you either. You and Parker are going to need backup. I’m your back up. I’ll be with the two of you, backing you up. Samantha, trust me.”

“I do trust you. You’re the *only* one I can trust. I’m sorry I just don’t want anyone to get hurt.”

“I have to ask...”

“Yes, if I get the chance, I am going to *kill* Jack.”

“I figured. Samantha, I have to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“There’s more to this Jack than you’re telling me.”

“There is and when you do find out, please *don’t* be mad.”

“Tell me now,” he crossed his arms.

“I can’t ... I’m trying to deal with it all in my head.”

“Does Parker know?”

“No, he *doesn’t*. Luke, I know he’s hiding something from me. I don’t know if it’s important or just private.”

“How do you know?”

“I just feel it. As for Jack, I have to deal with him, my way. I have to ... when it’s over ... I’ll tell you all about it. I promise. Now, please, let me deal with Jack my way.”

“All right. I promise. Samantha, he hurt you,” he sighed.

“No, he didn’t ... at least not the way I *said* he did.”

“Samantha?”

“Please, Luke. Remember what I told you from the beginning?”

“Yes, I thought things *changed*,” he said.

“Some did, some *didn’t*. I have to do this my way or it will never end.”

“All right, I *won’t* stand in your way.”

She hugged him tightly. “All right,” she took his hand and led him back into the living room. “Is tomorrow too soon?” she asked, as she sat down.

“No, I can coordinate it all tonight,” Drew said. “So, you three are going to hit the bar?”

“Yup. Well, *I* am,” Sam said.

“Sam? I thought we were doing this together?”

“Oh, we are. I’m just going to waltz in there and ask for Jack. Luke, you cover the front, and PK, cover the back. I’ll be fine.”

“Only if you wear a vest,” Parker said.

“I will. So, tomorrow, say around eleven?” she said.

Luke and Drew stood up. “Sounds about right. I’ll call you in the morning,” Drew said, as he headed out the door.

Luke touched Sam’s cheek. “I’ll be here in the morning. You’re *not* doing this without me.”

“I promise,” she said, as he walked out the door.

Parker took her hand. “Are you all right?”

“I will be when this is all over with.”

“I know, babe. So, what do you want to do now?”

“Eat. I’m starved.”

“I’ll run downstairs and get a few slices, if you want.”

“Sounds good. I’m going to get undressed,” she said.

When he came back upstairs, he set the pizza on the table. “Sam?”

“In here,” she said.

He walked over to the bedroom and smiled when he saw her lying on the bed, dressed in a lace teddy. “Wow.”

“I’m a *wow*?”

“Definitely.”

“Come here, PK,” she reached out her hand to him.

“What’s this about?” he asked, as he took his shirt off.

“I want us to enjoy each other. I bought this for you, just haven’t had the chance to wear it.”

“Oh, it’s very sexy. You look so good in black,” he leaned over her and started to kiss her.

“May I?” she asked.

“What?” he asked.

“Take the lead? I want you to be loved by *me*. Do you mind?”

“Not at all,” he said, as he slid his pants off and kicked them on the floor. “What do I do?” he asked.

“You’ve never *not* been in control?” she grinned.

“Never,” he said.

She placed her hands on his chest and gently laid him down. “I’ll show you how it’s done,” she said, as she laid on top of his strong, tanned body and kissed him softly. “Do you want me?” she breathed hard.

“More than anything,” he said.

She slowly sat up and took his hands. “Go ahead, you can touch me and I’ll make love to *you*, baby,” she whispered, as she made love to him.

She curled up next to him. “So?”

“Amazing. Babe, you’re incredible. I always knew you were, but that was a first for me,” he smiled, as he held her close.

“You’ve always been in control?”

“Yeah, but this was ... I can’t even explain,” he kissed her softly.

“Good. We can take turns. To me, when we make love, it’s about both of us feeling good. I don’t want you to do all the work ... well ... you know what I mean, I didn’t mean *work* exactly,” she laughed.

“I get it,” he laughed slightly. “May I hold you just like this all night?”

“You couldn’t tear me away,” she said, “but I am kind of hungry.”

“I’ll be right back,” he got out of bed and put his boxers on. He headed into the living room and came right back with the pizza. “Here, let’s eat.”

“Good. You’ll need your strength,” she laughed.

“For?”

“Oh, babe, we’re going *again* after we eat,” she said, as she took a bite of her food.

“I think I could get used to this,” he kissed her cheek.

“Me, too,” she hugged him.

Vengeance

Sam looked at Parker. “Um, Luke is going to drive the two of you to the bar. I’m going in first.”

“Sam?”

“I want to pick up my car at the garage first.”

“What if his men are watching the garage?”

“I want my car. I don’t care *who’s* watching. You two can pull up right behind it, but I want my car.”

“All right, we won’t argue with you,” Luke said, as he came into the room. “Are you ready?”

“Let’s do this,” she said, as the three of them headed out of the building.

Sam got in her car and watched as Parker and Luke pulled away. She kept staring at the door that led to the penthouse. “No time like the present,” she said. She got out of the car and grabbed her bag. She put her nine-millimeter in her back waistband. She slowly headed towards the stairs.

Parker slammed on the breaks and turned the car around. He sped down the aisle of cars and stopped. He jumped out of the car and grabbed her arm. “Oh, *no*, you don’t!”

“What?”

“I thought you trusted me,” he said.

“I do. I’m sorry. I just want it over with.”

“It will be, not this way, not yet. We have to get over to the bar.”

“Oh, all right,” she said.

“Get in!” Luke demanded.

“I’ll take my car.”

“Not a chance,” Luke said, as he lovingly pushed her in the back seat.

She sat in the back and crossed her arms. “I wasn’t going to...”

“Bull and you know it,” Luke said. “We knew you’d try something like that. What were you *thinking?*”

“Just that I can’t wait until he’s dead!”

“Well, *you’re* not going to kill him,” Parker said.

“Don’t try to stop me,” she said, as he pulled out of the garage.

“Oh, I’m going to do it, *not* you. I have a plan now,” he sped down the road towards the *Razor’s Edge*.

“Parker?”

“Sam, just shush right now! Damn you!”

“I’m ... I’m sorry. I didn’t...”

“Sam, I love you but what you just did, really *pissed* me off. You’re not *allowed* to do this crap on your own. You need us and we need you. Do you hear me?” he yelled.

“*Allowed?* You *don’t* own me!”

“I didn’t mean that. You can’t go off half-cocked without backup.”

“You’re right. I’m sorry. It was stupid,” she said, as he pulled across the street from the bar. “Now, what?”

He handed her a cellphone. “Call Jack.”

“And say what?”

“Tell him you’re giving yourself up to him. I don’t know, whatever he says or wants, just go along with it.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Just watch and learn, babe,” he grinned.

“OK,” she dialed Jack’s number and waited for him to answer.

“This is Jack,” he said coldly.

“It’s Sam. I hear you’ve been looking for me.”

“Where the *hell* have you been?”

“I needed some time to think about what happened between us. I was just caught off-guard.”

“No woman of mine leaves unless I say so. Do you hear me?” he yelled.

“I know. So, are you going to kill me?”

“Of course not. You’re of more use to me alive than dead. I want you. Sam, you’re a fighter and I like that. I promise, if you come back to me willingly, we can play your game, too.”

“*Promise?*”

“Yes. I was wrong to do what I did. I *am* sorry. I just wanted to remember loving you. It wasn’t *too* hard, was it?” he asked, as his voice softened.

“Um, no, of course not. I just like participating. That’s all. I’m not used to ropes, just handcuffs.”

“Oh, you like the *cuffs*, huh?”

“Yes, Jack, can we start over?”

“Yeah, *Allure*, we can.”

“Where are you? I’d like to meet you.”

“I’m at your place. I’ve been waiting here for you.”

“I’ll be there soon,” she said.

“Good. I have a surprise for you,” he said, as he hung up.

Sam stared at the phone. “I think I’m going to be sick.”

“What’d he say?” Luke asked.

“That he was sorry and the next time, he’ll have sex my way. He *doesn’t* want me dead. He wants a play toy.”

“We’ll get him,” Parker said. “OK, when I give the signal, jam the cell signals,” he said, as he got out of the car.

Sam and Luke watched as Parker approached the door. He put his thumb up and Luke pressed the button to jam the signals.

Sam looked at Luke. “I have to get Jack *alone*.”

“I thought you were going to let Parker take care of him,” he said.

“No. I have to do it. I have to confront him on my own. If I don’t, it’ll *never* be over for me.”

“How do we do that?” Luke asked.

“I’m not sure, but if I have to sneak away to do it, I will,” she leaned back in the car seat.

“Don’t worry. I’ll let you do this. I know there’s more to it, isn’t there?”

“Yes, please, Luke, trust me,” she cried.

“I do, sweetie. I do.”

Parker walked in and sat down at the bar. Steve walked over to him and shook his head. “We heard you were dead,” he said.

“Where’d you get that?”

“That broad you used to come in with. Sam, I think,” he said, as he handed Parker a beer.

“Nah, I killed that broad this morning. She was just trying to get into Jack’s pants. She thought she’d have an easy way in if I was dead. Dumb bitch. So, where *is* Jack?”

“Not here. I think he’s waiting for her. You want me to call him?”

“No, that’s all right. Are the guys around?”

“In the back,” Steve said.

Parker guzzled down his beer and looked around the room. He slowly reached into his pocket and pressed a bar of C-4 against the bar. He looked into Steve’s eyes. “When Jack does come back, tell him that

I'm not dead and that I'm looking for him," he stood up.

"Of course. I'll see you later," he said.

Parker slowly walked out of the bar. As he walked closer to the car, he counted to three on his fingers and Luke hit the button. Parker's body was thrown forward as the bar exploded into shards of metal, glass, and wood.

Luke ran out of the car and helped Parker. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. Are the others done?"

"Doing it now," Luke pushed another button and the apartment building behind the bar imploded. "Let's get out of here."

Sam got behind the wheel and squealed down the street. "What now?"

"Your plan," Parker said.

"Oh, so, *now* it's my plan?" she asked.

"I'm sorry about before. Damn, my back is burning,"

Luke turned around. "You've got something in your back. Hold on. Sam, pull over."

Sam and Luke got in the back with Parker. "A piece of wood is in your back. You have to get to the hospital."

"Fine. Take me. It's killing me," he moaned.

"Luke, take him to the hospital. I'll handle Jack on my own."

"No, you can't," Parker winced.

"I'm doing it. Don't worry. I won't kill him yet. I'll save him for you," she said. "Just go," she grabbed her bag and ran down the street before they could stop her.

"I'll take myself. Go after her," Parker said.

"I can't leave you like this. I'll call Drew on the way to the hospital," he said, as he got in the front seat and drove away.

Last Truths

Sam walked into the penthouse and Jack came out of the kitchen with two glasses of wine. She smiled at him. “So, I’m here,” she said.

He set the glasses on the coffee table and walked over to her. He kissed her softly. “*Allure*, I meant what I said.”

“Which *was*?”

“I’m sorry about the way we made love. I want us to both enjoy it. You did, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, I guess, it’s just not the way I think we should make love. Can we talk, Jack?”

“Yes, of course,” he said, as he pulled her towards the sofa and they sat down.

“I’m sorry that I left. I was ... caught off guard by you. I’m not used to be out of control in ... well ... I don’t know what we are,” she said.

“We can be so much together.”

“I realize that now. I’m sorry I left,” she said.

“You’re here now. That’s all that matters. You know, I do like this penthouse much better than that old apartment,” he said, as he handed her the glass of wine.

“So do I. Um, what *are* we to each other?”

“I don’t understand,” he said, as he sipped his wine.

“Are we just lovers? Do I still work for you? What?”

“Oh, I see. I think we could eventually be *partners*. I’ve never been with a partner before. I think you have a lot you could teach me and I could teach you a lot of things.”

“Really?”

“Yes, *Allure*, first things first, though,” he said, as he ran his hands through her hair.

“Sex, right?”

“First and foremost. That will always be our starting point.”

“Yes, I understand ... but sex *my way*,” she said.

“I can handle that. I’m *sorry* that I hit you.”

“It’s all right. No big deal. I’ve been hit a lot harder,” she laughed slightly.

“Now, *Allure*. I can’t wait any longer.”

She took his hand and led him to the bedroom. “All right, my way,” she said, as she kissed him hard on the mouth. She unbuttoned his shirt and pulled down his pants. She stood back and stared at his body.

“What *are* you doing?” he asked.

“Wondering where to start first,” she laughed.

“Oh, any *ideas*?” he grinned.

“I have *several*,” she walked over to him and ran her hands all over his chest. She kissed him long and hard again and ran her hand down between his legs. “Oh, I see you *are* excited.”

“Very, come on, woman,” he said.

“I said *my way*,” she said, as she walked over to the dresser and pulled out one of Parker’s ties. She wrapped it around Jack’s eyes. “I’m returning the favor,” she ran her tongue down his chest and back up to his face. She pulled her cuffs out of her back pocket and led him over to the chair. “Sit.”

“I like this game, but it’s taking *too* long,” he said.

“Just a little while longer. Aren’t I worth the wait?” she whispered harshly.

“Of course you are, *Allure*,” he whispered heavily.

She cuffed his hands to the arms of the chair. She unbuttoned her blouse and exposed her breasts. She ran her breast lightly over his mouth. “Can you taste me?”

“Let me do it now, woman, I can’t take this much longer,” he panted.

She walked over to the bottom drawer of her dresser and pulled out the duct tape and a pocketknife. She carefully taped his feet to the legs of the chair. She ran her hands between his legs and squeezed him hard. “Oh, come on, baby, *release* yourself.”

“I want it inside you, *Allure*,” he said, as he struggled.

She pulled off his blindfold. “I want you to watch now.”

“What are you doing?”

“I’m going to tease you for a little while. It will make it *so* much better,” she said, as she removed her blouse. “Do you want a taste?” she asked, as she pressed her chest against his face.

Slowly, he licked her breasts and then sucked on her nipples. “You do taste so good. Come on, show me the rest.”

She unzipped her pants and slid them down her legs. She walked over to him. “Can you feel it?”

“Yes,” he said, as he stretched his hand out to feel her panties. “God, you’re so beautiful and sexy. I *do* love you, you know.”

“I *doubt* it,” she said, as she stabbed the knife into his leg.

“Ow! What the *hell* are you doing?”

“I’m going to torture you. You’re going to pay for what *you* did to me!”

“What *I* did to you?”

“You’re just lucky I got your leg and not your damn *ram rod!*”

He looked down at his naked body as his leg bled. “You can’t do this, you crazy broad.”

“Oh, don’t tell me if I got on you right now, you wouldn’t enjoy it!”

“Then do it, woman.”

“I see that even with the pain, you’re still very excited. Is it me? Is it my body that’s turning you on or is it your submissiveness?”

“It’s *you*. I can’t help but look at that sexy body of yours. I want it. Now more than *ever*.”

“Oh, so, pain does turn you on, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, more than you know,” he grunted.

She walked over to him and sat on his lap. “How does that feel?” she asked.

“Wonderful. Do it again. Come on, let me put me inside you,” he said. “You *know* you want it.”

She stood up and slowly got dressed. She threw a blanket on top of his naked body. “You just *don’t* get it.”

“I get that I want you and I will get out of here and take you.”

“Oh, really?” she crossed her arms. “You don’t know me at all.”

“Oh, I know you’re a *tease*,” he struggled. “Sam, don’t you know how much I want you. I’ll treat you good, *Allure*. I swear.”

“Treat me good?”

“Yes, I treat you good. I treat you like a lady.”

She sat down in front of him. “You *raped* me.”

“I did *not*,” he shook his head. “I’m *not* a rapist.”

“I told you I’d make love to you and, yet, you wanted to fight me. No, you wanted me to fight you off.”

“I ... I ... I’m sorry. I told you I was *sorry*.”

“You don’t get it. I *would’ve* been with you and you still ... hurt me.”

“I’m so sorry, Sam. I’ve never met anyone like you before. I didn’t ... mean to hurt you.”

“That’s not *all* you did,” she unlocked the handcuffs and

untaped his feet. “Get dressed.”

He slowly put on his clothes and watched as she aimed her gun at him. “Sam? What are you doing? Don’t you want me now?” he asked.

She turned around. “Jack, do you remember who I am? Do you know who I *really* am?”

“Yes, I do, *Lee*.”

“So, you remember and yet, you *still* hurt me? How could you do this *again*?”

“Sam, that was *seven* years ago. I’m sorry that things got in the way of us.”

She dropped on the bed and Jack sat next to her. “Jack, I loved you back then but I *never* told *anyone* about us, and then ... you left me for *her*...”

“I know. You did find someone, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, but he died. You *kept* Kyle under your wing and you left *me*. Now, I find out that you killed my parents and you killed Kyle.”

“*Whod!* I don’t know *what* you’re talking about.” Jack took her hands. “Sam, I had *nothing* to do with your parents’ death.”

“How could you do that?”

“I didn’t. It was your *brother*.”

“Kyle couldn’t have killed my parents. He loved them, as I do.”

Jack put his arm around her. “Sam, I know what I did to you back then, but I *didn’t* hurt your parents. Yes, *Lloyd* was the one that threw Kyle off the roof.”

“Well, technically, Kyle was still hanging when I found him. He slipped out of my hands.”

“I’m sorry about that. I’m *not* an evil man, Sam.”

“You *still* hurt me. How could you *do* that?”

Jack stood up and walked over to the window. Sam walked over to him and kneeled. “Let me wrap that for you,” she said, as she wrapped a bandana around his leg that was bleeding.

He turned around and gazed into her eyes. “Sam, you came back to me to *kill* me, didn’t you?”

She nodded slightly. “Yes, Jack. My plan was to kill you. I wanted you to die. I wanted you to pay for what you did to me. When I met Parker, all I could think about was making *you* pay. *When* did you know it was me?”

He turned and lightly touched her cheek. He kissed her softly. “I knew from the minute you walked into the bar. I knew it was you. Back then, you called yourself *Lee*, and your hair was a lot lighter. But your face. Your beautiful face. I knew it was you. *Allure*, when you ... then ...

you killed Scott. I thought..."

"You thought I wanted you back, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. When I saw you, I can't tell you how I felt. All those feelings, those nights spent together ... came crashing in my head."

"Jack, I almost ruined my career because I tried to protect you. I've been angry with you for so long and..." she walked over to the bed and sat down. "Then, there *you* were. I wanted you dead. When I walked in your office ... the reason I had Parker with me is because I didn't want the feelings of loving you to come back. Jack, I never stopped, but it killed me inside. Then ... I thought you did all these horrible things to my family. When Parker and I met and he told me how he worked for you, I thought he'd be my way in to get to you."

"And then you *killed* Parker?"

"The truth is ... no, he's *not* dead. I faked those photos. I wanted to get closer to you and if you thought that he was out of the way, it would work."

"Well, it did work. Sam? Why all these *games*?"

She buried her face in her hands. "I fell for Parker. I can't explain why or how. It just happened. He took care of me."

"Where is he now if he's such a *good* man?"

"Um, earlier ... we kind of blew up the bar," she muttered.

"You did *what*?"

"I'm sorry," she said.

"Sam, you are *quite* a woman," he sat down next to her. "How *did* we get to this point?"

"I don't know. I feel so conflicted. Jack, I was madly in love with you. I knew what kind of business you were in, but it didn't matter to me. I loved you. Then ... you *left* me. When we were back ... you hurt me. You know I would've made love to you. I just wanted to feel you one more time before I killed you. I needed to love you ... one last time. I'm sorry. I know that sounds awful."

Jack took her hands. "Sam, I don't know how to make up for what I did to you. You're so important to me. You always *have* been."

"Then, why did you *leave* me?"

Parker slowly walked down the hall and stood outside the door when he heard them talking.

"I left *for* you," Jack said.

"You left *for me*? I *loved* you!" she stood up and faced him. "How is leaving me good for me?"

Parker took a deep breath and wiped the tears from his eyes. “Damn. She loves *him*? He’s going to tell her about me, now.”

Jack stood up and put his hand on her shoulders. “You loved your job. I didn’t want to ruin your life. Allure, we never made our relationship public. You never even told your best friend or parents about me.”

“I know. Maybe I should have,” she gazed in his eyes. “I don’t know what I’m doing anymore. You should be forgiving me. *I* betrayed you this time. I wanted to kill you. I *was* going to kill you. I was going to torture you and kill you.”

Jack gazed in her eyes. “I love you, Sam. I *always* have. You’re right. I didn’t ... I shouldn’t have hurt you. I never treated you like that before and ... I know that you’ll never be able to forgive me.”

“I don’t know where to go from here,” she said.

“Do you still love me?” he asked.

“Of course I do. I never stopped. I just don’t know what to do. You were right. I’m sorry for the games. I should’ve just confronted you. I know that Parker used me ... he used me to kill you. I’m such a fool. Jack, I don’t know what to do,” she cried, as tears streamed down her face.

Jack lightly caressed her cheek and kissed her softly. “Please, Sam, *stay* with *me*. Come *back* to me. I love you and I know you still love me. You just proved it. If you didn’t love me, you wouldn’t have tried so hard to hate me. We were always so good together. I am so sorry that I left. I’m sorry I hurt you.”

“I ... I love Parker.”

“I don’t know how you can love him. Who do you think *helped* Lloyd?”

“*What*?” she stared at him.

“He went with Lloyd to *kill* your brother. Yes, I sent them. After I found out what your brother did to your parents. I didn’t want them to kill him ... at least right away. I wanted them to bring him to me. I was going to find you ... to let *you* decide. That is why I sent Parker to bring you to me. *He’s* the one that changed the plans.”

“Why *did* Kyle kill my parents?”

“Money, I guess,” Jack sat down on the bed. “Why did you think I did it?”

“Parker told me that you killed them. He showed me the yellow rose.”

“Yellow rose?” Jack shook his head. “I don’t use roses for calling cards. I don’t have the men use calling cards.”

“I’m so sorry that I believed him. I heard you used roses ... I couldn’t believe that you did that.”

“The only yellow roses I ever used were to give to you,” he sighed. “Sam, please, we have to work through this. Your anger with me is misplaced. I didn’t hurt your family. I would *never* hurt anything you love. That’s why I wanted you to decide about Kyle. If you wanted the police to deal with it, I would’ve let you take him in yourself.”

Sam looked up and noticed a shadow in the hallway. “Tell me what you know,” she said, as she placed her finger to her lips. She walked quietly over to the door. She reached her arm out the door and grabbed Parker, and pulled him into the room. She jammed her gun against his head. “Move!” she demanded.

Parker put his hands up and walked over to the chair. “Sam, what’s going on?”

“That’s what we’re all going to find out. Now, sit,” she demanded.

Jack smirked at Parker. “Nice to see you, Parker, you know, *not* dead,” he laughed.

“Shut up, Jack!”

“No, *you* shut up. Where’s Luke?” Sam demanded.

“He ... um ... he went back to the safe house,” Parker said.

Sam took the cuffs and handcuffed his wrists to the arms of the chair. “Jack, can you toss me the duct tape?”

“Sure thing,” he tossed it to her.

Sam proceeded to tape up Parker’s legs. She backed away from him. “So, PK, tell me that Jack’s lying.”

“He *is* lying. *He’s* a murderer,” Parker said.

Sam turned to Jack. “Tell me ... what is it *with* the two of you?”

Jack stood up. “Sam, Parker is my *brother*.”

Sam’s eyes widened. She glared at Parker and punched him in the face. “You bastard! You made up a story about your grandmother being killed? You made up a story about having no family?”

“Our grandmother *is* dead. She died of a heart attack last year,” Jack said.

Sam aimed her gun at Parker’s head. “He’s not lying, is he?”

Parker shook his head. “I never wanted you to find out. I love you, Sam. How can you trust him? He *raped* you, remember?”

“And *you* said you loved me. You *lied* to me. You lied about your past. You lied about *everything*,” she hurried over to her phone and dialed.

“Luke?”

“Samantha...” he grunted.

“Where are you, honey?”

“Trunk. Do ... not ... trust...”

“I’ll be right there,” she said. “Jack, um, can you watch him for me?”

“I can do that.”

“Please, don’t kill him until I get back. He hurt Luke.”

“Your friend?”

“My *best* friend. Please, *don’t* leave.”

Jack walked over to her and kissed her softly. “We’ll finish this, don’t worry, *Allure*.”

Forward

Sam hurried out of the penthouse and ran down the stairs to the parking garage. She scanned the garage for Parker's car. "Luke? Can you hear me?" she cried.

"Sam?" he cried.

Sam picked up a near by fire extinguisher and smashed the window in his car and pressed the trunk release button. She hurried over to the trunk. "Oh, Luke, what did he do to you?"

"He shot me. I turned and he missed my heart and hit my shoulder. I faked it until he threw me in here. Where is he?"

"Honey, I have him tied upstairs. Jack is there, too."

"You didn't kill Jack did you?" Luke asked, as she helped him out of the trunk.

"No. Do you remember years ago, when you *assumed* I was seeing someone, but I denied it?"

"Yeah, what about it?" he asked.

"I was. I was involved with *Jack*."

"Sam, why didn't you tell me?" he said, as he leaned on her and they walked towards the elevator.

"Well, he's a criminal and I was a cop. He left me because he didn't want his world to interfere with my career. I was madly in love with him."

"What are you going to do?"

"I want answers from both of them. Jack and I already talked about what he did to me. I had to make him realize how much he hurt me."

"Do you still love Jack?"

"Yes. I've *always* loved him. It's just that the past year, I was so filled with hate because of what I thought he did. It wasn't him that killed my parents, it was Kyle. *Parker* and Lloyd threw my brother off the roof."

"I know. I got a report as they were checking out Parker's back. His prints were all over Kyle's leather jacket. He must've heard the officer and that's why he shot me," he said, as the elevator doors

opened.

She opened the door. “Jack?”

He walked out into the living room. “Need help?”

“Yeah, I need to fix his shoulder. Oh, is *he* still alive?”

“Yes, he’s alive,” Jack said. “Here, take off your jacket,” he said, as he rolled up his own sleeves.

“I’ll be back. I have to get the first aid kit.”

“You must be her best friend,” Jack said. “I am sorry about my brother.”

“He’s your *brother*?”

“*Unfortunately.*”

“I wish I had known that he was going to betray her.”

“He betrayed her the minute he met her. You probably know that I hurt her. I *didn’t* mean to. I didn’t realize what a monster I was until she made me realize it. I love her. I’ve *always* loved her.”

“I just don’t want her hurt. She deserves to be happy.”

“Yes, she does,” Jack said, as Sam came back into the room.

“Honey, this is going to hurt,” she said, as she poured peroxide on his wound.

“Damn, that does hurt. I’m OK. I think it was a through and through.”

“It was. Let me patch up both ends. You’re going to be all right,” she kissed his cheek.

Luke touched her face. “I’m sorry about Parker. I was so wrong about him.”

“Me, too. I guess that’s me, all over. Always trusting the wrong person,” she looked at Jack. “We still have a lot of things to work out.”

“Do you still want me *dead*?” he smiled.

“Not right now,” she laughed slightly. “I have to deal with Parker. You know, this isn’t even my place. Oh, Luke, what about Drew?”

“The take down was all a sham. The only thing that got blown up was the bar and the apartment. There wasn’t anyone inside. This whole thing is over, except we still have to find Parker’s partner. He’s out there, somewhere and I don’t know where.”

Sam looked at Jack. “I am sorry about the bar, but, *technically*, I didn’t blow it up. Parker did.”

“I always wanted to *rebuild*,” he kissed her cheek.

Luke laughed slightly. “Samantha, sounds like you have this under control. I’m going home. I’ll put an APB out on Drew. You and

Jack have a lot of things to work out. I'm here for you, sweetie. If you need me, just call," he kissed her cheek.

"I will and thanks," she said, as she led him to the door.

Jack sat down. "So, he is the friend you were sleeping with?"

"Yeah, he's a good man. I know he's a cop like I was..."

"So, you really *aren't* a cop anymore?"

"Can't be a cop when I killed three people, maybe four..." she looked towards the bedroom. "I don't know what to do with him right now."

He took her hands. "Sam, I am on your side. I will be here for you. I promise. I won't ever hurt you again."

"What about your wife?"

"My *wife*? I was divorced two years ago. I'm *not* married."

"I heard you had a wife *and* a mistress ... that Alyssa Marshall that I killed."

"She wasn't a mistress, yes, I had her, *once*, but she stole from me... *that's* why I wanted her dead."

"How much?"

"Over two hundred thousand. She was skimming my books from the bar."

"How could I misjudge you?" she cried.

"We'll work this out ... if you want to..."

"Do you?" she touched his face.

"*Yes*, I do. Now that you're back in my life ... and we're both *finally* truthful with each other ... I need to make up to you how much I've hurt you. Sam, we need to talk. We need to open up to each other. You've been putting me off ... I know you wanted to tell me ... but I think Parker was in your way."

"What do we do now?"

"Let me make a call. I have somewhere you can stay until you figure things out."

"The apartment behind the bar or what used to be the bar blew up, too."

"Oh, right. I have a house on the outside of the city. You can stay with me until you figure out what you want to do. If you decide to leave, I'll abide by your wishes. Is there anything here that is yours?"

"Just my clothes and my money in the safe," she said. "What about Parker?"

"He will remain alive ... for now. I'll have my men deliver him to my home. Don't worry. I will also find this Drew person."

"Do you know him?"

“If he is who I think he is, yes,” he said.

“Can I trust you, Jack?”

“*Allure*, if I didn’t love you, I would’ve killed you for stabbing me, no matter how *arousing*...” he smiled.

“I’m so sorry. I really should fix that up for you.”

“Later, *Allure*. We’ll take care of it later. Let’s get out of here,” he said, as he picked up his phone. “Lionel, you and Simon are needed at the penthouse. My brother has been acting up *again*. I’d like him brought to the *tea room*.”

“Yes, sir. Anything else?”

“Tell Claudine to set up the extra suite. I’m bringing a guest home.”

“Yes, sir,” he hung up.

Jack looked at Sam. “Why don’t you grab a few of your things? We can send for the rest later.”

“Thanks,” she said, as she headed into the bedroom. She stared at Parker who was still cuffed to the chair.

“I love you, Sam. Please. I didn’t mean to hurt you...”

“You *killed* my brother.”

“It was an accident. Besides, *you* did it. *You* let go of his hand.”

She walked over and punched him in the head, so hard that she knocked him unconscious.

She opened her closet and grabbed most of her clothes. She picked up the photo of her parents and put it in the bag. She walked over to safe and removed the portrait. She opened the safe and grabbed all her money. She gathered her guns and dropped them all in the bag. She flipped it over her shoulder and headed out to the living room.

She smiled at Jack. “I’m ready. Um, can I follow you in my car?”

“Of course,” he said, as they headed out the door.

As they walked to the elevator, four men came out of the stairway. They nodded to Jack and headed straight for the penthouse.

Jack smiled at Sam. “My men will take care of everything,” he said.

Old Comfort

Samantha stared out the large window of the guest suite in Jack's house. She lightly touched the glass as he walked in the room. "Samantha?"

She turned around and smiled. "Oh, I didn't see you there."

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"I was just thinking ... that's all. I'm OK. Well, maybe not OK. The man I loved, I wanted to kill and now, I realize that I still love him ... *you*. Then, another man, who I *thought* I fell in love with ... betrayed me and lied to me. He killed my brother just so he could get me to kill you. He *used* me for his own purpose. He pretended he was FBI."

"He didn't pretend. He *is* FBI," Jack said.

"Really?"

"Yeah, he's FBI. I know ... my brother... the agent, but to be honest, a bad man with a badge is worse than a bad man who commits crimes."

"I know," she sat next to him. "I am trying ... really hard to forget..."

"I don't know how I can make it up to you. Do you think revenge would work?"

"I don't understand. *Revenge?*"

"Do to me ... hurt me like I hurt you."

"I did kind of stab you before. It felt pretty good when I did it."

He smiled and shook his head. "It did hurt like hell."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Of course," he said.

"Why *did* you do it?"

"Do you remember the very first time?"

She closed her eyes and nodded. "Yeah, I cuffed you and threw you on the bed. I was rough with you, *right?*"

"Yeah, and I thought ... I know ... bad idea ... that ... well ... I wasn't sure if you remembered who I was ... I thought you *forgot* about me. I was trying to relive that. I am *so* sorry. I never want to hurt you. When we make love, that's what I want it to feel like."

“I have to admit something to you.”

“What’s that?”

“The first night, I dosed your wine with cough syrup. We didn’t sleep together. I just *pretended* that we did.”

“I know,” he smiled.

“You knew and you played along?”

“Yeah, I thought you had something up your sleeve and I was still alive, so I figured I’d find out soon enough ... and I did.”

Sam stood up. “What do you want out of us?”

“I want to be with you. I’d give up everything to be with you. I’d be content with just running my bar, if I had you by my side. Of course, I have to rebuild it.”

“I’ll pay for it to be rebuilt. I’m glad that no one got hurt, though.”

“Me, too, Samantha. I’ll let you rest. I’ll see you in the morning,” he stood up and went to leave the room.

Sam grabbed his arm gently. “Wait,” she took a deep breath.

He looked into her eyes. “What is it?”

“I *love* you. I’m sorry that I was stupid enough to fall for Parker. I’m sorry I ever laid eyes on him. I’m sorry that I ever had sex with him,” she wiped the tears as they streamed down her face. “Jack, I want ... to be ... with...”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I want *you*.”

He pulled her close to him and kissed her passionately. “Samantha, no more teasing?” he smiled.

“No more teasing,” she cried.

“Allure, I’ll always treat you with love and respect. I just want you so bad,” he said.

“I want you, too,” she said, as she closed the bedroom door and locked it. “Would you really give up your world for me?”

“There would not be much to give up. The money is here. The businesses can go. We’ll rebuild the bar. I never want to let you go again. Honey, when I said I owned you, I didn’t mean that I owned you. I *hate* how I treated you. I just want the chance to show you ... remind you of how we were.”

“Remind me...” she whispered.

He scooped her up carefully and laid her on the large king-sized bed. He laid next to her and held her tightly. “I do so love you, Allure, and I’ve *missed* you.”

“I missed you, too. No one was *ever* you,” she pulled him close

to her.

He slowly unbuttoned her blouse and ran his hand down her chest lightly. “Even when you were teasing me, you enjoyed it, didn’t you?”

“Yes, it brought me back to the way we were.”

“This is the way we can always be,” he whispered, as he kissed her neck.

“I’m sorry for hurting you,” she said.

“And, I’m sorry for hurting you. I won’t *ever* hurt you again. I love you, Allure.”

“Do you remember ... the night out on the balcony?”

“I’ll *never* forget,” he kissed her wanting mouth and rolled over on top of her. “I will always love you and treat you like you deserve.”

“Show me how much you’ve missed me,” she whispered, as he made passionate, gentle love to her.

The past few months were a betrayal, but her love erased the hate she once felt for this man. Her hate was *misplaced*. Yes, he hurt her, but she understood the reasons and she even hurt him back.

It wasn’t about the past anymore. It wasn’t about the betrayal of Parker. She thought in the back of her mind, that if she could she’d rub it in Parker’s face... she definitely would. *He* was the bastard. Pretended to be what he wasn’t, whereas, Jack was never fake about who he was. Yes, there was that day ... but it wasn’t rape... yes, it was a little rough... but it slowly was erased from her mind and all she wanted to be was here, in his arms, with the man she loved deeper than her own soul.

Lifetime

Sam woke up in the bed alone. “Oh,” she whispered, as he came into the room. “You’re *still* here?”

“I didn’t leave you. I just took a quick shower,” he said, as he dried his hair.

She took his hand and kissed it. “I thought for a minute...”

“I remember. I used to leave in the middle of the night. First, it’s my house. I *can’t* leave,” he laughed slightly. “And second, I *won’t* leave you again.”

“I so want to believe you. I’ve just been trusting the wrong people. I thought I loved Parker.”

“I know, and maybe you did ... do, but he *pretended* with you. I *never* pretend. I am sorry about hurting you. I won’t do that again. Sam, I want this to work this time with you. I love you and I don’t ever want to lose you. And, I like Sam much better than Lee. Where did the Lee come from?”

“I’m technically Samantha Lee. I know I had you call me Lee. Jack, I was undercover when you and I met. I know, eventually, you knew that. When I lost you ... I thought that you *didn’t* love me anymore. I was promoted to Detective soon after that, and Dylan and I were in an accident.”

“I heard about that. I am sorry about Dylan. Sam, I didn’t want to ruin your life. I thought I was being selfish. I knew you were up for that promotion. You were a damn good cop. I know why you loved it so much. You loved putting the degenerates behind bars. You loved the adventure. I didn’t want my life to touch yours.”

“I understand now ... I wish you would’ve told me. Jack, I would’ve chosen you ... we’d still be together and I would’ve never fell for all the lies that Parker convinced me of. He made me think that he loved me and that I could trust him. Where is he, anyway?”

“In the *tea room*, tied up. He’ll be there until you’re ready to deal with him. Are you hungry?”

“A little,” she said.

“I’ll have Claudine prepare something for us,” he smiled.

“Sounds good. Um, anything you want sounds good ... except.”

“I know ... no caviar ... I remember,” he picked up the phone.

“Yes, please prepare the special dinner now. Thank you,” he hung up.

“*Special* dinner?” she smiled.

“You’ll see. There is another thing I wanted to talk to you about,” he said, as she grabbed her robe and put it on.

“What? Is something wrong?”

“No, I wanted to tell you ... I thoroughly enjoyed your *teasing*. You know ... when you cuffed me to the chair ... I would’ve enjoyed it *more* if you followed through instead of stabbing me.”

“I am so sorry about that. How is your leg?”

“It’s fine, Allure. It’s fine. You didn’t stab it *too* deep,” he kissed her cheek. “I just wanted to tell you that ... in case you ever wanted to do that again,” he said, as there was a knock on the door.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” she flirted.

He opened the door and rolled in the dinner cart. “Thank you, Claudine. You may retire for the evening.”

“Thank you, sir,” she said, as she closed the door.

He pushed the cart over to the bed. “Oh, don’t get up. You just relax. I just had her prepare a little something for us,” he lifted the tray and smiled. “Do you remember?”

“Our *first* meal?” she laughed.

“Yeah, hard boiled eggs, potato chips, and of course, shrimp on a tossed salad. If I remember, that’s all you had in your cabinet.”

“Well, I still can’t cook. I order out a lot,” she laughed.

“Well, I also had my best bottle of *Chardonnay* sent up. You still like white wine, right?”

“Yes, I do. I still like my beer now and then, too.”

He rolled his eyes. “Yeah, I know.”

“Oh, just because *you’re* so refined. You own a bar but you don’t drink beer?” she laughed.

“I don’t like beer.”

“You don’t like beer because it’s in a bottle. You should try it. You don’t know if you like it unless you try it.”

“Drinking from a bottle never had any appeal to me,” he said, as he took a bite of his food.

“You should try it. At least once. I got it ... go ahead. Swig from the bottle.”

“You *can’t* be serious,” he laughed.

“I’ll do it, if you do,” she smiled.

“Are you *daring* me?”

“Yup, I can always *tease* you if you don’t,” she flirted.

He picked up the bottle of wine and shook his head. “Oh, what the hell?” he said, as he swigged the wine from the bottle.

“See, it wasn’t *that* bad, was it?”

“I guess it was all right.”

“You have to do it a certain way,” she said, as she took the bottle from his hand. She lightly ran her tongue around the opening of the bottle and slowly slid it into her mouth. She tilted her head back and swigged gently. She pulled it out of her mouth and went to wipe the wine that dripped down her chin.

“Oh, let me,” he said, as he kissed the wine off her chin. “You’re right. You’re *so* much better at it than I am,” he kissed her cheek.

“I could teach you a few things,” she smiled.

“You have and I know there is so much more to learn from you,” he laid down on the bed and leaned his head on his hand, as his elbow balanced him.

She laid down next to him and touched his face. “I feel like we’ve always been together.”

“We *will* always be together. I love you, Samantha. You’re such a beautiful, sexy, and loving woman. I don’t want us to be ruined by our past.”

“Neither do I,” she smiled. “Will you stay in here with me tonight?”

“I’d be happy to,” he kissed her mouth softly. “I’ll do whatever you want.”

“Just always be honest, always love me, and *always* ... look at me... the way you’re looking at me now.”

“You do the same and we’ll be just fine.”

Resolution

Jack watched as she slept peacefully. He closed his eyes and laid back into the pillow. *I wish I never hurt you. I will make it up to you. I love you, Allure, and I've loved you for so long. I won't allow the life to hurt you anymore. I'm done.* His mind drifted back in time and the love in his heart for her grew more and more as he remembered their past.

Jack watched as she slept. He lightly kissed her cheek and touched her tattoo that was on the small of her back. "I love you, Allure. I don't ever want to be without you," he whispered as she opened her eyes.

"What are you doing?" she smiled as she rolled over.

"Just watching you, Allure," he smiled.

"Why do you call me that?" she lightly touched his face.

"Because you are so alluring. I love you and I want to always be this way," he kissed her.

"I love you, Jack," she held him close.

"I love you, too, Lee. I need to be with you. I hate that we're keeping this between us," he sighed.

"So am I. I'm sorry, is it time?" she asked.

"I don't know. I want you to always be protected," he slowly sat up. "I have to go now," he said.

"Please, stay the night," she cried.

"I can't..."

"Jack, make love to me again, please, before you go..." she held out her hands.

"Now, how could I resist those beautiful dark eyes," he laid back in the bed and held her close.

He opened his eyes and saw her smiling at him. "Morning. How did you sleep?" he kissed her forehead.

"Wonderfully," she hugged him tightly.

"I told you I'd be here when you woke up," he kissed her mouth.

"Yes, you did and you are," she held him tightly. "I think I have

to deal with Parker, but I just don't know how to handle it."

"You want to rub us into him, don't you?"

"In a way, but I don't want you to get the wrong idea," she said, as she sat up.

"You deal with him however you see fit. If you need my help, I will be here. I have to make some calls for the bar today. I want to build it as soon as possible."

"You should make it twice the size and have food served."

"Really? Never thought about that," he said.

"Oh, yeah, on the bar, serve, well, bar food, like wings or whatever, even have popcorn, pretzels, or chips on the bar, but also serve simple lunches and dinners. You know like hot and cold sandwiches maybe even pizza," she smiled.

"You and your *pizza*," he laughed.

"Can't help it. I *love* it. But, I'm sorry. It's your bar. I didn't mean to imply anything..."

He took her in his arms. "Would you become my *partner*?"

"You were serious, weren't you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Before ... you said you wanted us to be partners. I thought you just meant..."

"Just lovers?"

"Yeah, *sex* partners."

"I *always* wanted more. I'd like you to buy into the bar, that is, unless you're going back to the force."

"I can't do that. I can't go back. Even though Luke *fixed* those murders that I committed, I wouldn't feel right about it. I don't know *anything* about running a bar. I can't even balance my checkbook. Do you have an accountant or something?"

"No, I handle the books myself now. I have gotten pretty good at it."

"Oh, right, you do have that degree in business management."

"Yes, I use it more than I thought I ever would."

"Well," she got up and sat on his lap. "Um, the only thing that we'd have to do ... I mean if we're partners..."

"What's that?"

"Stop killing those who piss us off," she smiled.

"Oh, if that's what *you* want," he teased.

"I think we can run an honest business. We both have money and don't have to worry about anything. I do still have to take care of Dylan."

“I know. How is he anyway?”

“Oh, I have to check on that. Parker knew where he was. He better not have hurt my other brother.”

“I doubt that he did, but I can look into it for you.”

“If he did, I will kill Parker myself. Do you have a problem with that?” she asked.

“No, that’s fine. It would be your last kill,” he kissed her softly. “Do you *know* what you’re going to do with Parker?”

“Not yet. Why did you keep him around if he was such an ass?”

“To keep an eye on him. I like knowing where my brother is at all times. You can do what you wish with him.”

“I still have to face the liar. Oh, I wonder if Luke caught his friend,” she said.

“Um, Sam, do you want to stay here ... I mean...”

“*Live* here?”

“Yes, do you?”

“I don’t know. I do really love this bed,” she smiled, as she ran her hands over the mattress.

“Well, the bed is yours, wherever you want to live.”

“I don’t want to be without you ... but your house...”

“I know ... it’s too big.”

“Yeah, it’s *very* big.”

“Then we can build us a new home, if that’s what you want. Allure, I’m going to spoil you and love you. I will do whatever it takes to make you happy.”

“Just remember our promises we made last night and we’ll always be together and happy,” she laid down on his stomach and hugged him tightly. “I could hold you like this forever. Promise me that this isn’t a dream.”

He ran his hands lightly down her back. “It’s not a dream. I promise you that,” he held her tightly.

She slowly sat up. “I think I’m going to take a shower.”

“I’ll get us some coffee,” he said.

“Oh, and if we move into our own home, no servants, well, except for a *cook*,” she smiled, as she headed into the bathroom.

“If you insist...” he smiled, as he leaned back into the pillow.

The Tea Room

Sam dried her hair and got dressed. She headed into the bedroom and put on her shoes. She headed out into the hallway, where Jack was standing, looking over the railing. “Is something wrong?”

“No, do you want to see him now?”

“Yeah, I want to get it over with,” she said.

He took her hand and led her down the stairs. “He’s in the tea room. It’s down the hall. Do you want me to take you there?”

“Yes, and I was right, this house is way too big,” she smiled. “*Tea room,*” she laughed.

“Yeah, it’s a *tea room*. I have my grandmother’s collection of teacups in there. That’s about it, except for a few pieces of furniture. *Tea room.*”

She kissed him softly. “Then, in our new house, we’ll have a tea room, too.”

“Are you sure you’re ready?”

“Jack, something *is* bothering you. Tell me. I didn’t mean to tease you about the house.”

He touched her face. “You were right. It is way too big. My life meant nothing unless you were in it. I will never forget how I hurt you.”

She wiped his tears. “Don’t. Please, we’re passed that. Last night was so amazing and loving. You’re a very loving man. You just needed someone like *me* to show you that you can be that way.”

“You’re so right,” he said, as he opened the door to the tea room. He held her face and kissed her softly as Parker watched. “Go on. If you need me, I’ll be right there.”

“Thank you,” she said, as she headed into the room and faced her betrayer. She looked at the man who stood over him. “Who are you?”

“Number two,” he said.

“What’s your *name*?” she asked.

“Lionel.”

“I’m Sam.”

“I know who you are. I’m glad that you’re here ... where you

belong.”

“You think I belong with Jack?” she smiled.

“I was the *only* one he trusted enough to talk to about you,” he smiled. “I am glad you’re here. *This* man hurt you?”

“Yes,” she said.

“What do you want with him?” Lionel asked.

“Untie him and please leave.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” she said.

He did as instructed and then left the room. She glared at Parker, who looked up at her. “So, what are you going to do? Kill me, too?”

“I thought about it but, no, I’m not. I want you to tell me why you did all this.”

“I fell in love with you. You fell in love with me. Remember what we meant to each other.”

“All that crap was a *lie*. I can’t live a lie with you. You *lied* to me. Tell me the truth or I will beat the living *crap* out of you.”

He stood up. “You *couldn’t* hurt me. You *love* me,” he said softly.

She punched him in the face and he grabbed her arms. He pulled her into a strong kiss. She lifted up her knee and kneed him in the groin. “Sit down and don’t *ever* touch me. You don’t know what love is. Love is when you’re truthful.”

“You’re sleeping with your *rapist*! How stupid is that?”

She shook her head. “He *didn’t* rape me. I *lied*!”

“You *lied*? I saw the bruises.”

“I like it rough sometimes. That’s all. It got a little rougher than normal. Why’d you kill my brother?”

“He was going to tell you that I was a dirty agent.”

“So, that’s why he came to my place that day?”

“Yes, we followed him. I didn’t expect him to hang on that long, but then, *you* were *unable* to save him,” he laughed.

“I’m much stronger now, you know.”

“Yeah, you’re a *killer* now.”

“And so are you and I taught you how to be one again. You can thank the use of your hand for me.”

“I do appreciate everything you did for me. Sam, I do love you. At first, I wanted to use you, yes, to kill my brother.”

“Why? What did Jack *ever* do to you?”

“He has everything and I have nothing. He has power and money and women ... I had nothing. I wanted what was his.”

“Did you know that Jack and I were involved seven years ago?”

“No. I didn’t know until I heard you two talking. I figured he had told you what I did.”

“I don’t know what to do with you. Lies. You killed me inside. You broke my heart. You betrayed me. I *don’t* forgive betrayal. You and I will never be anything, ever again.”

“What’s Jack going to do with me?”

“He left it up to *me*,” she said, as he stood up.

“Sam, please, you loved the way I made love. You said you never felt that way before.”

“I hadn’t. I never felt like this before. I tried to get passed my love for Jack, first, with Ed and then ... with *you*. By the time you and I were together, I was so hell bent on hating Jack, that I enjoyed being with you. Now, I see you for who you really are. You’re *pathetic*. You not only betrayed me. You killed my brother. You shot my best friend. *No* one touches my family.”

“You’re with Jack again, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, and I’ll *always* be with him, as long as he keeps his promises and I keep mine. I am my own woman. You never owned me. Jack doesn’t own me. The one thing about Jack is that he *never* lied to me about who he was. He loves me and I love him. I’ve loved him for a long time. I just thought a long time ago, that I was never getting him back. Now that he’s back in my life, I’ll do whatever I can to keep him with me.”

“What about *me*?”

“*You*? That’s all you care about?” she shook her head. “I *hate* betrayal. You are so lucky that I don’t have my gun right now. I just want to kill you for what you did to me and Luke.”

“Take your *best* shot,” he snapped.

She turned towards the door and then spun around. She kicked him across the room. He flew into the wall and landed on the floor. She walked over to him and kicked him in the chest. “I should’ve let you bleed to death on the balcony. Now, I know why he wanted you dead. You’re nothing to me. If Jack wants you around, that’s his business, but if you ever touch me, talk to me, or even *look* at me, I won’t hesitate to kick the crap out of you,” she said, as she headed towards the door.

Jack was standing in the doorway, smiling at her. “Feel better?”

“Much. I didn’t break any teacups. They are *very* beautiful,” she smiled. “I’m hungry. I guess I worked up an appetite.”

“There’s some food in the kitchen. Go ahead. I’ll be right there,” he said, as he kissed her softly. She headed down the hall and he went into the room.

He stared at his brother. “*Stand*,” he said.

“You knew ... you knew it was her, when you sent me for her, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did. I hadn’t seen her in a long time, but after what Kyle did... I was going to tell her. You *weren’t* supposed to kill him. You were supposed to bring him to me so *she* could deal with him. You’re such a loser. Always have been. You know, if I knew you were going to sleep with her, I would’ve killed you before you got the chance.”

“Jack, I love her, too.”

“Yes, and look at how you showed her. I know that I hurt her once, but I didn’t mean to. I *never* lied to her. I was always truthful with her. You, on the other hand, you have no honor and no loyalty.”

“What are you going to do with me?”

“You ... have two choices,” he smiled.

“Which are?” Parker crossed his arms.

“You can work in the bar as a bartender or you will *die*. You choose,” he smiled.

“Bar? I blew it up,” he said.

“It is being built as we speak. In a few weeks, the *Razor’s Edge* will have two owners. You *not* being one of them.”

“Sam?”

“Yes, isn’t that wonderful. We’re together. Last night, we made *passionate* love and the best part of it is because we truly love each other. I may not do a lot of good things, but now that I have her back in my life, I’m changing my life around. You should’ve thought about *that*. Maybe you wouldn’t have lost her back to me.”

“Death or *bartending*?”

“Yes, since you blew up the bar, Steve quit. I guess it was a little too close for him. Such a *wuss*.”

“I’ll bartend, I guess. Does *she* know?”

“Why?”

“She threatened to kill me if I even look at her,” Parker said, as he put his hands in his pockets.

“I will tell her. Don’t piss her off and don’t touch her or I *will* kill you. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I do.”

“You are lucky.”

“Why? Because you didn’t kill me?”

“No, because *she* didn’t,” he said. “Go now, oh, by the way ... your friend Drew...”

“He’s *dead*, isn’t he?”

“Yes, and you’ll *never* find him.”

“I figured as much. I can go?”

“Leave, but you *will* be watched,” he said, as Parker left the house.

Back Shot

Sam looked up from the table as Jack joined her. “You let him go?”

“He’ll be working at the bar as the bartender. It was that or be killed,” he smiled.

“Oh, well, all right,” she said.

“Let’s concentrate on us. I want us to do it right.”

“So, what do we do first?”

“Well, I’d like your help designing the bar. You’re the one with all the ideas. I already made some calls and they’re clearing the debris out now.”

“Really?”

“Yes, Samantha, we’re in this together. I hope you don’t mind that I hired him.”

“No, *you* can deal with him mostly, though, *right?*”

“Yes, don’t worry. If he bothers you, I’ll take care of my brother once and for all.”

“I appreciate it. I feel like I can finally take a breath. These past few months, I’ve been lost and betrayed. I guess it’s still hard to believe that we’re together again. I missed you and now, you’re back in my life.”

“It’s all right. I understand. This is new to me, too. We’re both changing our lives. It’s a big step. We’ll do it together.”

“It’s a whole new life and I guess I’m a little afraid.”

“Of what?”

“What will happen? I don’t want our lives to become uneventful because of our so-called new life and I don’t want our old lives to come back and haunt us.”

“Well, let’s do it this way. We’ll plan the bar and plan our new home, and then you and I will take a vacation. Some place where we can be alone with no worries and just get to know each other all over again. We can talk or just sit and hold each other. Whatever we want to do. I want to know who you are right now.”

“I’d like that. We could go to my cabin, unless you don’t want to because I was there with Parker.”

“I heard you taught him how to shoot again,” he sighed.

“Yes. I didn’t realize it was a mistake.”

“It’s not a mistake.”

“It was. He shot Luke.”

“I’m sure Luke is all right now. Speaking of Luke, I’d like to get to know your best friend. I also would like to finally meet Dylan.”

“Oh, did you call? He’s all right, isn’t he?”

“Yes, he is. How bad is he?”

“He doesn’t do much except stare out the window. He knows when I’m there, though.”

“Good. You should go see him.”

“I probably should. Maybe I’ll do that today. I just hope that Parker doesn’t follow me.”

“I have a man watching him.”

“Oh, that Lloyd person...”

“He’s been *dealt* with. I am sorry.”

“Don’t be,” she kissed his cheek. “I need to grab my bag and then I’ll head to see Dylan. Soon, I’ll bring you to meet him.”

“I’d like that,” he said.

She headed up the stairs and grabbed her bag. She hurried down the stairs and out the front door. As she was getting into her car, she heard a click from behind her ... *bang!*

She dropped to the ground as Jack ran out to the driveway. He stared at his brother as he rushed to her side. “Samantha?” he wept as he held her body.

She looked up at him. “My back, he got me in the back,” she cried.

Jack looked up at his man. “Lionel, take him and call an ambulance.”

“Yes, sir,” he said.

Jack held pressure on her back while he held her close. “Don’t leave me. Please, don’t leave me. I finally got you back.”

“It hurts,” she cried. “I can’t... catch... my... breath.”

“I know. I’ll take care of you. Where the *hell* is that ambulance?” he cried, as the sirens sounded in the distance.

The EMTs rushed over to her and took her out of Jack’s arms. “Take care of her,” Jack said.

“We will, sir. We’re bringing her to Mercy General.”

“I’ll be right there. Oh, please call a Captain Lucas Ford. He’s a captain of computer crimes at the 46th precinct. He needs to be there.”

“Yes, sir,” he said, as they loaded the gurney into the ambulance.

Jack walked into his house. "Lionel? Where is he?"

"In the tea room."

"Give me your gun," he said.

"Sir?"

"He shot her. *No one* hurts her," he said, as he took the gun out of Lionel's hands. He stormed into the tea room and glared at his brother. He aimed the gun at him.

Parker looked up at him. "I didn't *mean* to shoot her," he said.

"Liar. You can't have her, so you kill her?"

"She's dead?"

"Yes, you killed her. You killed the one woman I ever loved. You are going to die now."

"Please, don't kill me. Please, don't..."

He aimed, fired, and left the room. Jack walked out into the hallway. "Make sure no one goes in there."

"Is he dead, sir?" Lionel asked.

"No, but I'm sure he *wishes* he were. I'll be at the hospital."

"All right, sir. I hope she gets better."

"So do I," Jack said. "Oh, you better get my brother a towel, and call Dr. Edmonds. He'll know how to help my brother."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Samantha will deal with Parker later. I will be at the hospital," Jack hurried out to his car and drove away.

Helpless

Jack rushed down the hallway. “Where is Samantha Lange?” he asked the nurse.

“She’s in with the doctor. You can wait in the waiting room with her friend.”

He headed into the waiting room and looked at Luke. “Any word?”

“No, what the hell happened?”

“Parker shot her in the back. She was leaving to go see Dylan.”

“I came from seeing him. He’s all right. He’s been asking for her.”

“Damn. I should’ve went with her.”

“Don’t blame yourself. She needs us to both be strong for her. You do really love her, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do. I’m changing my life for her and she’s doing the same for me. I let her go once and I won’t do that again.”

“Did you *kill* him?”

“No, just made him *suffer*,” Jack buried his face in his hands.

“She’s strong,” Luke said, as the doctor walked into the room. The two men stood up.

“Are you two with Samantha?”

“Yes, how is she?” Jack asked.

“We’re taking her up to surgery. The bullet punctured her lung, but she’s strong and healthy. Is she on any medication?”

“Um, she was put on antibiotics a few weeks ago,” Luke said.

“Right. I saw her chart. She injured her stomach,” he said.

“She was *raped*...” Luke said, as he shifted his eyes towards Jack.

“That’s not what the chart says. Oh, I see, yeah, she refused the rape kit ... hmm, all right. I understand now,” he said.

“What is it?” Jack asked.

“Please, tell us,” Luke said.

“She told the doctor it was rough sex but to keep it quiet. Oh, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“Was it *rape*?” Jack gulped.

“I don’t know. I only know what the chart says. You’ll get a chance to talk to Samantha before she goes upstairs. Follow me,” he said.

Jack looked at Luke. “I know that I hurt her. I won’t ever do that again. I was so wrong and I’m going to make it up to her.”

“Did she make love to you?”

“Yes, beautifully.”

“Then she forgave you. But, she told me that it *wasn’t* rape. Yes, she said you hurt her, but she *wasn’t* talking about that,” he said. “Come on. Let’s go.”

They headed down the hall and walked into her room. She smiled lightly at her two favorite men. “I’ll be fine,” she whispered.

“I know you will,” Jack kissed her cheek. “You need to focus on healing so we can move ahead with the plans.”

“Don’t wait for me. Just do it. I trust you.”

“I love you, Allure. Please, just get better.”

“I will. You didn’t kill him, did you?”

“No, but I *did* shoot him.”

“Where?”

“Where he’ll *never* have another lover again,” he said.

“Good,” she said, as the orderlies walked into the room, followed by the doctor.

“She’ll be in surgery for a few hours and then in recovery. Once she’s brought to her room, I’ll let you know and you can be with her then.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Jack said, as they wheeled her out of the room.

Jack looked at Luke. “Are you staying?”

“Yeah, just until I know she’s out of surgery and is fine.”

“I have to do something, but I’ll be back.”

“What *are* your plans?”

“We’re becoming partners in the bar,” he said. “Please, call me if you hear anything before I return.”

“I will,” Luke said, as he headed down to the waiting room.

Healing

Samantha woke up and noticed Jack, asleep, with his head on her bed. “Jack?”

He looked up quickly and smiled at her. “Allure, how are you feeling?”

“Very sore but I’ll live.”

“I know you will. I’ve been sitting here watching you sleep. You’re so beautiful. I thought that he took you away from me again. I couldn’t bare to lose you.”

“You’re not going to. No bullet or man will ever take me away from you.”

“You’ll have to stay in here for a few days, but when you get out, our house will be done.”

“So fast? How?”

“I have men working night and day. I had the debris from apartment building that was behind the bar cleared and we’re building a real house ... a home there.”

“Really?” her eyes lit up.

“I figured since we’ll be concentrating on our bar, that we should live close by.”

“Sounds perfect. I want to help decorate, if that’s all right.”

“Of course. I let the entire staff go at the house, except for Claudine. I hired her to be our personal cook. She will only work in the evenings for our dinners. Lunch and breakfast we’ll have to take care of ourselves.”

“That’s fine. Oh, is Luke still here?”

“He’s asleep over there. He loves you very much.”

“I know and I love him, too. He’s a good man.”

“I like him very much. I know why you love him so,” he lightly touched her cheek. “I need to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“When ... um, when I hurt you ... you didn’t have an exam, why?”

“Even though I said the words ... I knew you could never rape

me. I knew ... I don't know how ... that it was rough but not rape. I'm sorry I called you a rapist. Because of my hate and anger, I turned a rough passion into rape. I'm sorry. I was more upset with the way my feelings were turned inside out."

"I will never hurt you again. I'm so sorry that I hit you and made love to you that way. I won't *ever* hit you again. I promise. I don't want to lose you ever again," he kissed her mouth softly. "Now, you close your eyes and rest."

"I want to look at you. I'm afraid if I go to sleep you'll be gone again."

"I won't leave you. When you come home, I will take care of you. I'll hold you and just love you. I can't be without you ever again. No more eliminations. No more dirty deeds. Our bar, our home, and our life will be on the straight and narrow."

"We can still play our *games*, right?" she raised her eyebrow up and down.

"Of course. I can't *wait* until you tease me again."

"I am sleepy," she said.

"That's the morphine. You just rest and I'll be here with you until you come home. I won't leave your side," he whispered, as she fell asleep.

For three days, Jack sat at her bedside and held her hand. He knew she was getting stronger and couldn't wait to take her home. It was finally over and they could start their new life together. Parker had been dealt with. He may limp now, but he knew to *never* hurt Samantha again.

Jack and Luke followed the nurse as she wheeled Sam out of the hospital. Jack helped her into the car and turned to Luke. "You're welcome to follow us. I think you should see it, too."

"I'd like that. I'll be right behind you," he said.

Jack drove for a few miles and pulled over. "Samantha? I want to blindfold you, but if you're not comfortable..."

"It's all right. I *trust* you," she said.

He put the blindfold around her eyes and then continued driving. When he stopped the car, he got out and opened the car door and helped her out of the car. "Ready?" he said, as Luke pulled in the driveway next to them.

He slowly removed her blindfold and she gazed with awe at the

beautiful house that was in front of her.

“It’s beautiful,” she cried. “It seems so strange to be in the city like this, but it’s gorgeous.”

Luke kissed her cheek. “It’s definitely you. A nice balcony and front porch. And right next to your bar,” he pointed.

She looked to her left and smiled at the workers who were hammering the new bar together. “I like it. It’s coming along great.”

“In another week it will be finished and we can have our grand opening. Luke, you will be coming, right?”

“Yes, I wouldn’t miss it for the world. So, are you going to drink a *beer* that day?” he laughed.

“Very funny,” Jack shook his head. “I just *might*,” he laughed. “Come, let me show you the house.” He took her hand and led her into the house. “I tried to keep it simple, but added rooms that you’d like. Here we have our living room,” he led her to the kitchen. “We have a large eat-in kitchen. Claudine will be working from five to seven. That’s when she’ll cook us dinner. She will also do the grocery shopping. If you want something, add it to the list on the refrigerator.”

“Sounds good. I can do that,” she said.

“If we want to eat when she’s not here, *I’ll* cook,” Jack laughed.

“Good and I *promise* that I *won’t* cook,” she laughed.

“Through those doors is a dining room, which is also like the tea room. You can see that later. I wanted to show you our offices and the work out room.”

“We have a work out room?”

“Yeah, I know how you like to train and keep in shape. I know it will be a while before you can do that again.”

“Oh, show me,” she said, as he led her and Luke down the hall. “Two offices, one for me and one for you, but this is the workout room. I hope I got everything that you like,” he said.

She opened the door and smiled. “It’s perfect. You know me so well,” she hugged him.

“I only lightly furnished the house. I figured you’d want to decorate. We can look through the mass catalogs I collected and order whoever you want.”

“The bed? It’s the *same*, right?” she asked.

“Yes, I kept that bed that you love so much,” he kissed her.

Luke smiled at the two. “I have to get to work. Samantha, I’m glad you’re better. I’ll see you both soon. Call me if you need me, but you’re in good hands,” he shook Jack’s hand and kissed Sam’s cheek, then he left.

“Show me our room, please,” she said.

He carefully lifted her up and carried her up the stairs. “There are two rooms up here. A guestroom and our master bedroom. Off the master, there’s a master bath. It has a garden tub and a separate shower,” he carried her into the bedroom.

She smiled at the room, as it was filled with deep red velvet roses. “Oh, Jack, it’s beautiful,” she said, as he laid her on the bed.

“I’m glad you like it. Anything you think it needs, we’ll order. We have a balcony, too. I know you’re still healing, but can I just lie with you and hold you? I feel like it’s been forever.”

“Please, do,” she said, as she carefully laid in his arms.

“Are you hurting?”

“Back is still sore, but you’re making me feel better,” she held his arms as he wrapped them around her. “I love you,” she whispered, as she fell asleep.

He held her close to him and vowed that he would never let anyone ever hurt her again. He hoped that Parker had learned his lesson, but if he did it again, he would lose *more* than just his manhood.

New Hope

Samantha took Jack's hand. "Now, I don't know if he'll understand that you're with me," she smiled.

"I'm sure it'll be fine," Jack said, as she opened the door.

Sam walked over to Dylan, who was sitting in his favorite chair, looking out the window. He was holding his teddy bear close to him. She and Jack sat down and pulled up a chair. "Dyl?" she whispered.

Dylan turned his head to her. "Sam here?"

"Yes, honey, I'm here. How are you?"

"Dyl good," he smiled. "Mom ... Dad, angels?"

"Yes, they're angels now. Do you see them?"

He placed his hand on his heart. "Here."

"You're right," she kissed his cheek. "Dyl, I want you to meet my friend. This is Jack."

Dylan looked in Jack's direction. "Love," he said, as he patted Jack's hand.

"Hi, Dylan. Yes, I love your sister."

"Sam good."

"Yes, she definitely is."

Sam stood up as the doctor came into the room. "Ms. Lange?"

"Oh, Dr. Woods," she said.

"Can we speak outside, please?"

"Of course. Jack, I'll be right back," she followed the doctor into the hall.

Jack looked at Dylan. "That's a great bear you have there."

"Sam bear," he said.

"She gave you that bear, it must be very special."

"Sam love?"

"Yes, I love her and she loves me. She loves you, too, very much."

"Hurt Sam?"

"No, I won't hurt Sam."

Dylan shook his head. "I ... hurt Sam."

"It was an accident. That's all."

“My fault...” he cried as tears streamed down his face.
Jack wiped his tears. “It wasn’t your fault.”
“Sorry,” he said.

Sam looked into Dr. Woods’ eyes. “What is it? Is something wrong?”

“Um, he’s starting to remember the accident.”

“Oh, I didn’t think he’d be able to. You all told me severe brain damage.”

“We’ve started him on a new protocol. It’s a new drug regimen.”

“It’s healing his memory?”

“Well, it’s healing something in his brain. He is talking better than he was before. He’s making eye contact and he won’t let go of that bear you gave him,” he smiled.

“Is my brother coming back to me?”

“Not all the way, but he may be improving. He has already improved. He hasn’t had an outburst in ten months. My guess in another six months, you may be able to have a real conversation with him.”

“That’s why he remembers my parents and Kyle being gone, right?”

“Yes, if he gets better, you may want to think about having him moved to a less confining institution. Maybe even a residential home.”

“Doc, will he walk again?”

“He *has* been walking. He’s even using a cane.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful.”

“Now, go visit with your brother,” he said.

“Thank you,” she said, as she headed back into the room. “So, how is he?”

“Good, Sam,” Dylan smiled.

She kneeled down and held his hand. “I heard you were getting better.”

“Feel it, Sam.”

“I know you feel it.”

Jack looked at her. “He said he hurt you.”

“Oh, Dyl, you didn’t hurt me. You never could. I love you and it wasn’t your fault.”

“Promise?”

“I swear. You *didn’t* hurt me.”

He lifted his hand and touched her cheek. “No ... kids. No ... *baby*.”

“It’s all right. I’m not the mothering type,” she smiled.

“Sor ... ry.”

She kissed his cheek. “Don’t be sorry. Just get well. Please.”

“Will do, Sam,” he said, as Jack and Sam stood up.

Jack led Sam out of the room. He put his arm around her. “Sam?”

“It’s all right. I’m fine. He’s getting better. It’s some new drug that’s making him better,” she said, as they walked out to the parking lot.

“What was this about *kids*?”

She turned and looked into his eyes. “I can’t have children. The accident... made me not be able to have kids. That’s all.”

“Sam, you never told me.”

“You want me to have kids?”

“No, I don’t want to have children, but you never mentioned it before. Why?”

“Because I can’t change it. When you and I were together before, I didn’t think it was forever and I was right, you *left*.”

“I am so sorry.”

“Don’t be. I should’ve told you, but when we were together, we were all about each other. But...”

“What is it?”

“I *was* pregnant.”

“You were? You never told me.”

“I lost the baby in the accident. I was six months pregnant. He was a boy. I’m sorry. I didn’t tell you because ... well, then he died and that was it.”

“A son? We have ... had a *son*?”

“Yes, I had him buried in *Our Lady of Angels* cemetery. My parents are buried next to him, as well as Kyle. I named him Jack Edward Lange. I should’ve told you.”

“You were planning on raising him alone?”

She stared at the ground and took his hands. “Yes. I thought you left me for another woman. I didn’t want to interrupt your life. After I lost him, I found out that I can’t have anymore children.”

“That’s the scar on your stomach, right?”

“Yes. I lost my entire uterus and part of my stomach. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I’m sorry that I lost our child.”

He hugged her tightly. “I’m glad you finally told me. Would you have told me if Dylan didn’t mention it?”

“Probably, I just didn’t think about it. I haven’t thought about it

for a while.”

He opened the car door for her. “Well, now that we are together, and it is about forever, we need to share more. All right?”

“If that’s what you want,” she smiled.

“It is, Allure, it is,” he said, as he started the car.

She looked over at him. “I’d like to take you to his site.”

“We’ll go now,” he patted her leg.

She took his hand and led him over to the small gravestone, *Jack Edward Lange*. She and Jack kneeled. “Do you think we should change it?”

“To?”

“Well, I named him without you.”

“Samantha, I like his name. I’m honored you named him after me. I would like my last name on his stone ... he was *our* son.”

“I’d like that, too. I should’ve told you I was pregnant. If I told you back then, what would’ve happened?”

“Oh, are you asking if I would’ve left you?” Jack slowly stood up.

She took his hands and gazed into his eyes. “Would you have left?”

“No. I would’ve been there for our son. I would’ve stayed. Samantha, I thought I was protecting you when I left. It turns out it just made both of us miserable. Yes, we both found others, but I can assume that we weren’t happy with them ... at least as happy as we were with each other.”

“You assumed right. Ed was a good man. I loved him, but he *wasn’t* you. When he died, I had given up on loving anyone ... ever again. I only had Luke,” she sighed.

“And *Parker*...” he cleared his throat.

“I don’t want to dredge up the mess with Parker. I made a big mistake. The truth is, after I found out the first time that he lied to me, I never trusted him again. When I told you that I killed him, the truth is, I had him tied up in a safe house. I eventually let him go and ... well... things happened. I always knew he was hiding something from me. I lied to him about you hurting me. I made him believe that I still wanted him, when the truth is ... I *didn’t*. I continued to have sex with him, in hopes that I’d be able to *forget* you. It *didn’t* work.”

“It’s all right. We’re together now and that’s the way it’s going to always be,” he kissed her softly. “Let’s go home,” he led her to the car.

Jack put his arm around Sam as they headed into the house. She sat next to him on their new sofa and laid her head on his shoulder. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you about our child. You know, we kept our entire relationship a secret. I think there's probably a lot we don't know about each other."

"Did anyone know you were pregnant?"

"Just Dylan. He was the only one I told about you. I didn't tell Luke, Kyle, or my parents. I couldn't. Dylan ... well, he was my big brother and I could tell anything to."

He looked into her eyes. "Sam, I've loved you for a long time. I know what kind of woman you are and you know what kind of man I am. We *belong* together."

"You're right. A lot has happened between us, both way back then and the past few weeks. I just don't want you to get tired of me."

He smiled. "Never. I never wanted anything more than I wanted you. You are always exciting and unpredictable ... to say the least."

"We're changing our lives and starting out fresh. I know it's strange, but I don't think we have to change *everything*," she turned and faced him.

"I already said I'd give up the other stuff for you," he said, as he lightly touched her cheek.

"I don't want you to. I want us to continue as we are, who we are."

"So ... does that mean ... if someone pisses us off..."

"Maybe ... depends on the person and how bad they piss us off," she reached up and kissed him tenderly. "Just ... *don't* tell Luke."

"Of course not. Our business is *our* business," Jack smiled. "And I can't wait until our business is officially open."

"Me, either," she kissed him softly. "Oh, do you know any single, gay men?"

"Why? Luke needs someone?"

"Yeah, the past few times he's had sex, it was with me. He needs someone to love, too."

"I could hook him up with Steve," he said.

"I thought Steve quit," she said.

"He did as the bartender, but I hired him as the cook, now that we have a kitchen."

"I think he'd be perfect for Luke," she smiled.

Keeping Life

Sam walked out to the balcony and sat down. She closed her eyes and sighed to herself. The shots of the past, echoed in her head. She could see the blood pour from the wounds as she rubbed her eyes. Life had certainly changed for her. She finally got back the man she deeply loved, but she also was realizing a lot about herself. She lightly touched her mouth as her mind drifted back in time...

She laid on the bed, with the towel wrapped around herself. "Jack? Are you awake?"

He opened his eyes and smiled. "You look lovely in that towel," he grinned.

"You have to leave, don't you?" she sighed.

"I'm sorry, Lee. Yes, I have something I need to take care of," he said.

"Tell me about it," she whispered.

"I can't share that part of my life with you. You know that. I love you, Lee, but you're a cop. Your loyalty is to your badge."

"My loyalty is to you ... always. I love you, Jack. Please, stay with me."

"I ... I can't. I'm sorry. Yes, I love you," he held her close as he dropped her towel. He ran his fingers over her barbed wire tattoo. "You know why I got this for you, don't you?"

"Yes, of course, so, you'll always be a part of me," she kissed him softly.

"Allure, you can be very strong and dangerous and sexy and I love that about you. But, it means that you are also mine," he kissed her hard.

"You're leaving me ... aren't you?" she pushed him away.

"How did you know..." he said.

"You never claim ownership on me ... you don't own me and you never will. I don't own you, Jack, I love you. Why are you leaving me?"

"I found someone ... someone I can screw whenever I want," he stood up and put on his pants.

"But we're in love ... are you saying you don't love me anymore?"

"No. I ... it's better this way. You'll forget about me."

"No, I never will. I will never love anyone more than I love you."

"I am sorry, Allure," he pulled her close and laid her on the bed. "I'm

sorry. I love the way we make love. Allure, if you were in a different line of work ... or even if I was ... maybe it would work ... but you're not a killer. You don't even get speeding tickets. I can't let you in my world. It's not the life for you."

"You don't get to say what I want out of life," she spat as she sat up and put on her robe.

"No, but I get to say what I want out of my life," he kissed her again. "I don't want to leave you ...but I have to," he put on his shirt and headed out the door.

Sam buried her face in her hands. "I want to be with you. I'd do anything ... I want to know..." she cried.

Sam jumped up as Jack put his hand on her shoulder. "Oh, you startled me," she said.

"Is something wrong?" he asked, as he sat down next to her.

"I was thinking about the night you left me."

"Oh, I handled that all wrong..."

"That's not why I was thinking about it. Jack, ever since you and I first became involved ... way back when. I also felt a *longing* to come into your world."

"You never said anything," he said, as he put his arm around her.

"I know. I always thought it was exciting. That's why I loved being an undercover officer. I was out on the streets ... doing things ... not always legal ... but I always had my ass covered. When Parker ... I don't mean to bring him up ... but when he gave me the instructions that I had to kill people ... I was at first very upset about it. My first kill was Scott. It was hard and I broke down afterwards. When I killed Alyssa, I closed my eyes and just shot her in the head. I didn't feel much when I killed Simon Elders. Parker said it would get harder ... but it got *easier*."

"Did you *enjoy* it?"

"I wouldn't say enjoy... it made me feel *alive*... and very *grateful* to be alive. I was turned on. To be honest, the so-called procedure was at first a cover-up, so that right after an elimination I could catch my breath and have time to myself."

"But ... you did this procedure, with Parker, correct?"

"Yeah, I needed to feel better. He did make me better, but I saw something in him that was like you. I know it's wrong, but I thought I hated you. Something in his eyes was so like you. I knew ... I thought I knew that I couldn't ever be with you again ... so I let myself be taken in by Parker."

“He is a very good liar. Most of the time I don’t know if he’s lying or telling the truth. I think that he does love you, but he doesn’t know anything about being in love with anyone but himself.”

“Jack, I’ve done a lot of killing for *you*,” she whispered.

“I know. Is there something *you* wanted?”

“Would you really kill for *me*?” she laid her head on his shoulder.

“Of course.”

“You *didn’t* kill Parker.”

“Did you want me to?”

“Um, yes, I mean, no. I guess ... I don’t know.”

“Allure, I would do anything for you. I love you. If you want me to...”

“No. I was just curious as to why you didn’t,” she sighed.

“I thought the best way to handle my brother is to make him suffer. He loves you and yet, he hurt you and lied to you. The only way to really make him pay is for him to suffer with his pride ... and you know, if he sees us, every day for the rest of our lives, loving each other, it’ll kill him inside. If he was dead, the suffering would be over. Did I not make the right decision?”

“It was the right one. I have to admit, that every now and then, I just may hit him if he looks at me the wrong way ... but I totally understand.”

“I knew you would, Allure,” he said, as she sat on his lap.

“I love you, Jack,” she said, as she looked into his eyes. “I want to be with you. I don’t want us to change for each other. I have to admit that ... yes, in the last seven years, I have changed. I’ve grown up. I’ve gotten stronger and I’ve learned a lot ... about myself.”

He lightly touched her cheek. “I am still learning about you. Is this what you really want?”

“Yes. I want us to be partners, but there is something that I’ve been very curious about.”

“What’s that?”

“Are all the bodies *really* buried in the construction site?”

He laughed. “No. That would be *too* obvious. There’s no way I would have bodies buried under places where families are going to live,” he kissed her softly.

“So, where are they?”

“Gone,” he said.

“Jack, don’t you *trust* me?” she asked, as she stood up and walked over to the railing.

“Of course, I trust you,” he stood up and put his hands on her

shoulders. “They’re disintegrated. I have a man who works at the crematorium. That’s all. Lloyd used to do clean up, but he’s ... well ... gone.”

She turned and faced him. “I’m sorry. I do have to ask ... how did you know about where Alyssa was?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. You told me the job was done. You gave me her necklace.”

“*Parker* got rid of her?”

“I would assume so ... unless he called his friend Drew.”

“I guess they got rid of her because Luke said there had been no sign of her or Scott.”

“The lawyer was discovered in his office,” Jack said.

“I know,” she sighed.

“Sam, is there something bothering you? We never really got into details before about this.”

“I’m sorry. I think I’m just kind of talking it out. I don’t really *like* killing people. The money was good...” she smiled slightly. “*Your* money was good ... but the *rush* ... the *thrill* ... the feeling inside me ... I can’t explain. I loved the adventure. When I was angry and focused on killing you ... there was the one thing I looked forward to ... before I did it.”

“What was that?”

“Making love to you ... I knew it was going to be the best sex I ever had and that’s because it was such a *rush* to want you. I wanted you for so long ... I know that I have you now ... I like the exciting ... *teasing* sex.”

“I did ... for the most part ... enjoy the teasing the night you were planning on killing me ... I am glad that we talked...”

She took his hand and led him into the bedroom. She sat on the bed and looked up at him. “I don’t know if I could’ve done it, though.”

“You don’t think you could’ve killed me?”

She shook her head. “At that moment, I was so turned on ... I know *you* were...” she smiled. “I wanted to make love to you. I wanted to be with you. I wanted you to remember who I was. I wanted you to know how much I loved you. It seemed that at that moment when I stabbed you, my love and hate combined and became the greatest emotion I ever felt. That’s why I stopped...”

He sat down next to her. “Sam, we’re in this together. We have a past together. We’ve had a bumpy ... strange past few months together. I should’ve never left you. I thought you were too good for me and I didn’t want to ruin your life.”

“You can’t ruin my life. For the first time in my entire life, I feel alive. I have control of my life. I have control of myself.”

“You also have control of me, too,” he whispered.

“I know I take a little control sometimes. I do like it when you take control, too. I like it when we have wild ... sexy ... *teasing* sex. I also love it when we just hold each other and make slow passionate love. I don’t ever want us to lose our spontaneity or our *passion*.”

“We won’t. I promise. Sam, let’s just live our life ... whatever happens ... happens to us ... together.”

“I do so love you. I need you, Jack.”

“I will always need you, too,” he said, as he kissed her passionately. “Do you mind a little passion right now?”

“Please, show me what you’ve got,” she pulled him on top of her.

He sat up. “Better idea,” he grinned.

“What’s that?” she sat on his lap.

“Let’s finish what we started that night...”

“Are you *sure*?”

“I want to be *teased* by you, Allure,” he said.

“If you insist,” she said. “Now...” she licked her lips as she untied his tie. She carefully tied his tie around his eyes. “Just feel it,” she said, as she unbuttoned his shirt. She gently removed his belt and made him stand. She pulled down his pants and he stepped out of them. She gently ran her hands all over his body.

She gently pushed him to sit on the bed and moved her body close to him. She unbuttoned her blouse and let it slide off her shoulders. She took his hands and rubbed them gently on her breasts.

He moved his face towards her chest and tenderly sucked on her nipples. She took his hand and ran it between her legs. “Can you feel me?”

“Oh, yes, Allure ... you feel so good,” he said.

She knelt on the floor in front of him and kissed his chest gently. She ran her hands down between his legs and squeezed softly. “I see you *are* turned on ... aren’t you?”

“Can I beg you yet?” he licked his lips.

“Go on ... *beg*,” she said, as she sat on his lap and rubbed herself against him.

“Now ... I want you now...” he panted.

She slowly removed his blindfold and gazed down at him. “First ... *touch* me.”

He ran his hands down her body. He fondled her nipples until

they peaked at the ultimate hardness. She pushed him on the bed and laid on top of him. “How *bad* do you want me?”

“I want it ... you ... bad. Don’t make me wait any longer,” he pleaded.

She gently ran her tongue down his neck, to his chest, and down to his waist. She lightly licked him all over and then ran her hands around his body.

When he couldn’t take the arousal anymore, he grabbed her and rolled over. “I want you now ... but *first*...”

“First what?” she moaned.

He sat on top of her legs and ran his fingertips over every inch of her body. “Do you *want* it?” he whispered, out of breath.

“Now, please,” she cried, as he ran his fingers lightly between her legs.

“Are you sure...” he grinned.

She reached up and pulled him down on top of her. “Make love to me, *now*...”

“That, I can do, my Allure,” he said, as he made gentle, passionate love to her. “How hard do you want it?”

“Harder, baby, please,” she said, as she kissed him passionately on the mouth.

“It’s not too hard, is it?” he asked, as the sweat poured down his face.

“No, it’s just right,” she said, as she held him close to her.

Jealousy

Sam woke up and noticed that Jack wasn't in the bed. She climbed out and got dressed. She opened the doors to the balcony and gazed over at the new bar. She noticed Jack in the parking lot ... with a *woman*. "What the hell?" she spat. She headed into the bedroom. She opened the drawer and pulled out her nine-millimeter handgun. She put it in her waistband and put on her leather jacket.

She hurried across the parking lot to the bar and opened the door. Parker looked up as she came in. "Um, you don't want to go in there," he said.

"Shut up, PK," she said.

"He *doesn't* want to be disturbed," Parker said.

"Don't you have some glasses to clean or something," she spat as she headed into the office. She stared at Jack and this woman, as she sat on his desk. "Who the hell is *this!*" she yelled as she pulled out her weapon.

Jack stood up and crossed his arms. "Um, Sam, this is Elaine," he cleared his throat.

"*And?*" she said as she jammed her gun against Elaine's head.

Elaine put her hands up. "Jack, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were involved with anyone."

"I *told* you I was," Jack grinned. "Now, *do* you believe me?"

"Who the hell are you?" Sam spat.

"I'm his ex-wife. I want my husband back," she gulped. "Who the *hell* are you?"

Sam grabbed her arms and made the woman face her. "I'm Samantha. Jack is *mine* and there's no way in hell that you're going to take him from me."

"No one owns Jack. He does what he wants," she put her hands on her hips.

Samantha hit her in the face with the butt of the gun. "Not anymore, you little bitch. Do you want to die now?" she aimed the gun at her woman's forehead.

“I’ll stay away from Jack. I promise,” she gulped.

“What *were* you doing here?”

“I was trying to ... um... *seduce* him.”

“Did he like it?” Sam spat.

“Um, I don’t know what you mean,” she cried.

“Did he get *hard*? Did you *turn him on*?” Sam spat.

“No. He didn’t. He told me he loved someone else and didn’t want me. I didn’t listen. I thought...”

“You thought you could sex him into wanting you again, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” she put her head down. “Please, don’t kill me. I’ll leave and keep my mouth shut. I don’t want to die. Please, don’t let me. My *kids* need me.”

“You have children?” Sam asked.

“Yes, two.”

“How old?” Sam slowly lowered the gun.

“Ten and seven,” she cried. “I’ll stay away from Jack. I promise. I won’t ever come back here again.”

Sam walked over to Jack and kissed him hard and then pushed him into the chair. “Just sit there,” she said.

“Can I go, please?” she looked at Jack.

Sam pushed her. “Don’t even look at my man again! Get out! If you come near this bar or Jack again, I will make your children *motherless*. Do you *hear* me?” she said.

“Oh, yes,” Elaine quickly picked up her purse off the desk and hurried out of the office.

Sam turned her attention to Jack. “So, tell me what was *that* about?”

He smiled. “*Jealous*?”

“Don’t play that with me. You know I love you, but I won’t *allow* you to be with any other woman than me, do you hear me?”

“I know, Samantha. I love you. She approached me in the parking lot. I told her to come in so we could talk. I tried to tell her about you, but she thought I was lying. Yes, she tried to seduce me, but, Allure, she’s *not* you. I only want you. I’ve never seen you so *riled* up,” he stood up and placed his hands on her shoulders.

“Oh, so *now*, you try to be nice,” she grinned.

“Always, Allure, you’re the only woman I want. I lost you once and I won’t lose you again. Why *didn’t* you kill her?”

“Children. If she didn’t have children, I would’ve put a bullet in her head. I know ... I shouldn’t have said that I owned you. I don’t own

you... but I was *pissed*. I *needed* to make my point.”

“Oh, you *definitely* made your point. You’re such a beautiful and sexy woman. You have my heart, Allure. This jealousy thing of yours really turned me on.”

“Don’t let it happen again just to get turned on,” she grinned.

He lightly touched her face. “God, I love you so much and I’m so glad that we’re together.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him softly. “Can you come home?”

“Yes, Allure,” he said as he picked her up and carried her out the back door of the office and towards the house.

“I do love you, Jack,” she said, as he carried her up the stairs to the bedroom.

“And I love you, Allure,” he said, as he laid her down on the bed.

Grand Opening

Sam and Jack opened the back door the new *Razor's Edge*. She held him close to her and kissed him softly. "Are you ready?"

"Definitely," he looked around at their staff. He nodded to Steve, who stood in the open kitchen, that could be seen by the patrons.

Parker stood nervously behind the bar and gazed over at Sam. Cal, Ryan, and Tom waited at the door. Lionel and Simon stood outside of Jack's office, as his bodyguards.

Sam looked at Jack and then he nodded to Tom. Tom unlocked the door and turned the sign to *open*.

He took Sam's hand and led her to the bar table that was located across from the bar, but near their offices. A sign gently hung from above the table that stated *reserved for Jack and Sam*.

Sam watched as patrons kept entering the bar, and either took a seat at one of the many bar tables or sat at the bar.

"This is better than I imagined," Jack said. "You were so right about the floor plan and the food and everything."

"Oh, there's Luke," she said, as she waved to Luke. "I think it's time."

"I'll be right back," Jack said, as he walked towards the kitchen.

Sam hugged Luke, "so, what do you think?"

"I think it's great. I love it in here. How are you and Jack doing?"

"Quite well. We're moving forward with our lives and we're learning to share."

"I heard that Dylan is improving."

"Yeah, he is."

"So, has Parker been giving you any problems?"

She laughed slightly. "Um, no. I haven't really talked to him since he shot me. Jack will deal with him more than I will."

"I think he already did," Luke laughed.

"Well, yeah, you know," she said, as Jack walked back over to the table with Steve.

"Um, Luke, this is Steve. He's our cook here," Jack introduced.

“Nice to meet you,” Luke’s eyes lit up.

“You, too. So, what do you think of the place?” Steve asked.

“I love it. It’s great. Didn’t you used to bartend here?”

“Yeah, but now I get to cook, which is what I really like to do,” he said.

“Really?” Luke smiled.

“Steve, why don’t you show Luke our kitchen after you get him a drink?” Jack said.

“Oh, sure, come on,” Steve said.

Luke kissed Sam’s cheek. “Thanks for the nudge,” he whispered.

“We all need *lovin’*,” she laughed.

“I’ll catch up with you later,” he followed Steve to the kitchen.

Sam looked at Jack. “How’d you do that?”

“I just told Steve to look out in the room and pick the one man he was attracted to.”

“And he picked *Luke*?”

“Yeah, go figure, but it all worked out. So, I see that Parker keeps staring over here at you.”

“Yeah, I should go talk to him. I’ll get our drinks,” she said.

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, he won’t hurt me. He *can’t* hurt me anymore. I won’t allow it.”

“And neither will I,” Jack said, as she walked away.

Sam walked over to the bar and sat down. Parker walked over to her. “So, boss, what can I get you?”

“Two beers, *bottles*,” she said.

“Jack doesn’t drink *anything* from a bottle,” he said.

“He does *now*,” she smiled.

“Coming right up,” Parker said, as he set the bottles in front of her. “Anything else?”

“Yeah, there is one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Why’d you shoot me?”

“I figured if I couldn’t have you, Jack shouldn’t either.”

“You know, PK,” she sighed. “If you didn’t lie to me ... if you didn’t kill my brother ... if you were up front with me about everything from the beginning ... maybe we would’ve had a chance.”

“You still loved Jack. How come you didn’t tell me about Jack in the beginning?”

“You told me he killed my parents. I started to hate him for that.

Things changed, Parker. I thought I was falling in love with you, but that person I loved wasn't real. The parts of you I saw reminded me a lot of Jack, the way we were together. I thought I loved you, but it *wasn't* real. Yeah, you betrayed me and broke my heart, but I'm better. You shot me in the back, you god damn coward. You're not the man I thought you were ... who you pretended to be. I don't know you and I don't know if I'll ever even like you."

"I'm sorry about everything. You're right, I should've told you the truth. I just wanted you to be as angry with my brother as I was."

"I don't know the issues between you and Jack, but that's not my problem."

"Well, I won't bother you. You'll just be my boss and I ... even if I wanted to ... I couldn't ... you know."

"I know what Jack did to you. It's too bad, because you *were* a good lover. You made me feel good, but that was just physical. I thought at the time we were making love, but it can't be love if it's not real, it was just *sex*," she picked up the beers.

"I am going to see a doctor to see if he can fix it. I can't live without ever having sex again," he said.

"Whatever makes you happy. I hope it works out for you and if it does, don't ever put your hands or any other part of your body on me," she said.

"I still love you, babe," he smiled.

"Don't call me anything but *Sam*. Do you hear me?" she said.

"Yeah, but you can still call me PK. I love hearing it from your mouth," he smiled.

"*Whatever*," she said, as she head over to Jack.

"A bottle?" he grinned.

"Yup, come on. Let's go in the office, that way no one has to see you drink it," she laughed.

Jack looked at Simon and Lionel. "Do *not* let us be interrupted."

"No, sir," Lionel said.

The couple walked into the Jack's office. Sam closed the door and locked it. She walked over and sat on his desk as he sat in the chair. She slowly sipped her beer and then set it on the desk. She slipped off her heels and gently ran her toes up and down his leg.

He smiled at her. "You once told me that you kept business and personal separate," he smiled.

"Oh, so, you *don't* want to break in your office," she flirted.

"Oh, I definitely do," he said. "What do you want me to do?"

She raised her skirt slightly as she straddled his lap. She ran her

hands over his chest. "Just love me, like you always do."

He stood up as she wrapped her legs around his body. He carried her over to the sofa and laid her down. He loosened his tie and threw it on the floor.

She pulled him close to her. "I love you, Jack," she whispered.

"I love you, Samantha," he kissed her softly as he made gentle love to her.

She sat next to him on the sofa. "So, not bad for a grand opening," she laughed.

He put his arm around her. "I like this partnership."

"So do I."

"So, you settle things with Parker?"

"Yes, he can't hurt me anymore."

"No one can. Believe me. *No one* can," he kissed her forehead. "Did you mean what you said the other day?"

"About what?"

"Keeping some things the same?"

"Yes, who do you need me to kill?" she laughed.

"Well..." he grinned.

"Jack?" she looked at him. "Who pissed you off?"

"There is just some unfinished business before we can move on."

She snuggled up to him. "I'll do whatever you need to find peace of mind," she said. "But, it's between you and me."

"Is the price still the same?" he asked.

She sat on his lap and faced him. "Yes, but my procedure is *different*," she smiled, as she kissed him.

"Oh, *how* is it different?" he lightly touched her cheek.

"You're the one I want the *procedure* with ... my way!" she laughed.

"I *love* your way. Is it all right, if now and then, we do it *my* way?" he asked.

"No hitting, but the blindfold and ropes are fine," she flirted.

"Good. I knew you'd be *mine* ... all the way."

She ran her hands up and down his chest. "Um, Jack?"

"What is it?" he asked, as he leaned back.

"I may be yours, but you're *mine*."

"I *like* that," he smiled.

"If you *ever* look at another woman again, I'll kill her. Do you hear me?"

“I don’t want anyone but you ... I promise.”

“Good. Always remember that I’m very good with a knife,” she ran her hands down his pants.

“Oh, you’re good with *a lot* of things. I remember and I’ll *never* forget.”

She kissed him long and hard. “How did that make you feel?”

“Like it should be *illegal*,” he laughed.

“Well, not *everything* we do is illegal, but since you played my game, we can break in my office and play *your* game, if you want,” she flirted, as she stood up.

He grabbed her and carried her into the adjoining office. He wrapped his tie around her eyes and held her close. “Strip!” he demanded.

She turned towards his hot breath. “*Make* me!”

“Do you *trust* me?” he lightly touched her face.

“With everything that I am,” she said, as she let her clothes dropped to the floor.