

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a white button-down shirt, stands against a backdrop of a city skyline at night. The lights of the buildings are visible in the background. The man is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

HIGHEST BIDDER CLUB

AUCTIONEER
to the
STRANGER

CASSI HART

Auctioned to the Stranger

Highest Bidder Club

Cassi Hart

Published by: Cheeky Publishing LLC

First Edition

Copyright © 2023 Cassi Hart– All rights Reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of various products referenced status and trademark owners of various products referenced in this work of fiction, which have been used without permission. The publication / use of the trademarks is not authorized, associated with or sponsored by the trademark owners. For any permission requests email cassi@cassihartromance.com

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Free Book for You



FREE BOOK!

NEVER PUBLISHED

Get all the latest updates first!



Be the first to know about new releases,
[join my list.](#)

*Dedicated to the ones that will stand up for a stranger.
You're the real angels in this world. Cheers!*

Thank you for your support, enjoy!



Cassi H♥rt

Contents:

[Free Book for You](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Up Next...](#)

[Other Books by Cassi](#)

[Free Book](#)

[About the Author](#)

Chapter 1

April

It looms ominously before me, and I fight to hold back a sob.

As soon as I see the shiny black door, my feet start to drag and I'm struck by how empty and silent my surroundings are. There's no one around this seemingly demure and rich neighborhood. Everyone's at their fancy jobs, working hard for their comfortable lives, and the upscale club is closed to the public right now.

There's no sign telling what the place is because there doesn't need to be. If you know, you know. And I'm completely aware of The Black Door and what it is. What's waiting for me on the other side will change both my life and my uncle's. His feet aren't dragging at all and he's got that look on his face that tells me I better hurry up my steps.

I just can't make myself do it. All the preparation, the coaching, the threats. I have to go in there and play a part, but my feet are trying to rebel just a little bit. Uncle Harris hates rebellion.

His hand grips around my arm, his thumb and forefinger digging all the way to the bone. Tears well up in my eyes, which surprises even me. As if tears will do anything.

"You'd better not cry," he hisses, even though no one is around to hear. "You think you'd be happy to finally be able to repay me."

I know it's futile, but I try again. For the thousandth, maybe the millionth time. "Let me get a job," I plead.

Ever since I graduated high school I've been begging for the chance. Looking for an opportunity to slip away and make any kind of money that would get Amelia and me away from him. He keeps a sharp eye on both of us, though. Our apartment is no better than a prison cell. The number of times I've wondered if a prison cell might be better is higher than how often I've begged to get a job.

He only sneers and pulls me closer to the door. "Do you think you can make enough at any job you're qualified for to pay me back for what I've done for you and your sister?"

The insult about my uselessness doesn't even register past my panic. "As long as it takes," I say, really digging in with my heels now. "I'll work three jobs, give you every penny I make. I'll keep helping out at home, too."

By that, I mean keeping his low-level thieving ring running smoothly: file serial numbers off things that shouldn't have them, pry gems out of stolen rings, and put cookies on the table when his cronies come over to squabble about their share. But my only real goal is to keep Amelia out of it at all costs.

Uncle Harris leans in close, jerking me hard toward the door. His other hand rises and I blink but don't flinch. I don't think he'll hit me. He's been laying off the last couple of weeks, so I won't have too many bruises for tonight.

His cruel, thin lips curl into a chilling smile. He doesn't have to hit me to make me do what he wants. "Seven years," he says, his face inches from mine. "It's been seven years since my deadbeat brother left me with you two brats and not a single dime to cover the costs. How do you think you can ever hope to pay me back? Not just the money, but the time?" The hand that isn't digging into my elbow reaches and curls around the heavy brass door handle. "No, April. I don't want a trickle of any minimum-wage jobs you might be able to scrape together. Not when you can make me rich."

Cool air wafts out from the darkened club and he gives me one last warning squeeze as he pushes me through the door. I don't have time to feel sad because of the distant

memory of my father. He wasn't much better than Uncle Harris, but he'd never have done this. His smiles were kinder, his touch gentle and at least somewhat fatherly.

I harden my heart as we make our way through the front part of the nightclub and passed the bar. I can barely take anything in as I fight to get into character. There's no way out for me, but once this is over, I'll find a way to get Amelia out before her time arrives. Even if it comes down to killing Uncle Harris and finding out if a real prison cell is better than living with him.

We enter into a brightly lit hallway. There's an industrial kitchen to one side and a row of doors to the other. One is marked private, another stage entrance, then there are a few innocuous offices that look like they could belong in a normal office building. But I know what they really are.

Hell. I'm in Hell.

The woman in one of them calls us in, a brisk smile on her business-like face. She introduces herself as Ms. Calloway, the manager of the place. She reaches across her desk to shake my hand and hers is warm and soft, as if she's human.

"What makes you want to take part in our little auction?" she asks.

Holy crap, a job interview? Out of the corner of my eye, I see Uncle Harris tensing. No, she's just making sure I want to be here. Maybe some women want to sell off their virginity to the highest bidder. Who knows? But Uncle Harris has drilled it into me that it's essential I play the part right.

I breathe out and smile, making my eyes wide and full of, what I hope comes across as, excitement. More than anything, I want Ms. Calloway to see through me and put a stop to this, but then what will happen later on tonight at home? Not just to me, but to Amelia?

"I'm looking for adventure," I say. "There's so many things I want to do, and they all take money, right?"

We all laugh as she studies my driver's license. "And you're over eighteen... This is your legal guardian?"

She's looking at Uncle Harris, who nods, his smile relaxed and pleasant. I jump back in.

"And my best friend," I say, forcing back bile. "He's just here for moral support."

"If this is really what she wants, then I can't stop her," he says. "But I can make sure she gets a fair deal and is completely safe."

Ms. Calloway nods. "All of our clients are vetted. We've never had a single complaint, and we have quite a few repeat participants. April, you'll get forty percent—"

"Just forty?" Uncle Harris butts in. "Surely that's negotiable."

She turns to him coolly. "It's not. But you can be assured the amount will far exceed her expectations."

"I'm fine with it," I say. She pushes the paperwork I'm supposed to sign across the desk to me.

There's a tiny thrill of being in charge for a second, even if it's not real, and even if I'll pay for it later. This is supposed to be all about me right now, and for once, Uncle Harris isn't going to get his way. It doesn't seem to register to him and he clears his throat to argue.

Ms. Calloway's brow furrows and she rests her hand on the paperwork before I can take it. "April?" she asks. "Is this something you're really interested in being part of?"

She looks at Uncle Harris, who finally looks away, remembering what's at stake. He can't act like he's in charge or she'll know I'm being coerced.

"If you're sure you're getting a fair shake," he says as if we walked out of here right now he wouldn't explode with enough rage to shake the Brooklyn Bridge on the other side of the city. "That's all I'm here for."

I can't make out what the papers say, and it doesn't matter anyway. That minuscule thrill of power is gone, replaced with a fear that freezes my hand on the pen. I stiffly sign my name, keeping my head down to hide the tears I can't

seem to blink back. With another deep breath, I gush about how excited I am. How does she not hear how robotic I sound? I guess I'm a better actress than I thought.

There's some more chat, and a few laughs, but I'm no longer there. Panic is crashing around in me like a wild animal caught in a net. It's all I can do to stand up, shake her hand, and smile while I tell her I'll see her again tonight for the auction.

This is it. I've known for months now, but always thought there would be a way out. It's never been so real.

Ms. Calloway directs us toward a back exit and as we leave, I see a man standing near the door. He catches my eye and for a brief second I come back to the moment, my fear and desperation receding at the way his brow furrows over his deep blue eyes in the most beautiful face I've ever seen on a man. He takes up almost the entire hallway, his broad shoulders and hard pecs stretching his black t-shirt taut across his tall frame.

Our eyes meet and the concern in his is palpable. Is he an angel sent to save me? Golden blond hair falls in waves almost to those big shoulders, certainly making him look like one. His piercing eyes seem brave enough to stand up to someone even as awful as my uncle. I must have stopped dead in the hall without realizing it, locked in this man's gaze.

Uncle Harris reaches to shove me along before I can somehow ruin everything, only stopping short of renewing his death grip on my arm when he sees the angel's eyes turn to him. His perfect face is now a mask of scrutiny and a muscle works in his jaw. He turns toward Uncle Harris, his big hands tightening at his sides. He's going to do it; he's going to save me.

"We've got lots to do, April," Uncle Harris says in his jovial voice that has fooled so many in the past. "Let's get going, hon."

I wait for my angel to swoop in and smite my wicked uncle, but he only frowns and reaches to open the back door for us. Disappointment hits like a sledgehammer to my middle

as Uncle Harris guides me through the door, and I tear my gaze from the beautiful man.

No one who could work at a place like this could be anything other than a devil, no matter how angelic he looks. My last shred of hope is gone. No one will save me.

Chapter 2

Michael

I don't really love my job as the head bouncer at The Black Door, and I especially don't love it on auction night. In fact, watching all these obscenely rich men bid for women makes my skin crawl. It's taken more than my share of self-control to keep from punching a few of the entitled assholes over the last two years.

Why stay, then? Since it's once again auction night, I find myself asking that question. And it's the same answer. Two answers, really.

The job pays ridiculously well. An insane amount I couldn't get anywhere else. For the last two years, I've been scrimping and saving to get to France, where I can start bringing the broken-down vineyard I bought from my old army buddy back to life. It's taken living in a shoebox and giving up every comfort, but pretty soon I'll be where I belong, in the heart of the French countryside, making amazing wine.

The second reason is that all the women who sign themselves up for the monthly auction do so willingly, for whatever reason. Maybe it's desperation, thrill-seeking, maybe they just want to make a shit ton of money for one night's work. Hell, we even have repeat participants, and they're all there because they want to be.

I still don't have to like it, and I like my boss, Nikol Antonov even less. He puts up a big front of propriety to lull his rich patrons into thinking the auctions are legitimate, but if Antonov didn't own half the city and most of the police force along with it, a lot of those guys would have been in jail a long

time ago. And it just takes one person to grow a conscience and the whole place could get raided on any of the auction nights. I don't want to go down for something I don't believe in. Not when I can practically smell the grapes and feel the sunshine on my shoulders.

Six or eight months more, tops, and I'll get out. And if a bunch of women make their own fortunes in the meantime, who am I to get in their way if this is the way they want to make it?

I sense the tension in the current meeting with the club's manager and stand near the doorway. Everything must turn out fine because I hear Calloway congratulating the latest participant on how rich she's going to be. She makes the same joke as always — you have to lose it sometime, right? Why not make a fortune at the same time? It makes my skin crawl.

My heart sinks to hear this one's a virgin. For some reason, they always hit me the hardest. Probably some misplaced romantic notion, because once I get the vineyard up and running, I'm sure I'll want to settle down. I have to stop worrying about these girls and their choices.

Except, when this one comes out, I'm not so sure it's really her choice. She has a delicate, stunningly beautiful face that's wreathed with long, glossy dark hair. It almost reminds me of the very door out front that this place is named after. The smile on her face is forced and when our eyes meet, they're full of nothing short of terror.

Well, of course she'd be nervous if she's one of the virgins. The old, tense-looking guy she's with makes to grab her and my instincts take over. Not on my watch. He recognizes the look in my eyes at the same time I recognize the look in his. This isn't a good guy. He calls her April. It's a perfect name for her since she's as pretty as a spring day. If only there weren't such dark clouds seeming to hang over her.

The old man doesn't grab her, which means I don't get to hit him. Instead, I open the door, trying to give the girl a signal. Another glance and I'll intervene. She puts her head down with a soft sigh that's almost imperceptible but goes

through me like a knife blade. I have no way of knowing if my hunch is correct, but I know I'm not letting her out of my sight.

I tell Calloway I'm going out, not waiting to hear what she says and follow the odd pair at a distance. As soon as they round the corner, the man's hand juts out to grab her arm. I can't hear what he's saying. He looks a mix of excited and angry. The girl just looks miserable but makes no move to pull away.

"April," I say out loud, liking the way it sounds.

Of course, she can't hear me and I wait for them to get in a cab or on a bus, but they keep walking. I keep following, and the further we go, the more I see her thin shoulders slumping, her head slowly nodding now and then to whatever the old guy's saying to her. We're at such a distance now that, even as tight as I am with money, I would have sprung for a taxi or at least taken a bus to get this far. Why is the bastard making her walk all this way?

I realize I'm looking for reasons to take her away from him. She could be his wife for all I know, and I find I don't care. There's something in the way she seems to cower away from him that screams of her fear. As much as I don't want her hurt, all it will take for me to race forward and take her away is just to see him raise his hand toward her.

But nothing happens and they finally stop in front of an old apartment building that's not upscale by any means, but not shoddy either, and I'm once again questioning why they walked so far. It's clear she's exhausted, and she's supposed to get up on stage tonight.

That thought almost makes me double over. How am I going to watch that happen?

April and the much older man go up the steps and disappear into the building and I laugh at myself for imagining that he was some wicked beast that I'd carry her away from. Being dragged away by a stranger is what would really scare her.

I'm making things up, distracted from my job by April's breathtaking beauty and sad eyes. She signed the papers, and Calloway's a pretty good judge of character. She's turned women away before because she didn't think they really wanted to be there. Nothing shady's going on. Right?

It takes me a long time, but I finally turn and head back to the club.

Chapter 3

April

I'm exhausted from the long walk home. Even though I'm supposedly going to make him an unimaginable fortune tonight, Uncle Harris won't spring for a ride. I know it's partly my punishment for not haggling for a larger percentage; but every message board I've read about The Black Door's auctions says that's what the participants get. No one ever complained about their share, either, but Uncle Harris is as greedy as he is mean.

There are a bunch of stolen cellphones I'm supposed to go through to see which ones can be resold after I wipe them, and I can hardly concentrate, earning myself a severe round of insults since he still can't hit me for fear of the mark showing tonight. I have to pretend everything is perfectly fine and normal when Amelia gets home from school. Uncle Harris isn't as rough on her, but he's been itching to smack someone for so long that I fear she'll get a slap for no reason just because he can't currently hit me. My overly cheery greeting as I polish a scratch out of a silver phone case is a warning that Amelia understands instantly and she hurries to our room to do her homework.

People have always mentioned that I'm pretty, not that it's ever made my life any better, but it's my little sister who is the truly beautiful one. Even at her young age, I can see our uncle's disgusting cohorts eyeing her up after I've given them dirty looks for trying to hit on me. Uncle Harris always shuts them down with harsh warnings because he had this plan even before discovering the Black Door nightclub and their black-market auctions.

I can handle it for myself, but I'll kill or die to keep it from happening to Amelia.

When it's time to get ready, I have to pause several times to keep from getting sick as I put on the lacy pink and white lingerie Uncle Harris bought for the auction. It's completely sheer and the thought of him picking it out, knowing exactly what it was for, keeps threatening to bring up the few bites of apple I could force down when we got home.

I pull on a sweater and a skirt and push out of the bathroom with a smile on my face that feels like it's being drawn up by rusty hooks. I don't want Amelia to ever know what I'm about to do. As far as I know, I've kept it a secret, but when I breezily tell her I'll see her tomorrow, she bursts into tears and grabs onto my waist. She may not know what, but she knows something's wrong.

"Where are you going?" she demands, digging her ratty old sneakers into the faded carpet.

We've never had sleepovers. We're not allowed to have friends over, either. Walking to the grocery store without our uncle hovering nearby isn't even allowed and if we get to go somewhere like school or on an errand, if we're not back on time, he's on us like a hawk. I can't find a lie that she'll believe. "I'll be back tomorrow," I say, prying her hands away. "Stay in here and stay quiet," I tell her. "Don't bug Uncle Harris."

She snorts. "As if." Now she's pouting, a typical twelve-year-old, mad at me for leaving her. That's better than fearful tears, so I hurry out before Uncle Harris even shouts for me that it's time to go.

Since I put on the sky-high heels, he bought to go along with the lingerie; he hails a cab with a scowl, muttering that I could have worn my sneakers until we got there. I'm too tired to argue and don't want to press my luck. As soon as we're in the back of the taxi, the only thing keeping me awake is an ice-cold dread about what's about to happen. I almost wished we had walked to keep it at bay a little longer, but all too soon we're at the club.

Ms. Calloway told us to use the back entrance, and Uncle Harris grabs my wrist when I freeze on the sidewalk by some trees in fancy pots.

He drags me around the corner into the squeaky-clean alley and reason leaves me. “Please,” I beg, reaching for the corner of the building, one of the flimsy trees, anything to stop him from pulling me closer to my fate. “I don’t want to do this. Please, Uncle Harris.”

I almost hear the crack of his palm hitting my cheek before I feel the sting. My head whips sideways and the pain stuns me into giving up the fight before he really loses it and I get another and another.

His glare is fierce and full of rage. “Shut the hell up and act right.” When his hand juts forward again, I cover my cheeks and remind him that they’ll notice the marks. His arm shakes, but he stops. A terrible smile takes over his face. “Then Amelia will get what’s coming to you unless you get your ass in there. You owe me, April.”

Once again I don’t know how we owe him anything and I wish he’d put us in the dreaded foster care system even though we’d probably be separated. I wish our father had never died so young, or that we’d ever had a mother. But none of my wishes come true and all I can do is keep Amelia from getting hurt. So, I straighten my shoulders, take a deep breath, and go through the door with a smile on my face.

I avoid making eye contact with the people mulling about all the way to the dressing room where Uncle Harris is told he can’t enter. He’s also not invited to the auction, which is a huge relief because God knows what kind of scene he’d make. With a final warning glare, he heads toward the back door.

“Good luck, hon,” he calls out in the voice that can fool everyone. “See you tomorrow.”

If the other girls think it’s weird my uncle dropped me off at the auction where I’m selling my virginity, they don’t mention it. I wish I could be as excited and calm as they are, with the four of them talking about what they’re going to do

with their winnings. Ms. Calloway comes in and makes me get out of my street clothes, quickly approving the barely there lingerie.

“You’re sure about this?” she asks once again as she scrutinizes me from head to toe.

As I follow her eyes, I notice a fading, yellow bruise on my ribs and move my elbow before she sees it. I could probably confess everything to her because she seems like a decent person. Maybe she’d believe me and cancel my contract. But then what would become of Amelia? At the first whiff of trouble, he’d take her and run, cutting his losses with me, but biding his time until he could do the same thing to her.

“Of course,” I tell Ms. Calloway, zoning out to the sounds of music from the front of the club.

“You ready?” one of the other girls asks, squeezing my hand and bringing me out of my trance. “You’re up next.”

I force my excited smile and nod, but there aren’t many thoughts in my head and I can barely feel the pressure of her fingers on my hand. The music pumping from the speakers out front seems a million miles away and the announcer’s voice is muffled and distorted.

Under the bright lights on the stage, it’s difficult to make out individual faces and the shouted bids all blend into one loud voice that’s eager to consume me.

Breathe. I have to breathe as well as smile. And I have to act sexy, desirable. Worth the huge sums that are getting yelled left and right. I shake my hair behind my shoulders and take a few steps across the stage, trying not to faint.

Chapter 4

Michael

I can't get April out of my mind the rest of the afternoon; so I decide to put someone else in charge of the door when the club opens. I need to stay in the back, see her again. Make sure I'm wrong about the hunch that she doesn't want to do this. As the auction participants arrive, I give them the same reassuring smile I always do, letting them know they'll be safe as long as they're under my roof. It's up to Calloway and Antonov to make sure the men who are doing the bidding aren't actually degenerates who might harm them once they leave.

One of the regulars gives me a grin and a high-five on her way to the dressing room. She must be saving for something big, or maybe she just likes the thrill of seeing how she can twist these rich old guys around her little finger. The time draws nearer and I go out into the alley behind the club, wondering if April's having second thoughts and won't show up. I don't know if I'll be relieved or disappointed not to see her again.

Then I see a flash of her glossy hair in the streetlamps as she rounds the corner, being dragged by the old guy from that afternoon. His face is twisted in a look of pure rage and hers is frozen with fear. She stumbles and tries to grab the corner, her hand scraping futilely along the brick as he yanks her forward.

The sound of her voice pleading makes my blood go cold, then burning hot when I hear the slap and his sharp voice ordering her to shut up and act right.

I knew it, and I hate being right about this. I have two options. Beat the shit out of the old guy and end up in jail while the auction goes on without me, or put a stop to this the right way. It takes every ounce of willpower not to rush forward and start slamming the man into the pavement, but I turn and head inside to find Calloway instead.

“The old guy just hit April,” I say when I find her about to go into the dressing room to approve the stage outfits. “She doesn’t want to be here. You need to cut her loose.”

The brisk, business-like manager gives me a pained look. “She signed a contract, Michael. There was nothing strange about her interview. She seems excited to make some money and—”

“Nope, no way. That’s not how it is.”

“You saw her uncle hit her?” she demands.

I swear under my breath. “I heard it. And I heard her begging not to have to do this.”

Calloway’s eye roll is barely contained. “You could have heard her clapping her hands, and maybe she’s got stage fright. The virgins often get a little nervous.”

“Is that why you won’t pull her? Is she the only one tonight? Can’t disappoint the pack of hyenas out there when there’s no fresh meat.”

Her pained look is stronger than ever. “You know that’s not it. I’ll talk to her in the dressing room, away from her uncle. Will that calm you down?”

It feels like I won’t ever be calm again when April and the old guy—her uncle, I guess, though what kind of family member would be down with something like this—come in through the back exit. There’s a big smile on April’s face and she assures Calloway she’s excited as she’s hustled toward the dressing room. It’s not real. I’d bet everything I own she’s acting.

I follow them, trying to catch April’s eye, but she seems almost in a daze and soon she’s in the dressing room. I give

her uncle a look that makes him go pale and causes him to leave in a hurry.

Pacing back and forth in the hallway, I wait for her to come out so I can offer to get her home safely. Somewhere else, if home means the same place as the uncle who got her into this. But the music starts and the first participant goes on stage. It's a fairly quick auction because they just want to get to the star of the show that night, April. It'll be mayhem when they announce the virgin's been canceled, so I head to the front to keep the peace.

Except, the virgin isn't canceled, she's called onto the stage. What the hell? Why didn't Calloway call it off?

The music and lights seem to confuse her for a second, then she shakily begins walking across the boards to the hoots and hollers and bids of the hyenas in the crowd. For a second I'm almost knocked out by how incredibly hot she looks, practically naked in a few scraps of sheer lace. Shoving my way up close to the stage, I can see she's barely keeping it together and I ignore the pull of my cock against my jeans. Christ, she's beautiful.

And terrified.

And there's a bruise on her ribs.

Fuck no, she clearly doesn't want to be here, and fuck no am I letting someone take her home. Someone other than me, that is.

I throw out a bid that's slightly higher than the last one, setting off a fresh round of shouted numbers that are so high it makes my head spin. I raise the bid again, turning to glare at anyone nearby who dares to beat me. I'm not supposed to be bidding, much less acting threateningly toward the audience. This is against the rules and I'll be fired if I keep going, but I've already put this place behind me. The second Calloway let April go onto that stage, I was done. Done with the crazy high salary I'll never get anywhere else. That's fine.

But is she worth giving up the last two years of my life and everything I've been working toward? Everything I've

been sacrificing for? Is she worth the dream of a quiet life on my vineyard?

The announcer reminds everyone she's a virgin, setting off a new round of bids and making me clench my fists so hard it seems like my fingers might break. Her gaze sweeps the crowd but her eyes are glazed with fear, her knees practically knocking together. I bellow out the highest number I can afford because nothing else matters except getting her out of here.

I jump onto the stage and stare down the crowd. They better get the hint that bidding is over—because nothing is taking my girl from me. If I need to, I'll rush her from the stage and set the place on fire behind me. There are men there that could buy and sell me twice over and I brace myself for violence, but there are no more bids. The crowd recedes with a mass grumble, already waiting for the next participant to come out so they can try again.

I won. April is mine.

Now that it's over, she hugs her arms around herself, swaying on her feet as she stares at me in shock. I take a step forward so she can see my face better.

"April," I yell, holding out my hand to her.

She blinks at me; her face a pale mask of confusion. When she catches my eye, her lush mouth rounds in shock.

"My angel," she sighs. Then she topples forward, passing out in my arms.

Chapter 5

April

I wake up to find myself in the front seat of a car. I'm still wearing the lacy lingerie, so the auction must have really happened. That part wasn't just a bad dream. But now I'm also wrapped in a thick, warm sweatshirt that's miles too big for me and zipped up to my chin with the hood tucked up over my hair. I'm strapped into the seatbelt and have a moment of panic as I try to tug the sweatshirt further down my bare legs.

"Easy there," a deep, soothing voice says. "You fainted. Give yourself a second to breathe."

I don't. With a gasp, I jerk my head to the left to see a big man with his hands firmly on the steering wheel while the world whizzes past the window beside him. City lights, street signs, people. This must be the man who won me, even though I could swear I saw...

He turns to face me with a reassuring smile on his beautiful face. It's him. The angel I saw in the crowd before everything went black from exhaustion, terror, and lack of food over the last few days because of my nerves.

"You don't have anything to fear," he says. His eyes are such a clear, dark blue they shine even in the dim light of the car, and his voice washes over me like a comforting caress.

"You bid on me?" I ask, sitting up a little straighter.

"That's right," he says. His hand lifts from the steering wheel like he wants to reach for me, but he places it back where it was and faces forward.

Am I disappointed he didn't touch me? I belong to him now, after all. I know I'm disappointed not to fully see his handsome face anymore, but he's driving. I concentrate on the strong line of his jaw, where a muscle works under the slight stubble as he grips the steering wheel.

"Where are you taking me?" I ask, a fresh wave of dizziness rushes over me and makes me close my eyes again.

"Home," he tells me.

I force my eyes open, the fear of turning up at the apartment too early and facing Uncle Harris's wrath making me gasp. "I can't—he'll—"

My angel shakes his head. "My home, April. Like I said, you don't have anything to fear. Close your eyes and rest if you want to, little one."

I do as he says, letting the motion of the car racing through the night lull me back to sleep. Maybe I never woke up, and this is a dream where the angel rescues me. If it is, I don't ever want it to end.

"Are you really an angel?" I murmur, drifting away from my hunger and fear.

I'm out again before I hear his answer, but I think I hear a very nice, warm laugh as I let myself sink back into my dream.

Chapter 6

Michael

I had the best intentions, really I did. But when I see more faded bruises than just the one on her ribs, I know I won't be taking her back to her uncle's apartment. As I carry her backstage and wrap her in a sweatshirt from my locker, I ignore the seething look on my boss's face. Antonov doesn't need to tell me I'm fired and once my bank transfer goes through, there's nothing he can do to stop me from carrying April out of here.

He could have tried, but he would have failed.

As soon as he accepts I've won her fair and square, I carry her out to my car and head home. I'm slightly worried about her, but at the same time, I can't keep my eyes off the creamy expanse of bare legs only a few inches away and begging to be touched. Halfway to my apartment, she wakes up long enough to mumble a few almost incoherent words to me, asking if I'm an angel of all things.

I can't help but laugh at her sweet innocence, not a single regret for giving up my life savings and the dream that had been sustaining me since I left the Army. There's no way she could have gone to anyone else in that club tonight.

At my place, I carefully lift her out of the car, not wanting to disturb her. She makes a soft noise and nestles close to my chest, reaching for my shoulders without opening her eyes as I carry her through the parking garage and toward the elevator. On the ride up to my floor, I glance down at the mass of dark hair and breathe in her vanilla and honey scent. With her soft body so close to mine, and knowing what's under my giant sweatshirt, I don't think I'm going to be able to

behave like the angel she's mistaken me for. She belongs to me now, after all.

Inside, I flip on a light and lay her on my couch while I rustle her up some food. What will she think of this place? Will she wonder how someone who lives in such a small apartment could afford the bid that won her?

My sorry bachelor refrigerator has two beers, some leftover Chinese takeout, half a dozen eggs, and some orange juice.

"Scrambled eggs sound good to you?" I ask, seeing that she's sitting up.

She glances at me and nods, looking resigned to her fate. It kills me to see her like that, when I know there's a fire somewhere inside her. All I want to do is rekindle it.

"All I know about you is your name," I say, whisking three eggs into a bowl before sliding them into a pan on the stove. "Which I like, by the way, April."

There might be a hint of a smile, but she lifts one shoulder in a half-hearted shrug. "Do you need to know anything else about me?"

"No," I say. "But I'd like to. And if you want to know anything about me, I'm happy to tell you."

When the eggs are done, I bring them to her and sit beside her on the couch, apologizing for not having any ketchup.

She looks offended. "Gross. But, thank you for this. I am pretty hungry, I guess." Her hand shakes as she takes the first bite, and then she practically shovels the rest down before noticing I'm not eating. "Sorry," she whispers.

"Don't apologize," I tell her. "You haven't done anything wrong."

Her head lowers, causing her silky black hair to slide across her cheek, hiding her beautiful face from my view. I tuck the strands behind her ear, letting my finger trail down her face. I stop myself before I get to the neckline of the

sweatshirt, afraid I'll yank the zipper down to reveal her perfect body. Just the feel of her soft skin has me wild for her.

"How old are you?" she asks.

"Twenty-eight," I say. "Hope that's not too old for you."

Once again, she shrugs, but she looks at me with curiosity now, her hazel eyes jumping from my face down to my chest and up again. Then lower. I can feel her gaze settle on my lap and my rock-hard cock moves against my zipper. A slight smile curls her lips and I have to hold back a groan.

I tip her chin up. "Yes, I want you, April. So fucking much. But you have a choice here, you know."

"Do I?" she asks.

"Yes."

She leans closer, but her brows furrow with worry. "But you won. You bid so much money. It wouldn't be..."

I put my finger on her lips, shaking my head. "Doesn't matter. I know your uncle forced you to do this."

It's going to be the hardest thing I've ever had to do to turn away from this beauty, but I will. I swear I will, even if it kills me. Which it might. She leans even closer and reaches out toward me. Her hand rests on my thigh and I grab it. As much as I want her, and I really fucking do, I'm not one of the hyenas from the club.

"How about this?" I start, pulling her hand to my lips and kissing her fingertips. Her eyes flutter and she nods for me to continue. I sweep her hair behind her shoulder and rest my hand against her neck, feeling her pounding pulse with my thumb. "Give me an hour. If you don't want me after an hour, I'll take you wherever you want to go."

"An hour?" She tips her head back, her mouth falling open. I move my hand up her throat to run my thumb back and forth across her full lower lip.

"Let me show you how good I can make you feel, April," I say, leaning close so that our mouths are only inches

apart. I can feel her breath speeding up, see her eyes darken as her pupils dilate.

“Okay.”

She barely speaks her agreement, and I claim her mouth with mine, pushing my tongue between her lips. Tangling my fingers into her hair, I tug her head back to go deeper inside as I slide my other hand behind her back to pull her close to me. The way she so eagerly accepts my hungry kisses is intoxicating. Her body presses against me, her hands clutching my shoulders while I tease her mouth with my tongue. At first, she only accepts what I’m doing, but soon she responds, moving her hands less shyly, sweeping her tongue boldly against my own.

When was the last time I made out with someone? It’s been a while, especially since I’ve been solely focused on working and saving money. And I’ve never enjoyed it this much. I could keep going, just kissing her, but I need to make her want me as much as I want her.

Getting my hand between us, I drag the zipper of my sweatshirt down, breaking away from our kiss to look down at her body. She shrugs out of the oversized shirt and with each shuddering breath, her lush tits heave over the top of the lacy bra that barely covers them. Her rosy nipples are hard peaks under the sheer fabric and I lean down to nuzzle each one, smiling at her gasp.

“I want to lick these tasty little tits of yours, April,” I tell her. “You promised me an hour.”

“Yes, do whatever you want.”

Her cheeks flame bright red as I unhook the bra and roll it down off her shoulders. “You’ve never even been topless in front of a man, have you?”

Her innocence inflames me, her blushes and gasps making it harder to hold back. I’ve got my work cut out for me if I’m going to make her beg me to fuck her by the end of my hour. As I lean her back onto the couch and lick my way down

her smooth stomach, her back arches, and her hands run over my hair and across my shoulders.

“You’re so hard,” she sighs, squeezing my arms. Then she giggles when I nudge my cock against her thigh. “That, too.”

I reach the top band of her panties, the barest scrap of lace covering her. The need to taste her makes me almost feral, but I ease my hand between her thighs instead of tearing her panties off with my teeth. When my fingers brush her swollen clit through the fabric, she jolts and cries out. Working my fingers in slow circles, I look up to see her head thrown back, eyes closed, her hair fanned out in a wild spray all around her on the couch.

“April,” I say reverently, pushing her panties aside to sink my fingers into her wet heat. “You’re so damn gorgeous, little one.”

Feeling me invade her with my fingers makes her eyes fly open, and she looks down at me, her teeth clamped around her lip. “What are you doing?” she moans.

I freeze my hand. “Should I stop?”

Her back arches as she writhes and clamps her legs together around my hand. “No, don’t stop. Keep doing that.”

“This?” I ask, easing a finger back inside her at the same time I coax her clit. I’m sick of the panties in my way and they’re so flimsy they’re easy enough to tear off. Tossing them aside, I spread her legs and begin kissing my way down her inner thigh. “Or this, April? How do you think you’d like it if I licked you here?” I stroke my fingertip across her clit and then down to dip inside her.

Both our noises mingle together as I push deeper to stretch her virgin pussy. I can’t get over how tight she is, how good it’s going to feel to sink my cock inside her.

“I think I’d like it,” she says, her hand shyly reaching for my hair.

“What?” I ask, half confused by the strongest lust I’ve ever felt, and half wanting to make her say it.

“Lick me there,” she whispers. “If you want to, I mean.”

“You don’t know how much I want to lap up and down your pussy,” I tell her, scooting down to settle between her thighs.

“How much?” she asks. Is there a hint of teasing in her voice now? I like it.

Gripping her hips in a tight hold, I lean down and stroke my tongue over her slippery nub, smiling at her gasp. “Just slightly less than I want to fuck you, little girl.”

“I want it now too,” she says, pulling on a handful of my hair. “I don’t know how long it’s been, but I don’t need the entire hour.”

With a laugh, I slide my tongue up and down her juicy slit and push it deep inside her tight cunt. In and out; the way I want to pound her with my cock as she wriggles against my hold on her. Hearing her tell me she wants this as much as I do makes it difficult to concentrate, but I want to give my little virgin something to remember. I continue pleasuring her, causing her to writhe in ecstasy, her warmth and wetness intensifying against my lips. Her noises drive me on, make me feral with need, and I don’t stop until she screams.

April takes at least a handful of my hair in her fists when I push her over the edge and make her come. I keep lapping at her, slower and softer, until she’s limp on the couch. Propping myself up on my elbows between her legs, I look at my prize and grin.

“Has any man ever made you come, little one?” I ask. “Do you want more of that?”

“No, and yes,” she says. “Yes, I want more.” Her limp hands curl into fists and she swallows hard when I jump up to get my jeans down. My iron-hard cock stands straight out in front of me and she squeezes her eyes shut. I guide her hand to wrap around my shaft and watch as she slowly looks down at what she’s carefully stroking. I think it might kill me.

“This looks pretty big,” she says. “Pretty damn huge, in fact.”

“You’re going to love it,” I promise.

“More like you are,” she says, still looking concerned even as she tightens her grip and moves her hand a little faster.

“Oh, you have no idea how much I’m going to enjoy fucking your sweet little virgin pussy, April. But I swear you’ll like it too.” I ease my fingers into her slippery opening. “Nice and wet and ready.”

I take her hand away and get in between her thighs, taking a second to look down at her perfect body. Her breath comes in harsh pants and she reaches for my shoulders. “I don’t know what to do to make you feel good, too,” she says

“Whatever you want,” I tell her. “Whatever you damn well want will work just fine. Now spread your legs for me, little girl. I need to be inside you.”

As she wraps her legs around my hips, I slowly, torturously push my cock inside her. She’s so, so tight, and I’d rather jump in front of a moving vehicle than hurt her. She gets impatient and digs her fingers into my shoulders, lifting her hips so that I’m soon balls deep and barely hanging on. With every ounce of self-restraint I possess, I force myself to remain still.

“Please,” she begs. “Move. Fuck me. I need to feel what you did before.”

With a growl I do as she commands, shocked and pleased at my virgin’s hunger. I lose all sense of time and place. There’s only April clinging to me and crying out with every swift thrust of my cock inside her hot little pussy.

I need to watch as she gets closer to another orgasm, wondering how I’ve managed to hang on so long with the way she moves beneath me. Her mouth is open as I pound into her and I lean down to kiss her. Our tongues tangle and she sobs, digging her fingers into my arms.

“Please, Michael.”

It’s the first time she’s said my name. I don’t even remember telling her. “Right now,” I promise. “Let me make

you come again, little girl. I want to feel that tight pussy of yours clamp onto my cock like a vice when you scream.”

“Yes, yes,” she agrees, digging into my arms as I swirl her clit with my fingers, ramming deep at the same time. Her scream is muffled against my chest and the exquisite agony of her spasms around my shaft make me join her.

I rest my head against her heaving shoulder, about to lose my mind and more than happy about it. “I’ve got to come inside you,” I tell her. “I’ve got to fill your pussy up, little girl.”

All she can do is breathlessly nod and I let loose, shooting inside her until I collapse in a mindless, gasping heap on top of her.

Neither of us can speak for long minutes, just holding onto one another and breathing deeply to try to recover.

“Holy hell,” I manage. “Good first time?”

“Very good first time,” she says with a laugh.

Chapter 7

April

It takes me a while to come back to earth. It really feels like I've been shot into space and floated around on a cloud for a while. I can't believe I thought the deal he offered me was going to end in letting him kiss me for an hour, then having him take me home. I was so grateful he was being so kind, but despite his amazing, muscular body and almost otherworldly face, I didn't think I'd be giving up my virginity tonight. His offer seemed much too good to be true.

It was too good to be true. What Michael made me feel, I mean. His hands, his mouth, the way his strong body dominated mine—I don't even think it took an hour before I was begging him to claim what he'd won. If he stopped, had been the angel I mistook him for, it might have killed me. I'm just glad he kept going. This night could have been so much worse, but there's no way it could have been better.

I went from thinking I wanted him to take me home to lying here now, dreading when he will. It's not just dread of facing Uncle Harris, it's not wanting to leave Michael. The only reason I don't want to stay much longer is because I'm starting to get worried about Amelia.

He doesn't seem to be in any hurry to get rid of me, even though he's gotten what he wanted. In fact, he seems perfectly relaxed and happy as he pulls me against his chest and wraps his arm around me. He wants to know all about me, but there's not that much to tell. My life has been pretty pathetic, and there's not much I want him to know.

But he pulls it out of me, just the way he drew out my passion. Before I know it, I've told him about being forced

into being an accomplice in Uncle Harris's petty thieving ring. The only thing I hold back on is how mean Uncle Harris can get sometimes because I don't want to see pity in Michael's eyes. I couldn't stand it.

"I've never actually stolen anything," I tell him, wishing I could take it all back because his hand has stopped stroking my arm. "I just do what he tells me to. Clean the stuff up, take it apart..." I don't tell him why I haven't run away from such a shameful life; not sure I can trust him to know about Amelia having to live the same way.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of," he tells me gruffly. "You're trying to survive."

I roll over and rest my elbows on his chest, searching his handsome face. My breasts press against him and he wraps an arm around me, drawing me down for a slow, steamy kiss. I pull back, not about to be distracted.

"Your turn now," I say. "Tell me all about you." When his brow furrows, I feel shy. "I mean, whatever you want to tell me. If anything..."

His slow smile melts my heart and I feel the answering tug between my thighs that makes me press closer to him. "It's not that exciting," he says, then ends up enthralling me with his life story.

He enlisted in the Army from the time he finished high school, stationed in Europe for most of his time in the service. He fell in love with France and made a bunch of friends there, traveling by motorcycle from one side to the other, from the English Channel all the way down to Spain. His aunt left him a moderate inheritance when he got out of the military, and then at that part of the story, his voice trails off and his eyes become unfocused, as if he's thinking about something far away.

"What then?" I ask.

He shakes his head. "I've just been working at The Black Door since then," he said, though I suspect there's more.

Ah, I get it. At least I think I do. I must be where the inheritance ended up. Does he regret it? He pulls me close for

another soul-stirring kiss and the worry vanishes. It doesn't matter in the long run, because the sun is now peeking through the windows. We've spent the whole night wrapped in each other's arms, kissing and touching and talking, and he still doesn't seem in any hurry to let me go.

It's Saturday, which means Amelia has no school, no safe place to be all day if I'm not there. "I should go home," I say anxiously.

His grasp around me tightens. "You don't ever have to go back to that asshole again, April."

My first reaction is panic. Will he keep me here? Then I feel pissed off at Uncle Harris. He truly ruins everything. I hold myself stiff in Michael's arms, trying to find a way to explain without letting on how bad things really are at home.

"What's making you look so hesitant?" he asks. The kindness in his voice makes me relax, but just a little. He nuzzles my neck, kissing his way up my jaw to swipe his tongue across my lower lip while one of his hands works its way down my back. "Do I need to convince you some more? How about giving me another hour, little one?"

I love his teasing, and I definitely want more, but my worry for Amelia won't let me truly relax again. "Unless you're going to keep me hostage here, I have to get home," I say, thrusting out my chin and trying to pretend his roaming hands aren't melting my resolve by the second.

He rolls me to the side, tracing the faded old bruises along my rib cage with his fingertips. "I can't let you go back to that," he tells me.

I push his hand away. "Those are from tripping on the stairs and ramming into the banister at my apartment," I say, not meeting his eyes.

"April," he says, soft but firm. He doesn't believe me.

"He's not that bad," I tell him. "Now are you the angel I believe you to be, or are you a devil who'd keep me here against my will?"

He frowns, then kisses me until I swoon against him, dizzy even though I'm lying down. Just when I'm about to forget everything in my life but what he's doing to me, he pulls away and sits up, reaching for his shirt.

"Come on, then. Get dressed." He grins, looking at my tattered underwear in pieces across the room. "I'll get you something. Hang on."

He brings me some running pants and the sweatshirt I wore last night. I have to roll the waistband half a dozen times to keep them from falling down. I wonder how I'll explain the strange outfit to Amelia when I left in a sweater and skirt; which must still be in the dressing room at the club.

We're quiet on the drive back to my apartment, but it's not an uncomfortable silence. I just don't know what's left to say. As he pulls up in front of my building, I get out and stand on the stoop, watching as he slowly drives away. Is he waiting for me to run after him, or is that wishful thinking? I certainly want to.

As his car rounds the corner and disappears, it feels like the last bit of happiness I was so graciously offered is disappearing along with him. I don't want to relegate last night to just a memory, but that's all it can ever be. A perfect, wonderful memory.

I hope to get inside and change my clothes before anyone notices I'm back, but Uncle Harris is already awake, brewing coffee in the tiny kitchen. He's in a great mood. Too good. His smile is more like a lion baring its teeth when he turns to me.

"I take it the auction money's already in your account?" I ask, keeping my tone from sounding as bitter as I feel. If I could get my hands on even a tenth of that money, Amelia and I could run and never look back.

"It is, indeed," he crows. "And it was such a success I'm already working on another one. This time we won't go through the club though, so I can keep all the earnings. The clientele won't be as upscale, and you're used goods now, but you'll still make plenty."

I have to stare at the tattered rug on the floor so he doesn't see the hatred I feel for him. I really think I could kill him then and there, but then what would happen to Amelia after I went to prison? I don't say a word as I somehow get to my room without lashing out at him in utter fury. Amelia is sitting up on her bed in her outgrown princess pajamas with a book on her lap. I wonder if she slept at all last night or stayed up worrying about me.

She looks over my strange attire while I force a smile and tell her I'll play a video game with her as soon as I'm done showering. I don't want to erase the feel and scent of Michael from my body, but it's an excuse to lock myself in the bathroom and away from her questioning eyes. I make it until the water is blasting noisily from the shower jets before breaking down into uncontrollable sobs.

Chapter 8

Michael

Since I don't currently have a job and I can't get my mind off of April, I decide that we're not finished yet. Dropping her off at her apartment was one of the hardest things I ever had to do, but she'd been adamant, almost panicked about getting back there.

I didn't understand it then, but now I do.

Waking up the next morning, free of my position as head of security at The Black Door, but nowhere near free from the thing that got me fired; I did a little sleuthing.

Some might call it stalking, but I called it curiosity. Active 1: Never mind that when I saw April coming out of her apartment building that morning, all I wanted to do was run over and sweep her into my arms. Press her against my body where she belonged. Then a much younger girl followed her out of the building. She looked like a mini version of April, maybe eleven or twelve years old.

With their heads down the whole way, it was easy to follow them the couple blocks to the middle school where April hugged her goodbye, then turned and scurried back to her building. Her little sister. April didn't want to leave her with that monster they had to call an uncle. I followed them every day for a week, looking for a reason. A new bruise, because I didn't buy her story about falling down the stairs for one second.

I stay hidden while hoping she'll sense my presence and demand to know why I'm watching her.

But despite April looking more defeated and tired by the day, it's been a week and nothing's shown up. She never looks left or right, just keeps her head down and drags herself home after dropping off her sister. Now I'm sitting in my own tiny apartment, at the crack of dawn, sipping my black coffee before heading out to follow them on their trek to the school. Then I plan to stake out April's place in case she needs me.

I'm convinced I need to do something, but what? I see my little hole in the wall with fresh eyes. The kitchen, living area, and my bedroom are basically the same room, divided by the kitchen counter and the couch that turns into a bed. There's another room that anyone who lives in the middle of the country would call a walk-in closet at best, that I've turned into a makeshift office. It barely fit the desk and chair I shoved in there. The single bathroom is even smaller than that.

I try to imagine bringing April and her sister here, but there just isn't space. Considering the apartment further, I dismantle the desk and haul out my old camping gear. The inflatable mattress fits from one wall to the next with no room at the head or foot, and there's about fourteen inches of free space on the side.

"Perfect room for any little kid," I say out loud, my voice more bitter than the coffee.

It's time to oversee the walk to school and I leave with an angry, helpless feeling that's suffocating. It's made worse when April seems more crushed than usual, with dark circles ringing her eyes and her delicate face looking almost gaunt. I squeeze the steering wheel until my knuckles are white, hating watching her spirit fade away.

This is my girl. I have to do something. I'm pissed as fuck at myself for waiting so long. With the decision made, I only have to wait for her to collect her sister at school. I'll meet her there where she'll feel safer, away from her uncle.

As I'm planning, the door to her building swings open and the uncle bursts out, his mean face twisted up in a snarl. It's rare he leaves and the idea of just removing him from the equation all together is powerful.

But I'm not a criminal, not a hitman, and April would probably despise me. The next thing I know, she's being pulled out of the building by the man whose head I was just fantasizing about tearing off. April looks more upset than the night of the auction, the fear on her pretty face turning to a look of pain as he jerks her down the steps to the sidewalk. Seeing his rough hands on her, along with her fright, makes the urge to destroy him almost too powerful to resist.

What has this woman done to me? She seems to have changed my very essence so that all I can focus on is her. Her safety, her happiness, her comfort.

The uncle hails a passing cab, and I shift into gear to follow. What's going on in the middle of the afternoon? The taxi continues out of the city to end up at a seedy roadside motel. A group of even seedier men are milling around at the end of the long, squat cement building, eyeing each other up as if they might start fighting at any minute. I pull in behind the taxi, and as soon as the uncle pulls her out, the men all light up and get animated. The uncle gets a firm grip on both her arms and motions toward one room. His behavior excites the men further and they begin to jostle each other, pushing to be the first through the door.

Oh, hell no. He can't possibly be trying to put on an auction of his own, can he?

It looks like that's exactly what he thinks he's doing, and April struggles as he pushes her toward the room; while the hyenas practically bounce with excitement while they wait for it to be opened.

Hell no.

I jump out of the car and my feet barely touch the ground as I cover the space between us. April's eyes widen when she recognizes me, but I can't give my attention to her just yet. The stupid man who thinks he's going to sell my woman must think I'm here for the auction, so he isn't prepared for the hard punch I give him straight between his eyes.

I feel the crunch of his nose and blood sprays outward as he crumples, his grip on April nearly bringing her down with him. I grab her and pull her close, hustling her behind me while I face down the other men.

“Who’s next?” I ask, leaning toward the closest one with my bloody fist raised at his face.

“We don’t want any problems,” he says, arms raised like I’m a cop.

I back April toward my car, staring down the others, but he seems to speak for all of them as they slink away back to whatever pit they came from. At the passenger door, April is frozen with shock, so I pick her up and gently place her in.

As I zoom away, I look over at her to see her staring straight ahead, her jaw clenched as hard as her hands on her seatbelt. I reach over and help her lock it in place and she turns to me, hazel eyes wide in her pale face.

“What did you do? He’s going to—”

I shake my head sharply. “He’s not going to do shit, April. You’re done with him.”

“You don’t understand,” she wails, trying to act angry through her clear relief at not having to go into that motel room.

I can read her like a book and she’s also scared half to death of what comes next, falling into a confused silence until I pull up in front of her sister’s school.

“Go check her out early,” I say. “Then we’ll go back to your apartment and you can get whatever you need.”

For the first time, her stiff face relaxes and there’s a glimmer of hope in her eyes that shatters my heart. She reaches for the car door. “Then what?” she asks shakily.

I reach over and brush a strand of her glossy hair behind her shoulder, tracing the line of her jaw as I smile.

“Then you’re coming home with me. Both of you.”

Chapter 9

April

Michael must actually be an angel. Why else would he be doing this for me, and Amelia? How did he even know about my sister when I kept that from him during our wonderful night together?

Trying to hide my frazzled state, I swiftly sign Amelia out of school, pretending to have a doctor's appointment as the reason. It's unprecedented and when she appears in the office, she's clearly confused and a little frightened.

"What's happening?" she asks, clutching my hand.

"Everything's fine," I assure her. Oh God, how to explain? "I met someone and he's going to help us get away from Uncle Harris." I think. I hope. I pray.

Once we're outside and she sees Michael resting against his car with his strong arms crossed over his broad chest, she relaxes a little. He looks like a warrior, and I want more than anything to tell her about him knocking Uncle Harris to the ground with one blow, but I feel like that can wait.

"We can trust him?" she asks, but it's barely a question.

Michael oozes confidence and strength from every pore, and his smile is warm and reassuring as I introduce them. My little sister tenses up again when we pull up outside our apartment building, but I tell her it's only to grab a few things. Neither one of us has much to begin with, and we hurriedly fill a few plastic grocery bags with some clothes our toothbrushes, and shampoo. Amelia grasps her little handheld gaming system she wants to bring, but I'm sure it was stolen along

with almost everything else in this nightmare home of ours, so I make her leave it behind.

“I’ll get you a new one,” I promise. “Same with your phone. Leave it here so he can’t track us.”

A ripple of something I don’t quite recognize goes down my spine. Is it hope? I can almost picture myself getting a job, making friends, and walking freely down the sidewalk without a time limit on how long I can be out.

I can see she’s upset about losing the lifeline to the friends she made at school, but it will all work out. It has to.

“Once I get a job, that’ll be the first thing we replace.”

“What’s happening?” she asks again as we run down the stairs, both of us too impatient to wait for the rickety old elevator.

“I don’t know,” I admit. “But it’s going to be better.”

I hope so anyway. That’s about all I really have right now, but it feels good. It feels even better when Michael takes my hand in the car on the way to his place. But why is he doing this? Responsibility? Pity? It’s surely not what’s welling up in my heart every time I glance at him, what’s been stewing since I made him leave me on my stoop. It can’t be love, but if it gets Amelia and me our freedom, I’ll take it. Even if my heart ends up broken at the end.

Once in his little apartment, he orders pizza and sets up his laptop to play movies for Amelia in a bedroom that I’m pretty sure was a closet; with a camp bed crammed in and a chair in place of a bedside table.

After we eat, Amelia settles in her new room and calls me in, a worried look back on her face now that the pizza is all gone and she has nothing left to distract her from the strangeness of the situation.

“What’s he going to do when we have to go home?” she asks. “He’s going to be furious.” Her voice is low, but Michael overhears and sticks his head in.

“You don’t have to worry about your uncle anymore,” he tells her. “I’ll make sure he never gets near you ever again.” Her answering smile is tremulous but I can tell she believes him. He slumps against the doorframe. “I don’t suppose either of you has a passport?”

I tell him no, and Amelia cowers against the wall, waiting for the inevitable outburst now that we’ve disappointed him. I know exactly how she feels because I get the same way around Uncle Harris, who hates being told no for any reason, and it’s usually answered with a slap or a shove. It’s hard to relax around a person like that, but with Michael, I have no fear. He’s nothing like Uncle Harris. He’d never hurt us.

“No worries,” he says, leaning back out of the tiny room to give Amelia space to recognize what I already am sure of. “We’ll figure it out. You still don’t need to worry about him anymore, okay, Amelia?”

She nods and plops her headphones on to start her movie. As soon as I see the opening scene on the laptop, I wave at her and close the door so it’s just Michael and me in the living area. The second we’re finally alone, I pounce on him. I want to show him how grateful I am, and I just plain want him. The last week has been torture, trying to fall asleep each night, knowing Uncle Harris’s auction was looming. I never want another man to erase the memory of Michael’s touch. Especially not those awful men that were waiting at the motel.

Now I can make new memories. I wrap my arms around his neck and press my body against his, feeling the hard planes of his chest and sliding my fingers through his long hair. I feel his cock rising against my belly and moan as I try to pull his head down for the kiss I need so badly.

But he pulls back, looking down at me with concern in his deep blue eyes. “Don’t you want me?” I ask, pushing harder against the rod between us.

He groans. “You can’t imagine how much. But not if you’re only trying to repay me.”

“Oh my God, Michael,” I say, impatience making me tug on his hair. “I haven’t been thinking of anything else since you dropped me off.”

He leans closer, relief flooding his face, then his brows furrow. “I never should have done that. What if—”

I shake my head. “We’re here now. That’s all that matters.” I untangle my fingers from his hair and take his hand, guiding it to my core. “No. This is all that matters right now. Feel how wet I am for you.”

With a growl, he pushes my skirt up and plunges his hand between my thighs. That sensation I’ve been craving rushes up my belly and down my legs as his fingers find my swollen nub through my panties. His palm slides further and presses flat against my pussy, the gentle, teasing pressure making me writhe with his touch.

“Okay, I believe you,” he says, chuckling right before he claims my mouth in the kiss I’ve been about to beg for.

“Good,” I murmur, reaching for the button of his jeans. “Now I need to feel this.”

As soon as I get his pants open, I reach in and wrap my fingers around his thick, smooth shaft, moaning against his lips when I feel the moisture at the tip.

“I like when you’re not shy,” he tells me, looking down as I stroke his cock. “I like that even more. Damn it, April. I might not make it inside you.”

I take my hand away but give him a teasing smile as I pull him to the couch. “I can’t wait much longer. It already feels like a lifetime that we’ve been apart.”

“Never again,” he tells me, sweeping his hand behind my back and leaning me backward. “Never, ever again.”

I close my eyes as he pulls my top over my head and pushes my skirt down my thighs. I wish his words were true, but I have no idea how long this will last. All I can do is enjoy this moment. And I am enjoying it. Very much.

When his fingers brush my needy clit, I sigh gustily and he presses his lips to mine with a laugh. “You can’t scream, remember? Not this time, I’m afraid.”

I glance at the other door and feel a blush popping up my cheeks. “You make me lose my mind,” I tell him, now worried Amelia will come out at any second. “Hurry up and get that big cock of yours inside me before she walks in on us.”

He freezes for a second and I’m afraid he’ll change his mind, so I drop and wrap my lips around his cock, sucking him deep into my mouth. I slide back and roll my tongue all around his dripping tip, then guide his hand between my thighs.

“Feel how much I need you, Michael.”

His fingers slide under my panties and deep inside me. We both sigh. “God, I love how wet you get,” he says, sitting on the couch with his erect cock waving high above his lap.

“Only for you,” I tell him as he takes my hand and guides me to straddle him.

“That’s right,” he tells me, ripping another pair of panties off of me. “You’re mine, April.”

“Show me,” I say, moaning as I rub my slippery opening against his cock. “Show me right now.”

He grips my hips and steadies me, lowering me slowly onto his thick rod. I take him in, gasping as he stretches my pussy. I have to hold on to his shoulders to keep from pitching forward. The sensation is intense, and so, so good. With one arm wrapped around my back, he leans back with a smile.

“You show me this time, little one.”

I feel giddy and powerful as I ride his cock, taking him deep and then sliding up. Watching his face as he struggles to maintain his tenuous grip on control drives me wild, and soon I’m bouncing hard and fast. I can barely hold on to him and he grips my waist and flips me onto my back on the couch. Only a blink passes before he sinks deep inside my pussy again and he growls against my neck.

“You feel so good, April. So damn good.”

Before I can answer, he finds my clit and that perfect burst overtakes everything. I wail, and he grabs my head and pushes my face against his shoulder as he laughs at my forgetfulness. But only for a second, because as soon as he drives me over the edge I feel his body jerk against me, his roar muffled in the couch cushions beside us.

It's a long time before either of us can speak, but we move around until we're side by side, crammed onto the couch together. He wedges his arm under my head, and softly promises he'll get up and pull out the bed after he catches his breath.

A few minutes later his eyes close and his chest rises and falls in a slow, steady rhythm that lulls me to sleep alongside him, completely content for the first time in my life.

Chapter 10

Michael

I wake up before the sun peeks in through the blinds, delirious to have April in my arms. Her body is warm against mine under the sheets and I smooth away some dark, silky strands of hair from her cheek, half wanting to wake her so I can kiss her senseless, and half wanting to let her sleep.

It's good to see her so relaxed, with all the worry gone from her brow. That worry has transferred to me. Still not sure what the best course of action is. The only thing I'm sure of is I'm not giving her up.

Knowing that there are not even eggs in my fridge at the moment, I slip out of bed and quietly get dressed. Then I scrawl a note, telling her I'll be right back in case she wakes up while I'm out.

At the corner store, I get bacon, eggs, milk, some fruit and bags of snacks. A few doors down there's an electronics store and I duck in and get two cheap phones that I load up with minutes for April and her sister. I want them to have everything they need and while I'm in there, someone returns a handheld game system because it's got a cracked case. While I'm waiting my turn, the shopkeeper argues that it still works and goes round and round about returning it, but in the end, the customer gets her refund. The guy grumbles about the loss before ringing up my phones.

"I'll give you fifty bucks for it," I say, even though I need to be more careful with money than ever. "You know nobody's going to buy it looking like that."

He scowls but agrees and I head back home loaded down with the gifts that I wish could be so much better than they are.

April is awake and brewing coffee in the kitchen and my heart skips a beat to see her wearing one of my t-shirts that goes down to her knees. Her hair is a bedraggled mess from all the times I ran my fingers through it or pulled on it for better access to her soft throat. When she turns and smiles at me with still sleepy eyes, I'm frozen for a second.

"You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," I tell her, shaking off my stupor and moving to drag her into a hug. "And you smell amazing, too."

She leans back to accept my kiss, her tongue darting greedily between my lips. "Why did you leave?" she demands, her hands reaching around to grab my ass. "We still have about a half hour until Amelia has to get up for school."

I put my hands on her lush hips and squeeze, then regretfully push her away. "About that. I don't think she should go today. And we might have to transfer her since I live so much further away. It'll be safer in the long run, just in case he decides he doesn't want to give up yet."

All the rosiness in her cheeks from our heated kiss drains away. "Do you think he'll do that?" Her frightened face turns angry. "He's already taken every last dime from the auction. He should just cut his losses."

"He should," I agree. "And if he doesn't, I'll take care of him, so you don't have to worry about that."

She pulls me close around my middle and presses her face into my chest. "I won't. Not if you're around."

I put my hands on her shoulders and give her a look I hope can convey everything I feel. "I will be around. Try getting rid of me." I playfully smack her adorable little ass and then reach for the bags I dropped when she stunned me with her beauty. "Now let me get these groceries put away and make you two some breakfast."

As soon as the bacon crackles in the pan filling the apartment with its delicious smell; Amelia pokes her head out of her room wearing pajamas that are woefully too small for her. What was I thinking, taking on a kid? When she spies the stupid cracked game system on the counter and her eyes light up, I realize I wasn't thinking, I was feeling. She looks at me hopefully and I nod.

"It's all yours. There's a phone, too. And as long as you're smiling, today's a skip day from school."

Amelia looks to her big sister who agrees and we settle down around the miniscule kitchen table and dig into our breakfast. Wow! Looks like I have a family now. When April clears the dishes, I ask Amelia to bring my laptop and call for a meeting. Both of them look anxious, but I assure them we're in this together.

"We need to decide what we're going to do next," I say. "Because we sure as hell can't stay in this shoebox for too much longer."

I find all the pictures of my vineyard in France and show them the ramshackle century-old house that sits on the property. I've been yearning to visit the stunning countryside and revive the neglected vineyard through months of labor. The house that is sure to be drafty and full of mice by now since it's been empty for so long.

"This is yours?" Amelia asks. I can't read her expression to tell if she's impressed or disgusted.

April already knew I owned the place, but this is the first time seeing what it's really about and her face is also carefully neutral.

"Yeah," I say. "It's going to be amazing one day, but here's how I see it going down. We've got two options unless one of you can come up with something else. One. We stay here and April and I get jobs and save up as much as we can for the next few years until we have enough money to make the renovation easier."

“What’s option two?” April asks, scrolling through the sunset views over the fields with the house in the distance.

“We go to France now and do everything ourselves, which will be a ton of hard work. Backbreaking work. And I tell you right now, that old house has crappy heating.”

“Now,” they both say in unison, then crack up.

“Right now?” Amelia asks, standing up like she’s ready to put her stuff back in the plastic bags she brought it over in. “Like right, right now?”

April’s eyes well up with tears and she puts her hand on my arm. “How soon can we go?” she asks.

“I figure we can fast track your passports and leave in about a month, maybe sooner. My last paycheck from the club will cover everything until then. After that, who knows? It’ll be an adventure. Are you sure you’re in?”

The two girls, my two girls, look at each other with shining eyes. “We’re in,” they both say and Amelia grabs her new phone and runs into her room, babbling about her friends not being able to believe it.

Once April and I are alone in the kitchen, her hand tightens on my arm and her giddy smile has faded.

“Having second thoughts already?” I ask.

“No, never.” A glistening tear rolls down her cheek. “A vineyard in France? With you and Amelia? It’s like a dream.” As if she still doesn’t believe it, she pinches the inside of her elbow and I reach over and smooth away the small red mark that’s left behind. “I don’t understand why, though,” she says.

“Oh, little one, don’t you?” I lean over to kiss away the salty tear. “It’s because I love you. From the moment our eyes first met at the club. I couldn’t let you go home with anyone else. And when I tried to let you go, I couldn’t. I never will. You’re mine, April.”

She shakily stands and hurries to sit on my lap, wrapping her arms around my neck. “I love you, too,” she says, and it’s the happiest moment of my life. “I just never

thought my silly dream of being with the angel who saved me could ever be real.”

The kiss makes us both forget everything for a moment, our mouths colliding as her arms tighten around me to the point I can hardly breathe. “It’s real,” I tell her when we finally pull back. “It’s going to get very real.”

She laughs, sweeter than any music. “I can’t wait.”

“Then let’s go get your passport pictures taken and get the ball rolling,” I say, standing up and holding on tight so she slides down my body.

She clings around my waist and presses her face into my chest, finally smiling up at me, then she hollers for Amelia to get her butt ready to go.

We’re starting our adventure, and I can’t wait to see what happens next.

Epilogue

April

Six years later

I lean forward on the hard bench in the little gathering hall, smiling at the eight kids who are lined up to graduate after their headmaster gets done with his interminable speech. My sister, eighteen now and looking so happy she might burst in her bright blue robe, glances up from whispering with one of her classmates and catches my eye.

Even after living here in the middle of the French countryside, it's still a little surreal to me to watch her graduate from the tiny village school. The picturesque backdrop of dark wooden beams overhead and stone walls covered in years of whitewash is stunning. I smile at her and wave and, while she gives me an eye roll, she wiggles her fingers back at me, eager to hear her name called.

She deserves every bit of happiness she's experiencing right now and, between my pride and bittersweet sorrow that my kid sister is an adult, I have to surreptitiously wipe away a tear. The three of us worked so hard for the last six years to be able to sit comfortably on this bench, accepted into this close-knit community of people who no longer consider us foreigners, but friends. Maybe even family if the boy who's had a crush on Amelia since we moved here gets his way.

Michael was right about how difficult the work would be. We were exhausted and broke for the first few years, but being together made it all worth it. The lack of fear, the warmth, and the love instead of the bitterness we'd had to endure before my angel husband swooped in and saved us.

Despite all the hard work and challenges, we now have a cozy home filled with our handmade crafts. The grapevines are not just growing again, but thriving, and if all keeps going smoothly, we'll have our first harvest this fall. It'll be rough without Amelia, and not just because we'll have one less worker when the time comes. But she wants to go back to America for college and I support her even though it's breaking my heart.

Her name is finally called and the smattering of applause from the small crowd of family and friends makes her cheeks burn bright. I turn to Michael, more handsome than ever with his deeply tanned skin from working outdoors and pale highlights from the sun woven into his golden hair. His muscles have always been impressive, but after years of real, hard labor, he's truly more like a god now than just an angel.

His smile lights up his handsome face and when I turn back to Amelia on the stage, I burst into tears like a fool. A proud, ridiculously happy fool. Michael nudges me with a teasing grin and hands me a tissue. When I'm done blowing my nose, I catch him wiping away a tear of his own, as proud of Amelia as I am.

But for me it's so much more, because I can remember the stage I was forced to walk across after I turned eighteen. The raucous calls from that crowd are nothing like the mild cheers from this one. I don't have any regrets because things turned out just the way they were supposed to, but I'm so grateful that Amelia never had to go through the same thing.

After the ceremony, Michael and I hurry back to the house to put the finishing touches on the party we're hosting for all the kids and their families. It's easy to do when there are only eight of them, but I still want everything to be perfect.

The twinkle lights are strung along the stone wall separating the garden where we grow most of our own vegetables from the vineyard, and I spent all morning picking wildflowers and arranging them into centerpieces for the tables we've set out in the back courtyard. Michael makes sure the sound system is set up so everyone can dance and soon

we're surrounded by other happy people, enjoying each other's company.

It's so simple, but it was something I never dared to hope for before Michael. And things are about to be so much better. As I'm swaying in his arms to a slow song, he points out the village boy who's had a massive crush on Amelia for years, flirting extra hard with her tonight.

"He's got to make his move before she goes," he says, leaning down to nuzzle my neck.

"I hope he's not heartbroken," I say, rooting for him and hoping she's not dazzled by one of her new college friends once she's back on her home soil.

"I hope you're not going to be," Michael says seriously.

Sighing, I rest my cheek against his chest, smiling at the sound of his steady heartbeat. "I'm just her sister, not her mother. I'll be fine."

And I think I really will be, especially since we never heard a peep out of Uncle Harris after we got away. Perhaps he was just happy to be rid of us, or we disappeared so quickly that he never got a chance to find us. Regardless, he could be in prison, dead, or just carrying on with his same old petty crimes for all any of us care.

"You act like her mother most of the time," he says with a slow smile that gets my blood racing. "There's nothing wrong with that, though."

There's a hint of sadness behind his smile that he wouldn't want me to notice but of course I do. Soon, that sadness will be erased. Despite the hectic workload at the vineyard, we've been trying for a baby for the last two years. Nothing ever came of it, and I was beginning to think something was wrong. But after the last few weeks of thinking I was struggling with a nasty stomach bug I couldn't shake; I finally went into town and bought a test. I was afraid to get my hopes up again, but I took it this morning and have been bursting with the news ever since.

I didn't want to overshadow Amelia's graduation, and we're surrounded by guests, but I can't stand keeping the secret anymore. I slip out of Michael's embrace and take his hand, leading him toward the house. It's as if he can read the news on my face and he sucks in a breath, gripping my shoulders.

"What is it, April?" he asks. "Please tell me what I think you're going to tell me."

"You know me so well," I tell him, drawing it out a second longer. But then I blurt it out with a laugh. "Yes, we're going to have a baby."

He wraps her arms around my waist and lifts me off the old plank floor, turning in a circle as he whoops with joy. As he loosens his grasp and I slide down his hard body, he gives me a kiss that makes my knees tremble. As soon as my feet hit the floor, I begin to push him backward towards the bedroom.

The music and laughter from our party waft in through the windows, but I can't wait until everyone leaves. French people can drink and dance until sunrise, and I need to be with my husband right now.

As soon as we're through our bedroom door, we tumble onto the bed, pushing aside the quilt Amelia and I made after getting lessons from one of the village ladies. Michael's hands roam down my side, pulling up my dress until he finds the spot I'm dying for him to touch.

"You know just what I need," I murmur, stretching out and reaching for his long, silky hair. A hundred times he's wanted to cut it to make it easier out in the hot sun, but I've begged him not to.

"And I'm going to give it to you, baby," he says, shoving my panties down and sinking his fingers deep inside me. Then he pauses, looking up at me with wonder in his eyes. "Baby," he says as if just remembering. "Do I need to be careful?"

"You better not be," I warn, making him laugh. He knows I like it rough and wild most of the time.

His hand moves lazily against my wet heat, making me squirm as he kisses me long and slow and sweet. His tongue swipes across my lower lip as he pulls back to look down at me, his blue eyes dark with the same desire that makes me cling to him. There are laugh lines etched into the tan around those eyes I love so much and they crinkle now when he smiles at me.

“You’re so beautiful,” he says. “Every inch of you.”

“You’re sweet,” I tell him, breaking out into a grin. “Now give me every inch of you.”

He snorts, then goes back to easing his fingers in and out of me. “Settle down there, little one. We’ve got all the time in the world and lots and lots to celebrate.”

But he can’t resist for long and soon he nudges my legs apart with his knee, leaning down to take my nipple in his mouth as he rubs his cock against my opening. With an almost pained look on his face, he pulls me roughly to him so that our chests collide, just as he sinks all the way inside me.

“Yes,” I moan, wrapping my arms around his neck and sliding up and down. I love being held tight against him; safe, secure, and cherished. “Oh, the things you can do to me.”

He tugs my hair back and kisses down my throat, his long, smooth movements building up a delicious longing that only he can satisfy. I let my head stay tipped back, taking in every sensation as I watch the lights from outside flicker across the ceiling. The music swells and changes to a loud, hard rock song, and I smile.

“Perfect,” he says. “Perfect timing.”

I know just what he means, because he begins to move faster, drive deeper. Both our breathing gets shallower and our hearts pound rhythmically. My moans get louder as my fingers dig into his back, then slide up to grab onto his hair. He loosens his grip around my body to slip his hand between us, his palm sliding down my belly to the crux of my thighs. The moment he brushes my clit, I let loose and scream; the sound drowned out by the rowdy party music outside.

He follows me, howling out his orgasm as he squeezes me tight. Barely enough room between us for a trickle of sweat to fall. For a long time, we cling to each other, letting the aftershocks ripple through us, lost in each other.

He finally rolls onto his back, bringing me with him, so I'm looking down at his satisfied grin. "Amazing," he says, his chest still rising and falling from our exertions. His eyes drift shut as his hand runs lazily up and down my back.

I just keep looking at him, with the party sounds rising and falling in the background, not sure if I'll ever get used to my life being this perfect. And it seems to keep getting better.

"How?" I whisper.

His eyes open and he pulls me close to rest a soft kiss on my forehead. "I wonder sometimes too," he says.

"You don't know what I was asking," I say, ready to tease him.

He nods solemnly. "You were thinking how you could be so happy you think you'll laugh and cry at the same time. That you might shatter from it if you move too fast. But then instead of going away, it only gets better and better."

I suck in a breath and feel those sappy tears that fell at the graduation ceremony welling up again. Michael grins, smug that he's gotten it so right.

"Yes, something like that," I say, cozying up next to him and pulling his arm under me for a pillow. "You think the neighbors and the kids can just shut the party down themselves? Or should we get back out there?"

"I bet they'll be fine without us."

"I'm so lucky," I murmur, feeling him shaking his head so that his chin brushes across the top of my hair.

"I'm the lucky one. I'd have never gotten this place fixed up without two hearty laborers like you and Amelia."

With a laugh, I poke him in the ribs. "You could have had professionals and gotten it done in half the time if you hadn't bid at some extravagant auction all those years ago."

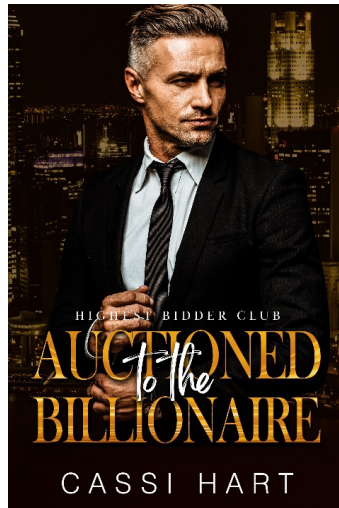
“Never once regretted any of it,” he tells me, serious now. “You?”

“Never,” I tell him instantly. “This has been the best adventure of my life.”

He wraps me close and turns so our faces are inches apart, his deep blue eyes searching mine. “And it’s only going to get better.”

~The End

Up Next...



Felicia

I've had a crush on my best friend's dad for as long as I can remember; saving myself for him.

But now, faced with a desperate situation, I need to come up with money—quickly.

Left with only one option, I'm forced to do the unthinkable.

Auction my V-card to the highest bidder.

Brock

Having it all doesn't mean much without someone to share your life with. Great business, tons of money, and none of it satisfies me. The only bright spots in my world are my daughter and her beautiful best friend.

The best friend I absolutely shouldn't want, even when she flirts with me.

I've controlled myself for so long, but when I see Felicia up on that stage I can't deny it any longer.

She was always meant to be mine—and now I'll own her.

No matter the cost.

Other Books by Cassi

Suddenly His Series:

[The Perfect Plan](#) FREE Book

[Daddy's Secret Angel](#)

[An Innocent Crush](#)

[Plated for the Chef](#)

[Tempting My Stepbrother](#)

[Tempting the Doctor](#)

Stalked Series:

[Soulmate Stalker](#)

[My Modern Viking Stalker](#)

[My Secret Santa My Stalker](#)

[Overprotective Stalker](#)

Seeing Double Twin Sister Series:

[Fake Athlete](#)

[The Professor's Copy](#)

[Pretend Ring Girl](#)

[Fake Assistant](#)

Standalones:

[His Runaway Valentine](#)

[Dirty Puck: F*** On the Ice Rink](#)

[Zorion: Demonic Disciples](#)

[Bred by the Boss](#)

Happily Ever After Mountain:

[The Loner's Prize](#)

[Beauty and the Recluse](#)

[Chasing Glass Slippers](#)

[The Billionaire's Final Treasure](#)

Courting Curves:

[Defending Her Heart](#)

Sweetheart Campus:

[Coaches Pet](#)

[Hot for Professor](#)

[Tutoring the Athlete](#)

[The Dean's Daughter](#)

Boxsets:

[Sweet Obsessions Boxset: Suddenly His Series Collection](#)

[His Obsession: A Stalker Collection](#)

[Seeing Double: Sister Swap Collection](#)

[Extra Credit Collection: Sweetheart Campus](#)

[Glamorous Brides Collection](#)

[Happily Ever After Collection](#)

Big Alpha's:

[Big Brawny Mechanic](#)

[Big Hulking Biker](#)

[Big Bold Security](#)

[Big Beefy Kingpin](#)

Glamorous Brides:

[Cuffing His Bride](#)

[The Hitman's Bride](#)

[Farmer Finds a Bride](#)

[Doctor's Surprise Bride](#)

The BFF Pact:

[His Weakness](#)

[His Mistake](#)

[His Apprentice](#)

[His Promise](#)

Dearly Devoted:

[Stalked by the Convict](#)

[Stepbrother's Little Secret](#)

[Stalked by the Marine](#)

[Hacking my Stalker](#)

A Big Burly Romance:

[Big Burly Forman](#) (FREE book)

[Big Forbidden Blacksmith](#)

[Big Brutal Roughneck](#)

[Big Grumpy Fireman](#)

[Big Merry Miner](#)

[Big Hefty Trucker](#)

Mistletoe Love Series:

[Joy for the Scrooge](#)

Highest Bidder Club:

[Auctioned to my Boss](#)

[Auctioned to my Best Friend](#)

[Auctioned to the Stranger](#)

[Auctioned to the Billionaire](#)

Free Book

Join my mailing list!



The Kingpin's Obsession

Alice

I saw something I shouldn't have, and my life is in danger.

The police won't listen, and I have no choice but to seek help at Benedetti's, a bar known for its criminal clientele. But I'm barely inside the door before a dark eyed devil drags me back out and demands to know why I'm there. I shouldn't trust him, but I don't have a choice when he's the only one willing to help me.

Too late, I learn who he really is, and now I'm left to wonder... when this is all over, will he save my life only to break my heart?

About the Author

Cassi lives to write brazen OTT, insta-love, short stories, about possessive alphas and the women they love. Stories that will leave you satisfied, and maybe blushing a little. Cassi loves pedicures, being pampered in any way possible, her darling golden Princess, amazing coffee, and traveling too anywhere warm.



Cassi  *H*  *nt*