



M.S. PARKER

USA TODAY BEST SELLING AUTHOR

*Club Privé*

French Connection Vol. 1

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# Club Privé

## French Connection Vol. 1

By M.S. Parker

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## Book Description

*The past year should have been everything I'd ever dreamed. Why, then, did I feel like something was missing?*

Things have been quiet for Carrie Summers and her boyfriend, Gavin Manning, since they took down Gavin's business partner for kidnapping and sex trafficking, among other things. Carrie is working as a pro bono lawyer, fighting for abused and exploited people, and Gavin has been hard at work changing Club Privé into a dance club. In all their hard work, however, they've lost the spark between them. Could a trip to the French Riviera be just what they need to bring the life back into their relationship...and their club?

**Don't miss the premiere installment of M.S. Parker's Club Privé: French Connection, featuring her first red-hot couple, Carrie and Gavin.**

# Chapter 1

## *Carrie*

I leaned back in my chair and stretched my arms above my head. My elbows popped, a sensation filled with both tension and release. I rolled my head, trying to loosen the tight muscles in my neck and shoulders. When I'd been a paralegal at Webster and Steinberg, I thought I knew what it was like to have to sit at a desk for hours at a time. Now, after almost a year of running my own pro bono law office, specializing in sexual harassment and sex trafficking cases, I knew just how naïve I'd been. I looked back longingly at eight-hour days.

Not that I was really complaining. I loved my job. I'd been good at divorce law, and there had been a few times when I'd been able to see the good I was doing. But with this, being able to select my own cases and experience the difference I was making in people's lives, I felt like my years of hard work were finally paying off.

Like now, I had this pet project going on. A few months back, a soft-spoken woman came into my Manhattan office and told me her daughter had been tricked into the sex trade. Once I'd gotten the name, I'd known why she'd come to me rather than the cops. Client confidentiality would prevent me from sharing the fact that Robyn Leeds, daughter of the governor, had chosen to trade her body for money. Since my office was just me and my

assistant, Zoe Masters, Mrs. Leeds felt she could trust us to be discreet.

I'd found Robyn through a source in the police department when the fifteen-year-old had been picked up in a sting. She hadn't been happy when I'd come to get her, but I'd managed to make her see reason and agree to testify against her "boyfriend," Little Tino.

Or so I'd thought.

For the past month, I'd kept tabs on Robyn, calling to check in every couple days to see how she was doing. Her parents were notorious for leaving her by herself while they took business trips to the Bahamas. Usually, Robyn was good about answering my calls or at least getting back to me right away if I had to leave a voicemail. This week, however, I called three times and hadn't heard from her at all. I was starting to get worried.

Part of the reason Robyn had let Little Tino talk her into having sex with his friends, and then with strangers, was that she craved being taken care of. With her parents on another of their trips and no one except the housekeeper around, I had a bad feeling she'd gone back to her pimp who was out on bail.

I pressed the intercom. "Zoe, I need to you to keep calling Robyn every hour and tell her to call me. Tell her if I don't hear from her by the end of the day, I'm involving the cops." I waited for my assistant to agree, but there was only silence. I frowned and tried again. "Zoe?"

When I still didn't get a response, I stood and walked out of my office. Zoe wasn't at her desk. I glanced into the conference room next to my office and found it empty too. There weren't many other places Zoe could be. My office was nice, but not very big. I checked the restroom, wondering if she'd just forgotten to tell me she was taking a break, but she wasn't there either. It wasn't until I glanced at the clock as I headed back to my office that I realized

it was almost noon and the morning had rushed by like a speeding train.

I frowned at myself. Zoe always took her lunch from eleven-thirty to twelve-thirty, and I never asked her to let me know when she was going since she always went at the same time. I just usually paid better attention than this.

Just as I reached my office door, I heard the lobby buzzer. I scowled, wondering what idiot couldn't read the hours posted on our lobby sign. I was tempted to ignore it, but that would mean I'd either have to get back to someone or track down a package. I wasn't in the mood to do either.

I walked over to Zoe's desk and hit the front desk intercom. "Yes?"

"UPS delivery, ma'am," the desk manager said. "He needs a signature."

"Send him up." I sighed and closed my eyes.

I was exhausted. Between worrying about Robyn and working on a proposal for Congressman White, as well as trying to sort through the cases that came across my desk, I hadn't slept more than a few hours a night in a couple of months. And it wasn't like anything I was doing could be put aside. It was all too important. Every case had the potential of saving a life. Robyn could be in trouble. And the proposal for the congressman was key in the fight against sex trafficking.

I'd first met Joshua White about six months ago when I'd attended a fund-raiser for sex trafficking awareness. He'd been passionate about the subject and after learning what I did, had asked me to work on a proposal detailing all of the areas in which the law was negligent. I'd finished the document but was still working on the polish. I had a meeting with his assistant tomorrow to present my case, and she would decide if what I had was good enough to pass on to the congressman. It had to be perfect.

The front door opened and I straightened, fixing my best disapproving expression on my face. It wasn't difficult. The man who entered was just a bit above average height, with broad shoulders, but I couldn't see any of his features. They were hidden under the brim of his hat and a pair of dark sunglasses. He kept his head down, so my stern glare was lost on him.

I took the package and scrawled my name on the receipt.

“Thanks,” I said tersely as I handed the clipboard back and tossed the box onto Zoe's desk. I turned to walk into my office when the delivery man spoke.

“Aren't you going to open it?”

I froze. I'd know that voice anywhere. My pulse quickened. There was only one reason I could think of why my boyfriend would be delivering a package while dressed like a UPS man. Desire flared deep inside me. It had been a while since Gavin and I had role-played, and never at my work. I wasn't quite sure what my role was supposed to be, but I knew Gavin would make sure I understood where we were going.

“Do you want me to open it now?” I asked, turning around.

He pulled off the hat and tousled his dark hair. Next came the sunglasses, revealing those deep blue eyes that made me weak in my knees. “Ms. Summers, I think you need to check your package and make sure it's not damaged.”

“Certainly, Mr. Delivery Boy.” I gave him a polite smile and carefully unwrapped the package. I caught my breath as I opened the box, revealing its contents.

Two tiny pieces of rich purple silk were inside. I held up the bra as if



inspecting it, and then the panties. They were both easily half the size of what I was wearing at the moment.

“They look fine,” I said with a casual lift to my shoulder.

He took a step toward me. “I think you should try them on, just to be sure.”

“Oh really?” I raised an eyebrow.

He nodded and I saw a hint of a dimple as he tried to keep from smiling. “And, I’ll have to carefully examine them to ensure everything’s in order.”

“I don’t think so.”

The quirk of his lips told me I’d given the right response.

“Ms. Summers, if I delivered a defective package, I could lose my job.” His face went puppy dog, his voice just shy of pleading. “You wouldn’t want to be responsible for that, would you?”

I tapped my toe and sighed, then picked up the package and motioned for him to follow me. “You can wait in my office while I change in my private bathroom.”

Gavin followed me, closing the door behind us. He stopped partway into the room and waited.

I made my voice as firm as possible. “Don’t touch anything. I’ll be right back.”

Once in the bathroom, I quickly stripped off my work clothes and underwear, leaving them in a neat little pile on the edge of the sink. My skin was flushed with arousal as I slid into the tiny panties and then fastened on the bra. Once I was finished, I took a step back to get the full effect in the

mirror. I was grateful I'd shaved this morning.

I owned far more lingerie now than I had before I'd met Gavin, and this was definitely one of the sexiest things I'd ever worn. The panties were sheer, leaving practically nothing to the imagination. The bra was not only equally as transparent, but was so low cut that I was pretty sure, if I breathed too hard, my nipples would pop out. It hooked in front and the clasps were covered with a cute little ribbon that fell all the way to my bellybutton.

Just one more thing needed to be done. I usually pinned my hair back at work because many people thought I was younger than twenty-five and, for a lawyer, looking youthful wasn't always a good thing. Now, I pulled the pins out and let my golden curls fall around my shoulders. Gavin liked my hair down.

With a final smile at my reflection, I headed back into my office. Gavin was standing right where I'd left him. I gave myself a moment to appreciate the way the uniform hugged his body, and then I walked out of the bathroom.

His eyes lit up when he saw me, and then darkened with desire, but he didn't break character. "What do you think, Ms. Summers?"

"I think you might need to take a closer look and make sure I didn't miss anything."

He closed the distance between us in two quick strides, but stopped before our bodies touched. He looked down at me for a moment and I thought he'd give in and kiss me, but he didn't. Instead, he reached out and cupped my breasts, his expression almost clinical. "It appears to contour nicely to your body."

He ran his thumbs across my nipples, back and forth again and again

until I couldn't quite stop myself from moaning.

“Seems the material doesn't detract from sensitivity,” he said matter-of-factly. His palms were hot as they slid down over my ribcage to my hips. “But I better check the panties too, just to be sure.”

His index finger ran along the elastic and I shivered. Goosebumps rose on my skin and he slid his hand around to my ass. The only fabric there was a thin strip that didn't actually cover anything, so it was all skin-on-skin as he squeezed and rubbed, all the while making his way to where the material disappeared between my cheeks. His fingers teased at the crack, then slid further down so that his hand was moving between my legs.

Despite the awkward angle, his fingers managed to brush against the now-soaked crotch of my panties and I swallowed hard.

“Hmm,” he said. His forehead furrowed as a thoughtful expression crossed his face. He removed his hand.

“Is there a problem?” I was trying for innocent, but couldn't deny the breathless quality in my voice.

“Your panties appear to be wet, Ms. Summers.” He circled around me until he was out of my line of sight. An arm snaked around my waist and his fingers danced across my lower abdomen, then dropped lower.

I drew in a sharp breath as his fingers pressed against me through the thin material. He ran them up and down, thoroughly wetting the fabric before pushing it aside. I moaned as his index finger slipped between my lips and I spread my legs, giving him the room he needed to work.

“Why, Ms. Summers.” His breath was hot against my ear. “I believe I may have found the problem.” The tip of his finger circled my entrance,

teasing but not penetrating. “There seems to be a leak. I may need to plug it up. What do you think?”

I smiled and nodded mutely, my eyes closing as I silently willed him to touch me where I needed it. All of the tension of the day was a giant ball inside me and I knew if he could make me come, it'd all fade away.

Fingers lightly pinched my nipple and I cried out as a jolt of pleasure went through me.

“I asked you a question.” Gavin's voice was low, taking on the authoritative tone that brought another rush of juices flooding south. He hadn't used that tone in a long time. “Do you think I should do something about this little problem we have?”

“Yes, please.”

The words were barely out of my mouth before his finger was sliding into me.

“Shit,” I breathed. I pressed down on his hand, desperate for friction on my throbbing clit.

Gavin's arm wrapped around my waist, holding me still. He made a disapproving sound. “No, Ms. Summers. You need to stay put.”

Stay put? How in the world did he expect me to be still when his finger moved so slowly? I was certain I'd go crazy before I could orgasm. Before I could ask, or even think of how to say the words, his hand shifted and a second finger joined the first. He wasn't exactly being rough, but he wasn't gentle either as he thrust his fingers into me over and over. Then his heel pressed against my clit and I grabbed onto his arm, my nails digging into his flesh.

“Yes!” I cried out as his hand moved, pushing against all the right places. My body was on fire, burning from the inside out, and I could feel my climax approaching.

“Come on, baby,” he said. His teeth scraped over the shell of my ear. “Come for me. Make those panties even wetter.”

He pressed his lips against the spot where my shoulder and neck met, then bit down. Not hard enough to hurt, but enough to push me over the edge.

I pressed my lips together to hold in a scream as I came. I'd never been a screamer until I'd started fucking Gavin. Now, my body shook as pleasure coursed through me as well as from the effort to keep my love noises inside. It had been weeks, maybe months, since I'd come that hard. He held me upright, his fingers working me as high as I could go and then beyond, almost until pleasure became pain, and then he stopped. His hand slid out from between my legs and he turned me so that I was facing my desk.

“Now, Ms. Summers, look what you've done.”

My chest was heaving as I drew in deep breaths, each one threatening to make my breasts burst free of their silken confines. Gavin put his hand on my back and applied pressure, telling me without words what he wanted me to do. I complied, leaning over my desk, resting on my elbows.

“I think you owe me for pleasuring you,” he said. He ran his hands over my back and sides, then underneath me to squeeze my breasts. “What do you think?”

I wasn't sure I could speak, but I managed a single word. “Yes.”

“And what do you think you should give me to show your gratitude for a job well done?” Gavin's fingers teased my nipples, the fabric between them

almost chafing on the sensitive flesh.

“Anything,” I gasped. Nobody knew my body the way he did. “Anything you want.”

His fingers pulled my panties to one side, dragging across my still wet skin. I moaned but didn't move from where Gavin wanted me. The moan turned into a surprised yelp as he roughly shoved his fingers inside me. My head fell forward as he thrust at least two of them into me.

“Fuck.” I closed my eyes. He hadn't been that forceful with me in months. I hadn't realized how much I'd missed it.

“Fuck? Is that what you want?” His free hand managed to unsnap the clasp on my bra, freeing my breasts.

“Yes,” I answered immediately. I pushed back against his hand. “Please.”

“Please what?”

He loved making me say what I wanted, tell him how it felt having him inside me. I understood it. He could say anything and it would make me wet.

“Please fuck me,” I begged.

“If you insist, Ms. Summers.”

His fingers slipped out, leaving me empty and wanting. I heard the sound of a zipper and then, he was pushing into my pussy. My muscles trembled as my body stretched to accommodate him. Even with foreplay, it was a tight fit, and his cock filled me completely, reaching places no one but him had ever reached before.

He buried himself with a groan, his hands sliding under me to cup my

breasts. He gave me a moment, waiting for the muscles surrounding him to stop their fluttering. No matter how many times we did this, that first penetration never got old. And then he began to move, pulling back until he was nearly out and then slamming forward, sending near-painful pleasure coursing through me as his cock sank deeply to the root.

When I'd first seen him naked, I hadn't been sure it was possible for him to fit inside me, and it wasn't a naivety thing of not understanding how biology worked. He was huge. But it wasn't size alone that made him a magnificent lover. He knew what he was doing and, from moment one, I'd known we'd been made for each other.

I cried out as he drove into me and it was all I could do to brace myself on the desk. His hands squeezed my breasts, then began to play with my nipples. His long fingers were talented, knowing just the right way to roll and pull. He'd once made me climax from my nipples alone, something I hadn't thought was possible until he'd taken me to bed. Now, it added to the other sensations I was feeling until my entire body was like a single live nerve.

His hands moved to my hips, gripping me tight as he fucked me, each thrust hard enough to push me onto my toes. I'd have bruises later and, if the pressure bubbling inside me was any indication, it'd be worth every one. I felt his rhythm falter and knew he was close. I shifted my weight onto one arm and slid my other one beneath me. I half-expected him to stop me from touching myself, remembering one of our first encounters where he'd done just that. He'd told me then that I was his, that he would be the one to bring me pleasure. This time, however, my fingers reached that spot between my legs without interference.

I felt his pulse inside me as I started to rub my clit. A few passes was all I needed and then I was coming too, my pussy contracting around his cock as

it emptied into me. I heard him groan my name and his arms slid around my waist as he slumped over me for a moment.

Before my pulse had returned to normal, Gavin pulled out, causing another shudder to run through me. Even soft, he was big enough to get a reaction. After a moment, I straightened.

“Thank you,” I said as I fixed my bra and panties. I'd change back into my other underwear in a moment, but I was suddenly aware that I was in my office and almost naked. My thighs were slick with our cum and I was glad I had my own bathroom. Clean-up would've been a bitch otherwise.

He grinned at me as he tucked himself back into his pants. “You've been working so hard and I figured since we hadn't done it here, now was as good a time as any.”

I glanced at the clock and swore. “Zoe will be back—”

“No, she won't,” Gavin interrupted. “I arranged for her to take a two hour lunch. You still have plenty of time to get cleaned up and presentable before it's back to work.” He took my hands and leaned forward to kiss my forehead.

I leaned against him. The tension I'd had before was gone, melted away. I'd missed this. I wasn't the only one who'd been working hard. Lately, it seemed like the only time we saw each other was when one of us was sleeping. I'd thought moving in together would bring us closer, and I supposed we would've seen less of each other if we'd been living apart, but it didn't make things easier.

“So,” he said. “I got a call a couple hours ago and have a dinner meeting with a potential new client tonight. What do you say? Dinner, dancing, some



wine, then we spend some quality time together?”

I wanted so badly to say yes. A night with him was what I needed, but I sighed and straightened. The moment was gone. “I can't tonight. I have to finish my presentation for Congressman White. If I can get his assistant interested, there's a good chance the congressman will use some of my ideas for a bill against sex-trafficking.”

Gavin smiled, but I could see the disappointment in his eyes. I hated putting it there, but I was doing important work. There were thousands of young women out there being held against their will, forced into sexual slavery, and I had to do everything in my power to free them.

“I understand,” he said as he released my hands. “But tomorrow night, you and I are having dinner at La Petite.” He gave me a cocky smile. “It took me a month to get those reservations.”

I smiled back. “It's a date.” I glanced at the clock again. “But now, I really need to get dressed.” I winked at him. “Unless you think I should see clients like this?”

His eyes narrowed and he grabbed me, pulling me against his chest. His mouth came down hard on mine and I could feel the fire there as his tongue pushed past my lips. He plundered my mouth, all teeth and tongue, until I was gasping for air.

“No one sees you like this but me,” he all but growled as he finally released my mouth.

“Never,” I agreed. I let myself have a moment, then sighed. “But you really do need to go.”

I could feel the reluctance in his arms as he released me, but he knew as

well as I did that I had work to do. The door to my office was swinging closed behind him as I disappeared into the bathroom. It was time to return to reality.

## Chapter 2

### *Gavin*

My little tryst with Carrie had taken more time out of my day than I'd planned, but it had been worth it. She did great work, and I knew it was important, but I could tell things between us were suffering. Today had been the first day in over a week that we'd had sex. For some people, that would've been about average, but when you considered that nine or ten months ago, we'd had sex almost every night, this was a bit of a dry spell. Our time together had been slowly decreasing over the months. When we'd first gotten together, we hadn't been able to get enough of each other. Now, it was same old, same old.

I was late as I rushed down to the streets of Manhattan. I groaned in frustration and ran my hand through my hair as my cab pulled up to the curb. The hat I'd worn had given me hat-hair, but again, worth it. I could still feel Carrie's smooth skin under my hands, feel her tight channel squeezing every last drop from my cock.

Dammit. Just thinking about her was getting me hard again. As I walked into Abruzzi's Italian Dining, I forced myself to think of things of a less appetizing nature. I was already running behind for my dinner with Vincent Paoli. I doubted greeting him with an obvious erection would help make a better impression.

Paoli had contacted me a few days ago and said he had a business proposition for me. He hadn't given details over the phone, only said that he was interested in investing in a European expansion for Club Privé. I'd spent the last year remodeling my club physically as well as changing its reputation from a sex club into a dance club. I'd even sold my software company, with a hefty profit, so I could focus completely on the club. I'd been getting bored with writing software and designing apps anyway. It was time to branch out, and Paoli seemed like he had the right kind of connections to make something like this fly.

I scanned the restaurant as I entered and spotted Paoli right away. In his early fifties, he dressed like Don Johnson... from the eighties. White suit jacket with a t-shirt underneath it and he even had his salt-and-pepper hair styled like Crockett in Miami Vice. In the right light, he actually kind of resembled Johnson. If I hadn't done my homework and knew he was an extremely successful businessman, I might've thought twice about going through with the meeting based on looks alone.

I made my way through the tables, nodding a greeting when Paoli looked up. As I took my seat across from him, I spoke, "Sorry I'm late. Traffic was a bitch."

Paoli waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "I took the liberty of ordering us some scotch."

I didn't try to hide my surprise. "I wasn't aware they served scotch here."

"For me, they do." He grinned at me and drained his glass. "Drink up." He motioned toward the glass in front of me.

"Thank you, Mr. Paoli," I said as I took a sip of the alcohol. My eyebrows went up. This was expensive stuff.

“You're welcome. And call me Vincent.”

“Vincent.” I nodded.

He leaned back in his chair as a waiter came over with another drink. I'd been here often enough to know at least a few things on the menu so we both ordered. Once the waiter was on his way back to the kitchen, the talk turned to business.

“I don't know if you recall,” Vincent began. “But I visited your club twice last year during the first few weeks it was open. I was here on a business trip and looking to have a bit of fun. I've never forgotten it.”

“Thank you.” I tried not to shift uncomfortably. If he hadn't been back since then, he probably didn't know the club had gone through some changes.

“It got me thinking and I couldn't get this idea out of my head. I want to open a club like Privé in the French Riviera. A legit private club for the rich and famous.” He regarded me with a serious expression. “I could hire someone already in Cannes, but I love the way Privé is designed. Creative. Elaborate. And that's what I want for my club. I'd like to make this an extension of your club here, with the two of us as equal partners.”

I forced a smile and took a drink to avoid having to say anything. Somehow, I doubted Vincent would be quite as enthused when he found out that Club Privé was just another dance club now. Granted, it was still one of the most elaborately designed clubs in the city, but I'd had a lot of it redone to suit its new purpose.

“I'd like you to come to Cannes to take a look at the site and go over the building plans with my architect.” Vincent emptied another glass. “Bring a lady friend, if you like.” He grinned. “Or don't. I'm sure a man like you

doesn't lack female attention.”

I was torn. In all honesty, the club wasn't doing nearly as well as a dance club as it had as a sex club. I wasn't quite losing money, but it was close. If I hadn't had the money I'd earned before and what I'd gotten from the sale of my software company, I'd be hurting financially. As it was, if I kept having to spend on remodeling and putting out money to fund Carrie's pro bono law office, I was going to run out eventually, and what little I was bringing in from Club Privé wasn't enough for both Carrie and me to live on, even if I downsized my spending. And it certainly wouldn't be enough to keep Carrie's office afloat.

If I did this for Vincent and he was an equal partner, I wouldn't exactly be responsible for it being a sex club. I could make sure he was aware of my stance on bringing in escorts, but I wouldn't have to feel like I needed to police things since I'd be here in New York.

I could go to Cannes with Carrie, give him all of the suggestions and business tips that he'd need to get things started, and spend the rest of my time on vacation with my girlfriend.

That idea was appealing on so many levels. Financially it made sense and personally, it was the best thing I'd heard in a long time. Carrie and I had both been working so hard, we hadn't been able to get away. In fact, we rarely had more than a single day off at the same time, and most of those had been holidays, so we'd spent them with my daughter. Not that Carrie ever complained about that. Carrie adored Skylar and vice versa. It would just be nice to have some time for just the two of us. As loathe as I was to admit it, the spark between us had been flickering dangerously low as of late.

“I'd love to expand Club Privé to the French Riviera,” I said, smiling at

Vincent. “And I'm sure my girlfriend would love a chance to see Cannes.”

“Excellent.” Vincent rubbed his hands together. “Now, what do you say after we eat, we make a little stop at your club for some dessert?”

It didn't take a genius to know that he wasn't talking about some apple pie. I managed a tight smile and felt a wave of relief that I had a good excuse to refuse. “I'm sorry. The timing's awful. The club's closed right now. Renovations.”

Vincent looked a bit disappointed but didn't force the issue. I was glad for that. I'd eventually make sure he knew that I was concerned about the club in France being used as a thoroughfare for the sex trade, but I really didn't want to explain the whole reasoning behind what I'd done to Club Privé here. Telling a new partner that my former partner had been selling girls and women to the highest bidder, and I hadn't noticed until it was almost too late, didn't exactly make me sound like an intelligent businessman.

The waiter returned with our meals and Vincent turned the talk to general things. We talked sports and family, where we'd grown up, the basics of conversation. He didn't ask anything too personal or even about how the club was doing now, for which I was grateful. Once we finished, it was handshakes and a promise to be in contact within the next couple days with details about the trip.

I waited until I was climbing into a cab before calling Carrie.

“Hey, babe!” I could barely contain my excitement. “I've got some great news, but I want to tell you in person. See you in a few?” I glanced at my watch. It wasn't too late, which meant I could share my news and we'd still have time for some celebratory sex. My cock stirred at the thought of being back inside her for the second time today. It had been more than six months

since we'd gone more than once in a day.

Then she sighed and I knew my fantasy of making slow, lazy love to her was just that.

“I'm sorry, hon. I'm still at the office, working on my proposal. It has to be perfect, and I'm already exhausted. I'll probably fall asleep at my desk.”

I could hear her trying to put a bit of humor into her words, but there was more fatigue there than anything else. I tried not to be too disappointed. She was busy and it was for a good reason. It wasn't like I was getting brushed off for something like clothing design or, I smiled wryly, running a club.

“That's fine,” I said. I hoped the cheerful note in my voice didn't sound as forced to her as it did to me. “Focus on your proposal and after you nail it tomorrow, we'll celebrate at La Petite.”

“Sounds great.” She sounded distracted and I knew she was already back into her work. If she came home at all, I'd probably already be asleep and I usually left before she did, which meant I mostly likely wouldn't see her until we met at the restaurant.

I pocketed my phone and stared out the window as I rode back to our place. I'd lived here longer alone than I had with Carrie, but it had never truly felt like home until she'd moved in. When she wasn't here, it seemed like too much space for just one person and I wondered how I'd ever stood it before.

I rubbed my chin and tried to remember if we still had a bottle of wine. I was suddenly in the mood for a glass or two. Everything good I'd been feeling about today faded behind a maudlin mood that I knew was here for the rest of the night.



I had to admit, Carrie and I needed this business trip slash vacation more than I'd originally thought.

## Chapter 3

### *Carrie*

I was practically bouncing as I walked into La Petite. Things had gone better than I'd ever dreamed and I couldn't wait to share my news with Gavin. We'd both been working so hard lately that it seemed like we hardly ever got to see each other. He'd been sleeping when I'd gotten home and was gone when I'd woken up, but that was about par for the course these days. I'd actually completely forgotten about the reservations he'd made here until he'd reminded me yesterday.

“I'm here with Gavin Manning,” I told the hostess as she approached me. The jealous glint in her eyes told me that either Gavin was already here or she'd met him before.

“Right this way, Miss.” She gave me a professionally polite smile that didn't reach her eyes, and walked toward the far side of the restaurant.

While I'd eaten La Petite's food before, I'd never been inside the restaurant and I tried not to gawk as I followed the hostess. Sparkling chandeliers, expensive carpeting, furnishings that looked like they cost more than I used to make in a year. The place was almost overwhelming. If I hadn't known personally that the food was insanely good, I'd have thought they were trying to make up for the quality of their meals with the ambiance.

I saw Gavin a moment before he saw me and wondered what had him looking so serious. Then he raised his head and his entire face lit up. My stomach clenched. I wondered if there would ever be a point when my body didn't react to seeing that smile. I certainly hoped not.

“Hey, babe.” He stood and reached out his hand.

I caught another flash of jealousy from the hostess as Gavin kissed my cheek in greeting. We took our seats and a waiter immediately came to the table. Gavin ordered another of whatever he'd been drinking before I'd arrived while I skimmed the wine list. I was no connoisseur, but I did know what I liked. I ordered a glass and the young man hurried off to bring us our drinks.

My news was on the tip of my tongue, but I didn't blurt it out. I wanted to savor it a moment longer, wait until the drinks arrived so I could offer a toast. The waiter returned in record time and then told us to signal as soon as we were ready to order.

We both raised our glasses at the same time.

“I have great news,” I said.

Simultaneously, Gavin said, “I've been waiting to tell you this.” We both smiled and Gavin nodded at me. “You go first.”

The polite thing probably would've been to say the same to him, but I was too excited. “Congressman White's assistant loved my proposal and called him right there! He's going to meet with me next Thursday.”

Gavin tapped his glass against mine and we both took a drink. The alcohol helped take the edge off of my buzzing nerves. I'd want to be careful, though, until the food arrived. I'd forgotten to eat lunch today and alcohol on

an empty stomach with this much excitement wouldn't end well.

“That's so great, babe,” Gavin said sincerely. “So Thursday's your big day? That's really fast. I'm so happy for you.”

I shook my head. “No sorry, not this Thursday. The following week.

“Oh.” His face fell and I knew something was wrong.

“What?” I asked.

“It's fine,” he said stiffly. “Don't worry.”

I frowned a little, but decided the best way to get that smile back was to let him share his news. “What was it you wanted to tell me?”

The smile he gave me was polite, but it didn't touch his eyes. Whatever my news had triggered wasn't going to be easily chased away. He took another sip of his drink and I tried not to press him to share what was bothering him.

“Last night, I had that business dinner,” he said.

I remembered him asking if I could go with him.

“This man, Vincent Paoli, wants a Club Privé in Europe, the French Riviera to be exact. A legit, private club for the rich and famous, particularly the Americans who visit, which is why he came to me. He needs a partner, and he wants me.”

“That's wonderful!” I interrupted.

His smile tightened. “He wants to discuss further plans on site. In France.” He sighed. “Since we've never gone anywhere together and we've both been working so hard, I wanted to take you to France, but it's the same

week you'll be going to DC.”

And now I understood the problem. I reached across the table and squeezed his hand. “That's great news. And I'd love to spend a week in France with you.” I released his hand and leaned back in my seat. “Is there any way it can be put off until after my trip? I mean, will a couple days make that much of a difference to the club?”

“I can try to reschedule.”

Gavin's good humor seemed to be back and I relaxed a bit. Both of us having good news and being together to celebrate it was rare. I didn't want to spend all night with him being moody because our schedules conflicted.

“I don't know about you,” I said. “But I'm starving.”

Gavin signaled for the waiter who'd been hovering in the wings. It hadn't taken me long with Gavin to realize how many people waited around to do things for him. Not in a bad way, and he didn't take advantage of it, but he was definitely used to it, which was funny since he hadn't been born into it. I wondered if I'd ever get used to having money, but then I remembered that the money keeping my business afloat and paying all of the bills wasn't actually mine to begin with.

When we'd discussed him supporting my law practice, and us moving in together, we'd gone round and round about the financial situation. Technically, I was listed as a partner at Club Privé, but I'd had little time to do any real work on the business. Gavin had wanted to just put my name on his accounts and let me do what I wanted, but I hadn't been comfortable with that. I loved Gavin, and even though neither of us had said it, I knew we both saw our future together. Still, we'd only been together a little over a year and we'd been through hell at the beginning. We'd finally managed to

compromise, but I was always aware that the money in my account came from a paycheck I received from my boyfriend for a business I barely thought about anymore. Sometimes, the money thing bothered me, but if I got the congressman to help get this bill passed, it'd be well-worth the sting to my pride.

# Chapter 4

## *Gavin*

I had to admit, I was a bit surprised when Carrie suggested we get dessert at home, our not-so-original or subtle code for 'let's get out of here so we can have hot, sweaty sex'. I'd planned on making a move, but I'd already prepared myself for a preemptive excuse about how hard she'd been working and how glad she'd be to get some sleep. Granted, that was the truth and I knew she wasn't using it as an excuse not to be with me, but it was getting harder not to feel like that. And, of course, that was followed by guilt since I knew everything Carrie did was to rescue exploited girls, boys, men and women. It wasn't just about the sex though. Sure, I missed making love to her, of having the time to indulge our desires, but I missed the connection more.

I hoped that her sultry smile when she'd mentioned dessert was the beginning of us getting back on track. When we'd first gotten together, she'd enjoyed having me coax her out of her comfort zone and had even asked me to teach her more about the things I'd liked, the things that had led me to create Club Privé in the first place. But then she'd begun to throw herself into her work and, lately, I'd been wondering if she'd ever really wanted that in the first place or if she'd just said it to make me happy. It was the kind of thing a couple should talk about, but we had such little time together anymore, I didn't want to waste it bringing up such a heavy subject. I could survive

without a lot of the things I enjoyed in the bedroom. I was more worried about if I'd survive losing her.

“You're thinking awfully hard,” Carrie said as the cab took us home.

“It's nothing,” I said. I slid my arm around her waist and smiled. I was disappointed that I hadn't been able to surprise her with this vacation to Cannes, but I refused to let it spoil our evening. I was excited for the opportunity she had and I was proud of her for all of the work she was doing.

She leaned against me and sighed. “I've missed this,” she said softly, pulling my arm more tightly around her.

“Me too,” I said. I pressed my lips against the top of her head. While I loved the sparks and electricity that came with us touching, there was something to be said for a slow burn as well.

I paid the cabbie and gave him a nice tip as a thank you for not trying to make chit-chat and just letting us relax in silence on the ride. Some taxi drivers felt the need to fill silence, but he hadn't, letting Carrie and me maintain the anticipation between us. As we headed toward the doors, I reached out and took her hand, threading my fingers through hers. My skin hummed where it touched hers and the sensation traveled up my arm. I'd forgotten how such a simple gesture could make me want her so much.

Neither one of us spoke as we rode up in the elevator, but the moment the door to our loft closed behind us, I pulled her into my arms.

“I've been thinking about this all day,” I said before lowering my mouth to hers.

The moment our lips touched, heat flooded through me. She moaned as I slid my tongue into her mouth and I felt her hands clutch at my shirt. I kissed



her slowly, thoroughly exploring her mouth as if for the first time. My hands slid down to the small of her back and rested there, hovering just above her ass. As her tongue curled around mine, I dropped my hands lower, squeezing the firm muscles as I pulled her even more tightly against me, letting her feel my erection pressing against her stomach.

“Bedroom,” she gasped, tearing her mouth away from mine. “Now.”

We shed our clothes as we went, my desire to take it slow replaced by her contagious urgency. By the time we reached the bed, both of us were naked. I reached for her, loving the feel of her silky skin beneath my palms. I cupped her breasts, my cock stiffening even more at the weight of them. I loved her body, every dip and curve, every flaw and imperfection. It was all her. I brushed my thumbs over her nipples and they hardened under my touch. I never tired of how her body responded to me. The flush of her skin. How wet I knew she would be when I finally reached her pussy.

She slid her hand down my chest and I sucked in a breath as she raked her nails across my skin. Damn. I loved when she did that. When her hand closed around my cock, I groaned. She stroked me expertly, knowing exactly how I liked to be touched. I shifted away from her grasp, not wanting this to end too quickly, and bent my head to take one of her nipples into my mouth.

She moaned as I sucked on the hardened bit of flesh. I alternated suction with tongue and teeth, teasing at it until I felt her hands in my hair. I released it and started to move toward the other one, but a hand on my chest stopped me. Carrie gave me a little shove, just hard enough to let me know what she wanted. My eyes met hers and she smiled.

If she wanted to drive for a while tonight, that was fine. I threw back the covers and situated myself on the bed. My heart thudded in my chest as she

climbed onto the bed and straddled my legs. The heat inside me grew. It had been a while since she'd been on top and I'd missed the sight of those beautiful breasts bouncing while she rode me.

I swallowed hard as she positioned herself above my cock. Things were moving much faster than I'd wanted them to go, but with her rubbing the tip of my aching dick against her wet pussy lips, how the hell was I supposed to tell her to wait? I grabbed onto her hips, wanting to drag this out, but Carrie had other ideas. She lowered herself onto me, her pace slow but not teasing. Without any prep, she was impossibly tight, squeezing me almost to the point of pain, and I could only imagine how it felt for her.

I grabbed onto the sheets and gritted my teeth, using every ounce of my self-control not to lose it right there. I squeezed my eyes closed as wet heat enveloped me and I could feel the muscles in her thighs trembling with the intensity of being filled so completely. It didn't matter how many times we did this or how well I prepared her, the initial penetration was always like this, a nearly overwhelming sensation as our bodies fit together in a way that we never had with anyone else.

She sighed as she came to rest, her fingers flexing against my chest as her body adapted to my size. I opened my eyes, and studied her face, tracing every inch of it. Her eyes were closed, her brow furrowed in what looked like concentration. Her lips were parted slightly, her no-smudge lipstick earning its name after our earlier kiss.

When her eyes opened, she saw me looking and smiled. She shifted her hips, angling herself until her clit rubbed against the base of my cock. I knew she'd hit it right when she shuddered and then began to move. I waited for her to get her rhythm before following, raising my hips to meet her downward thrusts with upward ones of my own, driving myself deeper into her.

“Fuck, yes...” she hissed as we clashed together.

I let her control her movements and busied my hands at her breasts. If we weren't going to take things slow, I wasn't going to be as gentle as I usually tried to be. I cupped her breasts, then squeezed, drawing a moan from her. I took her nipples between my fingers and began to roll and tug on them, increasing pressure as she arched her back, pushing her breasts at me. I had the sudden image of putting clamps on that tender flesh, hearing Carrie's cries of pleasure as I taught her to enjoy the new sensations, soothing them after removing the clamps, leaving them swollen and tender...

I shook my head. I didn't need that. This was enough. I gave her nipples a twist, not enough to cause real pain, but enough to give her a jolt. Carrie's body jerked and her nails dug into my chest. I hissed, enjoying the pinpricks of pain from where she was marking me.

Her breathing was coming more rapidly now and I dropped one of my hands, still using the other to manipulate her nipple. I slipped my hand between us, my fingers quickly finding her swollen clit. Two passes over that little bundle of nerves and her body was tensing as she came. Her pussy tightened around me and I swore. I was getting close but I didn't want this to end yet. I wanted to flip us over and drive into her until she came again and again, screaming my name. I wanted to bury my cock deep inside her and lose myself in her body.

Before I could do any of that, Carrie was rolling off of me and taking my cock in her mouth. One hand massaged my balls as the other gripped the base of me, taking care of what she couldn't get into her mouth. She bobbed her head, the suction just this side of painful.

“Carrie.” I put my hand on her head. “Please, babe. I'm too close.”

She dropped her head further down, taking me all the way to the back of her throat, something that had taken a lot of practice for her to accomplish and something that was always guaranteed to make me come.

I cried out, my fingers twisting in her curls as I came. She drew back as my cock sputtered into her mouth, letting the last bit catch her chin. She grinned at me as she wiped it off, then climbed off of the bed and headed into the bathroom. I watched her go as I tried to catch my breath. Not that I had an issue with getting an amazing blow job from my girlfriend, but what the hell had that been? Even with the smile at the end, it didn't feel like she'd done it because she thought I'd wanted it, but rather because it had been the quickest way to get me to finish.

When she came out of the bathroom a few minutes later, she handed me a warm washcloth, then pulled on one of my t-shirts and climbed back into bed. I waited for her to say something as I cleaned myself up, but she rolled onto her side, her back to me, and didn't say a word. I tossed the washcloth into the hamper and pulled the covers over us both. I moved up next to her, curling my body around her from behind, and brushed back some of her hair. I pressed my lips against the spot under her ear that always turned her on.

“I love you, babe,” she murmured. “But no more tonight. I'm exhausted.”

She already sounded half-asleep, so I knew she wasn't lying, but it stung. Had that been the reason for what had happened? Carrie rarely took control of things like that in the bedroom, and the few times she had, it had always been to tease me, to prolong the sexual experience. Never to have a quickie. Not that I was opposed to quickies, but they were usually because we had some place to be at a specific time or we were in a position where we could be caught by other people. Not in our bed at nine o'clock at night. If she'd

said she was too tired for sex, I would've understood. If she'd said she wanted a quickie because she was tired, that would've been fine too, but something about that had been off.

I frowned, tempted to roll over and stay on my side of the bed. I couldn't help but wonder if Carrie had fucked me tonight as much as a consolation prize because she hadn't been able to agree to the trip to France right away. Was that what our relationship had become? Pity fucks and just getting off? If all I'd wanted was an orgasm, I could've taken care of that myself.

I tightened my arm around Carrie as a stab of fear went through me. Was this the beginning of the end? I was already feeling like my sexual needs were being put on the back burner, and I was willing to give up the kinks that I liked, but if I lost the rest of the connection we had, I didn't think I could handle it. Falling in love with Carrie had been the best and hardest thing I'd ever done, and I couldn't lose her.

I was more determined than ever to get us to France. We needed this. We had to get the fire back. I rested my cheek against the top of Carrie's head and concentrated on the sound of her slow, steady breathing, letting it lull me into a restless sleep.

# Chapter 5

## *Gavin*

When I woke up, Carrie's side of the bed was empty, save for a note on her pillow. She'd gone into the office to work on polishing her proposal for her meeting with the congressman and to try to track down the governor's daughter. I frowned as I read the note. I remembered Robyn Leeds from when Carrie had been asked to help find her. She'd asked me if I'd thought it'd be a good idea since she was a lawyer, not a PI. The last I'd heard from Carrie, Robyn had been doing fine and was ready to testify against her pimp. Had Carrie told me that something else had happened and I didn't remember?

I sighed as I climbed out of bed. That seemed like the sort of thing I should know. I'd planned on spending the day with Carrie, the two of us doing some things around the apartment. Maybe going out for normal couple stuff like grocery shopping. Granted, we rarely ate anything at home anymore, but maybe buying specific things would make us more likely to want to start. Now that she was at work, I found myself alone in the apartment with nothing to do.

Before I'd met Carrie, these were the kinds of days I'd have used for networking, mingling at the club, meeting new people who could benefit from the software I designed, or ones who were just important people to know. People like Vincent Paoli.

Since Carrie was gone, maybe this was a good time to start coming up with ideas for the European club. I could've worked from home, but there wasn't really a point if I was the only one here. For a moment, I let myself think about what it would be like to have the kind of life where Carrie and I were sitting together in the living room, working from home. The distracting glances. Little flirtatious touches that turned into more as we both said we should be working.

I had to admit, that had been more of what I'd envisioned when we'd moved in together. I'd thought, with us being partners at Club Privé, we'd spend weekends and evenings working together here, cuddled together while we shared a laptop. Maybe separate laptops, but sitting next to each other, involved in the other's work.

“Dammit.” I raked my hand through my hair. I had to get out of the house and I needed to convince Vincent to postpone the trip to France.

My driver was waiting by the time I got downstairs. Carrie and I alternated using cabs and a private car service, but right now, I didn't feel like flagging someone down or having to deal with someone who might be chatty. Despite the business opportunity of a lifetime, I wasn't in the best of moods.

When I arrived at Club Privé, the construction crew was hard at work. That was good. I'd never worked with these guys before and I hadn't been sure what to expect. After the whole thing with Howard, I'd ended contracts with every company he'd personally hired. Most of them had probably been clean, but I refused to take a risk that I was working with anyone who'd contributed to Howard's “other” business.

I nodded at the foreman as I passed on my way to the elevator. The soundproofing on the second floor muffled the noise from downstairs as soon

as I stepped into the hall. My office would take care of the rest. All of the rooms up here had been given the best soundproofing available. Two people could stand on either side of the door and scream at the top of their lungs and would never hear each other.

As I swiped my access card, I found myself glancing toward the end of the hall. The door there led to a room I hadn't been in for nearly a year. Carrie had suggested we keep it and had teased that she and I could use it for me to introduce her to more of the BDSM lifestyle I enjoyed. Instead, the door had remained closed. I'd only been in there once since the police had cleared it as a crime scene, and that had been to let in the cleaning crew.

Part of me never wanted to step foot in there again. My memories of the place were torn. On one hand, it had been the first place Carrie and I had ever had sex, an encounter that had shaken me to the core. I'd known right then that she was the one, even if I hadn't wanted to admit it at the time. On the other hand, however, it was also where Howard had assaulted and nearly raped Carrie before trying to kill us both.

I entered my office and closed the door behind me, shutting out the rest of the world. Not for the first time, I wondered if I should've just sold the whole building and started over from scratch. A new place, one without memories. A new start.

I sat at my desk and tried to focus. France could be my way of seeing if that'd be possible. If I could design another amazing club, I could prove to myself that I could do it again here.

Before I could start sketching out any ideas, a buzzing sound told me I had a visitor. My heart thudded at the thought of it being Carrie coming to see me, but when the door opened, it was Daniel, my foreman.



“Mr. Manning,” he said as he stood at the edge of my office. He was a large man, solidly muscled, the kind of guy I'd look for to run security.

“I told you before, Daniel, you can call me Gavin.” I smiled even though I wasn't really feeling it. I didn't have anything against Daniel, but I wanted to be alone right now. “Now, what can I do for you?”

“The construction's taking longer than anticipated.” He got straight to the point. “We've run into some shoddy workmanship when we got down to the bones.”

I scowled. Damn Howard. “How far back is this going to set things?” Daniel grimaced and I almost said that I didn't want to know.

“At least three weeks.”

I closed my eyes and resisted the urge to massage my temples. Three fucking weeks because Howard had hired a company that did a half-assed job. The least the perverted fuck could've done was get this right.

“And, Sir? There's something else.” Daniel sounded downright nervous now.

I opened my eyes. “What is it?”

“The custom-made chrome and glass finish that you wanted for all of the walls has been delayed. The manager of the company called me this morning and said that they'd gotten in a rush order from another customer, and since we hadn't put a rush on the finish...”

“Our order gets delayed,” I finished the statement. This day just kept getting better and better. Only the expression on Daniel's face kept me from blowing up. Rich men in positions of power often shot the messenger and I could tell that Daniel was afraid he and his crew were about to get fired for

things they had no control over.

“I can call around, see if I can find someone else who can do it,” Daniel offered.

I shook my head. “It's not your fault. I'm pissed, but not at you.” I pinched the bridge of my nose as I thought. “Figure out the date you'd need it. Call the manager back and tell him to have it ready on that day or he'll lose my business for good. If he names a price, haggle a bit, but pay whatever we need to pay to get it here on time.”

“Yes, Sir,” Daniel said. He turned to go, then paused. “And, Mr. Manning, if I were you, I'd get someone to take a look at the wiring up here too. If it's as much of a mess as it is in your walls downstairs, you're going to need to have some work done. I don't know how that got past inspection.”

“Unfortunately, I do,” I said. I didn't want him thinking I'd bribed anyone. “My former business partner dealt with the inspectors, as well as hiring the electrician and construction crews.”

Daniel nodded in understanding and left without another word. It was too bad I couldn't hire him to do the construction in Cannes, I thought, as I looked down at the empty sheet of paper on my desk. But, if I decided to change things up here, he was definitely first on my list of hires.

And speaking of France, I had a phone call to make. I hated the thought of asking Vincent to change the date of an all-expenses paid trip to France, but it was for Carrie and she was one of the only two people in the world I would do anything for. The very least I could do here was ask.

I picked up the phone and made the call. Vincent answered on the second ring.

“Gavin!”

At least he sounded thrilled to hear from me, I thought. That was a good start. “Hope I didn't wake you, Vincent,” I said as I glanced at the clock. “I wasn't sure if you were out enjoying the night life.”

“I was,” he said. “But I've been up for hours. You know how it is. Men like us never sleep.”

I chuckled, then waited the appropriate number of seconds to transition from small talk to business. “I was actually calling about your invite to the Riviera.”

“Great,” he said. “Do you need one ticket or two?”

“Actually,” I said. “I was wondering if it'd be possible to postpone the trip a week, or at least a few days. My... business partner has a previous engagement that Thursday.” That was true. Carrie was technically my business partner.

“Your 'business partner'?”

I could hear the air quotes and knew I needed to be honest. “Yes, Carrie is my girlfriend, but she is also a partner at the club. She came on after my previous partner... left.”

“But you are the controlling partner, correct?” Vincent asked.

“Yes,” I said.

“I'd like to help you,” Vincent said with a sigh. “But it can't wait. I already have an appointment set up to check out the site. It's a hot property and that was as long as I could delay it. If I don't have an answer for them by the end of that week, they're going to move on to another buyer.”

“I understand.” And I did. Business was like that. Time was money and things sometimes moved fast. “I’ll double-check to see if there’s anything that can be done from this end.” Even as I said it, I knew it wouldn’t be possible. A congressman wasn’t going to change his schedule so I could take my girlfriend to France to open a sex club.

“Just let me know soon how many tickets to book,” Vincent said. “And best of luck.”

“Thanks.” I was barely listening as I hung up the phone.

I put my head in my hands. What was I going to do? I couldn’t ask Carrie to miss the meeting with Congressman White. Aside from it being a great connection for her to have, this bill was important. What was my business compared to the lives of people in sex slavery? And my only other option was to go without her. It was a business trip, but I had no doubt that me going, alone, to France for a week to open a sex club wouldn’t be healthy for our relationship. She trusted me, but we were already growing apart. My gut told me this could break us.

I stood abruptly. It was too quiet in here. I couldn’t think. I opened the door and the sounds from downstairs, though muffled, were loud enough to tell me that I wouldn’t be able to work down there either. I scowled. Why couldn’t we just go now? Drop everything and get on a plane tonight. No empty beds and notes. No dealing with this construction shit and what it could mean for the club. Just me and Carrie.

I went out the back way, not wanting to risk Daniel stopping me to talk about something else going wrong. I pulled out my phone, ready to call for a driver, but as I stepped out into the warm spring day, I changed my mind. A walk might be exactly what I needed to clear my head.

Before I'd gone two blocks, I'd come to at least one decision. This was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. With or without Carrie, I was going to France.

## Chapter 6

### *Carrie*

I should've known, when my weekend ended with Gavin saying he couldn't get the dates of the France trip changed but that he was going anyway, that things were going to keep getting worse. Monday consisted of more fruitless attempts to reach Robyn, a call from the DA saying that they couldn't find her either and if she didn't testify, Little Tino was going to walk. Oh, and getting threatening calls from two different pimps had been fun. I'd ended that day grinding my teeth until my face hurt.

Then there was Tuesday, when I spilled my morning coffee on my favorite work blouse, staining it and leaving me without caffeine until I could get a new cup. And, of course, there was the tension at home, even when we barely saw each other. It hung around us like a shroud.

By the time I was sitting at my desk on Wednesday afternoon, trying to call Robyn for what felt like the thousandth time, I'd pretty much written off the entire week as a loss. I'd decided to forget this week and focus on the next, my excitement about meeting with Congressman White next Thursday the only thing keeping me sane.

“Yes?”

A familiar surly voice came across my phone.

“Robyn?”

A half-hearted curse answered my question and told me that I didn't need to bother identifying myself.

“What do you want, Carrie?”

I pushed down my urge to snap at her and reminded myself that no matter how grown-up she pretended to be, Robyn was a kid and the victim in this situation. She thought she was making her own choices, but I knew she was being manipulated by Little Tino.

“I've been worried about you, Robyn. You haven't answered your phone for over a week.”

“Yeah, well, no one asked you to be worried about me, did they? I know it sure as hell wasn't my parents.”

I closed my eyes. This was bad. “I have been worried, I care about what happens to you.” I needed to say something to rebuild our trust. Plus, it wasn't a lie. I really did care for this girl.

“Right. All you care about is my testimony. You don't give a shit about me.”

I took a deep breath. “That's not true, Robyn. I hope you don't really believe it.”

She scoffed, a keep exhale of breath. “Well, you don't have to worry anymore. I am safe.”

Worry thrilled through me. “What do you mean? Where are you?”

“I'm with the one person in the world who really cares me. I'm with Little T.”

If I hadn't been sitting down, I would have fallen to the floor. Surely not, surely this girl couldn't be that stupid.

"Robyn," I breathed. "Please tell me where you are, I'll come get you. You have to get away from him."

She scoffed again. "I'm not going anywhere. This is where I belong."

"But, the court case..." I started.

"Yeah, no. I'm not doing it."

I cursed silently and fought to keep my voice calm. "What do you mean you're not doing it?"

"I'm not testifying against Little Tino. He's the only person who really cares about me."

"That's not true." I knew I was repeating myself but she needed to hear it again.

"Bullshit," she snapped. "He's here when I need him. He takes care of me. He loves me."

"He doesn't love you, Robyn—" I started to say.

"What the hell do you know?" she interrupted.

My hand tightened around the phone. The only time I'd ever heard Robyn get that belligerent with anyone but her parents was when she was on drugs. Before I could ask her if she was using again, she went on.

"You're so busy worrying about everyone else's life that you don't have one of your own. Probably haven't had a man in years and wouldn't know what to do with one if you did. You don't know what love is, because if you



did, you wouldn't be after me like this.”

I swallowed hard, trying not to let my voice show how much her words fed into my fears about Gavin and me. “Let me help you, Robyn. I can get you into rehab. Get you off the drugs and you'll be able to think more clearly then.”

“Fuck that,” Robyn snapped, and then her voice softened. “Look, I know you think you're doing good, but it's pointless. My parents are pissed and won't pay for rehab. I go in some state one and Little Tino makes a couple calls to his buddies. You know what it's like, doing a train of thugs and addicts? It's not pretty. I'll pass on the rehab, the testifying and the parents who don't give a shit.”

“Please, let me...”

“Please nothing. Leave me alone.”

Click.

The call ended before I could finish processing what she'd just said or even begin to consider a response. I set my phone down and stared at it, myriad emotions coursing through me. At first, I was furious with Robyn. I'd worked my ass off getting her clean and running interference for her. Then my anger shifted to the appropriate people. Little Tino for seducing her and then turning her out. Her parents for not realizing that their daughter was more important than anything else.

I picked up the phone and dialed her father's office. He'd told me more than once to never call him at the office or on his landline. He had a special burner phone he used for everything relating to Robyn. He had to try to keep her out of the press as much as possible. If it had been for her sake, I

would've applauded the gesture and followed protocol, but I knew better. He didn't want the media finding out what kind of a mess Robyn was and saying, however much truth there was to it, that it was all his fault.

“Governor Leeds's office,” a professional-sounding woman answered after just a couple rings.

“Hi, this is Carrie Summers. I've been working with the governor's daughter. I need to speak with him.”

There was a long pause, as if the woman knew I wasn't supposed to be calling this number. “I'm sorry, the governor is out of the office for the rest of the week. Good-bye.”

For the second time in under two minutes, I was hung up on. I was half-tempted to call her back, but I tried the burner number instead. The number was out of service. Well, I supposed that was one way to make it clear you'd disowned your daughter or gave up on her at least. I called the home, but got the answering machine. I didn't trust myself to leave a civil message, so I hung up without one and then debated calling the DA to give him a heads up about Robyn.

“Carrie?” Zoe knocked and then poked her head in my office. The bright smile on her face gave me hope that something good was going to happen today. “Congressman White is on line two for you.”

My eyebrows went up. The congressman was calling me directly? “Thanks, Zoe.”

She grinned at me, gave me a thumbs up and went back to her desk. I took a deep breath and reminded myself that I'd be face-to-face with this man in a week. A phone call should be nothing. I wasn't sure if I believed it, but it

did settle my nerves a bit.

I picked up the phone. “Hello?”

“Miss Summers.” A rich, deep voice came over the line. There was a smoothness and intentional cadence to it and I wondered how many speech coaches he'd had to get that sound.

“Congressman White,” I said. “It's a pleasure to hear from you.”

“I'm afraid you might not say that in a moment.” He laughed, but it was the kind of laugh that people did to let you know that they're actually half-serious. “I'm afraid I have some bad news.”

Of course he did. I sank back in my seat.

“First let me tell how much we appreciate everything you have done for this cause. I still want to talk to you about the bill, and human trafficking is very much an issue I care about.”

I could hear the 'but' coming.

“But due to the upcoming mid-term election, my advisors have suggested I wait until after the election to start touting new pieces of legislation.”

I closed my eyes, seeing all of my hard work going straight into the garbage bin.

“I don't want you to worry though. When I'm re-elected, this will be the first thing on next year's agenda.”

“Thank you, Congressman,” I forced myself to say it even though I wanted to tell him how pissed I was, how I felt he was putting politics over human lives. If he did get re-elected, burning a bridge now in a fit of temper

wouldn't help anyone.

“Needless to say,” he continued. “We'll want to reschedule our meeting for a later time. No use talking over things now when it'll be a while before we can do anything about it.”

“I understand.” My voice was polite, but I could hear the hollow note in it. I didn't understand, not really. I'd put everything in my life on hold for this and he wasn't willing to take a chance on it? It wasn't like this was something controversial like abortion or same-sex marriage. It wasn't as if a big contingent of voters would be picketing to keep the sex slave trade going.

“I look forward to speaking with you in the future, Miss Summer,” he said. “And I hope I can count on your vote come fall.”

“Thank you for your time, Congressman,” I said automatically.

I slumped in my chair, any hope I'd had for salvaging this week gone. The one thing that had kept me going for the past few weeks had been knowing that what I was doing would be placed into the hands of someone who could make a difference. Now, it was just words and pieces of paper. Although I'd spent days poring over them, perfecting them down to the last sentence... now, they would be read by no one.

I lay my head on my desk and could have cried, but I was so depressed that I couldn't even muster up anything other than a mild annoyance.

My cell phone dinged and I considered not even looking at it, but it hadn't been Gavin's ringtone, which meant it could be from anyone else. I picked up my phone and almost smiled. It was from Leslie.

Leslie and Dena had worked with my former roommate, Krissy, and me at Webster and Steinberg. The four of us had been inseparable, but since

Krissy had moved to LA and I wasn't working in the same law circles as Leslie and Dena, we hadn't seen each other as much as I wished we had.

I read Leslie's text and then actually did smile. Hey, stranger. Want to meet Dena and I for drinks at Huggins? They're having a special mid-week happy hour tonight.

I didn't even have to think about it. Absolutely. I needed a girls' night out.

# Chapter 7

## *Carrie*

Being at Huggins Bar & Grill with Dena and Leslie brought back so many memories, not the least of which was this this had been the place I'd seen Gavin for the first time. Krissy had bet me I wouldn't get the phone number of the hottest man I'd ever seen. I had, and that had started it all. Huggins wasn't only about meeting Gavin though. My friends and I had come here all the time after work to kick off the weekend. Most of the time, it had been my only social interaction before going back to the apartment I'd shared with Krissy and shoving my nose in a book or writing a paper for school. The other three had always been the more social ones.

Leslie was the most out-going out of all of us. Bubbly and flirtatious, she loved being the center of attention, but managed to not be obnoxious while doing it. Surprisingly, she and Krissy had rarely butted heads even though Krissy was just as head-strong. I always assumed it was because they usually had the same goals: find hot guys, fuck hot guys and move on.

I smiled wistfully. Things had changed. Krissy had found her hot guy in Los Angeles, fucked him, but hadn't moved on. I was happy that Krissy had found love with DeVon, but it still made me sad that she was on the other side of the country. We talked, but not as often as we once had. I loved my other friends, but she was the closest thing to a sister I had. No matter how

much Krissy and Leslie were alike, it wasn't the same.

Then there was Dena. She was the quietest one of the three of us, but in a ruthless kind of way. She was the sort of lawyer everyone underestimated because she looked like she was twelve even though she was twenty-six. She'd walk into a court room looking like a school girl then massacre her opponent with an organized, brutal argument. I was always thankful she was on my side.

Unlike Leslie, with her brilliant red curls and enviable curves, Dena was a quiet kind of beauty. She kept her white blond hair in a short pixie cut and, with her pale gray eyes and fair skin, she looked like she should be the poster child for some sort of snow fairy. Not that I'd ever say something like that to her. She was kind of scary sometimes.

They were both there when I arrived ten minutes late. Since they were still working their way through Webster and Steinberg, they would've left work together, just like the four of us used to do. I felt another stab of nostalgia as I made my way over to the table. I sat across from them and tried not to look sad at the empty chair next to me.

It must not have worked because the first thing Leslie said after we exchanged greetings was about Krissy.

“She called a couple days ago to tell me how well things were going with DeVon and the business. Apparently, it's getting really serious between the two of them.” Leslie narrowed her bright green eyes at me. “She also said she'd tried to call you but kept getting voicemail.”

I felt a stab of guilt. I'd been working on my proposal for the congressman pretty much every waking moment and hadn't had a chance to call Krissy back yet. “It's been a busy week.”

Dena and Leslie exchanged one of those glances that Krissy and I used to have, the kind that doesn't need any sort of explanation because two minds are in sync.

“I've been working my ass off on this proposal for Congressman White.” I hated how defensive I sounded.

“How's that going?” Dena asked, deflecting the conversation.

I gave a frustrated sigh and took a gulp of the Lemon Drop that had just been put in front of me. Usually I loved the things, but tonight, they just made me sad. No matter what we'd ended up drinking at the end of the night, Krissy and I had always started off with Lemon Drops.

“That well?” Leslie asked.

“I put so much time into it and I get a call this afternoon from the congressman saying he wants to table any discussion about it until after the election in November.”

“Seriously?” Leslie tossed her curls over her shoulder. “This isn't exactly the kind of issue that divides people. You'd think he'd want to be showing that he's taking a firm stance against human trafficking.”

“You'd think,” I agreed dryly, draining my drink. “I just feel like I wasted all this time, sacrificed so much, to get this done and it's all been for nothing.”

“Sacrificed?” Dena's voice was soft. “What's going on, Carrie?”

I looked at her, feeling comforted by her concern. I dropped my eyes to the appetizers we always nibbled on. I wasn't hungry.

“I feel like Gavin and I are drifting apart,” I confessed. Saying it out-



loud made me wince.

“Hon, you're just getting over the honeymoon stage,” Leslie said. She popped a piece of bread into her mouth. “Trust me. It's normal.”

I raised an eyebrow. “No offense, Leslie, but when your longest relationship has been with Lexi the barista over on Third Avenue, I'm not so sure you're the one to be giving me relationship advice.”

She shrugged and grinned, accepting my comment without denial. “Just saying.”

“I'm sure it's just a phase,” Dena said. “The two of you have been through so much, it's bound to make things feel weird when everything's becoming routine.”

“When was the last time you two had sex?” Leslie asked.

I glared at her but her smile only got bigger. I might have lost many of my inhibitions when it came to talking about sex when I was with Gavin, but it didn't mean it was open season in public.

“Come on, Carrie,” Leslie coaxed, giving me her ‘loosen up’ look. “I'm not asking what positions you did it in. I just want to know how long it's been.”

“A couple days.” I said. “Friday night after we went out to eat.” I flushed. “And the day before that too. At my office.”

“Damn.” Leslie laughed. “You're getting more than I am.”

I brushed my hair out of my face as I frowned. “It's not the lack of sex, even though it's less often than it had been before.” I struggled to define what I was feeling. I wasn't sure I wanted to share, even with my friends, but I had

to talk to someone and, for once, it couldn't be Gavin. "There's something missing." I glanced up at them. "Don't get me wrong. It's still amazing and he can do things..." My face heated up. "But the passion that had been there before, it's gone. There's no spark."

"Do you still love him?" Dena asked.

"Yes," I answered immediately. "More than anything."

"More than anything?" For once, Leslie was being serious. A few seconds ticked by while she chewed her lip. "More than your work?"

I flinched. How could she ask that? "Of course," I snapped.

She held up both hands in a gesture of surrender. "I'm just saying that if you'll ignore your oldest friend because you're working..."

"Love has nothing to do with it." I scowled at her. "The work I do is important. It saves lives."

"Carrie," Dena spoke before I could really get going. "We know that what you're doing is important, but you have to take care of yourself too. And, if you really do love him, Gavin is part of that. If you don't take the time to work on your relationship, you're going to lose him."

I slumped back in my chair. Dena never talked that much outside of the courtroom, so I knew when she made a little speech, it was something I needed to listen to, no matter how much I hated it.

"Taking some time for yourself and Gavin doesn't make you a bad person," Leslie said.

I closed my eyes for a moment. That's what it was, I knew. I didn't enjoy working more than I enjoyed being with Gavin, but I felt guilty if I wasn't

doing whatever I could to save people. I ran myself ragged, barely able to excuse myself for needing time to sleep. And it was killing Gavin and me.

I thought back to the other night and how bad I'd felt asking Gavin to reschedule his important trip. I wanted to make it up to him but was just so tired, so overwhelmed, all I really wanted to do was go straight to sleep. So instead of being honest with him, or even honest with myself, I'd purposefully taken control and done everything I could to get us both off as quickly as possible. And it hadn't even been a warm-up for something longer. I'd just been so tired and knew I had a ton more work to do the next day. It had been more about finishing than it had been about being close.

"You're right," I finally admitted. I looked up and found my friends wearing nearly identical expressions of concern. "I have been feeling guilty any time I'm not working."

Leslie reached across the table and took my hand. "You can't fix the world, Carrie. And it doesn't mean you're a bad person if, every once in a while, you take a break from trying. Your own personal world is important too."

We drank a bit more in silence before I spoke again. "Gavin has a business trip to France coming up and he wanted me to come with him, but I had my meeting with Congressman White scheduled that day. Now that it's been canceled, should I tell Gavin I want to go? I don't want to seem like I'm doing it out of some sense of obligation or anything like th—"

"Go," Dena said before I could even finish the last word.

"She's right," Leslie agreed. "You need to spend some time with your sweetie and what better place to do it than France?" She gave me an impish grin. "But if you don't want to go, can I?"

I rolled my eyes and smiled as the mood lightened. As soon as I was done here, I'd call Gavin and ask him what I needed to pack. I wasn't sure what the dress code was for a business meeting about starting a sex club in the French Riviera.

## Chapter 8

### *Gavin*

When Carrie told me about the congressman canceling on her, I was frustrated and upset for her, but I'd have been lying if I said I also hadn't been excited that she could come with me now. The first class cabin, complete with excellent champagne, would've been dull and boring without her. With her at my side, cramped coach would've been more than tolerable.

Not that I was about to give up our seats.

I reached over and squeezed Carrie's hand. "Have I told you yet how beautiful you are?"

She blushed and I felt a surge of love go through me. I loved that I could still make her flush with a compliment. And I meant it. She was wearing a cute little dress with half-sleeves and a hemline that hit her thighs at the most frustrating place, short enough to tempt me with those gorgeous legs of hers, but long enough to be decent. I was thinking anything but decent thoughts when I looked at her.

"More champagne, Sir?" The flight attendant leaned closer than necessary as she refilled my half-empty glass. She smiled down at me and I automatically smiled back. I felt Carrie stiffen next to me and I squeezed her hand again. It might've been a bit mean, but I was actually glad she was

jealous. I wasn't flirting with the attendant, but it was nice to know that seeing someone flirt with me still annoyed the woman I loved. If she hadn't cared, I'd have been worried.

As the blonde walked away, Carrie spoke in a half-serious, half-joking tone. "Look at the menu all you want, but you better not even think about eating anywhere but home."

I grinned and leaned close to her ear, keeping my voice low. "Babe, you're the only one I want to eat."

Her face went bright red and she glared at me. No matter how much I'd managed to loosen her up, I could still embarrass her, especially when it came to talking about sex in public.

Taking pity on her, I changed the subject for the moment. "I just realized there's something I don't know about you. Have you ever been to France?"

She rolled her eyes. "Sure, Gavin. I went all the time while I was juggling college and working as a lawyer."

Part of me wanted to threaten to spank her for her smart mouth, but I refrained. I'd promised myself that I'd never try to push what I wanted on her.

"I've been to Cannes twice and it's absolutely gorgeous," I said. "There's the Promenade de la Croisette, this spectacular avenue along the waterfront. There are beaches and restaurants, boutiques. Plenty of places to get good food and to shop." I put my arm around her shoulders. "Or we could check out the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence." The French words rolled off my tongue and she raised an eyebrow, impressed. "It's an eighteenth-century mansion that has artifacts over thousands of years. Maybe more. I've never been there myself."

“You speak French, don't you?” she asked.

I shrugged. “Enough to get my point across.”

She leaned up and spoke in my ear. “How do you say 'I'd rather just stay in our hotel and fuck your brains out' in French?”

My jaw dropped and I stared at her. Her face was flushed and I could tell she was embarrassed by what she'd said. That she'd done it on her own, without any prompting by me sent blood rushing south. It was all I could do not to take her in my arms and savage her mouth, run my hands all over her body, other passengers be damned.

She grinned at me, her eyes dancing. I could see she was pleased to have shocked me. “Now, about the club.”

I blinked, surprised by the change of subject.

“Do you have any specific plans in mind?”

Here came a conversation I really didn't want to have, especially not after what had just happened, but I knew it was better to tell her now, rather than later. She'd be furious if I kept it from her.

“I don't know anything about the site yet,” I said. “But I do know that Vincent wants it to be in the style of the original Club Privé.” I hesitated, wondering if she was going to need me to be more specific.

“That makes sense,” she said amicably. “I'm sure France has plenty of dance clubs, but one that caters to the desires of the rich and famous in Cannes would definitely be a gold mine.”

My eyebrows shot up. Would it be possible for us to do this without any conflict? I approached the subject cautiously. “I'm surprised you're okay with

it,” I admitted. “I’d thought you’d object to there being...” I chose my words carefully. “On-site sexual liaisons occurring.”

“I’m not a prude, Gavin.” Carrie’s voice seemed a bit tense, but she continued before I could tell her that I hadn’t meant it like that. “My concern is only that the encounters be between consenting adults without the exchange of money. No one in the sex industry, forced or otherwise.”

“Absolutely,” I agreed automatically. “No prostitutes of any kind.” Relief went through me. That had been much easier than I’d dreamed possible. Now, I just had to smooth over whatever it was that I’d said that had prompted the prude comment.

“Is everything all right here, Sir?” The flight attendant was back and, unless I was mistaken, she’d hiked up her skirt a bit. She crouched down next to me, one of her full breasts pressing against my arm. “Because if there’s anything I can do for you, anything at all, please don’t hesitate to ask.”

“That’s it,” Carrie snapped.

Oh shit. I looked over to see her eyes flashing. For a moment, I thought she was going to hit the flight attendant, but instead, Carrie stood and grabbed my hand.

“Come with me.”

I stood, confused about what was happening, but there was no way I was going to stop her. As we headed down the aisle, I put two and two together... and my cock did as well. It was hard in an instant, making it a bit interesting to walk. If I was right, Carrie was going to initiate something that even I had never done before.

She glanced behind us, but didn’t even hesitate as she reached for the



door to the bathroom stall. She backed inside, pulling me after her. I could barely get the door shut behind me, but as she picked herself up to sit on the sink, I forgot about the tiny space we were in.

She pulled her skirt up, giving me a glimpse of the creamy skin of her inner thighs and a hint of a pair of dark gray panties that matched her dress perfectly. With my gaze fixed between her legs, she pulled aside the crotch of her panties and slid her finger into her pussy.

“Fuck,” I breathed.

“That's the point,” she said. “Come on. We don't have much time.”

I actually fumbled with my pants in my rush to get them open and I had a moment of thanks that we didn't have to mess with condoms. Then I was pushing inside of her tight, wet heat. I pressed my face against her neck, muffling my moans, and then I felt the sting of her teeth against the base of my throat and my body jerked. She cried out as I went too hard, but when I stilled, she wrapped her legs around my waist and pulled me toward her.

“Je préfère juste rester dans notre hôtel et baise la cervelle,” I whispered.

“What?” Her voice was barely audible.

“That's how you say it in French,” I said as I drew back.

“Just fuck me.” Her nails dug into my shoulders and I could feel them through the thin cotton of my shirt.

That was all the encouragement I needed. I thrust into her as hard and fast as I dared, each of us trying to contain our cries of pleasure. And then...

"Folks, we have begun our descent into Nice Côte d'Azur International Airport, we'll be at the gate in about twenty minutes. If you are up and about,

please return to your seat now. Flight attendants, please prepare the cabin for landing. Thank you for flying with us today."

"Fuck," I growled.

I felt a hand between our bodies, fingers brushing at the base of my cock as Carrie found her clit. A moment later, her body tensed around mine. I kept pumping, faster and harder into her pulsing pussy. I was so close; I needed to come to.

A loud knock at the door broke my rhythm.

"You need to vacate the bathroom." A stern woman's voice came through the door.

"Just a minute," I practically shouted. My balls were aching, my cock throbbing with my need for release.

"Now, Sir," she said. "Or I'll be getting the key to unlock this door."

Carrie pushed at my chest and I cursed, knowing we were done. As much as she'd initiated and wanted this, the idea of being caught with our pants down, literally, terrified her.

"Fine!" I snapped as I yanked up my pants. I was so hard it hurt and I winced as I tucked myself back into my boxer briefs, and then zipped up my pants.

"Sorry," Carrie mumbled, her cheeks flushed. She climbed down off of the sink and then glanced down. "I'm thinking I should walk in front of you."

I looked down to where I was sporting a very obvious and large erection. Yeah, that wasn't going away any time soon. "That's probably a good idea."

The flight attendant pounded on the door again, but before Carrie could

open it, I leaned down and gave her a hard, fast kiss. “You owe me,” I said. “And I'm going to enjoy collecting.”

Judging from the way her eyes brightened before she turned back toward the door, I had a feeling she was going to enjoy it almost as much as I would. It was almost enough to make up for the serious case of blue balls I was getting.

Almost.

## Chapter 9

### *Carrie*

I wasn't entirely sure what had come over me on the plane. All I knew was that I didn't like the way the flight attendant had been flirting with Gavin and I wanted to prove that I wasn't a prude, not even outside the bedroom. I'd remembered how insanely turned on I'd been when we'd fucked in the conference room, nearly getting caught by a janitor, and something inside me had just snapped. I wanted that feeling back. What I hadn't counted on was us reaching our destination before Gavin got to... arrive.

I knew it wasn't really funny, but I couldn't stop smiling as we made our way back to our seats, my face burning as I passed by people who looked at us with knowing expressions. And, of course, Gavin's comments about me owing him had my already wet panties soaked clean through. I hoped he came through on his promise to collect. I missed the way he'd possessed me when we'd first started having sex. How he'd once told me that I was his, that he would be responsible for my pleasure.

How either of us managed to sit still through the plane landing at the Nice airport and then wait for everyone to exit, I didn't know. After that, it was customs and security checkpoints, all the while both of our bodies were screaming for us to finish what we'd started. At least I didn't have any physical evidence of the strain I was under. Poor Gavin wasn't just sporting a

decent hickey at the base of his neck, but he was still at least half-hard too.

When we were finally through all of the checkpoints and had our bags, he took my hand and we hurried toward the exit. Vincent had sent a limo to pick us up and I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw a distinguished looking man holding a sign with Gavin's name on it. He introduced himself as Dave and then insisted on loading our bags while we got into the back of the limo.

I started to slide across the seat to the opposite door when Gavin's arm wrapped around my waist and he yanked me back against him. The door closed, leaving us with the dim sunlight coming through the tinted windows. Gavin put his mouth against my ear as he pulled me half onto his lap. His hard cock pressed against my ass.

“I hope you don't have any immediate plans for when we get to our room,” Gavin said. “Because I plan on fucking you senseless the moment the door closes behind us.”

I shivered with anticipation and hoped the ride would be a short one. I wasn't sure I could handle a long wait.

“Mr. Paoli has arranged for you to stay in the InterContinental Carlton Cannes,” Dave said as he got into the driver's seat.

“How far is it from here?” Gavin asked, his arm tightening around my waist.

“Depending on traffic, Sir,” Dave said. “About ninety minutes.”

I closed my eyes. I was going to explode, and if I felt that way, I could only imagine how Gavin felt. The string of oaths he uttered in my ear gave me a pretty good idea.

Dave glanced in the rearview mirror and then pulled out into traffic.

“You know, Sir,” he said in a politely conversational tone. “One of the best features about this car is that with the push of a button, I can put up a privacy screen that prevents you from seeing or hearing anything I'm doing. We can still communicate through an intercom, but if I want to sing along with the radio, which I do often, it won't bother you.”

Gavin's hand was already on my thigh, pushing my skirt up, as he spoke. “That would be quite appreciated, Dave. You go ahead and sing along with the radio all you like.”

“Thank you, Sir.”

A moment later, a panel slid into place and Gavin's fingers were pushing their way into my pussy.

“Fuck.” My head fell forward as he roughly thrust the digits into me. I'd had enough time since my orgasm so I wasn't overly sensitive, but the nerves were still awake enough that it didn't take much for them to start humming again.

“Yes,” Gavin said. “That is exactly what I'm going to do.”

He pulled out his hand and half-lifted me. I heard the sound of his zipper and then he was lowering me onto his raging erection. I moaned as he slid inside. I was still stretched from before and he was able to bury himself completely without hurting me. That was a good thing because I didn't think I'd ever felt him so hard.

“I'm not going to last long,” he warned me. “So if you want to come, you're going to have to help yourself along.”

I nodded but didn't move. My eyes were squeezed tight, absorbing the sensation of fullness. Of all the things Gavin could make me feel when he

touched me, this was one of my favorites. I loved the way we fit together.

He gripped my hips hard and lifted me up enough that we'd both have room to move. Except, I didn't need to move. Gavin held me in place as he slammed up into me. I cried out, putting a hand on the ceiling to brace myself. His second thrust was stronger than the first, sending jolts of electricity racing through me.

Neither one of us spoke as he drove into me over and over, each stroke bringing a wail to my lips at the bruising force. I hoped the limo was as sound proofed as Dave had said, otherwise, he was getting quite an earful. The hand not on the ceiling moved between my legs. The pressure inside me was building again and I could already feel Gavin starting to lose control. I began to rub my clit, the friction making my muscles tremble.

Just before I got there, Gavin pulled me down hard and his cock went deep. I would've screamed if I'd had the air. As it was, my body went rigid, riding that edge between pleasure and pain, waiting for the last push to decide where I would go. I felt him coming inside me and shuddered. Just a little more.

Gavin's fingers closed around my wrist and I whimpered. I was so close.

“I should make you stop,” he said. His voice was rough and I could feel his heart thudding in his chest, but he was in control. “Make you go the rest of the way on the edge.”

My pulse stuttered.

“What do you think about that? I had all that time with no release. Shouldn't I make you touch yourself the rest of the way to the hotel, but never let you come?”

He flipped up my skirt and spread my legs so that my pussy was completely exposed. He was still inside me and I could feel our combined juices slick on my thighs. If Dave chose to lower the divider, he'd see everything.

“Is that what I should do?”

I shook my head, desperate for release. “Please,” I whispered.

“Please what?”

“Please let me come.”

He paused, as if he was considering it, and then released my hand. “Alright,” he said. “But you only have thirty seconds before I buzz Dave to open the divider.”

A thrill of fear went through me.

“Better get started.”

If he'd waited any longer to let me start, I might've come down too much to be able to make it, but as it was, I was so close that he'd barely made it to fifteen before an orgasm ripped through me. I cried out his name and heard him swear as my pussy squeezed his now-soft cock. He pressed his lips against the side of my neck as wave after wave of pleasure washed over me. And then he slid out of me and a mini-orgasm hit me.

As he pulled me onto his lap, cradling me against his chest, I realized something. “You didn't buzz Dave.”

“No.” He sounded amused and I looked up to see his deep blue eyes sparkling. “Just wanted to make things more interesting.”

“Ass,” I muttered as I buried my face against his chest.



He kissed the top of my head. “I don't know about you,” he said. “But this was a great way to start our business vacation.”

I nodded in agreement. Leslie and Dena had been right. Some “us” time was exactly what Gavin and I needed. We'd get through this and come out stronger than ever.

# Chapter 10

## *Carrie*

I'd never adjusted well to time changes and the five-hour difference between New York and France was playing havoc with my sleep cycle. Despite being exhausted from the flight and the sex on the car ride here, I hadn't been able to fall asleep right away, and I must've woken several times during the first part of the night. This time when I woke, however, I knew I'd been out for at least a few hours. I was still jet-lagged, but far from non-functioning. Especially if my nose was correctly identifying coffee.

I opened my eyes and stretched, my hand brushing the empty space next to me. I turned my head. Gavin wasn't there. I sat up and blinked the last of the sleep from my eyes. The light coming through the window seemed wrong until I glanced at the bedside clock and saw that it was past nine. And this was why I hated time differences.

A warm breeze blew across me, drawing my attention to the open French doors on the far end of the room. I climbed out of bed and picked up the thin silk robe lying across the back of a nearby chair. I slipped it on over my nightgown and then followed the smell of coffee and saltwater. As I stepped out onto the balcony, I was torn between the views. On one hand, I was looking out over the ocean and one of the most beautiful beaches I'd ever seen. On the other hand, Gavin was standing at the railing, dressed in a pair

of khakis and an open white cotton shirt that showed off his gorgeous body.

Lust won out and I walked up behind him and slipped my arms around his waist. I rested my cheek against his broad back, letting myself breathe in the scent of him. My hands flattened out on his stomach and the muscles beneath my palms jumped.

“Good morning, sleepyhead,” he teased. “There's coffee behind you.”

I lingered for a moment, but my need for caffeine was too great and I reluctantly released him. As I moved toward the second greatest smell in the world, I spoke, “How long have you been awake?”

“A couple hours,” he said. “I'm determined not to sleep away our vacation.”

I glared at him as he turned to face me. “How are you not jet-lagged?”

He shrugged. “You know me; I can sleep whenever and wherever.”

I rolled my eyes and took another long drink of the premium roast. He held out his hand to me and I took it, setting down my cup. I wanted coffee, but I wanted him more. I stepped into his embrace and wrapped my arms around his waist, purposefully staying under his shirt so I could feel his skin against mine. His hands rested on the small of my back and I could feel the heat of him through the thin silk of my robe and nightgown.

“This is nice,” I said and pressed my lips against his chest. He made a sound that sent a spike of arousal through me.

“Definitely different than New York spring weather, isn't it?” Gavin said.

I nodded in agreement. I loved my home, but there was something to be

said for the sunshine and near sixty-degree weather at the end of April. Back in New York, we were just finishing up with the cold and snow, and were heading toward the hot and humid days of summer.

“It'd be nice to get away from the city once in a while, wouldn't it?” he said. “Maybe spend the first couple months of the year over here. Come down after the holidays and not head back until the weather changes.”

I imagined what it'd be like, waking up like this every morning, and I couldn't say that I disliked the idea.

“You know,” he said carefully. “If this deal goes through, I might need to spend a couple months here to get things started. Now that your work with the congressman is on hold until after the elections, maybe you could work from here for the summer.”

I looked up at him. “If you're offering me this every day, I might never want to go back to New York.” I smiled and reached up to push some hair out of his face. He'd need a haircut soon. “This vacation was a brilliant idea,” I said. He beamed and my stomach flipped. I loved that smile.

“You've been working too hard,” he said. He wrapped a curl around his finger, then tucked it behind my ear. “We both have, and I've missed you.”

I swallowed hard. “I've missed you, too.”

He bent his head and brushed his lips across mine. When he pulled away, his expression was troubled. “I feel like we're drifting, Carrie.”

I felt my breath catch in my throat. He'd been feeling the distance too... “Then let's not.” I put my hand on his cheek. “We're here for a week. Let's focus on each other, not get all wrapped up in other things. Let's work on us.”

He nodded. “That sounds perfect.” His eyes darted away and he sighed.

“Except I have a brunch meeting with Vincent.”

“We are here for that,” I said, trying not to be disappointed. I'd known coming into this that Gavin had to spend some time working on the club. “But the rest of the time is just us.”

“Agreed,” he said. “Get yourself from room service brunch and I'll be back by noon.” He cupped my chin and tilted my head up. “We'll go shopping and you can model sexy dresses for me.” A smile played across his lips for a moment before he bent and kissed me.

My mouth opened under his and I moaned as he slid his tongue into my mouth. It curled around mine and I dropped my hands to his ass, squeezing the firm muscles until Gavin took a step back. His eyes were dark, his breathing heavy.

“I have to go.” His expression plainly told me that he'd prefer to stay and finish what we'd barely started.

I definitely wanted him to stay too, but I knew this was important. For Gavin, what had happened at Club Privé hadn't just been business. It was personal. He needed to do this for himself as much as for the business.

“Hurry back.” I smiled at him as he headed into the room. I took a moment to appreciate the view from behind before following. I was hungry. By the time Gavin had finished buttoning up his shirt and was on his way out, I'd ordered a few things from room service and then gone into the bedroom to change.

After I was done, I still had some time to kill before the food arrived, so I headed back out to the balcony. I'd been all caught up looking at Gavin before, but now I could appreciate the rest of the view.

The private beach had the white sand and deep blue water that dreams were made of. It looked like paradise. Only the hotel guests were allowed on this part of the beach, so it wasn't as crowded as I guessed the public beaches were. There'd be room to walk or sit privately and not have to worry about being disturbed.

Other guests were down there already and I watched them as I waited. It didn't take long for me to notice a few things. First, the bathing suits the women wore often covered less than some of my lingerie; many were even topless. Second, basically every woman I saw was gorgeous. There were tall ones and short ones. Some that were model-thin, others had curves, but every one of them was beautiful. And most looked like they were younger than me. Considering I was only twenty-five, that was saying something.

Another pattern quickly presented itself and I frowned as I realized it. Other than the occasional man holding another man's hand, every guy down there was either with one of these gorgeous women or being pursued by one. Most of the men were in their fifties and had these twenty-something's hanging off their arms.

Back home, I'd been used to women flirting with Gavin and shooting me dirty looks when they realized we were together, but this was different. Even in this short amount of time, I could tell that the women here were going to be more direct in their approach. They wouldn't have any problem telling him what they wanted. And a man like Gavin, rich and gorgeous, would be what every woman wanted.

I nervously smoothed down the skirt of my sundress. I'd brought it because it was cute, and it had been one Krissy had helped me pick out for Gavin before. He'd always said he'd liked it, but now I felt underdressed. These women were sexy, unashamed of their bodies and willing to flaunt

them. Gavin had helped break down some of my inhibitions, but it wasn't until now that I realized how far I had to go. When given the choice, I still dressed like a kid. Not in a “trying to recapture my youth” kind of way, but more in a naïve kind of way.

Someone knocked at the door and I went back inside to answer it, thoughts still spinning through my head. I'd been taking Gavin for granted, I realized. I knew he loved me and I hadn't even considered that maybe I should be trying to make sure I was worth it. We had sex and we both got off, but had it really been soul deep satisfying? In the car yesterday, that had been the first time in a long time that I'd heard Gavin use that authoritative voice for real. Sure, he'd kind of used it when we'd been role-playing, but he'd never needed to pretend to be someone else before. When had he stopped dominating me, pushing my boundaries? A better question was, why had he stopped?

I opened the door and greeted the handsome young waiter with a polite smile.

“Where would you like me to set up?” he asked.

“On the balcony.” I gestured even though I knew he knew where it was. I didn't miss his appreciative look as he passed me and that made me feel a bit better about my appearance, but I didn't want some waiter flirting with me. I wanted Gavin.

I needed a plan. A better one than just coming to France and spending time together, hoping that would magically fix whatever was wrong with us. The first step, I decided, would be to take advantage of our shopping excursion this afternoon to get myself a sexy new wardrobe. It wasn't that I didn't like wearing those kinds of clothes. A part of me really enjoyed it. It

was just that I still felt awkward, like I was a child playing dress-up. I wasn't going to let that stop me anymore. If I wanted to keep Gavin, I was going to have to grow up.

And we were probably going to need to talk about why things had changed. That, however, wasn't something that could be done now, so I could turn my attention to the amazing food being set out in front of me.

“Is this your first time in Cannes?” The young man's English was good, but heavily accented.

“It is,” I answered as I plucked a strawberry from a plate. “It's beautiful.”

“Yes,” he agreed. “And beautiful places attract beautiful women.”

I blushed. “Thank you.”

He gave a little bow. “Is there anything else you need?”

I shook my head and reached into the bag Gavin had thoughtfully set aside for tips. I handed the young man a bill.

“Thank you,” he said. “And if there is anything you need at all – a tour guide, companionship – please do not hesitate to ask. My shift ends at five.”

I stared at him as he left and wondered if he'd seriously just propositioned me. Wow. Apparently, it wasn't just the women who knew what they wanted. Even though I had no intention of being with anyone but Gavin, I had to admit, it was nice to have been thought of in that way.

I leaned against the railing as I picked my way through my meal. I could definitely get used to this.



# Chapter 11

## *Gavin*

It took me more time than I'd thought to get to Gaston-Gastounette from the hotel and I silently cursed myself for not having left before Carrie woke up. As much as I'd enjoyed being able to talk to her, especially since we'd been able to touch on how this part of this trip needed to be about us, I was frustrated that I was now running late. Again. This wasn't the kind of impression I wanted to give Vincent.

I'd never been at Gaston before but I knew that this was one of the hottest places to go for lunch, so it wasn't a surprise that it was packed. I strained to look over the heads of the people waiting to get in and quickly spotted Vincent. He was at the back with a woman sitting on either side of him.

As soon as I reached him, I apologized for being late and Vincent waved a dismissive hand. I took a seat in the only chair left and offered polite smiles to both of the women.

“Gavin, this is Felice, one of France's most popular pop singers.” Vincent caressed the arm of the petite brunette next to him. “Only twenty and already the hottest thing out there. And very talented in many ways.”

I smiled at her, wondering if I was just imagining the innuendo in

Vincent's words. "Pleased to meet you, Felice."

Her dark eyes looked over me as she smiled and I had the distinct feeling that I was being mentally undressed. Something told me I was going to have to watch out for this one. She looked like the kind of woman who was used to getting what she wanted, and if she wanted me, I'd have my hands full.

"Pleasure," she said. "I look forward to know you."

"Likewise," I said.

"She doesn't speak much English," Vincent said. "But she knows all of the important words, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, not protesting when Vincent's hand rested on the back of her neck for a moment.

"And this," he turned to the other woman, "is Marguerite. She's Felice's best friend slash entourage slash assistant. They go everywhere together." He brushed back some auburn hair from Marguerite's face. "And they do everything together. Isn't that right, girls?"

And there was that innuendo again.

"Yes, we do," Marguerite said. Her eyes flicked to me and she gave a polite smile, but I didn't see any of the admiration in them that I saw with Felice. Until her gaze turned to the other woman. Unless I was mistaken, Marguerite had a crush on her friend. Maybe more.

"I'm Felice's manager," Vincent explained. "And once the club opens, Felice and performers like her will be the entertainment."

"In more ways than one," Felice added in her thickly accented English.

I caught a flash of annoyance on Marguerite's eyes and then it

disappeared.

“She's quite the entertainer,” Vincent said before he called over a waiter.

I wasn't sure which was worse, listening to Vincent imply that he'd had sex with both women or that neither woman protested his comments. I hoped we'd get down to business soon as I had no desire to hear anything about Vincent's sex life, but as the brunch progressed, it became obvious that Vincent was the kind of guy who preferred to lead with pleasure and business came last.

I focused on eating my bouillabaisse and hoped he didn't notice I was being rather quiet. Neither of the women talked very much either, but I felt Felice's eyes on me the entire time and whenever I'd look up, she'd be staring. Before Carrie and I had gotten together, I would've enjoyed the attention. Hell, Felice was the kind of woman I might have taken for a ride around the block a couple times. But things were different now and I found myself wishing that she'd turn her attention back to Vincent.

It was a relief when she and Marguerite excused themselves to the restroom. At least I'd have a few minutes of being left alone with Vincent.

“What do you think?” Vincent asked as soon as the women were out of earshot. “Aren't they a hot pair of asses?”

I gave him a tight smile.

“Everyone knows Marguerite has a thing for Felice,” he said, confirming my suspicions. He winked at me. “Makes it that much easier to get them both in bed. Marguerite will do anything for the chance to eat that pussy.”

I stared at him.

“What do you say?” Vincent asked. “When we're done eating, let's head

back to my hotel. You and I can watch the girls go at it and then take turns with them. I don't mind sharing.”

Making sure my voice didn't sound judgmental, I said, “No thanks. I'm just here for business.”

Vincent scowled. “Business is boring. Why do you think I want to start a sex club? That's exciting. Today should be about fun.”

“It is fun, I'm enjoying getting to know you better.” I tried for an easy smile and a change of subject. “I want to hear more about your vision for the club. When can we see the building so I can get started on some ideas.”

Vincent leaned back in his seat, his expression clearly stating that he didn't like that I wasn't going to join him in a foursome. I wondered if he even remembered Carrie had come with me or if he thought a pretty face and hot body would be all I needed to cheat. Maybe he thought because we ran a sex club, we were in an open relationship. I made a mental note to be careful with Carrie around Vincent. I wasn't sure I'd be able to control my temper if he propositioned her.

“We're scheduled to see the site tomorrow,” he said, then looked around. “Now, I hope this isn't too much mixing business with pleasure for you, but there's a big music conference in town this week. That's why it's so crowded.”

I felt Felice's hand trail along my shoulder as she passed by on the way to her seat. I stiffened, but didn't shrug her off. I didn't want to offend her, not if she was going to be performing at the club.

“Tonight's the biggest party of the week,” Vincent continued. “I want you to come. It's a huge hip-hop artist throwing it and it'll be a great time to mingle with the celebrities. Make connections.”

He was right, I knew. Making connections was important in this business. “Sounds great,” I said. “I’ll be there.” Besides, Carrie liked music. She would enjoy it.

“You come?” Felice asked.

“Sure,” I said. “And I hope to see you there.” I smiled at Marguerite to include her as well. “It’ll be nice to get to know you better.”

Vincent looked pleased at that and I breathed a sigh of relief that I’d salvaged the brunch. The last thing I needed right now was for things to go south on this deal.

# Chapter 12

## *Gavin*

By the time I got back to the hotel, I was more than ready for an afternoon of just me and Carrie. It had been too long since we'd had any real alone time. We'd need to be back at the hotel before six to make sure we were ready for the party at seven, but when most of our time together had been measured by just an hour or two, nearly six hours seemed like a luxury.

“How'd the meeting go?” Carrie asked as soon as I entered our room.

“Let's not talk business,” I said as I crossed the room and wrapped my arms around her. The meeting had left me with a bad taste in my mouth and all I wanted to do was be with her. I'd work with Vincent, but it didn't mean I had to like him. Maybe it was better that way. Howard had pretended to be my friend and I'd let that blind me for longer than I cared to remember.

“Okay,” she said. “So what do you want to talk about?” She put her arms around my neck and looked up at me.

“How about how amazing you look in that dress?” I captured her mouth before she could say anything. Her fingers twisted in the hair at the base of my neck as I nibbled at her lips, forcing myself to be gentle when what I really wanted to do was make her cry out. Bite down, then soothe the bruised flesh with my tongue, suck it into my mouth... I pulled back and smiled down

at her. “Now, what do you say we go shopping?”

She returned the smile. “You're probably one of the few straight men in the world to ever utter that line.”

I laughed and released her. She went to get her purse and I watched her go. I really did love that dress. The color was perfect on her and it was just right for walking around Cannes, but I wanted to get her into something sexy. The memory of her in various outfits she'd worn at the beginning of our relationship flipped through my mind. I never wanted her to feel like I didn't love who she was, but I sometimes thought she didn't give herself enough credit, especially when it came to how amazing she looked in designer clothes.

“Lead the way,” she said as she hooked her arm through mine.

If I had to describe a perfect afternoon, this would've been it. The sun was shining and the temperature hovered around sixty degrees. A light breeze came in off the ocean, just enough to keep the sun from being too hot. People were out and about, but the sidewalks weren't even close to as crowded as they normally were back home.

“Where are we going?” she asked after a few minutes.

“La Croisette,” I answered. “It'll take us right along the waterfront and we can see the yachts while we shop. There's also places where celebrities have put their handprints in the cement.”

She wrapped her other arm around mine and leaned her head on my shoulder. My heart gave a skip. I loved this woman so much that it hurt sometimes, especially when I thought about how far apart we'd drifted. It was foolish to think that a day of shopping could fix everything, but maybe it

could at least make things better.

I lost track of time as we walked, letting myself enjoy the weather and the company. Palm trees, clear blue sky...all the things I needed to forget about the busy lives we'd left behind.

“Hey, babe, is that...?” Carrie's voice was low. I followed where she was looking and saw a familiar face. Even if she hadn't been sporting blue hair once more, the entourage would've clued anyone in that this was a celebrity out and about.

“She must be in town for the music festival.”

“There's a music festival?” Carrie glanced up at me.

I nodded. “Vincent told me earlier. He thinks it'd be a good idea for us to go to a party tonight. I forgot about it.” I kissed the top of her head. “You distracted me.”

She tilted her head up for a quick kiss. “That sounds great, but I'm definitely going to need a new dress then. If I'm representing the club in front of all those celebrities, I can't go dressed like this.”

“You'd be gorgeous in a potato sack,” I insisted. “But I'd definitely love to see you in something with some slink.”

“Then let's head up there.” She gestured toward a plaza with a large metal sculpture in the center. “I'll bet those are some pricey shops.” She winked at me and then grinned.

I decided right then that I didn't care how much whatever dress she wanted cost. Price wasn't going to be an object this week. If the business deal flopped and we had to discuss a change to finances at some point, fine, but for right now, there would be no limit.



A rush of cool air hit us as we walked in and a pair of finely dressed sales women immediately greeted us. Carrie glanced at me and I smiled.

“Surprise me,” I said.

As the sales women began their pitches, I headed toward the couch in the center of the store. Another husband or boyfriend was already sitting there. We exchanged the nods of men who had resigned themselves to spending as much time as necessary waiting for the women in our lives to find the perfect dress.

I checked my phone while I waited, but there weren't any messages from Vincent. I wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. I'd gotten the impression that he'd been a little annoyed at me for not wanting to play this morning, and that made me a bit nervous about our deal since we hadn't officially signed anything. I just hoped, in his case, no news was good news.

I wasn't sure how much time had passed, but the other man's wife had come out in two different dresses before Carrie emerged. Taking her time had paid off. It was perfect. A deep crimson – my favorite color on her – it complemented her skin tone perfectly. The neckline was plunging, far more daring than anything I would've imagined her choosing for herself. My mouth went dry as my eyes followed it down between her firm breasts until it ended at the base of her ribcage. The simple tie top kept her shoulders bare and, as she turned, her back as well. That part of the dress exposed everything down to the base of her spine, confirming that she wasn't wearing a bra. I shifted in my seat and tried to will away the beginnings of an erection. Unfortunately, the hemline barely covering her ass and the fabric clinging to her body didn't help. Then there were the six-inch matching heels.

Fuck me.

“I believe he approves.” One of the sales women smiled at Carrie.

I nodded. “He most definitely does.” My voice was hoarse. I stood and hoped I wasn't as hard as I felt. I reached into my pocket and withdrew my credit card.

As we left the shop, Carrie was beaming.

“Did you really like it?” she asked.

I gave her an incredulous look. “Are you kidding me? It was all I could do not to take you on the couch right there.”

She reached over and took my hand. Her arm bumped against mine as she moved closer. “I know we have this party to go to, but do you think we have some time?”

I raised an eyebrow, hoping she meant what I thought.

Color rose in her cheeks. “Do we have time for a quickie?”

I squeezed her hand as blood rushed south. “Hell yes,” I answered immediately. As I realized what time it was, however, I had to add, “But I think it'll have to be in the shower. We're cutting it close.”

“Then we better hurry,” Carrie said as she quickened her pace. “We don't want a repeat of the airplane.”

No, I silently agreed with her. I most certainly didn't want that.

# Chapter 13

## *Carrie*

From the moment I'd seen the look in Gavin's eyes when he saw me in that dress, I knew there was no way I was going to go to some party without fucking him first. The insatiable appetite I'd once had for him had come back with a vengeance, and I was going to feed it.

As soon as we got back to our room, I put my purchases – including some new panties he hadn't seen yet – in the bedroom while Gavin went to warm up the shower. I then immediately stripped and headed into the bathroom. My stomach was twisting into knots as I went. One of the things I'd had turning over in my head all afternoon was how to approach this whole change in our sex lives. It had been when I'd suggested the quickie that I'd decided the best way to do it. And I wasn't going to wait.

Gavin pushed open the sliding glass door and held out his hand. As he backed into the shower, taking me with him, I let my gaze wander. No matter how many times I saw him naked, he still took my breath away. His body was like a work of art, a sculpture of male perfection. His chest and abs were defined, not from being too thin or because he was bulky. His waist and hips were proportioned to the rest of him and those deep v-grooves pointed to the most exquisite piece of flesh I'd ever known.

He was only half-hard and already bigger than average. I swallowed

hard and knew exactly how to begin. The warm spray beat down on me, soaking my hair and caressing my body. Gavin's eyes darkened as they traveled over me, then widened as I went down on my knees. The tile was hard and still cool against my skin. I looked up at him as I put my hands behind my back. The position pushed my breasts out, but I knew that wasn't the only reason he'd caught his breath.

“Carrie?” He breathed my name as a question.

I reached out and took his hand, guiding it to the back of my head. Once it was there, I clasped my hands behind my back again. I watched his Adam's apple bob as he swallowed and then my eyes flicked down to his cock. It was fully erect now, meaning he didn't really need my mouth on him to get us where we needed to go, but I wanted him to do it anyway.

He moved forward, pulling my head toward him at the same time. The tip of his cock brushed against my lips and I opened my mouth. My tongue darted out, swirling around the tip. We didn't have time to make this last, but I wanted a taste. Then he was pushing his cock forward, sending the thick shaft sliding across my tongue until he almost reached the back of my throat.

I looked up at him from under my lashes and found that he was staring at me. The intensity in his gaze made me shiver despite the heat of the shower. His fingers tightened in my hair, sending little pinpricks of pain through my scalp. I moaned and my pussy throbbed. I'd forgotten how good that felt.

Too soon, he was pulling back. When I didn't stand, he pulled me to my feet. His eyes met mine and I could see there was a question he wasn't sure how to ask. I kept our gazes locked and backed up until I was against the wall. Then, without a word, I held out my hands, my wrists crossed over each other. When he wrapped his hand around them, I nodded.

He groaned as he pinned my hands above my head and pressed his body against mine. His free hand moved under my thigh, lifting my leg around his hip. My heel rested against his ass, allowing me to feel the flex of muscle as he drove into me.

I keened, my entire body shaking with the sudden force of the intrusion. The second stroke was just as intense and I cried out again, this time, forcing it into a single word so he would know not to stop.

“Yes!”

Again and again he thrust into me, making me feel every inch of him. My fingers curled and flexed, wanting to touch him, needing to find some sort of outlet for the sensations coursing through me. But he held me tight, refusing to give me that respite. He swiveled his hips, grinding the base of his cock against my clit.

“Gavin!” I writhed against him, desperate for something I couldn't put into words. All I knew was that I was going to explode, that this pressure inside me was going to be too much very soon.

“Come for me,” he panted. “Come for me, baby.”

I whimpered. I wanted to do as he said. I needed it. But I couldn't quite get there. And then his mouth was on my breast, his teeth and lips worrying at the soft flesh until I knew I'd have a mark. A mark that would be visible in my new dress. A mark that would show everyone that I belonged to him.

He gently pulled on my nipple with his teeth and I came. His arms moved to wrap around my waist, holding me tight as he thrust up into me twice more, then stilled, buried deep inside me. He pressed his face against the side of my neck and I felt the heat of every shuddering breath as he came.

His muscles trembled under my hands as I ran them down his back.

After a minute, he pulled back, a reluctant expression on his face. “We need to clean up and get dressed. Besides, I have another surprise for later.”

“A surprise, huh?”

He looked down at me, a flicker of uncertainty in his eyes. “Yes, and I hope you’ll like it.” He swatter my ass. “But for now, we better hurry.”

As much as I wanted to explore what had just happened, I knew we didn't have the time. We washed in silence, each of us lost in our own thoughts. I didn't know what had Gavin so preoccupied, but I was thinking about how much I'd enjoyed what we'd done. I'd liked giving him that control. The feel of his fingers circling my wrists, restraining me, had twisted something inside me that hadn't made itself known since the beginning of our relationship. And judging by his reaction, he'd liked what we'd done too. We may not have had the time now, but I was more resolved than ever to have a discussion with him about why he didn't do those things anymore.

We were in the middle of dressing when our phones rang at the same time. When I saw who was calling, I was glad Gavin was distracted by whoever had called him. Mine was from the front desk. I pulled on my shoes and quickly left the room, hoping I could get down and back before Gavin noticed I was gone.

As I rode the elevator, I glanced down to make sure my dress was staying in place. The hickey Gavin had put on the side of my breast was indeed visible and I knew it should've embarrassed me. Instead, the heat that spread through me was one of arousal. I had no reason to be ashamed that the man I loved had marked my body.

When I reached the lobby, I kept my head up as I walked from the elevators to the front desk. I could feel eyes on me as I went, but refused to look. I knew some of those gazes would be ones of admiration, but there could be some condemnation too. I didn't care about any of that.

“Here you are, Miss Summers.” The young woman behind the desk handed me my package after I scribbled my signature on the delivery form.

I thanked her and headed back to the elevator. While Gavin had been at his meeting earlier today, I'd decided I wanted to give him something. Forty-five minutes online and a big chunk of money later, I had my gift being delivered to the hotel. I peeked in the little box. The cufflinks were perfect. One had my initials, the other had his daughter's. I'd even had the script matched to the tattoo of his daughter's initials on his back. I couldn't wait to see him open them.

When I entered our suite, Gavin was still on the phone. I could hear him in the bedroom, his voice hushed and hurried, as if he wanted to get off the call right away. I glanced at the clock. We were running late.

“I'll have to figure out how to get away, but I'll be there.”

A moment later, he appeared in the doorway, fully dressed, but looking rushed. “Babe, where'd you go?”

I smiled at him, enjoying the way his eyes were drawn to my body as I walked toward him. “I had to run down to the front desk and pick something up.” I held out the box and it took him a moment to refocus his gaze on it. “I wanted to get you a little something.”

“You didn't have to do that,” he said as he took the box from me.

“I know,” I said. “But you got me this gorgeous dress and I wanted to

get you a present too.”

“Trust me,” he said, his voice low. “That dress is as much for me as it is for you.”

A moment of heated silence passed between us.

“Open it.” I was afraid if I didn't break the moment, we'd never make it to the party.

He opened the box and his face lit up. “Wow, where did you get these? They're amazing!” His mouth came down hard on mine, his tongue pushing its way between my lips. Desire went straight to my core, heating my entire body. And then he was stepping back, the expression on his face saying he'd rather stay in the rest of the night.

“Here, let me.” I fastened on each one and then admired how they looked. “Perfect.”

“Thank you.” He ran his fingers over the one with his daughter's initials and then reached for me. His hand cupped my chin, tilting my head so that he could brush his lips against mine. As he straightened, his eyes dropped to the mark he'd made on my breast. He lowered his hand from my chin and gently touched the darkened flesh.

I made a sound in the back of my throat and his hand covered my breast, squeezing it. My eyelids fluttered and the pressure spiraled into pleasure. I moved closer, ready to say to hell with the party, then jumped.

Someone knocked on the door.

I swore silently as Gavin dropped his hand and moved to answer it. I looked down and made sure my dress was in place, then turned just in time to see a gorgeous, petite brunette walk into the room. My eyes widened when I



saw what she was wearing and suddenly my daring dress didn't seem so daring. Even Krissy wouldn't have worn something like that.

The top half of the young woman's body was wrapped in a scarf. Literally. She had a filmy scarf tied over her breasts, the material so thin that I was pretty sure I could see the outline of her nipples. If she'd been any bigger, the material wouldn't have covered everything. And then there was her skirt. If it could be called that. The waist of it rested so low on her hips that if it dipped the tiniest bit, I'd be able to confirm that her pussy was bare. The skirt was so short that she almost risked flashing everyone just by walking, and I was positive she wasn't wearing panties.

“Carrie, this is Felice.”

“I escort.”

I glanced at Gavin, hoping there was a language barrier issue here.

“She's a singer so she knows her way around the Cannes music scene,” he jumped in quickly to explain. “Vincent's her manager. He must've asked her to escort us to the party.”

I forced a smile and held out my hand. “It's a pleasure to meet you.”

She smiled back but it didn't reach her eyes. As soon as she turned back to Gavin, it was obvious her reaction was limited to me. “We go now?”

Gavin gave her a warm smile and looked over at me, he eyebrow raised in question. “Ready?”

I nodded and followed them out of the room. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask her if she was going to get cold, but I didn't want to sound catty. Gavin always had women hitting on him. That was one of the things that came with dating a man like him. Not all of the girls looked like they

were barely legal and would drop to their knees in a second if he asked though.

Felice rattled something off in French and Gavin laughed. I suddenly wished I'd taken French in high school. Maybe I could look up how to say, "keep your damn hands off my boyfriend" in case I needed it.

When we walked outside, I hooked my arm through Gavin's and he smiled down at me. I started to return the smile when I saw Felice link her arm through his on the other side. She shot me a glare that disappeared as soon as he looked at her. I waited for him to tell her to let him go, or at least politely remove her arm from his. Instead, he began to walk and we fell in step beside him.

He was just being polite, I told myself. He didn't want to make Felice feel like a third wheel. It was the gentlemanly thing to do. She could have her hand on his arm all she wanted, but I knew whose bed he'd been in when the night was done. And I wasn't planning on us getting much sleep.

I kept my peace as they chatted in French, distracting myself by taking in the sights of Cannes in the evening. It wasn't difficult to see where we were heading once we rounded the corner. What looked like a few thousand people were making their way toward the Grand Hotel. We didn't need Felice to show us the way after all.

"The guests here are from all over Europe and North America." Gavin's voice drew my attention away from the beautiful sunset. "These are the people we want spreading the word about the club. And some of them might even want to perform there." He glanced at Felice. "Vincent's already said he wants Felice as an entertainer."

I had a pretty good idea that her brand of entertainment wouldn't always

involve singing, but I decided I'd better keep that to myself. I'd promised Gavin that if things at the club happened between consenting adults, I was fine with it. Instead, I changed the subject by pointing toward a large, dark-skinned man with several tattoos. "Mimi handled his divorce case."

"That's great!" Gavin exclaimed. "You should talk to him."

Shit. That hadn't been what I wanted. I didn't want to remind one of the East Coast's most thug-like rappers about his divorce from some reality star. Fortunately, by the time I looked back, he'd been swallowed up by the crowd. Maybe I'd be lucky and I wouldn't see him again tonight.

We were walking through a press of bodies now, down to almost a shuffle as we made our way to the front of the line. Felice flashed a smile at the massive man at the door and he stepped aside, motioning the three of us through. We walked into the lobby, following the people in front of us, and then found ourselves outside again. The hotel had a massive garden that had been turned into a dance party.

The music pulsed around us, a rhythm that was familiar even though the lyrics weren't. I glanced toward the place where guests were dancing and was half-tempted to ask Gavin if he wanted to go.

"We dance," Felice said, pulling at Gavin's arm.

He shot me an apologetic look as he allowed her to drag him away. I watched them dance, though what Felice was doing looked a lot more like writhing than dancing. I thought back to how Gavin and I had danced the first night we'd met and a pang of jealousy went through me. I told myself that he wasn't interested in Felice, that he was just humoring her, but it was hard to keep thinking that way when she was rubbing her body on him like a cat in heat.

I grabbed a glass of champagne from a passing waiter and drank half of it in one gulp. I tore my gaze away from Felice and Gavin and started looking around. I recognized a few other big name stars, but most of the people around me were indie artists or local ones. I liked music, but I wasn't exactly up on the latest hits. Still, there had to be someone here I could talk to about the club. If I wasn't going to enjoy this as a date, I'd at least prove my worth to my boyfriend's business. Besides, I told myself, if I found a hot guy who wanted to dance with me while we talked, it would be a nice bonus. After all, why should it only be Gavin having fun on the dance floor tonight?

No hot guys were asking though and three more songs played before Gavin returned, a laughing Felice clinging to his arm. Oh yeah, this was going to be a fun night, alright.

I tried not to let Gavin see how annoyed I was as the night progressed, but it wasn't easy. Felice demanded all of his attention and every time he wasn't looking, she'd shoot me a smug grin that clearly said she knew exactly what she was doing. She dragged him around like he was some prize for her to show off, leaving me to follow if I wanted. Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't. I nursed a second glass of champagne and reminded myself that I didn't want to make things awkward for Gavin by bitch-slapping the singer who'd be working in the club.

I was gratified to see him checking his watch every so often, but I would've felt a lot better if he'd made a point of making sure I was with him, of letting people know that we were together.

“There are a lot of great possibilities for talent here,” Gavin said as he and Felice found me at the edge of the party.

I was working on formulating an appropriately supportive response

when a beautiful auburn-haired woman approached. A glance at Gavin told me he knew her too.

“Carrie, this is Marguerite, Felice's best friend and assistant.”

“Pleased to meet you,” I said. She got a warmer smile than Felice since she didn't start clinging to my boyfriend.

“Likewise.” Her handshake was firm and her face gave away nothing.

“Where’s Vincent? I haven’t seen him here yet?” Gavin said looking around.

Marguerite nodded. “He had some business to attend to. He hopes he can make it later tonight. Knowing Vincent I doubt he will show.” She turned to Felice and said something in French. Judging by the confused expression on Gavin's face, he hadn't gotten most of it. “We must be going,” she said in accented, but flawless English.

“It was good seeing you both again,” Gavin said as Felice released his arm. “We should get together before I leave and do something. Drinks maybe.”

“I would like that.” Felice gave him a predatory smile before her friend took her arm and the pair walked off.

Gavin picked up a glass of champagne and drank in all in one long draught. I smiled. Maybe he hadn't been having as much fun as it had appeared.

“Excuse me.” A woman's voice came from my right and I turned, my eyes widening.

A pretty blonde was standing less than two feet away, flanked by a pair

of men with arms the size of my thighs. “Kelsey Larson.”

“I know who you are, Miss Larson.” I shook her outstretched hand. “I’m a huge fan. You do great work drawing attention to human trafficking.”

“As do you, I hear. And, please, call me Kelsey.”

I didn’t try to hide my surprise. “You’ve heard of me?”

Kelsey’s smile widened. “I have, Miss Summers.”

“Carrie, please.” I couldn’t believe it.

One of the foremost entertainers working to promote awareness of the sex trade and human trafficking, Kelsey Larson was the poster child for the movement. Born to a Russian prostitute, Kelsey had been abused since birth. Sold to an American businessman when she was eight, she endured four more years of horrific abuse before escaping and taking three more sex slaves with her, all under the ages of ten. Now in her late twenties, she was a best-selling author, a chart-topping country star, producer and director of the documentary *My Rapist’s American Dream*, a re-telling of her life. Rumor had it, she’d be nominated for an Academy Award for her work.

“I’ve heard that you’re working on a proposal for Congressman Joshua White. I’d love to hear about it.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Gavin check his watch again. Maybe it hadn’t been Felice boring him. Whatever it was, it could wait. I began to explain how the proposal was designed to fill in loopholes in sex trafficking laws, as well as address the statute of limitations. Kelsey was amazing. She asked all the right questions, giving advice on some points I hadn’t thought of, as well as how certain things should be worded. We were right in the middle of a discussion on international policy when Gavin put his hand on

my shoulder.

“Babe, I need to go do something.” He sounded distracted. “I know you're busy here, so I'll see you later?”

I nodded, slightly annoyed that he hadn't lasted more than twenty minutes without being the center of attention. I'd stayed in the background while he and Felice had gone all over the place together arm in arm. Everyone probably thought she was his girlfriend, and I hadn't complained to him once. Now, he was going to bail just because I was talking to someone about something important? I suppressed a scowl because I didn't want Kelsey to know something was wrong, but all of the excitement of talking to her was muted by Gavin's exit.

A quarter of an hour later, Kelsey and I exchanged contact information and promised to connect once we both returned to the States. With her support of my proposal, I could really gain some traction while I was waiting for Congressman White. Maybe even give him a bit of push to move ahead before the elections.

As Kelsey walked away, I looked at my watch and then around at the crowd. It was only eleven o'clock and I knew that meant the party was just starting. I just wasn't interested in mingling, not by myself.

I sent a text to Gavin saying I was heading back to the hotel and then started to walk back the way I'd come. I wasn't sure what he'd planned when he told me he'd see me later, but at the moment, I didn't care. He'd left and I was going to do the same. If he wanted to be off doing whatever, that was his business.

I tried not to feel abandoned as I walked back to the hotel alone, but it wasn't easy. I'd gotten this beautiful dress because I knew Gavin would like

me in it. We'd had what I thought had been great sex, and he'd loved the gift I'd given him. I really thought we had been on our way to getting things back on track. Instead, I spent most of the night watching my boyfriend with another woman and now he was off somewhere, leaving me in a strange place where I didn't speak the language. I looked at my phone and nearly growled... he couldn't even bother to text me back. What could he be doing that was so important he couldn't just acknowledge my message?

I was good and annoyed by the time I reached our room, so distracted that I was halfway through the main area before I heard noises coming from the bedroom. My stomach twisted and my heart told me to turn around and leave, but I didn't listen. I forced my feet to go toward the unmistakable noises of passion.

When I pushed open the door, it took my brain a moment to register what I was seeing, and then the picture became clear.

Felice and her friend, Marguerite, were lying in our bed, naked, and in a position that left absolutely no doubt as to what they'd been doing just moments before.

“What the hell?” The question came out flat.

Felice smirked at me from where she was laying on her back, legs spread wide. Despite her thick accent, her words were perfectly clear. “Gavin invite us to join him.”

***To be continued in Club Privé – French Connection Vol. 2, coming  
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available.

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## About The Author

M. S. Parker is a USA Today Bestselling author and the author of the Erotic Romance series, Club Privé and Chasing Perfection.

Living in Southern California, she enjoys sitting by the pool with her laptop writing on her next spicy romance.

Growing up all she wanted to be was a dancer, actor or author. So far only the latter has come true but M. S. Parker hasn't retired her dancing shoes just yet. She is still waiting for the call for her to appear on Dancing With The Stars.

When M. S. isn't writing, she can usually be found reading— oops, scratch that! She is always writing. ☺