

ANNA

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

HACKETT

SENTINEL  SECURITY

HEX

HEX



SENTINEL SECURITY #6

ANNA HACKETT

Hex

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WHAT READERS ARE SAYING ABOUT ANNA'S ROMANCES

The Powerbroker - Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) winner 2022

Heart of Eon - Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) winner 2020

Cyborg - PRISM Award Winner 2019

**Edge of Eon and Mission: Her Protection - Romantic Book of the Year
(Ruby) finalists 2019**

**Unfathomed and Unmapped - Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby)
finalists 2018**

Unexplored – Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby) Novella Winner 2017

**Return to Dark Earth – One of Library Journal's Best E-Original Books
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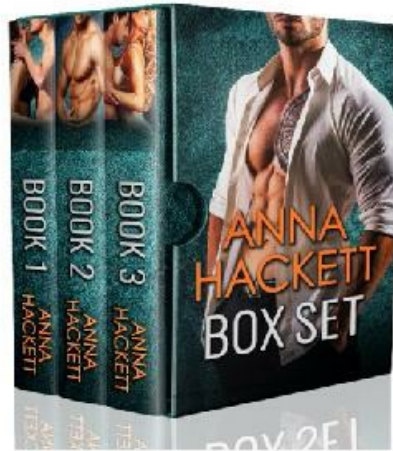
**At Star's End – One of Library Journal's Best E-Original Romances for
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CHAPTER ONE

“Come on, baby. Just a little more—”

Jet “Hex” Adler’s fingers flew across the keyboard.

She grinned. “I’ve got you. You know I’m too good.”

There was nothing quite like hacking into a bad guy’s security system. This time, though, she had to admit this guy’s system wasn’t bad.

That was irrelevant. She was better.

Biting her lip, Jet focused, staring at the code filling the screen. *Mm-hm.* Yep, this should do it.

Almost there.

Another tap, and the system opened for her like a clamshell.

“Yes!” She whirled her chair around. “I am the *queen*.” She touched her headset. “Killian, the system is down. You’re clear for infiltration.”

Next, Jet moved to the controls of the drone she had hovering over the warehouse in Brooklyn. Her boss, Killian “Steel” Hawke, and his team were going to retrieve a bunch of corporate technology stolen from a client.

Sentinel Security was *the* security firm in New York City. They did work for clients all around the US, and the world. Killian had built the company from the ground up. The former CIA agent was a legend. She loved working for such a badass.

“Acknowledged, Hex.” Killian’s voice was deep and sexy, with the tiniest rasp. “Good work.”

The huge interactive screen on the wall of Hex’s office filled with aerial images from the drone. The massive, squat warehouse dominated the view. She tapped the keyboard and switched to infrared.

“Killian, I’ve got six heat signatures inside. Watch your back.”

A snort cut across the line. “Only six? And here I thought we might have a challenge.”

The female voice belonged to Killian’s new wife. Devyn “Hellfire” Hayden—or rather, Hawke now—was also former CIA. The redhead was not one to cross.

Killian was so in love. Jet sighed. She’d never dreamed she’d see the day when the dangerous, aloof man was so infatuated with one woman.

Actually, all of the Sentinel Security alpha team—a group of tough former military and ex-international law enforcement agents—had fallen in love over the last few months.

On-screen, she watched the heat signatures of her team as they closed in on the warehouse.

Along with Killian and Devyn were Nick “Wolf” Garrick, and Matteo “Hades” Mancini. She’d had a front-row seat as both of those tough guys had claimed their women. And they were great women. Jet loved Lainie and Gabbi. They’d all become good friends.

Then Hadley “Striker” Lockwood had gone and fallen for a sexy British billionaire. Hadley, a stylish, former MI6 agent, was Jet’s best friend. Hadley and Bennett were the perfect couple. They always looked like they’d stepped out of some glossy magazine.

The final member of their team was not on this mission. Bram “Excalibur” O’Donovan was upstairs in his apartment, with his pregnant fiancée. The team had only recently rescued her from an unhinged stalker who’d kidnapped her, and Bram wasn’t letting her out of his sight.

On the screen, the Sentinel Security team attacked, and Jet watched the action even as her mind wandered.

Yep, everyone was in love.

Except her.

She wrinkled her nose. Not that she didn’t want love, she just didn’t trust it. Her hand tightened on the keyboard. Or maybe she didn’t trust any man could really love her.

God, it was all Brandon’s fault. Her asshole ex hadn’t broken her heart exactly, but he’d infected it with a virus that had left it stuttering and unsure.

She blinked at the viewscreen. Her team appeared to have the bad guys contained.

“Hex, we’ll start loading up the tech,” Killian said in her ear. “Can you call New York’s finest and have them meet us? They can deal with our

thieves.”

“On it, boss man.” She smiled. It was always good when a mission went off without a hitch.

When there was gunfire, or one of her peeps got hurt, it was the absolute worst to be stuck in the command center in the office, able to do nothing more than watch and wait.

Sometimes, she wished she was out there too—doing, fighting, taking action.

Jet snorted. She wasn’t a field agent. Even when she’d been at the CIA, she’d been in the high-tech computer room, hacking terrorists and criminals.

She quickly put a call through to their contact at the NYPD. Then she stared at her phone. After a quick internal argument, she pulled up a number.

She’d saved it as Infuriating. She tapped out a message.

I just nabbed six bad guys. That’s ten for me this week. I’m smoking you, James Bond.

Cain, no last name, a.k.a. codename Shade, often didn’t reply for several hours, but this time, her phone dinged instantly.

You mean Steel nabbed ten. You just watched.

Jet snorted.

Without my insane skills, he would never have found them. Therefore, I get the credit. How many have you taken down this week?

One, but he was really bad, so he should count for three, pixie.

Either way, I’m in the lead. And pixie is a terrible nickname. I prefer goddess of all things tech.

I think goddesses are usually taller.

Jet shook her head. Shade was the CIA’s best deep-cover agent. Most people had never heard of him, or only heard whispers surrounding the mysterious Shade. The kind that made criminals nervous. No doubt his bad guy was the worst of the worst.

She hoped he hadn’t gotten hurt. Not that he’d ever tell her.

A funny pressure filled her chest. Shade confused the hell out of her. He was annoying, with an uppercase and underlined A. The man knew how to tap dance on her last nerve, and light the fuse of her short temper.

He was also hot as hell. She fiddled with her hair. He was tall, muscular, and had tawny hair that he often wore up in a sexy man bun, or short ponytail. Not to mention the wide, sexy smile. His eyes were brown—a rich, dark brown that hid so many secrets. He knew he was a walking fantasy. No doubt he used that to his advantage in his job.

Now, a sour feeling filled her stomach. It was too easy to imagine him charming international supermodels and beautiful foreign agents.

Jet was short and cute. She knew who she was. She had a big brain in a tiny body. She pushed her almost-shoulder-length hair back. It was black, with her usual pink tips on the end that she'd just had recently re-colored. She was comfortable in her skin and her abilities.

She just wished she could find a man who felt the same.

They either felt threatened by her skills or intimidated by her work, or left her for more glamorous and beautiful women.

Shaking her head, she focused on her phone. Taller. The jackass.

Watch it, Bond, or I'll hack your phone and make it so your ring tone is annoying Minion noises.

That doesn't sound so bad, pixie. I like the Minions. And you are just pint-sized.

Jet's gaze narrowed. She hunched over the keyboard. "Let's see how you like this."

Her fingers flew. She loved her work. She did feel like a goddess, with so much power at her fingertips. The CIA had trained her well before Killian had lured her away.

"There." She hit a key and grinned.

A second later, her phone chirped.

Change it back. Now.

Nope.

Jet.

She could almost hear the deep timbre of his voice.
You were warned.

I'll get my revenge.

You're all talk. For all I know, you're in Timbuktu. I think you're full of hot air, Bond.

Bad girls get spanked.

Jet gasped and her hand shook. She felt a fierce pulse between her legs. She was sure Cain could make a spanking very pleasurable.

No. She squeezed her thighs together. Not thinking of Cain and spanking. His big palm on her ass...

Her panties dampened. *Shit, get a grip, Hex.*

Nothing to say now, pixie?

Oh, now she could almost picture the cocky look on his face and the smug tone to his voice.

I never have been, and never will be, spanked.

We'll see. I could make you beg for it.

God. She pressed a hand to her belly. They were crossing so many lines here.

In your dreams, Bond. Now go away; I'm working.

The phone went silent, but Jet felt all churned up. She tried to focus on the computer screen.

It would be very, very stupid to let her fantasies about Cain, aka Shade, get any worse.

He was *not* for her. The man had heartbreak written all over him.

He was married to his job, and serving his country. He was his job. Plus,

he was gorgeous; pure sex on a stick. He could have any woman he wanted.

There was no way he'd ever give her what she needed. What she craved. She'd just be a minor detour in his road. Jet was sick of being a detour for men before they found someone better. She wanted to be someone's ultimate destination.

CAIN "SHADE" Cavanagh flicked off the blowtorch and rose. He kicked the circle of metal he'd just cut, opening up a neat hole. He ducked, stepping into the vault.

His headlamp shone on the gold bullion and artwork.

A nice little stash, but not his target. He knew exactly what he was after.

He moved to a row of filing cabinets at the back of the vault, and pulled open the third drawer on the second unit. He flicked through the files. God, Corozzo was an asshole. A dirty one, who liked young girls.

Cain found the file he wanted and pulled it out. Then he slid it inside his black jacket.

Turning, he slipped back out of the vault. He paused to take a picture of the front. Then he found the number saved under *Pixie*.

Look what I just broke into.

He sent the picture.

She didn't disappoint.

A Cerberus vault? No way you cracked that. You cut your way in, didn't you?

Damn, he really liked this woman's sharp brain. He liked everything about Jet "Hex" Adler. She wasn't like anyone he'd ever met, and such a refreshing change. He liked her brain, her fine hacking skills, her sharp tongue, and her small, perfectly formed body.

Fuck. Get your head in the game, Cavanagh. Nothing ever distracted him from his work. Nothing.

Distractions got you killed.

Besides, he had no fucking right to mess with a woman like Jet. Sure, she understood his world and his work. Hell, she understood him, and that was

rare. He was used to lying and manipulating to keep his country safe. He was used to never standing still, never caring about anything or anyone but his work. He was used to never being himself.

No, there was no way he would care for Jet.

He'd have to settle for poking at her from afar.

He slipped out of the building. Outside was a warm, balmy New Orleans evening. He heard laughter from a bar close by. He was on the edge of the trendy Arts/Warehouse District.

Cain hit the sidewalk, pulling on his backpack. He kept his stride loose and easy. Just a regular guy out for an evening of fun.

He turned a corner. A block down, there were more bars and restaurants. Gold neon caught his eye. There was a sign above a set of beaten-gold double doors. The nightclub was called Ember, and there was a long line of people waiting to get in. The pub beside it was doing brisk business, as well.

He knew the club, the pub, the restaurants, several warehouses and buildings, hell, the entire block, were owned by the Fury brothers.

Cain approached Ember, heading straight for the front of the line. Two big bouncers saw him and tensed.

Someone grabbed his arm. He glanced sideways.

A blonde woman in a glittery silver dress standing in the queue smiled at him. "Hey, can you get me in?"

"No, sorry sweetheart." He pulled his arm free.

Her gaze ran up and down his body. She fluttered her fake eyelashes. "I'll make it worth your while, hot stuff."

"Another time." He turned back to the bouncers. "I'm here to see Dante."

One spoke into a mic attached to his shoulder, then nodded. "Go in."

Cain entered the club. It was like descending into luxurious sin.

The decor was all black and gold. He passed through the lavish entry and into the main club space. A huge bar glowed gold, where an army of bartenders worked to keep the crowd watered. The ceiling also glowed gold, covered in a sea of gold flowers.

Servers darted across the space with trays of drinks, all of them decked out in shimmery, gold halter tops and black trousers.

He approached the back of the club, skirting the busy dance floor. Huge, gold urns decorated the length of the wall.

Ahead, a door opened, and a man stepped out.

He suited the interior—black tailored pants, black shirt with the sleeves

rolled up, and black ink visible on one forearm. His hair was jet-black, and way past needing a cut. A dark beard covered a strong jaw, and his eyes looked black as well.

Dante Fury spotted Cain and jerked his chin up. Then he waved at the doorway. Cain followed him through into the back area of the club.

There was less gloss back here. Here it was employees only, where the real work got done. Back here, the music was muffled, and offices and storerooms extended off a long hallway. This was the work center of the busy club. Cain passed a security room with a wall of screens, and several black-suited guards monitoring them. He was unsurprised that Fury ran a tight ship when it came to security.

Fury and his brothers were not always on the right side of the law, but they had a code. They were known for helping those who needed it. The five of them were more than capable of going toe-to-toe with the New Orleans underbelly.

Dante led him up a set of stairs and into a spacious office.

There was a large black desk with a laptop on it, and a black-leather couch against one wall. Three paintings hung on the wall behind the desk—they all looked like gold swirled through black ink.

But it was the large window that drew Cain's eye. It was clearly one-way glass, giving Dante a bird's-eye view into the packed club below.

"You got it?" Dante asked, dropping into his desk chair.

Cain withdrew the file and dropped it on the desk. "You'll make sure he goes down?"

There was a glint in the other man's eyes. "Fuck yeah. The bastard hurt the daughter of a friend. Lured her in, did sick shit to her, photographed it."

"You got her out?"

Dante ran a hand through his hair. "Yes, but she committed suicide three weeks later. She was thirteen."

Hell. Cain felt a blip of sympathy, but the truth was that he was desensitized to bad shit. He'd seen a lot of horrible things, all around the world. A lot of innocents chewed up and spat out. "Sorry to hear that. This will help you make sure he doesn't hurt any other young girls." And didn't venture any further into human trafficking.

Dante nodded. "He's going down."

"Uncle Sam thanks you for your help."

"Thanks, Shade. You need help from me, you only have to call me."

Cain nodded, then headed back down the stairs. As he crossed through the club, he ignored the welcoming, interested look from a stacked brunette in a tiny, red dress.

Outside, he headed down the street, taking several turns until he found where he'd parked his rental car. It was a short drive to his hotel in the French Quarter.

He liked staying at the Bourbon Orleans Hotel. He liked its old-world charm, which made for a nice change from the sterile hotel rooms he was used to. He strode through the grand lobby with its pillars and grand furniture.

When he reached his suite, he checked the small, near-invisible strip he'd set to ensure that his room was still undisturbed. Once inside, he pulled his shirt off and headed for the shower.

The room had more French styling and a view into the hotel's lush courtyard. Not that he ever had time to stop and enjoy it.

He'd wash off the day with burning hot water, but he already knew that he'd never quite feel clean. He was dedicated to protecting his country. He knew his work was important, and that it saved lives, and kept many innocent people safe.

But sometimes it sucked. It was hard and horrible and shitty.

He walked in the darkness and did the hard things so other people didn't have to. So they could stay safe and naïve, so they could voice their uneducated opinions on social media, and get up every morning and have breakfast with their kids, then go to the job they bitched about.

Shit. He shook his head. He was in a mood today.

After indulging in a long shower, he dried off. With a towel wrapped around his hips, he went to the computer on his desk and let the facial recognition read his face.

An image of the Sentinel Security office appeared. Not the stylish upper levels of the warehouse that housed the corporate security and cybersecurity divisions. No, this was the lower levels, where Killian's top team worked. The command center where a hacker called Hex ruled.

She sat on a chair, one leg tucked under her, moving it slightly side to side as she studied the screen. Her brow was creased in concentration.

He smiled. He liked watching her work. Of course, if she knew that he'd planted a tiny, secret camera the last time he was there, she'd lose her mind.

Suddenly, the elevator to the side of the image opened, and a woman in a

neat skirt suit strode out holding a vase of flowers.

Cain frowned.

Jet stood up, her mouth open.

He saw her smile and reached over to touch a flower. Then she grabbed the card nestled in the blooms and read it.

He flicked on the sound.

“Who are they from?” the receptionist asked. “A secret admirer?”

“No, a guy I worked with on a recent job. Cybersecurity.”

“Was he cute?”

Jet cocked her head. “I guess. Yeah, he was.”

Cain scowled. Some dickhead had sent her a mixed bouquet. Could the guy not figure out what flowers suited her best? Jeez, there were even chrysanthemums in there. They were too ordinary for Jet.

She set the vase down on her desk, then sat, still smiling.

He picked up his phone and tapped.

Chrysanthemums? So lame.

He saw her read the message. Her brows snapped together.

How did you know I got flowers?

I'm a spy, remember? And those are not flowers. They're a bunch of lame.

She scanned the area, a fierce scowl on her face.

You'd better not have a camera in here, Bond! And what, I'm not worth sending flowers to?

That's not it. You're just worth more than lame, boring flowers.

Shit, he knew he was skirting a line. He shouldn't be flirting with her.

On the screen, she looked frozen. Then her fingers moved.

That's kind of...nice.

I can be nice. I know what a smart, beautiful woman deserves.

Actually, he was pretty sure no one would ever accuse him of being nice. He saw Jet bite her lip and he swallowed a groan. He felt that small move in his cock. Then his eyes were on those lips, and he was imagining them wrapped around his cock.

What does she deserve?

He stared at her message for a beat, then tapped on the phone.

The best. Beautiful pink lilies with colorful dahlias.

Those are my favorite flowers.

Oh, he knew.

You deserve breakfast in bed, and someone to worship that small, sexy body.

On the screen, he saw her jaw move, her lips murmuring his name.

Fuck, what the hell are you doing, Cavanagh? He shouldn't be doing this.

He watched Jet tap.

He also needs to be here doing all of that.

Cain sighed, staring at her message. He wished he could, but there were so many reasons why he couldn't. Most of all, he wasn't capable of that. Of a relationship.

He didn't respond and shoved his phone away.

No more flirty texts. He needed to stay away from temptation.

CHAPTER TWO

“Coming through with cocktails for the girl of the hour,” Hadley said.

Hex grinned as her elegant friend set the pink drinks down. They were all in fancy glasses topped with delicate flowers.

Nearby, Bram O’Donovan wrinkled his nose. “Those are *not* drinks.”

“You think only whiskey is a drink,” Killian said.

Bram grunted. “That’s not true. Only Irish whiskey.”

Jet rolled her eyes and grinned. Bram had his fiancée, Addie, snuggled in his lap, a hand pressed to her pregnant belly. It was so cute watching the big, grumpy Irishman turn to goo for his sweet, blonde baby mama.

Beside them Killian sat, legs stretched in front of him and one arm across the back of his wife Devyn’s chair. As Jet watched, Devyn leaned in and bit his ear. Killian smiled at her.

Smiled. God. A few months ago, if anyone had told Jet that deadly Killian Hawke would be married and in love, she’d have fallen off her chair laughing.

“Happy birthday, Hex.” Hadley lifted her cocktail.

Hadley’s fiancé, British billionaire Bennett Knightley sat beside her. He winked at Hex and held his glass of wine aloft. A chorus of Happy Birthdays followed.

Jet lifted her drink. “Thanks, guys.” She sipped, enjoying the pop of sweetness. Thirty-one wasn’t so bad.

Around her, her friends talked and laughed. She worked with the best group of badasses in New York City. Hell, in the world, in her opinion. Killian ran a tight ship, and only hired the best.

She looked down the table at Nick and Lainie, and Matteo and Gabbi.

The couples were chatting with Maverick Rivera and his wife Remi. Remi was another hacker who had once worked for Sentinel Security before she'd married her tech gazillionaire.

God, everyone was coupled up, and here she was, depressingly single. She didn't need a man to complete her, but she wouldn't mind someone to share the cooking with, and who could give her some non-self-induced orgasms.

Someone to talk to at the end of a long day. To hold her when she needed a hug.

Shit, she was getting melancholy on this birthday. She took a huge sip of her gin cocktail. Her gaze fell on her two girlfriends who were sitting right at the end of the table. Both were single and dolled up like her. Jet had worn her favorite dress—a white, fitted number that clung to her body perfectly, and ended at mid-thigh.

Nina and Ellen worked in tech too, and they'd crossed paths—online and off-line. The pair was always lots of fun.

Nina spotted her looking, and lifted a drink and winked. Hex lifted hers in response. Nina was a glamorous, tall African-American woman, and Jet envied the woman her height. Their other friend, Ellen, was a classic geek. She wore a vintage, polka-dot dress, had moon-pale skin, kept her brown hair cut short, and wore a set of oversized glasses.

The conversation at the table ebbed and flowed. It wasn't long before Bram and Addie left. Addie was expecting twins, and was starting to get tired more frequently. Slowly, the other couples started to filter out.

Remi stood. "Let's dance."

Maverick, chatting with Killian, scowled. "I don't dance."

"I'm in." Nina dragged Ellen up. "So's Ellen."

Jet knocked back her drink. Dancing sounded good. She was going to dance, and maybe flirt with some hot guy.

She hadn't heard from a certain hot spy for over a week.

Ugh. She skirted the table. She was *not* thinking about him.

She forced herself to smile at her friends. A song came on with a deep beat. Hex sauntered onto the dance floor, swinging her hips.

"You go, birthday girl," Nina yelled over the music.

Remi cheered. She leaned against Jet, and they belted out the words to the song. Nina and Ellen danced together, laughing.

This was fun. Life was good. Smiling, Jet kept dancing with her friends.

One song turned into two, then three.

Suddenly, Jet's phone vibrated in her tiny, glittery shoulder bag. Shit, she tried to fight the urge to check it.

"I'm going to get a drink," she yelled at Remi.

Her friend nodded.

Jet hurried over to the bar and pulled out her phone.

Happy birthday, pixie.

She felt a burst of warmth. She tried to fight it off.

Thanks.

How are you celebrating?

Drinks with the gang. Dancing.

Sounds fun.

I suppose you're somewhere far away and dangerous.

Maybe.

She knew there was so much he could never share about his missions. Did he ever talk to anyone? Was he always alone?

She snorted. The great, dangerous Shade didn't need anyone.

You safe?

God, she was an idiot.

Yes, pixie.

She hated the nickname. Well, okay hate was a strong word. She sighed. Okay, she kinda liked it. She'd never admit that it made her belly warm.

Sliding her phone back in her tiny bag, she headed back to the dance floor. It was her birthday. She was determined to let loose a little and have some fun.

Remi was really moving now. The woman could dance. Several men were starting to watch her. *Uh-oh*. Jet knew Mav well enough to know he'd lose his mind if anyone touched her.

Nina and Ellen danced up to Jet, and she lifted her arms, moving to the beat.

One man made a move on Remi. Whatever he said, her friend shook her head. Jet started heading in her direction.

But the dude wasn't taking no for an answer. He waved at the bar, smiled, mimed drinking.

A second later, Mav appeared. He had a fierce scowl on his rugged face. He wrapped his arms around Remi, and kissed her neck, glaring at the man the entire time.

The man hesitated, eyed Mav's broad form, then slunk off. Mav spun Remi and kissed her. Right there in the middle of the crowd of dancers, like they were the only two people in existence.

Jet nearly stumbled. She wanted that. So badly. All that passion and need and possessiveness.

Once the couple pulled apart, a flushed and dazed-looking Remi waved at Jet as Mav dragged her away.

Jet whirled around. She was going to have fun if it killed her. Maybe she'd even kiss a guy.

She danced to the beat, then turned, and bumped into a man.

"Sorry," she shouted over the music.

He smiled at her. He wasn't handsome, but he was pleasant looking. And he had a nice smile. He held out a hand to her.

Why not?

She put a hand in his. They danced together, swinging to the song. She really wanted to feel a spark. Something. Anything.

He pulled her closer and she let herself enjoy the song. Sadly, the sparks were missing.

"You're so sexy," the man drawled. "Such a tiny, little package." His hand slid around her hip.

Nope, no tingles.

The hand moved lower, reaching the hem of her dress.

Ah, no. She grabbed his wrist and shook her head.

"Come on, cutie," he cajoled.

She rolled her eyes. "No."

“We’ll have fun.”

A second later, the man was wrenched away from her.

Jet blinked. The crowd of dancers swirled around her.

A bigger, hotter body pressed behind hers. Her heart leaped into her throat. An arm snaked around her middle, leaving a trail of sensation.

Everything in her flared to life. The hard body engulfed her and smelled so good. She felt the brush of lips at her ear.

“Happy birthday, pixie.”

SHE WAS the perfect little handful.

Cain pulled Jet close, moving with her to the music. He’d had dance training. It was just another tool for his job.

But there was nothing work-related about the way he and Jet moved together.

Her white dress was short and showed every sweet curve of her body. *Fuck*. The asshole who’d touched her was lucky Cain hadn’t punched him.

“What are you doing here?”

He barely heard her over the music. Leaning down so his mouth was close to the side of her jaw, he felt her shiver. “Had to wish you happy birthday. Who did you wear this dress for, pixie?”

She turned her head a little. “Myself.”

He made a humming noise. She was so damn small. He stroked a hand up her thigh. She shifted, her body rubbing against him.

His hardening cock was about to jab her in the back. “I think you wore this to torment the men in here.”

She snorted.

Cain whirled her out, then pulled her back so they were face to face. He clamped an arm around her waist, hauled her up, and slid a thigh between hers. Her feet weren’t fully touching the ground.

“Cain.” Her gaze locked on him.

He loved her eyes. One was blue and one was green. Unique. Just like Jet.

He’d seen all kinds of women before. Beautiful, bold, shy, mousy, striking, quiet, loud. He’d seen it all. He’d slept with a few.

Yet, he’d never met anyone quite like Jet “Hex” Adler.

He pulled her closer. He shouldn't be doing this. He knew that she wasn't for him.

Max had taught him to stay alone, unattached. A man like him, with no family or close friends, had nothing to lose. He could do this job. Work for his country and its people.

Jet was too good for him. She might have a snarky edge, but she was still sweet and good underneath it all.

He knew all that logically, yet he didn't let her go. Some part of him couldn't damn well stay away. He pulled her close and buried his face in her hair. "Damn, you smell good."

Her hands clenched on him. For a few minutes, they danced to the music, holding each other close.

He heard his heart thud loudly in his head. *Shit*. Cain stroked a hand down to her ass. He wondered what she tasted like.

Jet tipped her head back, the lights strobing across the dance floor, highlighting her pretty face. He cupped her jaw. So damn pretty.

He should let her go. He shouldn't hold her like this.

But he didn't let go.

Her gaze stayed locked on his

He squeezed her tight ass. He wondered what was under the dress. He imagined that small body spread out for him, imagined touching her, licking her sweet pussy, sliding his cock into her warmth. He'd have to work to get her to take him.

His cock was as hard as steel now. He knew she felt it. Saw heat in her gaze.

"You came armed." She rubbed against him.

Damn, he wanted to laugh. No one made him laugh like her. He leaned down, his lips inches from hers, they were breathing each other's breath.

"Hey." A man appeared, drunk by the looks of it. "I want a turn with her. She's hot."

"Get lost," Cain growled.

The man puffed up his chest. "You can't hog her all—"

Cain snapped a hand out, tapping the man's throat. It wasn't hard enough to hurt him, but enough so he felt it. The man gagged and bent over.

Cain pushed Jet behind him. "Are you going?"

The idiot decided to take a swing. He straightened, his arm swiping out wildly.

Moving fast, Cain grabbed the man's arm, then jerked it up behind his back. The man's pained sound was audible over the loud music.

Looking around, Cain caught the gaze of a security guard at the edge of the dance floor, and waved him over.

The drunk took a spluttering breath, but thankfully the security guard grabbed the back of his shirt and dragged him away.

Cain turned. Jet was watching him, a hot look on her face.

Shit. He snaked his arms around her. "Does violence make you hot, pixie?"

"Not usually." She pressed her hands to his chest and leaned in. "But you barely did anything, and—"

He couldn't stop himself. He took her mouth with his.

Alarms blared in his head, but he ignored them. He kissed her. He needed to taste her again. Just a little taste.

He'd kissed her weeks ago on the Sentinel Security jet. He'd been teasing her, enjoying riling her up as she'd tried to treat one of his wounds.

Maybe this time it would be enough.

Her hands slid into his hair, tugging it free of its tie, and she made a needy noise. Her bold tongue tangled with his.

He hitched her up. She barely weighed anything. She wrapped her legs around his waist, and pressed her hot, little core against his abs.

Fuck. *Fuck.* He kissed her harder, forcing her mouth wider. He was lost in her.

The song ended. Another started. They kept kissing. She made a hungry noise, deepening the kiss.

But when the next song ended, a popular song started, and people started clapping and hollering. It broke through the spell.

What the fuck was he doing?

He wrenched his mouth free.

Her face was flushed, her lips parted.

Jet was a temptation he had to avoid. He couldn't give her what she needed, what she deserved.

He set her down.

He saw some of the desire bleed from her face. "Cain?"

"Sorry. Shouldn't have done that."

Now her face hardened. "Why?"

"Got carried away. It was a mistake."

She jerked. “A mistake.”

He heard the hurt in her voice. He hated it. “Jet—”

“Why are you here?” she demanded.

“I need you.”

Her lips parted, something unreadable moving through her gaze.

“For a job,” he hastily added.

Now, her face shuttered. “Then you should’ve said that at the beginning.”

Her voice was sharp. “You shouldn’t have danced with me, or kissed me.”

“Won’t happen again.”

Now, there was a familiar flare in her eyes. He knew that pissed-off look very well.

“Good.” She whirled and stomped back toward the table.

Cain mentally cursed himself, then shoved his hands in his pockets and followed her.

He had a mission.

That was all he ever had.

He needed to keep his hands off Jet Adler.

CHAPTER THREE

As Jet strode into her command center, she didn't feel her usual sense of calm and pleasure. Her big, interactive screen and computers usually made her feel good.

Not tonight.

The light clicked on automatically. She saw the searches she'd set before she'd left for her birthday drinks were still running.

God, trust Shade to ruin her birthday.

She heard the murmur of deep voices behind her. Killian and Cain... No, Shade. She needed to use his code name. To remind herself of exactly who he was.

A player. A man who knew exactly how to play a part.

A man who only cared about his mission.

Devyn had warned her. Shade was a man who'd do anything to achieve his mission objective.

There was no reason for him to flirt with her. To act like he liked her. Wanted her.

So why the hell had he done it?

She huffed out a breath and kicked her shoes off. Stupid heels. She tossed her handbag on the desk.

He didn't need to flirt and turn her on, to make her feel special.

She dropped into her chair.

From now on, no more fantasies about him. No more messages and flirty texts and teasing.

Killian, Shade, and Devyn walked in, their faces serious.

Work. She could focus on that and be professional.

Devyn sat on the table beside Jet, and crossed her long legs. She looked stunning in a strapless, grass-green dress. Jet would hate her if she didn't already love her. The woman was yin to Killian's yang. Jet was grateful that Devyn had made the man so happy. Killian was a badass, and he was always looking out for everyone. He deserved some happiness.

Devyn gave him that.

Jet rubbed a palm against the ache in her chest. She glanced at Killian. Despite the long day and the late hour, his suit still looked freshly pressed, and his hair unruffled.

Shade stepped to the front of her space, like he owned it. She fought back a scowl. He looked like every good-looking bad boy that teen girls swooned over, and grown women dropped their panties for.

He wore all black. Black button-down shirt, black pants that hugged strong thighs. His tawny hair was in a man bun that begged fingers to pull it down. She remembered pulling it loose on the dance floor while they'd kissed the hell out of each other. Her cheeks heated and she shoved the memory away. He'd clearly re-tied it.

He wasn't exactly handsome. Not in a Hollywood kind of way. He had too much of an edge, a harsh, sexy strength.

"All right, what's going on?" Killian demanded.

"I have a mission." The light of the screen caught Shade's face. He was frowning. "We've been following a leak of top-secret military technology. It's being sold to foreign interests."

"Shit," Devyn said.

Shit was right. Jet fiddled with her long necklace as her thoughts ticked over. That put the country's entire military at risk.

"The leak's coming from a private contractor," Shade continued. "The higher-ups in the company all checked out. They are also on board to plug the leak."

"Before they lose their valuable government contracts," Devyn said dryly. He nodded.

"What's the tech?" Killian asked.

Shade paused. "It's next-generation drone technology. AI-driven systems that allow swarm-like formations."

Jet gasped. "Swarming. I've read articles on the possibilities of the tech. Entire swarms of drones flying together, working together, with minimal human intervention. If that falls into enemy hands..."

“Our enemies would be able to develop the technology themselves, and in addition, they’d have the ability to hack our drones.” Shade clasped his hands behind his back. “They could take over our drones, conduct strikes on our own soil, and attack military targets overseas, all using our own gear.”

They were all silent as the ramifications sank in. This was bad. Really bad.

“So who’s selling top-secret government technology to the bad guys?” Killian asked.

“Someone keen to make a lot of money.” Shade’s tone was harsh. “We don’t know who the buyer is, but we know they’re offering two-hundred million dollars.”

Devyn whistled.

Jet studied Shade’s face. She saw the lines bracketing his mouth. This pissed him off. He risked his life to keep people safe, and whoever this corporate thief was, they were risking lives.

“After careful surveillance, we tracked the leak to this woman.” He pulled out his phone and tapped. On the interactive screen behind him, an image appeared of a short woman in a pantsuit, with a dark, bob hairstyle, entering a building with the name Dynathon on the glass.

Dynathon was a huge aerospace and defense company that did a lot of work for the military.

But that wasn’t what caught Jet’s attention. “Wait! You hacked my system.”

Shade shot her a smile.

Killian held up a hand, forestalling further argument. “Who is she?”

“Her name is Sara Mardis. She’s a lead scientist on Dynathon’s drone projects.”

“She’s selling out her own project!” Jet was incensed.

“She has debts, and a sick mother. She’s recently divorced. And it was ugly. Whoever the buyer is, he went for the weakest link.”

Killian nodded. “He probably targeted her for months and worked her hard.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Jet said. “This is selling out your country. Treason. It will cost innocent lives.”

“We need to stop her passing on the tech, and find out who the buyer is.” Shade’s gaze fell on Jet.

She felt like he was looking inside her, stripping all of her defenses. She

fought the urge to fidget.

“That’s where Hex comes in,” he said.

She cocked a brow. “Oh?”

“Sara Mardis is currently locked up in a cell. And she’s talking. She’s scheduled to attend the Global Tech Summit conference in Paris.”

Jet stifled a gasp. She’d always wanted to go. “The conference is this week.”

He nodded. “She’s planning to hand a data chip containing all the drone schematics, with details on the swarming tech, to the buyer at the conference.”

Jet frowned. “Okay. Did she say who the buyer is?”

Shade shook his head. “All communication was done via email and messages. No names. No voices. She has no idea who the buyer is.”

Jet shook her head. “She must know it’s an enemy or criminal.”

Shade shrugged. “At this point, she was only thinking about the money.” He slid his hands into his pockets. “I need you to go undercover as Sara Mardis and make the handoff.”

Jet’s eyes popped wide. She heard Killian make an unhappy sound and turned her head. Her boss was frowning.

Shade held up a hand. “Hear me out. Hex and Mardis are the same height with similar looks. Mardis is a few pounds heavier, but close enough. She’s an introverted workaholic, so she has no social media accounts. There aren’t a lot of images of her out there. With the right clothes, Hex could pass for her. I also need someone who understands the technology, if she’s asked about it.”

Devyn nodded thoughtfully, studying Sara Mardis’ picture on the screen. “This could work.”

“I can’t hand that tech over,” Jet said. “What if the buyer gets away with it? I’d never forgive myself.”

“Whoever they are, they aren’t stupid. We can’t risk using doctored data.” Shade didn’t look happy about it. “We need to identify the buyer, then arrest him, and secure the data chip.”

Jet bit her lip. Could she do this? How could she not? She needed to stop this technology from falling into the wrong hands, and whoever this buyer was, he wouldn’t stop. If Mardis didn’t meet him, he’d find another poor idiot to blackmail.

The buyer had to be stopped.

“Hex isn’t a field agent,” Killian said. “This is too dangerous.”

Shade nodded. “I’m not going to let anything happen to her, because I’ll be with her.”

Jet straightened. *Say what?*

His gaze locked on her. “I’ll be undercover as her colleague.” His lips quirked. “I won’t let her out of my sight for a single second.”

The insides of her belly started dancing wildly. *Oh, hell.*

THE NEXT MORNING, Cain wandered into the Sentinel Security office, his nose following the sweet scent of coffee.

He loved the stuff, in any and all variations. He loved the thick, Turkish coffee from street vendors in Istanbul, to watery, gas-station coffee on the road in the US. He made his way toward the small kitchenette.

Killian had put him up in a guest apartment in the Sentinel Security warehouse. He couldn’t fault the digs. The warehouse had been thoroughly renovated. He liked that Killian had kept the old touches—the worn bricks, the concrete floor, hell, there were even old railway tracks in one of the courtyards downstairs. But it had modern elements, too. He glanced at the lush green wall that added a pop of color.

He paused in the arched, brick doorway into Hex’s lair.

She was in there, her back to him and her feet up on the desk. She wore fitted, dark-blue pants, and an olive-green T-shirt. She was drinking from a huge mug of coffee. The graphic on the mug read, *Computer Whisperer*.

He let himself look. Even though he knew he should resist the temptation.

He drank her in. The glossy dark hair, the bright-pink tips, the slender slope of her shoulders. He heard her mutter to herself. Even that was cute.

Damn. He dragged in a breath. He had to get this under control.

He was about to drag her into a dangerous mission. Yes, he’d be there to keep her safe, but things went wrong. They *always* went wrong on missions. He knew that, he’d seen it happen hundreds of times.

His hands clenched. *No.* No one would be touching Jet, let alone hurting her.

She clearly sensed him, and spun her chair around. “Morning, Bond.”

Her expression was a little cool. “Morning. Going to share the coffee?”

She eyed him over the rim of her mug. “No.” She took a large sip. “Get your own.”

He wandered closer. He could smell her. The crisp scent of lemons. He’d never considered lemons sexy before.

“You prepping for the mission?” On her computer screen, he saw information on both Sara Mardis, and the Swarm Drone project.

“Yes. I have to admit Mardis is quite the genius. Her work is incredible. She studied at MIT and Harvard.” Jet’s nose scrunched. “Such a shame she’s a treasonous sellout.”

“Everyone has their breaking point.”

She frowned. “We shouldn’t. You should never compromise your values.”

He shrugged. “Values don’t pay bills, feed kids, get treatment for a sick relative, or save lives.”

“I know that, but without them, you’re nothing.” She eyed him. “I know you change your persona at the drop of a hat, but I also know your values are solid. You protect your country, no matter what.”

Cain stiffened. No one had ever said anything like that to him before. Usually, people only saw what he wanted them to see.

He cleared his throat. “So, unfortunately, these have to go.” He flicked the pink ends of her hair.

She pulled a face. “My mom won’t be happy.”

He raised a brow.

“My mom’s a hairdresser. She does my hair.” Jet smiled. “She’s done it since I was a kid. Thankfully, she’s off on a cruise with friends, so she won’t see me colorless.”

“It’s just the two of you?” he asked the question, but he already knew. He’d looked up everything he could on Jet Adler. Raised by a single mom, aced all her classes at school, and had gone to college early.

“Yep. My father wasn’t in the picture.” She tapped her fingers on the table. “I’ll make an appointment to sort out my hair. I guess Mom can plan something new for my hair once she’s back from drinking too many margaritas by the pool, and this mission is over.”

She nibbled her lip, and he knew she was worried.

“It’s going to be fine,” he said. “I’m going to be with you every step of the way.”

She rolled her bi-colored eyes. “That doesn’t reassure me, Bond.”

He leaned in behind her and stroked her pink hair. He'd be sorry to see it go. He lowered his voice. "I won't let you get hurt, Jet. If anyone tries, I'll kill them."

She stilled.

"That's right." His lips brushed her ear. "Don't ever forget that I'm the most dangerous thing in the room."

She turned her head and met his gaze, their lips an inch apart.

Then he reached past her and stole her coffee mug. As he straightened and sipped, she made a squawking sound.

"Asshole!"

Footsteps. Cain straightened, just as Killian entered the room. The head of Sentinel Security was in dark suit pants, and a white dress shirt. Nick "Wolf" Garrick strode in behind him.

"Morning," Cain said.

"Shade, when did you arrive?" The bearded Nick stepped forward to shake hands.

"Last night. How's your lovely fiancé?"

The former Navy SEAL smiled. "Beautiful. Off being smart and making millions."

Lainie was the CEO of a graphic design company, and Nick was clearly proud and besotted.

Killian met Cain's gaze. "Got a minute? My office."

He nodded, setting Jet's mug back on the desk. She quickly snatched it away and glared at him. He shot one more glance at her, saw her poke out her tongue—he fought hard not to laugh—then followed Killian.

Killian's office was sleek and spacious. One brick wall contrasted with another of smooth concrete. His desk was a dark wood, and behind it was a large canvas of an abstract painting done in shades of blue, gray, and gold. After a moment, Cain realized it was actually mountains.

Killian leaned back against his desk, and crossed his ankles. "I'm not happy about Hex going on this mission."

"You'll send the CIA a nice, fat bill for her services."

"It's not about the money," Killian growled.

Cain held up his hands. "I know."

"She's like a sister to me. I don't want her hurt."

"I know. I told you that I'd protect her from any danger."

"It's not the danger that I'm worried about."

Cain jerked his head up, and met his friend's gaze.

Killian gave him a long look, reminding Cain why the man had once been one of the best spies in the CIA.

"You take care with her, Cain. She's tough, and has a smart mouth, but she's soft under the shell."

"I know."

Then Killian's lips curved. "Maybe she's just what you need."

Cain half laughed. "I'm a lifer, Hawke. I'm in too deep. My boots are stuck firmly in the muck." And he knew that filth would never wash off.

"You can get free if you want to," Killian said quietly. "For the right reason. I'm an example of that."

Cain shook his head and started toward the door. "Not for me."

"We'll see. Oh, and Cain—" Killian's voice dropped to Arctic temperatures "—if she gets hurt in any way, I'm coming for you."

CHAPTER FOUR

Tugging on the hem of her jacket, Jet stared at herself in the mirror.

She didn't look totally different, but she also did. She was polished, a little more conservative, a touch boring.

She wasn't Hex anymore. Now she was Sara Mardis.

She wore a skirt suit in navy blue, with a pale-blue shirt underneath. Her hair had been cut slightly shorter than her norm into a sleek bob, and all her pink was gone. *Boo*. She touched the ends. Her makeup was nice, but sensible.

"Here." Hadley held out some pumps. "Not too high, not too low."

Jet took them and slipped them on.

Hadley crossed her arms. "Transformation complete."

Jet wrinkled her nose. "It's a bit boring."

"You're undercover. That's the point."

Jet turned sideways. "Do I look like a genius-drone-scientist-turned-corporate-espionage-traitor-bad-guy?"

Hadley pulled a face, and she still looked beautiful. She had an effortless elegance that Jet had always envied.

"The bad guys don't always look bad," Hadley said.

As a former MI6 agent, Hadley would know.

Jet fluffed her hair. "Well, I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

Her friend caught her gaze in the mirror. "For the mission where you'll be spending twenty-four hours a day with a certain smoking-hot spy?"

Jet lifted her chin. "This is *work*."

"*Mmm*. Addie told me she saw you and Shade kissing on the jet in Alaska."

Jet's mouth dropped open. "That tattletale. And he kissed me. He grabbed me, and—"

"Oh, so you didn't kiss him back? There wasn't any tongue involved?" Hadley cocked a brow.

Suddenly Jet felt like she was being interrogated. "I plead the fifth."

Hadley snorted.

"And maybe we kissed again last night."

Hadley's eyes widened.

Jet held up a hand. "Look, he's hot."

"He sure is."

Now Jet frowned. "Excuse me, don't you have your own hot guy?"

"I do, but I also have 20:20 vision."

"Cain's also dangerous. A loner. He's married to his dangerous job, and he uses people to get that job done." Jet shook her head. "He's a bad bet. I want more than that."

Hadley touched her shoulder. "You like him."

She sighed. "I feel...something. Most of the time it's itchy annoyance. But I mean, who wouldn't react to the guy. But I'm a tech whiz who works in New York, and he's a deep-cover spy, addicted to the rush. That's got *bad idea* written all over it." She looked at her friend. "I want to be number one to someone. I want to be the most important thing in their life. The first thing they think of when they wake up, and the last thing they think of when they go to sleep. I want what you have with Bennett. What Devyn and Killian have. Nick and Lainie, and Matteo and Gabbi. And now Bram and Addie."

"It's been hard watching everyone fall in love," Hadley said quietly.

Jet shook her head. "No, it hasn't. I'm happy for all of you. Ridiculously happy. All it's done is solidify what I want. I'm not accepting less. My mom always said to hold out for a man who loved all of me, who thinks my quirks are cute."

Her mom had fallen madly in love with the man who'd fathered Jet. She'd been sure he was her soulmate...until he'd left before Jet had even been born.

Her mom had never gone into detail, but even as a little girl, she knew her mom's heart and trust had been broken.

"This is also about the douchebag." Hadley wrinkled her nose like she'd smelled something bad.

"Brandon?" Jet sniffed. "A little. I let all the red flags slide with him,

because I wanted to be with someone. He was a lesson, albeit a sucky one.”

“All men *aren't* like Brandon the douche,” Hadley said.

“I know that.”

“But Hex, real love? It isn't all perfection and grand gestures, either. Sometimes it's messy, and it's making mistakes and apologizing, and its compromise, and the little things.”

“I've never been in love, Hadley. Guess I'll have to learn all of that myself, if it ever happens.”

Hadley reached out and hugged her. “It'll happen. Now, enough talk because you have a plane to catch to Paris.” Hadley let out a gusty sigh. “I love Paris.”

Jet grabbed her laptop bag, and the handle of the suitcase full of clothes suitable for Sara Mardis.

Killian appeared in the doorway. “Do you have the chip?”

She nodded and touched the top pocket of her shirt. The data chip, loaded with top-secret drone tech, was tucked safely inside. “It's hidden inside a small protective case that has my fake business cards in it. It's waterproof and shockproof, so it'll be safe.”

“Ready?” His dark eyes bored into her.

She lifted her chin. “Yes.”

“There's a car downstairs waiting for you. Shade said he'd meet you at JFK.”

“Got it.” This was it. Her first official mission in the field.

Killian gripped her shoulders. “Be careful.”

She grinned. “That's usually my line when you guys head out on a mission and leave me behind. But don't worry, I will.”

“We're on standby if you need us.” Devyn lounged in the doorway.

“Thanks. Hopefully it all goes off without a hitch.”

“Mardis is detained in CIA custody,” Killian said. “No one knows. As far as the world will be concerned, you are Sara Mardis.”

“Good.” Jet set her shoulders back. “All right. *Au revoir.*”

It was a boring drive to the airport. Jet fiddled with her phone, hoping nothing went wrong with her job while she was gone. She'd pulled in one of the Sentinel Security cybersecurity team to run her area. If Austin screwed up, she'd skin him.

Soon, she reached the airport, and it wasn't long before she was checked in, and holding her business-class boarding pass to Paris. Now, she just had

to find a certain spy acting as her Dynathon colleague.

She reached the business lounge and scanned around. Where the hell was he? She set her laptop bag down, and her gaze moved across mostly businesspeople sitting in armchairs, sipping coffee, or talking on cell phones. There was one family, with two boys glued to tablets. A man rose from an armchair not far away, and her gaze swept back toward him.

And her hormones lit up like the Fourth of July.

She watched as Cain slowly walked toward her, a lazy smile crossing his face.

He was in suit pants and a white shirt, and a fitted, gray vest, with his sleeves rolled up. God, his forearms. She let her gaze trace the muscles. His suit jacket was in one hand. His hair was slicked back, and he was wearing glasses. *Glasses*. No fair. Why did a sexy pair of wire rims make men hotter?

She tried to wrestle her hormones into submission, but they'd gone wild.

"Hi, Sara," Cain said.

No, not Cain or Shade. Shit, what was his cover name again? Her mind went blank.

He leaned in. "Jake."

"Jake, right. Hi."

His gaze shifted to the ends of her hair. "I miss the pink, pixie."

She fought back a shiver. It was going to be a long mission.

THE RIDICULOUS SPY MOVIE ENDED, and Cain shook his head with a small, wry grin. It had been a fun romp, but not very accurate. To be honest, most of his job wasn't flashy, or exciting. It was downright boring. And a lot more dangerous.

He glanced over at the seat beside him. But not all of this particular mission was boring.

Jet was stretched out. The large, business-class seat made her seem even smaller. She had her headphones on. Her own. She'd sniffed in disdain at the airline ones. She'd just finished watching some recent rom com. Before that, she'd spent time going over all their intel on Dynathon.

Her clothes and the new hair made her look like a smart scientist, but they didn't suit her. Jet was made for color, and sassy comments, and fun. She was

a breath of fucking fresh air.

She met his gaze, then poked her tongue out at him. He barely stifled a laugh.

They'd be landing in Paris soon. His gut tightened. Then the real work began.

"Sir, can I get you anything?"

He looked up at the flight attendant—a young brunette with a very white smile. She touched his arm.

"Anything at all?"

"I'm fine. Thank you." When he looked back at Jet, she was rolling her eyes.

"*Anything at all,*" Jet whispered in a breathy voice. "She should have just invited you back to the bathroom for a quickie."

He snorted.

"So." She leaned closer and lowered her voice. "I was wondering something."

He arched a brow.

"What's your last name?"

He grinned. "Couldn't find it out in any of your searches?"

Her lips tipped down. "I could find it. If I really wanted to."

He picked up the in-flight magazine and flipped it open. "No, you couldn't."

As he'd guessed, her eyes sparked with challenge. "Yes, I could."

He winked at her, then slid the magazine away, and put on his headphones. Time for another bad spy movie.

A FEW HOURS LATER, they landed at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. Soon, they were off the plane and in line, heading through immigration. Jet was a little twitchy. Cain could remember the first time he'd entered the country on a fake passport. He'd been twitchy, too. Now, he didn't even blink an eye.

But they didn't raise any red flags, and before they knew it, they were waiting for their luggage.

"We're staying at the Le Grand Hotel," he told her.

“I know. I looked it up.” Her face lit up. “Fancy.”

He didn’t tell her that he’d picked the hotel in the heart of the city with stellar views just for her.

“We have a two-bed suite.” His plan was for them to get in, and sweep the room for bugs. The local CIA team would leave weapons and gear for him. He was hoping he wouldn’t need it. “Tomorrow is day one of the conference.”

She nodded. “I’m excited.”

He could see she actually was excited. He figured she’d enjoy seeing all the tech. He wondered how the buyer would make their approach.

Who were they? A foreign government? A criminal syndicate?

Time would tell.

They grabbed their suitcases and wheeled towards the exit.

“We’ll get a taxi to the hotel,” he said.

She nodded. It was busy outside the terminal. The weather was beautiful, with a clear, blue sky stretching overhead. Summer in Paris could be lovely. He’d enjoy watching Jet soak it all up when she could.

They headed toward the taxi line. A crowd of young men moved close, all carrying bags and talking loudly. One bumped Jet, knocking her into Cain.

“Back off,” Cain growled in French.

The young man lifted his hands. “*Je suis désolé.*”

“Wait here.” Cain moved her out of the way. A mass of people were getting in and out of taxis. One taxi driver had rolled down his window to holler at someone. One taxi stood there with the back door open, but the passenger hadn’t gotten out yet. Cain raised a hand, waving at the next empty vehicle.

Suddenly, Jet yelled his name. “Cain!”

Her voice suddenly cut off, and he whirled—

Just in time to see her laptop bag slide off her shoulder and hit the ground as someone in the back of a black taxi yanked her inside.

She tried to grip the edge of the door, but her attacker was stronger and pulled hard. She disappeared from view as the taxi pulled away, the back door still open.

Fuck.

Adrenaline rushed into Cain’s system. He sprinted after the vehicle.

Jet. Fuck.

The door was still open, and he could see her struggling with someone in

the backseat.

That was his pixie. She was a fighter.

The taxi's tires screeched as it dodged around another car. He pumped his arms and legs, sprinting onto the road. The taxi picked up speed.

The taxi door slammed closed. Pushing with all he had, Cain got close. His fingers brushed the trunk.

For a second, he met Jet's gaze through the back window. Her lips moved.

Cain.

Then the driver put their foot down and the car sped away.

Cain couldn't keep up. He slowed to a stop, his lungs heaving.

He'd lost her.

"Fuck. Fucking fuck!" They'd barely landed, and she'd already been snatched.

A lethal calm settled over him.

No one got to hurt her.

And *no one* took her from him.

He turned and strode back toward a line of cars dropping passengers at the terminal.

He saw one man get out of the driver's seat, helping a woman who was obviously his wife with a suitcase. He quickly scanned around, dropping his head. He'd studied the airport security cameras and knew he was in a blind spot.

Cain pushed open the driver's door and slid inside the car.

A man started yelling in French.

"Sorry, buddy." Cain stepped on the accelerator and sped away.

He pulled out his phone and connected to the hands-free. He tore out of the airport, tires screeching, and headed toward the city center. He tapped his phone.

"What?" a deep voice answered.

"It's Shade. My Sentinel Security partner was abducted at the airport."

His local CIA contact cursed.

"Black Renault sedan. License plate—" he rattled it off. "I want to know who the fuck took her, and I need her location."

"On it."

"And organize someone at the airport to retrieve our suitcases and laptop bags."

“I’ll take care of it.” The line went dead.

As Cain sped toward the hotel, worry crept in like a shadow swallowing the sun.

Who the hell had taken her? Was she okay? A panic like he’d never felt before swirled in his gut, burning like acid.

Some assholes had Jet.

“You’d better be okay, Jet.” If not, he’d raze Paris to the ground in revenge. “I’m coming, pixie.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Well, this was *not* how she'd imagined seeing the Eiffel Tower for the first time. Kidnapped and held prisoner in the back of a car.

Jet glanced at the famous structure out of the car window, but inside she was furious.

Her two captors, the driver, and the guy in the backseat with her, wore balaclavas and hadn't said a thing.

Were they working for the buyer?

But she'd planned to meet the buyer at the conference. Why take a risk like this?

The chip resting in her pocket felt extra heavy. If these guys found it...

Shit, Cain would be losing his mind. She dragged in a deep breath. He'd find her, she was sure of it, but she had no idea where she was headed or to whom.

She'd prefer to exit this ride. Stat.

"Who are you guys?" She made sure she put a little tremble in her voice. "Why are you doing this?"

No response. Damn, they were well-trained thugs.

She glanced outside at the enchanting apartment buildings and their balconies with black metal railings. Oh, it was so easy to imagine drinking a coffee on one of those little balconies, gazing over Paris.

She shook her head. She couldn't get distracted. She needed a plan.

She needed to get away, escape, and then get back to Cain.

Easy. She rolled her eyes. *Think, Hex. You have a good brain. Use it.*

The car crossed through a busy intersection, then turned. They passed over a bridge crossing the Seine. *Ooh.* For a second, she was caught by the

view. She saw a long tourist boat heading down the river.

The car slowed. She looked ahead and saw the traffic was backed up. Several people on mopeds whizzed past them, weaving through the cars.

Hmm. Their car stopped. She looked outside the window at the lovely carved stone railings of the bridge. There was a small car beside them, a young driver bopping his head to the beat of whatever he was listening to.

Screw it. She wasn't staying here. *Please let the door be unlocked.* As quickly as she could, she shoved open the door and tumbled out.

She heard a shout behind her.

Jet ignored them and leaped up. She sprinted down the bridge, between two rows of stopped cars.

There were more shouts and she glanced back. The men were out of the car and giving chase. Wearing their black balaclavas, they stood out, and she saw people pointing at them.

She picked up speed, cursing the stupid pumps on her feet.

Suddenly, there was the crack of a gunshot.

Shit. She ducked. When she glanced back, she saw that one of her abductors had a handgun. *Shit. Shit.*

She darted to the other side of one of the cars, running hunched over. There were more gunshots and she heard drivers yelling and honking their horns.

These idiots were going to kill someone.

She sprinted onto the sidewalk, and that's when she saw a woman pushing a pram with a cute chubby baby inside it. There was a young toddler beside her, a boy, babbling to her about something. A little family out for a sunny stroll. The boy turned to point at the boats on the river.

There was another gunshot. It hit the railing close by, sending rock chips flying.

The woman screamed, clutching the little boy to her.

Jet looked back over her shoulder. Her captors were rushing toward her.

God, she couldn't handle it if someone, especially a child, got hurt because they were after her. She looked at the boy. He clung to the woman, and the baby started wailing.

She dragged in a breath, and looked down at the river.

Oh, hell.

She scrambled onto the railing, then without letting herself think, she jumped.

It wasn't a long drop. A second later, she hit the water and it closed over her head.

Jet stayed under the water, and kicked, swimming under the arched bridge. When she surfaced, a boat was coming right at her.

Crap.

She swam to the side, close to the arch of the bridge, and pressed against the stone.

The boat glided by. She patted her pocket and felt the slight weight of the case holding the chip.

Then she heard shouts from above on the bridge. Adrenaline rocketed through her system.

Shit, she couldn't stay here. The thugs would come looking for her.

Another long tourist boat was heading her way. She saw people packed onto the top of it, pointing at the various sites. Thankfully, no one was looking down at the water.

As the boat slowly passed by, she spotted a rope dangling off the side of it. It was old and covered in green slime.

She kicked hard and grabbed the rope, then she held on and floated along, ducking her head low in the water.

As the boat towed her along, she didn't glance back at the bridge, and tried to keep only her nose and eyes above the surface.

She sucked in a quick breath, and accidentally swallowed some water. *Ew.* She was pretty sure she didn't want to know what she'd just ingested.

As she traveled down the river, she took the time to slow her heartbeat and take in some deep breaths. At the next bridge, she let go of the boat, and splashed her way toward the edge of the river. There was a stone pathway running along the side of the Seine, and she hauled herself up.

She was sopping wet, and she'd lost her shoes during her mad escape. A man on a bicycle rode past, giving her a strange look.

Yeah, yeah, I'm wet, barefoot, and I took a swim in the Seine. I know.

She rose. She couldn't stay here. If her abductors came searching, they'd be asking about a wet woman who'd been in the river. She stood out like bad spaghetti code.

Jet squeezed out what water she could from her clothes and hair, and set off. She needed to put some distance between her and the river.

Then she needed to find the Le Grand Hotel and find Cain.

FUCK.

Cain paced the hotel suite at the Le Grand Hotel. He didn't pay attention to the luxurious Art Deco furnishings, or the view of the Eiffel Tower in the distance.

Jet. He had to find her. He ran his hands through his hair for the hundredth time. It was loose around his shoulders.

His chest was tight. He wasn't used to feeling panic. His ability to stay calm in the worst situations was a thing of legend with his CIA colleagues.

He'd stopped feeling panic as a very young kid. Once he'd realized it never did any good. He'd vowed to never feel that way again.

Was she hurt? The idea of even the smallest scratch on her had rage welling up inside him.

He'd called Killian, who'd chewed him out. To say Killian was pissed was like calling a nuclear inferno a small blaze. He and Devyn were on their way to Paris.

If Jet was hurt, Killian wouldn't have to kill Cain, he'd do it himself.

The laptop on the table chimed and he whirled. He saw a video call from the agents at the local office. He tapped and he saw the three of them—two men and a woman—sitting around a conference table.

He leaned over. "What have you got?"

"The car that was used to snatch her was stolen," the head agent, David Henke, said. "We have no way to track it. We're searching CCTV for the plate to see where it is in Paris."

Cain growled. "Not good enough. I need a location *now*." He straightened and kicked one of the chairs.

"We're working on it, Shade. It'll take time."

"She might not have time."

"You're worked up over this mission." Henke frowned, then pulled his glasses off and cleaned them with a handkerchief. "It's not like you."

It wasn't the mission he was worked up about. It was Jet.

He didn't know Henke well enough. He wasn't planning to confide in him. "She has the data chip on her. Find where they took her."

He ended the call. There was a knock at the door, and he frowned. Reaching back, he drew out his Glock 19. He hadn't ordered room service, and no one knew he was there.

He crossed the plush carpet and looked through the peephole. His heart slapped against his ribs, and he yanked the door open. Jet stood there in bare feet, clothes bedraggled, and her damp hair sticking to her head.

She raised a hand. "Hi."

He slapped the gun on the lacquered side table and yanked her inside. He slammed the door closed, then pulled her to him.

"Fucking hell." He pressed his face to her hair and held on tight.

She hugged him back, her hands clenching on his shirt. "I'm okay. Took a bit to sneak into the hotel. This place is *amazing*. I was sure if security spotted me, they'd throw me out. Then I had to hack the elevator..."

"Fucking *hell*," he said again. He tipped her face up and then took her mouth with his.

She made a sound, then opened for him.

He poured all his worry into the kiss. She was alive. He stroked her tongue with his, absorbing her taste and loving her moan.

When he pulled back, he realized his chest was heaving and his hands weren't steady. He also realized she was shivering.

Damn, she was saturated. He needed to get her warm and dry. He took her hand and towed her across the suite.

"Tell me what happened." They passed through a bedroom with a large, king-size bed, a mirrored wall behind it, and a view of the Eiffel Tower, and into a marble bathroom.

"Well, these two guys grabbed me. They didn't say a single word and they were wearing balaclavas. I've no idea who they were working for. Sorry."

Cain bypassed the freestanding tub and turned on the shower in the giant stall. "I don't care about that." Although he would find out who they were and make them regret it. "Then what happened?" He stripped off her jacket.

She was looking around the bathroom. "Wow, this is a hell of a bathroom."

"Jet."

"Um. We were stopped on a bridge over the Seine. There was bad traffic. I jumped out and ran."

Cain stilled. His little firecracker had run from the bad guys. *God*. Then he blinked. Her wet shirt was transparent, and her lacy bra and hard nipples were showing through it. *Shit*.

His hands clenched on her, and he took a deep breath.

“Then they started shooting,” she continued.

He stiffened. The assholes were dead men walking.

“There were people around. Kids. I couldn’t let them shoot innocent people. So I jumped.”

He felt a muscle twitch under his eye. “Jumped?”

She nodded. “Off the bridge into the river.”

Cain released a slow breath.

“I got a little more up close and personal with the Seine than I’d planned. I even swallowed some water. Ugh.” She cocked her head as she looked at him. “Are you all right?”

“No.” His hands clenched into fists, released, clenched again.

Jet pressed her hands to his chest. “I’m fine, Cain.”

“But it’s just pure luck you didn’t get hurt, or worse.” His voice was harsh. “They could have tortured you, hurt you... It’s my fault I let them take you.”

She rolled her eyes. “Yes, you’re in charge of the entire world. I’m *okay*, Bond.”

“Get in the shower.” He pushed her inside the stall, clothes and all.

“Oh, this hot water feels so good.” As steam billowed, he watched her strip her clothes off. They hit the tiles with a wet slap. He caught glimpses of her tiny, perfectly formed body. Toned arms, nipped-in waist, and although she was small, she definitely had curves.

He turned away, his blood humming. “I’ll order you some food.”

“Thanks, I’m starving.”

She’s fine. She’s fine.

Cain repeated the mantra to himself as he ordered room service. *She’s fine. She’s fine.*

He’d still have the CIA team find the assholes. Then he’d dismantle them, limb by limb. He made himself focus on his phone as he messaged Killian to let him know that she was all right.

When Jet came out of the bathroom, she was dwarfed by a huge, white robe, and he mostly had his shit together.

She held up a small tube. “I have some cuts on my feet. I need to put some antiseptic cream on them.” Her nose wrinkled. “Catching some random infection from wandering the streets barefoot is not on my Parisian To-Do list.”

“I’ll do it.” He snatched the tube.

“Cain—”

“Sit.” He jerked his head at the large, L-shaped, gray couch. He shoved some of the black throw pillows aside.

“Fine.” She huffed out a breath and sat. “You need to chill. It all worked out, and the chip is fine, too.”

“I don’t give a fuck about the chip.” He sat beside her, then lifted her feet into his lap. That dislodged her robe, showing a lot of bare leg, and smooth skin.

Shit. He couldn’t stop staring. His cock gave up the fight and hardened. Then he saw the scratches on her small feet.

“Damn, Jet. I’ll call a doctor.”

She made a sound, then she shifted and pressed a hand to his cheek. “Take a deep breath.”

He did as she ordered, air filling his tight lungs.

She smiled. “I’m fine. I don’t need a doctor for scratches, and whatever mayhem you’re planning, save it for the mission. Now, cream.” She wiggled her toes.

Her smile eased something inside him. Carefully, he smoothed the cream onto the scratches. He’d never really found feet sexy before, but hers were. He stroked her arches, and he heard her suck in a breath.

Their gazes met. He watched her white teeth sink into her bottom lip. He kept stroking her foot. Her toenails were painted hot pink.

“Does Sara Mardis wear pink polish?” he asked.

“I’m guessing no, but I had to get a splash of color in somewhere.”

He’d almost lost her.

The thought of no Jet—no sass, no smart-ass messages, no smile—made his gut harden. It was something he couldn’t contemplate.

The knock at the door made them both jolt.

“That’ll be room service.” His voice was husky.

“Good, I’m hungry.” Her voice was husky as well.

“Me, too.” And it had nothing to do with food. He squeezed her foot and rose, his thoughts churning, and his heart—which he’d thought cold and shriveled—was beating hard.

He was so fucked, but he couldn’t seem to bring himself to care.

CHAPTER SIX

The next morning, Jet finished donning her next Sara outfit.

Thankfully, Cain had retrieved their suitcases from the airport. Today, she was wearing slim-fitting pants in black with a button-down shirt in emerald green, with a fitted, black jacket. She finished straightening her hair. She'd slept pretty well. The huge bed in the luxuriously decorated bedroom had felt like a fluffy cloud. Why did beds and pillows in expensive hotels always feel so good? She'd tried to find the same down pillows for home, but they were never the same. It had to be a trade secret.

The best thing about her room was that she could see the Eiffel Tower in the distance. It was much, *much* better than from the back of your abductors' car.

The only thing that had kept her awake for a while last night was knowing that Cain was one room away, lying in his bed. Did he sleep naked?

God. She bobbed the straightener. *No naked Cain fantasies, Hex.* She didn't need to burn her fingers.

She finished her hair and double-checked her makeup. She patted the front pocket of her shirt. The data chip was resting in there in its special case. It was none the worse for wear for having had a dip in the Seine.

Today, she and Cain would wander the Global Tech Summit at the Paris Convention Center. And the buyer should make contact.

Sara Mardis didn't have any details on who the buyer was, or when they would make the approach. All Jet knew was that the buyer would approach her at the conference. It was all very vague.

Jet strode out of her bedroom. She found Cain standing beside a laptop, tapping at the keyboard, frowning at the screen. *God,* the man was built. He

looked so good in his tailored pants and fitted, pale-gray shirt. And those damn glasses. He had the hot, muscled, geek look going on.

He glanced her way.

No, not a geek. No geek would radiate this much intensity and danger.

“How many ways do you know to kill someone?” she blurted out.

His brows rose. “I’ve never counted them.” His gaze wandered down her body and back up. “How are you feeling?”

“Good.”

“Your feet?”

“Are fine, Cain. I promise.” He’d been really worked up about her abduction. Did that mean he cared?

Those were dangerous thoughts.

To keep busy, Jet reached out and grabbed her handbag. “We should get going to the conference.”

He nodded. “Killian checked in. He and Devyn arrive at lunch time. He was...displeased I let you get kidnapped.”

“I’m *fine*.” Men. They always believed they were responsible for everything. And in control of everything. She huffed out a mildly exasperated breath. “Let’s go. And I need coffee and breakfast.”

IT WAS a twenty-minute drive to the Paris Convention Centre in Porte de Versailles. Once Cain had parked, they walked up to the large, glass façade. There was a large crowd milling about inside, but the line was moving quickly.

They both slipped their lanyards with their tickets over their heads. They grabbed coffees and some delicious swirly pastry from a café in the entry, then moved into the main exhibition center. The large, cavernous space was buzzing with voices and filled with various vendor stands and tables.

“So, we just wander around?” Jet sipped her coffee.

“Yes.”

“That’s not much of a plan.”

“I’ve worked with less. Just make yourself available for the buyer to make their approach.”

She nodded and scanned the large space. Wow. She didn’t know where to

look first. Large, brightly lit screens showcasing animations of new technologies and devices caught her eye.

They headed down the first row, and it wasn't long before Jet forgot that she was even on a mission. There was so much amazing stuff to see.

"Ooh. New trends in cybersecurity." She hurried over, picking up a pamphlet to read the information. "This is amazing. This is a detailed look at integrating AI into cybersecurity."

Cain made a sound. She looked up. He was smiling, his eyes highly amused behind his glasses.

"Geek," he said.

She fought the urge to poke her tongue out at him. Ignoring him, she moved onto the next stand.

Soon, they were moving into the next aisle. This one was dominated by drones and drone technology. There were lots of vendors—established ones, as well as new startups.

She caught Cain surreptitiously scanning the crowd. He was good. He had this semi-interested look on his face; just a guy at a conference.

No one would guess he was a hotshot, undercover spy.

Jet's belly twinged. It was getting harder and harder to fight this attraction.

Cain shifted, and pressed up against her back. "See anything interesting?"

"Yes." She lowered her voice to a near whisper. "No sign of our friend, though."

"Not yet," he murmured.

They moved on. Jet was becoming overwhelmed by all of the cool tech, and made a mental note of the things she wanted to follow up on. She was getting some ideas of things she wanted to incorporate at Sentinel Security.

"You're interested in computers?"

The British accent made her look up. There was a cute guy behind the stand, smiling at her.

"Yes," she replied. "Computers are a big part of my job."

He smiled. "Awesome. Mine, too. Anything I can explain to you?"

"Well—"

A large hand landed on her shoulder. Across from her, her new friend paled.

"Let's keep moving, Sara," Cain said.

She glanced up to see him sending the guy at the stand an unfriendly

glare.

“Sure.” She smiled at the man as Cain tugged her away. “Thanks.”

“What was that?” she whispered.

“Nothing. We just need to keep moving.”

She rolled her eyes.

After another hour, they returned to the café for drinks and a snack.

Come on, evil bad guy buyer. She looked around. *Make a move.* She nibbled on a pastry. God, it was delicious. Even conference cafés in Paris had good food and coffee. She took another bite and swallowed.

“Maybe we should split up for a bit?” she suggested.

Cain’s jaw tightened. “No.”

“Jake.”

His hand clenched on his coffee cup.

“It’s a good idea.” The buyer wanted her. Maybe Cain hovering nearby was putting him off.

He sighed. “You’ll stay in visual range.”

“Sure.”

“If I see something concerning, I’ll close in.”

“All right.”

“If you see something—”

She gripped his arm. “Yes, Bond. Now, let’s do this.”

CAIN WALKED SLOWLY, pretending to read information on—he squinted—advanced robotics. Really, he was looking past the stand to Jet, who had paused two stands away.

She was smiling, looking at something on a flashing screen. Her face lit up. She was actually enjoying this conference.

He hated being this far away from her.

Fuck. How could she affect him this much? She was under his skin. In his damn blood.

He didn’t let anyone get to him. Ever.

There’s only ever the mission objective, boy. He heard the grizzled voice in his head. *Never let people matter too much. You can’t trust them. They’ll betray you, or move on.*

Cain had already learned that lesson when he was young. Max hadn't had to teach him that.

He'd been the son of drug addicts, born in Washington D.C. He'd ended up in foster care for a bit, and then finally landed with a decent family. The father had played catch with him, the mom had cooked good meals.

Until they'd gotten a newborn they could adopt. Then, they'd dropped him like a live grenade.

He'd bounced around a few other foster homes, then gone his own way. He'd ended up on the streets.

Cain hadn't minded it. He got to look out for himself, make his own choices. For a fourteen-year-old, he'd been pretty street-smart, and had quick reflexes.

Then, he'd picked the wrong pocket. Usually, he'd targeted tourists. That day, he'd picked the pocket of a retired CIA agent.

Max had been as grizzled as hell, with a temperament to match. But he'd seen something in Cain. Taken him in.

For a while, Cain had been sure the old man was a pervert. But the hot meals, a real bed, and piles of books, had been worth the risk. Slowly, Max had gained his trust.

Then, he'd started to train Cain.

Cain had ended up with an education and the skills to become the best deep-cover agent the CIA had. Max had always told him to stay alone. To steer clear of entanglements.

If the old bastard was still alive, he'd be very unhappy with Cain about Jet.

Yeah, well, Cain wasn't sure he had a choice anymore. He wanted her. He couldn't seem to make it stop.

Every minute he spent with her... He loved watching her smile, frown, loved pushing her buttons to get a sharp retort or an eye roll.

Ahead, a man approached her, and Cain had to force himself not to tense up. He picked up a leaflet.

"Can I help you?" A blonde woman approached him, but he waved her off. He kept his gaze on Jet and the man.

Who are you, asshole? Cain noted the man's details. About six feet tall, one hundred and seventy pounds, salt-and-pepper hair. He looked to be around fifty, and wealthy. His suit was tailored—Cain guessed Brioni—and his watch was a Rolex. Definitely a businessman of some description.

Cain lifted his phone like he was texting. He took a shot of the man and quickly sent it to his team. Was this their buyer?

The guy had started a conversation with Jet. She was smiling, and gestured at the high-tech drone on a pedestal beside her. She was relaxed. The guy wasn't worrying her.

Cain edged closer so he could hear them.

"You know a lot about drones." The man had an American accent.

"They're my thing. I use them at work."

"Where do you work?"

"Dynathon."

"I know the company well. I own Brink Aerospace."

"Oh, right. You supply parts for our drones."

Cain knew she was the right person for this mission. She'd researched Dynathon, but he suspected she knew more about drones than anyone.

The man smiled. "Yes. It's refreshing to have a beautiful woman know as much about my work as I do."

Jet laughed.

Cain scowled. His phone dinged and he glanced down. The man's name was Simon Hadlow. All of what he'd said was true. He owned Brink Aerospace, and apparently liked small women, preferably underage ones.

"My name's Simon."

"Sara."

"Would you like to get a coffee, Sara?" Hadlow said. "Talk some more."

The asshole reached out a hand to touch her arm.

"Oh, I—"

"She already has plans." Cain closed in and slid an arm around Jet's waist. He shot Hadlow a cool look.

"Oh, Jake, there you are." Jet leaned into him. "This is Simon."

"Nice to meet you." Cain didn't give a fuck that his tone said otherwise.

The man cleared his throat. "It was nice talking with you, Sara. Enjoy the conference."

The man walked away. Jet waited a few seconds, then she whirled. "You scared him off. He could've been...the guy."

"He's not. He's an asshole with a predilection for small women, preferably ones who are very young and still in high school."

Her nose wrinkled. "Ew."

"Yeah."

“Okay, well, shoo. Off you go again.”

He tapped her nose with a fingertip. “Behave.”

She grinned. “I’m not known for that.”

There was that sass. Cain reluctantly pulled away.

They both moved into a new aisle. *Come on.* He wanted the buyer to make a move. He kept Jet in sight, and saw her start chatting with another young woman.

Cain leaned against the wall.

“You look bored,” a low, throaty voice drawled.

He turned his head. A tall woman in a red, sleeveless dress stood beside him. Her brown hair was done in waves of curls.

“Just taking a breather,” he said.

“I spotted you earlier.” She smiled. “I’m so bored with this summit. I’m here to support my company, but I’m in PR, not tech.” Her gaze ran down his body, then she reached out to touch his chest. “Why don’t we find a way to entertain each other for a bit? Relieve the boredom?”

CHAPTER SEVEN

So, one upside to this mission was that she was really enjoying the conference. Jet had learned a lot, and seen some cool technology, and gotten some good ideas.

But there was still no buyer.

She sighed. Patience. She wasn't good at it. The conference was scheduled to continue for two more days, and there was no guarantee that the buyer would make an approach on the first day, anyway.

There was only an hour left before the conference wrapped up for the day. She turned, searching for Cain.

He'd wasted no time chasing Simon off. She was pretty sure he was jealous.

Where was he? She frowned.

Her gaze swept her surroundings, then she saw him. Her frown deepened and her belly did a weird circle.

He was smiling at a tall, svelte brunette.

For a horrible second, she remembered seeing Brandon with his model. She'd been tall, and a brunette. The woman across the room was like a doppelgänger. Her dress was gorgeous. *She* was gorgeous.

And she was touching Cain. Her perfectly done, polished nails were on his shirt.

A part of Jet wanted to shrivel up.

You're weird. Your eyes are wrong. You're too smart. Too small. Too cute.

Dammit, she wasn't a teenager anymore. She was a smart, capable woman. She was good at her damn job, and she knew who she was.

She marched across the aisle. Cain saw her coming and their gazes collided.

Jet planted her feet. "Sorry to interrupt, but we have business."

The brunette turned, her expression startled. She gave Jet a long look, then smiled.

Ah yes, this woman was secure in her knowledge that she was more attractive.

"Is this your colleague?" the woman asked Cain.

"No. Yes," Jet answered. "We're...complicated."

The woman's clear, blue eyes flicked to Cain, a faint smile on her lips. "I can be uncomplicated."

Jet gasped. The woman was propositioning him right in front of her.

"It appears I like complications in small packages," he said.

A few emotions crossed the woman's face before she smoothed them out. She shrugged. "Let me know if you change your mind." She swiveled and stalked off.

Jet sniffed. "What a...a..."

Cain laughed.

She whirled on him. "You were just standing there, flirting with her. *Wait.*" A horrible thought hit her. "Were you interested in her?"

"Jet—"

"God, you men are all the same. Whenever you see long legs and a pair of boobs, your brain short-circuits. I shouldn't be surprised. I should've learned my damn lesson by now."

He grabbed her arm. "Hey—"

"You can't help it, I guess." She shook her head. "It must be in your DNA. My ex taught me that, but I just don't learn."

Cain's gaze narrowed and he started pulling her through the crowd. "I'm not your fucking ex—"

"I don't want to hear it. I—"

Cain made an annoyed sound and pushed her through a maintenance door. They ended up in a long, empty corridor. The door clicked closed, cutting off the sound of voices at the conference.

Then he pushed her against the wall.

"I'm *not* interested in her."

Jet snorted. "Sure."

He closed in, hands pressing the wall on either side of her head. He was

so close. But as her pulse skittered, she smelled that woman's musky perfume.

"Ugh. You smell like her."

"Not. Interested. All I can think about is a small pixie with unique eyes, a smart mouth, and sexy lips."

Jet sucked in a breath.

"Last night, in bed, knowing you were so close, I couldn't sleep. Know what I did?"

Her belly was jumping all over the place. Since she couldn't seem to speak, she shook her head.

"I took my cock out and stroked it. Imagined it was your hands on it, your lips on it."

She moaned. "*Cain*."

He leaned closer, his eyelids hooded. "Damn, when you say my name like that...it shreds my control, Jet. It's just gone."

He dipped his head and kissed her.

She needed him. She *needed* this. She slid her hands into his hair. God, she loved his hair.

He lifted her up and she wrapped her legs around his waist. He pinned her to the wall, grinding against her. She cried out into his mouth. Electric sensations crackled through her.

"Fuck, you're hot and sexy." His lips moved to her neck.

She bucked against him. No one had ever said that before. That she was sexy. The big bulge in his trousers grinding against her told her that he wasn't lying or exaggerating. Pleasure grew inside her, tightening her belly.

"*Cain*," she panted.

"Fuck. I want to feel you come." He slid her down to her feet.

She was unsteady on her feet for a second before he whirled her around.

"Hands to the wall, pixie."

She did as he asked. What was—?

His hand curled over her belly and he flicked open her pants. His hand slid inside.

"*Oh*," she panted.

"I'm going to make you come." His breath was hot on her ear. "Then you'll never question who it is I want."

Excitement rocketed through her. "Someone could—"

"Don't care. Then they'll see who you belong to."

His fingers slid into her panties.

“You have a frothy bit of lace here. You wore these for me, didn’t you?”

His voice was like a dark fantasy. She made an incoherent sound. His fingers found her clit.

Jet bucked and cried out.

“What color are they?” he murmured.

“P-pink.”

His fingers dipped lower. “There’s my sexy pixie.” He stroked her. “So wet for me.”

He worked her clit with his thumb, then she felt his hand move, and his finger slid inside her. She moaned.

“Tight and wet.” He pressed against her from behind, his hard cock rubbing against her lower back.

“Now, I want to feel you clenching my fingers as you come. There’ll be no doubt who I want, and who makes my cock as hard as fucking steel.”

He pinched her clit and Jet exploded. She bit her lip to strangle her cry. She jerked wildly against him, her body clenching on his thrusting fingers.

She tilted her head back and he kissed her.

It was all him. All Cain.

She flew apart for him. She wasn’t sure she could stay upright, but he held her tight. When she came back to reality, she was panting.

“Good girl.” He pulled his hand free and spun her.

There was desire on his handsome face, and the hard bulge in his pants left no doubt as to how turned on he was. Keeping her gaze, he lifted his hand and licked his fingers clean.

Jet bit her lip, her belly full of heat.

Then his cell phone rang. She saw a flicker of annoyance before he pulled it out.

“Yeah.” He huffed out a breath. “Okay. We’ll meet you at the hotel.” He slid the phone away. “Killian and Devyn have arrived.”

AS THEY STEPPED into the hotel suite, Cain watched Jet kick off her shoes and strip off her jacket. He stared at her feet. At that sexy pink polish that was the same color that was normally in her hair.

But Cain's mind was on one thing.

"Who's the idiot ex who cheated on you?"

Jet froze. "Ancient history. And I didn't say he cheated."

Oh, but it was clear the guy had, and in the process, had hurt her.

"You love him?" Cain knew his voice sounded harsh.

She glanced back at him over her shoulder. "No. I was in love with the idea of being part of a couple. He broke my trust, though."

"What's his name?" Cain asked carefully.

She crossed her arms. "Why?"

So I can find him and kill him slowly. "No reason."

She snorted. "Sure. He doesn't matter, Cain. End of story."

It did matter. Cain would find out.

The front door flung open behind them. Killian strode in like an avenging god, Devyn sauntering behind him.

"You could have knocked," Cain said.

The head of Sentinel Security skewered him with a sharp, hot look. "You got her *kidnapped*."

"I'm fine," Jet said, holding her arms out. "All in one piece."

Killian gave Cain another dark look, then engulfed Jet in a hug.

"It won't happen again," Cain said.

"It had better not, or you'll be dead."

"Boys." Devyn shook her head. "Hex is fine. She saved herself." Devyn nudged her husband aside and hugged Jet.

Cain knew Killian had the right to be pissed. He'd promised to look after her, and he'd failed. Hell, he was still pissed at himself. It was pure luck she hadn't been tortured or killed.

Fuck. He'd seen fellow agents who'd gone out like that. Snatched by the enemy, their broken bodies found dumped hours later.

"Okay, now that we're all friends again," Devyn said, "did the buyer make contact?"

Jet shook her head.

"He will." Killian's gaze slid to Cain. "Any luck identifying who snatched Hex from the airport?"

"No." His team had nothing. "It was either the buyer, or we have a rival in play who wants the drone tech, as well."

Killian scowled. "So they could try to nab her again."

Cain smiled sharply. "They can try."

“Okay, don’t smile like that,” Jet said to him. “It’s scary.”

“Hawke and I made some calls on the flight here,” Devyn said.

“You weren’t busy joining the mile-high club?” Jet joked.

“I didn’t say that.” Devyn winked. “Besides, Hawke and I are already members.”

Cain groaned and Jet laughed.

Killian rolled his eyes to the ceiling. “Dangerous mission, remember?”

Devyn blew her husband a kiss. “I know. Now, I made some calls, and tapped my European contacts.”

“Some of them will only talk face-to-face,” Killian said, not sounding happy about it.

“So put on a dress, Hex, because we’re heading to L’Arc to meet our first friend.” Devyn used air quotes for the word friend.

“What’s L’Arc?” Jet asked.

“The hottest club in Paris. It’s right near the Arc de Triomphe, is *the* place to be seen, and it has awesome cocktails. You’ll love it.”

As the women hurried into the bedroom, Cain walked to the bar. “Bourbon?”

“What have they got?”

“Knob Creek 12-Year-Old.”

“Should have known you’d find a bottle of Knob Creek, even in Paris,” Killian said.

Cain poured them both a glass of his favorite liquor.

“She’s really okay?” Killian asked.

“Yeah. Took a few years off my life, then she turned up at the door, barefoot and soaked.” Cain knocked back some bourbon. “She jumped off a fucking bridge into the Seine.”

“Fuck.” Killian sipped his drink. “Sounds like Hex.”

“It’s *not* happening again,” Cain said.

Killian watched him for a beat, then nodded.

Cain swirled his drink, the amber fluid sticking to the crystal. “I want to know who the fuck is responsible for taking her.”

He saw that his dark tone made Killian pause. “You know the CIA brass frowns on revenge.”

Cain snorted. “They do not. We find these assholes, they’re mine.”

“I want to help.”

“Deal.” Cain held his glass out.

Killian clinked his against it.

“You boys ready?”

Devyn’s voice made them both turn.

Devyn was now dressed in a slinky column of black, her hair a wild cloud of red around her shoulders. Jet was beside her in a tiny slip of purple he thought she’d call a dress. It was short, with a flirty skirt, and tiny straps.

Fuck me. Cain fought back his erection. Her lips were bright kiss-me red. She smiled at him. No, bright let-me-suck-your-cock red.

“Let’s go,” he growled. The sooner they got this done, the sooner he got her back here.

L’ARC HAD an upscale but edgy interior, with hints of luxury and elegance. Situated right near the Arc de Triomphe, it was the premier club in Paris. It not only had a dance floor, but an upscale bar, elegant dinner club, an outdoor terrace covered in lush plants, and a VIP area.

Cain had been here once before. Each area had its own décor and lighting. Tonight, the packed dance floor was awash in purple light and filled with generated smoke, as music throbbed loudly. The restaurant and VIP area were both quieter, with a grander elegance. They entered the main bar, which was lit up in blue and pink. Bartenders were busy making drinks at the long, glowing bar.

Killian ordered drinks and handed them out. They found an empty booth and sat.

“Who’s the contact?” Jet sipped her glass of champagne.

“An old friend,” Killian said from across the table. “Former DGSE. Laurent Allaire.”

Direction générale de la Sécurité extérieure. France’s foreign intelligence agency.

“I seem to recall he had the hots for Devyn,” Cain said.

He watched a muscle tick in Killian’s jaw.

Devyn shot Cain a look, then leaned over and whispered in Killian’s ear. The man relaxed, then kissed her lips.

It was no tame, sweet kiss, either.

Cain saw Jet watching them. Then she glanced at him.

He felt a jolt of heat. Yeah, he wanted to kiss her like that, slide his hands under that maddening, purple dress. He settled for pulling her closer to his side.

“Those two generate some heat.” She sipped her drink.

Under the table, he slid a hand up her knee and she jolted. “They do.”

“There’s Laurent.” Devyn slid out of the booth, and Killian moved after her. “We’ll be back.”

Cain saw Jet lick her lips. He let his fingers slide up her satiny skin, and then under her dress.

“Cain—”

“Yes, Jet.”

“You’re confusing me. I don’t know if you’re playing with me, or…”

He leaned down. “Or if I actually want you?”

“Yes.” A quiet whisper. “I’ve had guys act interested, but I’m…me. Too smart. Too cute. Too…”

“Perfect.”

Her lips parted.

“I can’t stop touching you,” he murmured. “I’m losing the battle to stay away from you.”

She made a sound. “What if I don’t want you to stay away?”

The skin of her inner thigh was so soft. He stroked and heard her gasp. “You should. I’m not good enough for you.”

Her eyes widened.

“I’m not good. I’ve done terrible shit. I’ll fuck this up. I…” He looked away, the club a blur.

Then she grabbed his wrist and moved his hand. Right between her thighs.

That’s when he realized she wasn’t wearing any panties. His cock throbbed, hard. She was wet and warm. He moved his fingers, stroking her bare pussy. *Fuck.*

“That’s for you,” she said. “Maybe it’s not right, maybe we’ll mess it up, but I want you, Cain.”

“Jet—”

“Hey.” Devyn and Killian slid back into the booth.

Cain tried to keep his face composed. Jet was blushing, but it was dark enough in the club to hide it. He flicked her clit, and saw her bite her lip. She hastily took a huge gulp of her champagne. He reluctantly pulled his hand

back.

“Laurent didn’t have a name, he’s just heard whispers,” Devyn said. “But he gave us another contact who might have more. He’s at a bar. Le Syndicat.”

Cain knew the place. “In the Strasbourg Saint-Denis district. It’s a short drive to get there.” He rose. “We’ll see you there.”

He led Jet out of the club. Their cars were parked out front. Killian had rented a sleek McLaren 720S in a dark gray.

Cain had rented a silver Audi R8—normal enough not to stand out too much, but with some power under the hood. He opened the door for Hex.

As she slid in, she let her dress ride up.

He growled. “There will be payback for the little teases.”

She just smiled at him.

For the first time in his life, he had to force himself to focus on the mission.

CHAPTER EIGHT

She wasn't sure what made her hotter, the man or the car.

Jet squirmed on the beautiful, dark-leather seat, accented with red stitching. Okay, the car was hot, but the man was hotter.

She glanced at Cain. The night shadows caressed his face and highlighted the dips and slashes of his cheekbones. The scruff on his jaw was hot, as well.

She could imagine it scraping her inner thighs.

Crap. She pressed her legs together. If she was wearing panties, they'd be damp. She still felt his touch there. Could still hear his words.

This man wanted her, but thought he wasn't good enough.

That he couldn't give her what she wanted.

He could be right. She could get addicted, fall for him, then he'd rush off to save the world and leave her behind. She knew that not every grand passion had a happy ending. Look at her mom.

They took a corner, and Cain gunned the engine. Of course, he handled the powerful car well. She'd be a hot mess if she was driving, hoping not to scratch it.

She could fly a drone through a tight space, but not a car like this. Nope.

He took another corner. Fast. They zoomed through an intersection. Ahead, there was a crush of cars, but somehow he made it through.

She glanced over at him, and saw his face was tense.

"What's wrong?" She checked the side mirror.

"We have company," he said.

Crap. She spotted a black SUV.

"There are two of them," he said. "There's a silver BMW, as well."

“Are they the buyer or my abductors?”

“Let’s find out.” He stomped his foot down and they sped forward.

Behind them, Jet saw the cars give chase.

Cain didn’t look tense or worried. He picked up speed, dodging between cars. He wrenched the wheel, and they sped down another street. Parked cars were just a blur beside them. They raced out of the street and ended up alongside the Seine. They raced along the river.

Jet pulled out her phone and hacked into the Paris traffic cams. “Got them. Running the plates now.”

Cain yanked the wheel and overtook a slow truck.

“They’re both rentals,” she said. “Hmm, it might take me a little longer to hack the rental company records.”

“Do it.”

There was a red light ahead. Cain didn’t slow down.

Jet tensed. “Cain. *Cain*.” She gripped the seat.

He threw the car into a tight turn and they sped over a bridge. Behind them, she heard horns honking. He turned again, speeding down the other side of the river.

“You’ll kill us,” she cried.

He winked at her. “Don’t worry, pixie. I’m good with my hands.”

She rolled her eyes. Her phone vibrated. “Okay. A company rented the cars. The company’s called Genesis Inc. Let me do some digging.” She wished she had her tablet or laptop. It was hard to do everything on her phone, even though her phone had lots of special upgrades that she’d added herself.

The phone rang and she saw Devyn’s name pop up. Jet hit the speaker.

“Where are you guys?” Devyn asked. “We’ve already met the contact.”

“Um, we collected some company,” Jet told her.

“Are you all right?” Killian’s sharp voice came across the line.

“Well, I’m currently in a high-speed car chase through Paris, so all right might be a stretch.”

“Shade?”

“I’ve got it, Steel.”

There was a beat of silence. “Our contact said there are lots of interested parties who want the drone technology. The Chinese. The Russians. A warlord in Sudan. The Taliban.”

“And a partridge in a pear tree,” Jet quipped, dryly.

Cain flashed a quick grin at her. “The Russians are too tied up with skirmishes. The Taliban don’t have the money or resources.”

“The contact thinks the buyer is someone else,” Devyn said. “A broker.”

“Arms dealer?” Cain mused.

“Most likely,” Killian agreed.

“Okay, let me find out who’s following us, then we’ll meet you back at the hotel.”

“I’ve one more contact to meet,” Devyn said.

The black SUV got close. Cain accelerated and turned down a narrow street. Jet gasped. The parked cars passed by with only an inch to spare.

“I need to meet this contact alone,” Devyn continued. “Or he won’t show.”

Across the line, Jet heard Killian growl.

“You’ll spook him, Steel,” she said. “I’ll be fine. I’m a big, dangerous girl.”

“I won’t be far away,” Killian said.

“I know.”

“If you two are done,” Cain said, “we have a car chase to deal with.”

“Stay safe,” Killian said.

Jet ended the call, just as Cain wrenched the wheel. She braced a hand on the seat and gritted her teeth. They sped through a tunnel. She blinked and frowned.

God, was this tunnel where Princess Diana had died? As he weaved through the traffic, the air lodged in her throat. She really hoped they didn’t crash in here.

She glanced in the mirror again and saw only the BMW behind them now.

They sped out of the tunnel.

There was more traffic ahead, and she saw a large park. Cain turned sharply, narrowly avoiding a car, and shot down another street.

The pursuer didn’t have quite as good reflexes.

The BMW swiped a car, tires screeching.

Crash.

The BMW hit a fence by the park, and the front crumpled.

Cain slowed and pulled over. A Glock materialized in his hand, and he shoved the door open.

“Stay in the car,” he said. His face promised death.

Oh, shit. Jet scrambled out of the passenger seat.

She watched him stride over to the crashed car. There were two men in the front, both wearing balaclavas. The passenger wasn't moving, and as she got closer, she saw blood on the man's shirt.

The driver was moaning and moving weakly. He was trapped in the twisted metal and broken glass.

Cain whipped his gun up. He reached through the shattered side window, and yanked the man's balaclava off. Jet gasped.

When Cain spotted her, he cursed.

The man was Chinese. He looked dazed.

With a shake of his head, Cain looked back at the man. "Who sent you?"

The man sneered.

Cain pressed the gun barrel between his eyes. "I can guess who sent you. Why?"

"The drone tech," the man clipped out.

"Yeah, you guys like to steal. You're done."

The driver groaned.

"Done. You come for her again, I will kill you, your friend, and any other agents you have in Paris. I'll track down every last one of you."

Ice crawled over Jet's skin. Cain sounded scary as hell.

There was no evidence of the charming man who'd flirted with her earlier.

This wasn't Cain...this was Shade.

"You are just one...man," the driver gritted out.

"Tell your bosses my name is Shade."

The driver froze.

Cain dragged the gun barrel to the man's mouth. "Nod if you understand."

The man gave one unsteady nod.

"Now, are you done?" Cain asked.

Another nod.

"Good." He slid the gun away. The howl of sirens coming echoed in the distance. Cain strode to Jet, grabbed her hand, and then towed her back to their car.

Shade was scary, but she realized that he was a part of Cain. A part, she realized he thought meant he didn't deserve a real life. One that meant he couldn't form connections.

It was a part of him she'd need to accept if she wanted him.

"I said to stay in the car," he bit out.

"I know."

"Did you hear me?" He opened the door.

"I heard you," she replied.

His gaze narrowed as he leaned in. "You're asking for punishment, pixie. I won't let you put yourself in danger."

Her belly flip-flopped. Yep, if she was wearing panties, they'd be soaked.

Just then, her phone rang. She pulled it out. "It's Killian." She pressed the screen. "Hey, boss man."

"Get to my location. *Now.*"

Jet stiffened like she'd been struck with electricity. She'd never heard him use this tone before. "What's wrong?"

"Devyn's missing."

CAIN SPED DOWN THE STREET, pushing the car for more speed.

"Turn here," Jet said.

She had Killian's location on the screen and was giving Cain directions.

Devyn was the closest thing that Cain had to a sister. They had to find her.

They were in a seedier part of Paris, to the northeast. There were no trendy restaurants or attractive landmarks here. It had once been home to textile and clothing factories.

"She shouldn't have gone in alone," Cain said.

"She's as good as you and Killian. She knows what she's doing." Then Jet's voice cracked.

Cain reached for her hand. "She'll be fine. Devyn is as tough as hardened steel. We're going to find her."

"Killian can't lose her." Jet swallowed and nodded. "Up ahead, on the left."

He followed her directions and found a spot to park the car. The Audi was totally out of place in this neighborhood. As soon as he got out, Killian emerged from the shadows.

The man's face looked carved from stone, but his dark eyes were alive

with vengeance.

Fuck. If anyone had hurt Devyn, there was no way Cain could hold Killian back.

“She went in there to meet the contact.” He stabbed a finger at a small, dilapidated warehouse. “I searched it. It’s empty. I didn’t see them leave.”

“Who’s the contact?” Cain asked.

“Henri Carbone.”

Cain scowled. “You can’t trust that rat. He’s all about the money.”

“We need to find her,” Killian snapped.

Cain saw movement in the shadows nearby and swiveled. “Come out here. Now. Don’t make me chase you.”

A boy slunk out of the darkness. Shit. It was almost like looking in the mirror from a few decades ago. Shaggy, brown hair, a long face. The kid was fourteen or fifteen, probably.

“Watch the car,” Cain said in French. “I’ll pay you well.”

“Five hundred euro,” the boy said.

Cain snorted. “Do I look like an idiot, kid?”

The boy lifted his chin. “Four hundred.”

“You get what I give you.”

The boy gave an elegant shoulder shrug. He looked too thin. “Fine.”

“What’s your name?”

The boy paused. “Bastien.”

“Good, now, Bastien, did you see Carbone leave the warehouse?”

“*Non.*”

“A woman? A redhead?”

“The gorgeous redhead?” The boy’s English was heavily accented. “*Non.* She has not come out. She gave me fifty euro when she arrived.”

Killian stepped forward. “She’s mine. And that place is empty.”

“Does Carbone have another exit?” Cain asked.

“Not that I know of,” the boy said. “I know he’s a pig. He cannot be trusted.”

“Okay, watch the car,” Cain ordered.

The boy gave him a lazy salute.

Cain watched Jet open her handbag. “Give me a sec.” She pulled something out and unfolded it.

He cocked his head. “You keep a drone in your handbag?”

“A mini drone.” She shrugged. “You never know when you might need

one.”

He shook his head.

With a high-pitched whine and whirr of rotors, the drone started up. “Let me see what I can find.”

Cain saw Bastien watching avidly as the drone flew upward.

Jet hunched over her phone, swiping the screen. The drone disappeared into the night sky.

“Got it.” She smiled. “Two heat signatures inside the building. Center of the space.”

Killian growled. “It’s empty. I searched it myself.”

“Is there an attic?” Cain asked.

The other man shook his head. “Just open rafters.”

“Basement?”

“Not that I saw.”

“Monsieurs, there are lots of basements around here,” Bastien said. “Many are closed up.”

Killian’s gaze darkened. “Come on.”

He flicked on a flashlight, and led them to a rusted metal side door. Killian shoved it open, and they entered the building.

Cain studied the scarred, concrete floor, the wooden beams overhead. They fanned out, searching for anything. Any entrance to a basement.

Jet walked along the far wall, while Killian prowled around like a big, agitated predator.

Cain stalked to the back of the space. He guessed it had once housed a factory. He didn’t hear anything or see any movement.

The place was mostly empty. In one corner, he spotted a tattered couch covered in fast food wrappers. Carbone was a pig. Cain kicked some trash and saw some of it was moldy.

Where are you, asshole?

If he’d hurt Devyn, Cain would help Killian beat him to a pulp.

“Over here,” Jet called out.

Cain and Killian converged on her. He saw her standing next to stacks of boxes.

“What did you find?” Cain asked.

She pointed.

He studied the boxes. They were stamped, and were apparently full of champagne. But then she nudged one and it moved.

“This one’s empty,” she said.

Cain shoved it aside.

There was a trap door in the floor.

Killian crouched and wrenched it open. Light filtered up from below.

Without a word, he charged down the wooden steps.

“Stay up here,” Cain said and followed his friend.

They descended into a small space. There was an old square of carpet on the floor, and some even older couches.

Devyn was standing, wobbling a little. Her hands were tied in front of her.

She saw Killian and smiled. It was a little crooked, and her pupils were dilated.

“Hey, baby,” she slurred.

Carbone was curled in a fetal position on the floor, whimpering.

Killian went straight to his wife, and cupped her face. “Are you all right?”

“Yup.” She gave a slow nod. “He drugged me. I was out for a bit, but I woke up and got mad.” She tried to touch Killian’s face, and almost clubbed him in the head. “I was coming to find you.”

He took her hands and untied them. “Is the drug dangerous?”

“No. GHB. It’ll wear off.”

Killian’s gaze turned to Carbone.

“Oh, I know that look,” Cain said. “No bloodshed.”

“He *drugged* my wife,” Killian enunciated carefully.

Shit, that tone made even Cain wince. On the ground, Carbone whimpered.

There was a creak on the stairs, and Cain glanced behind him. As usual, Jet hadn’t stayed where he’d told her.

He scowled at her, and she poked her tongue out.

Oh, he was itching to get a palm on her sweet ass.

“Killian, no, you can’t kill him,” Devyn said.

“Why?”

As Killian hauled Carbone up, Devyn looked confused. “Because...we have questions.” She grinned like she’d worked out the answer to a hard puzzle. “Questions. We need to ask him questions.”

“Sit down, Hellfire, before you fall,” Killian said.

Jet hurried over and helped Devyn onto the couch.

Killian skewered Carbone with an icy glare. “Why did you drug my

wife?”

“I had no idea she was yours!” Carbone whimpered.

Killian leaned down and punched the man in the gut. He crumpled like a wet tissue.

“Answer me. *Now.*” Killian dropped the man.

He dropped to the dirty floor and wrapped an arm around his middle.

Cain and Killian both circled Carbone.

“I have ways to make him talk,” Cain said.

“So do I,” Killian said quietly.

Carbone whimpered again.

Cain crouched. “He’s really pissed, and you don’t want to test him.”

Carbone licked his lips. “It was Franchetti. Giovanni Franchetti. A mafia boss in Italy. Hellfire burned down his mansion last year, and he’s now obsessed with her. Thinks she’s stunning. He put a big bounty out on her.”

Devyn frowned. “Men are idiots.”

Jet nodded. “Yep.”

Cain shook his head. “Okay, Carbone, I’ll try to convince my friend here not to kill you, *if* you answer my questions.”

Killian crossed his arms. “Oh, I’m killing him.”

Carbone pissed his pants.

Cain wrinkled his nose. “Someone’s after drone technology being smuggled from the US. They’re willing to pay big. Who?”

“I don’t know,” Carbone stammered.

Killian stepped closer.

Carbone skidded back. “I don’t have a name. I just heard it’s a rich, fancy businessman.”

“French?” Cain prompted.

“I don’t know. Not French, but I don’t know where he is from. That’s all I’ve got. Please!”

Killian stared at the man for a long time. “I’ll let you live, if you tell anyone who touches my wife that they’ll deal with me. You try again, I’ll come back and break every bone in your body.”

Carbone nodded violently.

Killian went to Devyn and picked her up in his arms.

“Hey, Hawke.” She smiled at him.

“Come on, Red.” He headed for the stairs.

Cain stared after them. Two badasses who were there for each other, and

totally in love. They'd made it work. And once, Killian had been just like Cain.

Could Cain make it work, too?

He took Jet's hand.

"A rich businessman," she murmured as they headed out. "It isn't much to go on."

No, it wasn't. But it was something. They were closing in.

"Come on, I need to pay the kid. If the car is still where I parked it."

She smiled. "I know you're going to give him the five hundred euro. I think you're secretly a softie."

First time he'd ever been accused of being soft. Fuck, he kind of liked it.

CHAPTER NINE

A hot shower solved lots of problems.

Jet dried off with the luxurious, thick towel. What a night.

She was glad Devyn was okay. Killian had messaged that he'd had a doctor see her, and she was now sleeping the drug off. Jet imagined that Killian would watch over her all night.

Would Cain do that with her?

Yes. She shivered. Yes, she thought he might.

As she finished drying her hair, she realized she felt a little shaky. Adrenaline crash. She yawned, then pulled on her pajamas—little teal shorts and a loose, pink T-shirt.

Tossing her towel on the rack, she headed out. She'd style her hair in the morning—before they left for the conference again.

Right now, she needed some sleep.

But she found herself heading for the living area. It was dark and her heart clenched. Cain must have gone to bed.

Then she saw a dark silhouette sitting in one of the armchairs. A little light leaked around the curtains, catching him.

“You like sitting in the dark?” She wandered closer.

“I spend a lot of time in the dark.”

Yes. She was sure part of him believed he should stay there.

“My earliest memories are of the dark,” he said. “My father locked me in a closet.”

Jet stifled a gasp.

“I'm the child of drug addicts. I did time in the system, then lived on the streets.”

Oh, Cain. Her heart hurt for him.

“I was no one. I don’t even know what my name was. One of the do-gooders in the system gave me a name, until I picked one for myself.”

Jet had searched high and low to uncover his full name, without any luck. Now more than ever, she wanted to know the name he’d picked for himself.

“You aren’t no one now.” She moved closer. “You’re the man you’ve made yourself into. A hero.”

She heard him snort.

“You protect our country from threats most people don’t even know about, Cain.” She took another step. “That’s hero material.”

“I’m the nameless, faceless boogeyman that does all the dirty work.”

Her knees bumped his. “You’re a good guy, Cain. Even if you don’t believe it, I do.”

“If you tangle with me, Jet, I’ll break you.”

She shook her head. “No, I’m starting to think you won’t. In fact, I think you’re worried I’ll break you.”

She heard his harsh breath.

“My CIA mentor warned me, no attachments, no relationships. Don’t let yourself care. It was how he lived.”

“And yet, he cared for you.”

Cain made a harsh sound. “Max made me a weapon. I was his crowning achievement before he died.”

Her heart squeezed. It must have hurt him to lose Max. “Did he die alone?”

There was a pause. “No, I was with him. He died of cancer.”

She reached out and touched Cain’s face. “Do you want to die alone?”

“I know I want you.”

Her heart started pounding hard. “So take me.”

He grabbed her and tumbled her onto his lap.

She felt the hard cock beneath her. Oh, he definitely wanted her.

“I want to fuck you, Jet. Sink my aching cock inside you. Pound into you all night.” His fingers curled around her throat, not hard enough to hurt, just enough to know his hold was there. “But I can’t. We only have a few hours until the sun comes up, and we need to go back to the conference. I can’t risk you by both of us going in tired.” His mouth brushed her cheek. “And a few hours won’t be long enough. I need to fuck you all night to get this voracious need under control.”

“God, Cain.” She writhed. His words had desire clawing at her insides.

“But I can make sure my pixie sleeps well.”

Her belly tightened.

“After I punish her for putting herself at risk.”

She blinked. “What?”

He flipped her over, a hand resting on her ass. She found herself balanced over his knees.

“Cain—”

He yanked her pajama shorts and panties down to mid-thigh.

His palm smacked on her ass cheek. It wasn’t very hard, but she jolted. Excitement skittered through her.

“That was for getting kidnapped.”

“That wasn’t my—”

Crack. His hand hit the curve of her other cheek. She moaned. The sting spread tingles across her skin.

“For not staying in the car.” He slid a hand between her legs. “Pixie. So, so wet.” Two fingers speared inside her and she cried out.

She rocked back, desperate for more of his touch.

Then his fingers were gone.

Crack. The next strike made her moan louder.

“For going into that basement.” He stroked her pussy again. “Even wetter. My pixie likes taking her punishment.”

Jet gasped for breath. “I need to come.”

“Is that an order?”

His silky drawl made her shiver. “*Cain.*”

He stood, and she found herself draped over the arm of the chair. She sensed him kneel on the carpet behind her and her pulse rabbited. He shoved her knees apart.

“There’s just enough light for me to see this perfection.” He squeezed her ass, then his mouth was on her.

Jet could hardly believe the hungry, husky cries coming from her. The sensations were outrageous, and so good. She writhed and he pressed a big palm on her lower back, pinning her there. She reached out and gripped the other arm of the chair.

“God, I love your mouth. Your tongue.” The words bubbled out of her as his stubble scraped her skin. “Suck my clit.”

“My greedy pixie.” He did as she asked, his strong hands gripping her

thighs, his mouth busy between her legs.

Jet held on for dear life. Her orgasm was building, and it was bigger and scarier than anything she'd felt before.

Another lick, and she exploded.

She screamed his name, her body shaking. For a moment, the world went white.

When she came back to reality, she was sweaty, her heart pounding, and she felt wrecked. Good wrecked.

Gently, he pulled her shorts back up. He gave one ass cheek a quick squeeze.

"You taste too damn good." His body covered hers.

She realized he was hugging her.

God, this man. This dangerous, sexy, confusing man.

She turned her head and kissed him. "Thank you."

"You never need to thank me for that."

"I want to touch you," she said.

She heard his deep breath. "Soon. I need my cock inside you soon, or I'll lose my mind."

She smiled. Well, she liked hearing that.

"But for now, you need to sleep. You need to be ready for tomorrow. And I need to go and jack off in the shower."

She felt a pulse between her legs.

He slid his arms under her and rose, lifting her.

Then Shade, possibly the most dangerous CIA spy in the world, tucked her into bed.

CAIN WOKE how he always did, to instant alertness.

He'd learned it as a young child, with parents who were most often high, then honed it as a kid on the street. If you got caught unawares, you got messed up, or dead.

The same applied to his work with the CIA.

Sunlight streamed through the window. He was sitting in an armchair, and his neck was a bit stiff. He'd slept in worse places.

He was in Jet's bedroom. After everything, he hadn't wanted to let her

out of his sight.

He didn't trust himself to sleep beside her on the bed. Lying beside her in that bed...yeah, there wouldn't have been much sleeping going on.

She was stirring, but her eyes were still closed. She looked tiny in the king-sized bed. She was lying on her belly, with one leg rucked up. Those tiny shorts were an instrument of torture. He swallowed his groan, letting his gaze take in the perfect view of the lower curves of her ass. A sweet ass he'd left his handprints on last night. His morning hard-on let him know how unhappy it was that it wasn't getting any attention.

Jet rolled over and blinked. He liked seeing her like this, soft and sleepy. That brain of hers not fully online yet.

Her gaze settled on him and she blinked. "What's the time?"

"We have an hour to get to the conference."

She groaned. "I need extra coffee today."

"That can be arranged."

She pushed up on one elbow. Her breasts, with no bra, caught his attention. The soft cotton of her T-shirt hugged them lovingly.

"Do you think the buyer will reach out today?" she asked.

He met her gaze. "Yes."

She blew out a breath.

"You can do this," he said to her.

She nodded. "I know. And I know you'll be there."

There was simple trust in her words. Not many people actually fully trusted him. For good reason. He was used to doing whatever it took to get the job done, and it often meant forsaking someone for the greater good. There were times when his job sucked.

Jet's T-shirt slid off one shoulder, exposing bare skin. He wanted his mouth right there, biting her.

Shit. He needed to get out of there. Now. They only had an hour, and they couldn't be late.

He rose. "I'll take a shower."

Jet made a sound and pushed up to sit in the rumpled sheets. He realized her gaze was locked on his cock.

Shit, it was tenting his loose sleep pants, and doing its best to get her attention.

"Ignore it," he gritted out.

"Ah, Bond, that is impossible." She waved a hand. "It's too big to

ignore.”

All his muscles tensed, liking the way she was looking at him.

Those bi-colored eyes flicked up to him. “Show me.”

Fuck. He should walk out.

Mission. Espionage. Treason.

All important things that needed his attention.

Jet shifted to the edge of the bed on her knees, a flush on her cheekbones.

And right then, the most important thing in his world was her.

Cain stepped closer, and pushed the waistband of his pants down. She gasped.

Yeah, he was long and thick, and extra-hard just for her.

“You want to touch it, pixie?” His voice was a growl.

“Yes.” She wrapped her small hand around him.

He groaned and closed his hand over hers. “Tighter.”

Her grip tightened and she stroked him. “Of course, your cock is as hard and sexy as the rest of you.” She kept pumping him.

Then she used one hand to grip his hip and bring him closer. Her mouth was right near the weeping head of his cock.

“Have you imagined this, Cain?” Her voice was low and tempting.

“Yes,” he clipped out.

“My lips wrapped around your cock?”

“Yes, damn you. I’ve come a hundred times imagining it.” He slid a hand into her hair, clenched on it, then rubbed the head of his cock across her lips.

Her tongue darted out, and his groan was harsh. Then she opened her mouth and sucked him deep.

Fuck. His cock in Jet’s pretty mouth. She made a hungry sound and went to work.

Fuuuck. Her fingers flexed on him as, with great enthusiasm, she sucked him. Damn, she worshiped his cock. She sucked him deeper, and he felt the back of her throat. She kept sucking.

“Pixie... Jet... Fuck.”

He thrust forward. She took it. He was getting close.

Then she pulled her mouth off. “Where do you want to come, Cain?”

His mind was a daze of pleasure and need. “On you.” He gripped her T-shirt and yanked it off. Her pretty tits, topped with pink nipples, were on perfect display. He wanted to mark her. Wanted him on her.

She leaned down and sucked his cock again, until he felt a ball of hot

need ready to burst.

“Jet...”

She pulled off and pumped him. Then he was coming. A groan ripped from him.

He came on her breasts, his come splattering her skin.

“Yes,” she panted.

He kept coming, the pleasure so big that he could barely stay upright. He dropped to his knees on the bed.

Jet grinned at him.

He reached out and rubbed his release on her skin. “Mine. Me on you. On your skin.” He toyed with her hard nipple.

“Well, you’re mine too, Cain. When this is over, we’re doing this. Us.”

He froze. “I told you, I can’t give you what you deserve.”

She arched a brow. “You won’t know unless you try. You’re not a coward.”

“You’re braver than me,” he whispered.

“We’ll be brave together.” She shot him a sassy smile. “You’re going to fall in love with me.”

Shock felt like a bullet to the gut. “I’ve never fallen in love with anyone.” And no one had ever loved him. He wasn’t sure he was worthy of it.

She rose to her knees. “Then you’d better enjoy the ride. Now, we have a conference to get to.” She looked at the clock. “Shit, I have to get ready.” She scrambled off the bed. “Better move, Bond.”

He watched her head for the bathroom, and felt conflicted.

He didn’t want to hurt her. If he fucked up, and broke her heart...

Well, then Killian would kill him, so it didn’t really matter.

CHAPTER TEN

She was going to keep these pants. They did good things for her butt.

Jet walked through the conference. Today's outfit was slim, navy pants and a white shirt, with a fitted, tan jacket. Simple, yet stylish. It lacked a little flair, and she really missed her pink streaks. She fluffed her hair. She'd had to dress in a hurry, but it had been worth it.

So worth it.

Cain sauntered up beside her. He was wearing a suit. And those damn glasses.

She took a second to savor him—and imagined seeing him wearing nothing but those glasses. *Mmm*. Tendrils of heat flickered through her belly.

She knew what his cock looked like now. Tingles spread through her. And what he tasted like. The sounds he made when he came. Her panties dampened. She imagined sucking him off again while he wore nothing but those glasses.

Oh, boy. She needed him so badly.

He touched her lower back and she jolted.

“You okay?” He frowned down at her, and when he saw her face, he grinned. “Thinking naughty thoughts, pixie?”

She couldn't control her flush. Two could play at that game.

“Maybe.” She touched her chest where her shirt was open and stroked her skin.

His brown eyes blazed, looking shades lighter. She knew he was remembering just where he'd come this morning.

“Next time, I want you wearing nothing but those glasses.”

He shook his head, smiling. “Mission, remember.”

She dropped her hand and set her shoulders back. She hadn't forgotten. Despite the excitement, there was still a ball of tension lodged in her chest.

"I'm going to get you another coffee," he said.

She beamed at him. "My hero."

As he strode to the café, she eyed his ass. It was a thing of beauty. As where his muscled thighs, and his abs.

She couldn't help but feel like she was playing with fire.

Her stomach jittered. She was gonna make him fall for her, but sometimes, love wasn't enough. Would he stay? Would she ever be more important than his job?

Echoes of her father and Brandon jumbled in her head. Brandon's work was his identity, and he'd often cancel dates at the last minute because of late meetings. And because he was banging a model.

Ugh. Brandon was getting no more bandwidth. Jet pulled out her phone and saw she had a message from Killian. Devyn was fine, but he was letting her sleep in. The pair would meet them later.

She slipped her phone back in her pocket and turned her attention to the closest tech stand. She read their advertising information until Cain returned, holding a huge latte.

"Oh my God, I need this." She sipped. "Thank you, thank you."

He watched her, an unreadable look on his face.

"What?" She cocked a brow.

"Don't ever change," he said. "Always be you, and show your enthusiasm for the things you love."

Her heart clenched. "I think that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me."

"Damn, I want to kiss you."

"Later." She made herself turn away, or she'd kiss him. "Let's wander."

They spent the next hour wandering through the venue and Jet started to feel edgy. She really wanted this buyer to make his move.

She wanted this done. She'd had enough of kidnappings and car chases and druggings. She wanted this over so she could lock herself in a bedroom with Cain.

She shivered and gulped more coffee.

Except after this mission, he'd have another one.

The coffee curdled in her stomach. He'd fly off to places unknown.

Not now, Jet. She released a breath. She glanced up and saw him chatting

with two young men at the stand nearby.

She turned to the one beside her. Micro drones. Oh, that was something she was very interested in.

“You’re interested in drones?”

She looked up at the smooth, deep voice.

A very handsome man in a suit stood beside her. His hair was well cut, and he had piercing blue eyes. He looked like a banker.

The buyer?

“I am,” she replied. “You?”

“I’m interested in lots of things. Micro drones could have interesting applications.”

She tried to guess the accent. It was very elegant and cultured. “I agree,” she said.

“I’m Markus. Markus Weber.”

“Sara Mardis. What business are you in, Markus?”

He smiled. “The business of finding untapped ideas, and helping them reach their full potential. And connecting with the right people.”

The hairs on the back of her neck rose. “So, like venture capital?”

“Something like that.” He reached into his jacket and pulled out a large, white card. “Sara, I’m holding a party tomorrow night. It’ll be a chance to connect with some of the wealthiest businesspeople in Europe.” He handed it to her. “To share ideas, do deals. I’d love for you to attend.”

The card was mostly empty, except for a gold-embossed border, and his name printed in the middle. Underneath was Vivante Estate. Geneva.

Geneva? “You’re Swiss?”

Weber inclined his head. “I’ll see you there. It’ll be your chance to handoff anything you think is valuable.” He smiled. “A pleasure meeting you, Sara.”

He strode off.

A second later Cain appeared. “Who was he?”

“I think he was the buyer.”

Cain’s face hardened.

She held up the card. “I’ve been invited to a party. In Switzerland.”

“We’ve been invited.”

WATCHING Jet work was fast becoming one of Cain's favorite things.

Her fingers moved so fast on the keyboard, and she absorbed the data quickly. She also frowned and muttered a lot. It was both cute and sexy.

He leaned in. "Anything?"

"No." She swatted him. "Don't break my concentration."

They were back at their hotel. She was trying to find everything she could on Markus Weber.

Cain frowned at the card on the table and picked it up, then turned it over. He'd never heard of the guy. And that worried Cain. He'd heard whispers of at least every major player on the international scene.

If this guy had been successfully operating under the radar...

Cain scowled. There had to be *something* on him. No one was a ghost.

He paced away, listening to Jet's cute mutters. They needed intel. There was no fucking way he'd take Jet into this guy's no-doubt-heavily-guarded estate without decent intel.

The door to the hotel suite opened, and Killian and Devyn walked in.

Killian was in suit pants and a white shirt, while Devyn wore dark jeans and a black T-shirt. She looked her usual self, and no worse for wear after her late-night escapades.

"Anything?" Killian asked.

Jet sat back in her chair. "Markus Weber is thirty-three years old, a wealthy businessman. Owner of Weber Investments. From what I can tell, the company does a little bit of everything. Real estate, insurance, investment, banking. He owns a multimillion-dollar estate in Geneva, on the lake."

Jet turned her computer screen. There was a standard head shot of a smiling Weber. He didn't look like an evil arms dealer.

"He look familiar?" Cain asked Killian and Devyn.

They both shook their heads.

Devyn crossed her arms. "He can't have popped up from nowhere and just be brokering huge arms deals."

Jet tapped her keyboard. The next image showed a large, historic house set on huge grounds. Lake Geneva, also known locally as Lac Léman, sat in the background.

"Vivante Estate is in Vandoeuvres," Jet continued.

"Ah, the rich end of town." Devyn leaned against the table. "Houses on the lake cost a pretty penny."

"Yeah, well, Weber's place is ten acres."

Cain whistled.

Jet nodded. “Other than that, nothing. I can’t find where he went to school or grew up.”

Killian frowned. “Markus Weber must be an alias.”

“He popped up ten years back,” Jet said. “His business appears legitimate. No red flags.”

“No, but something doesn’t smell right,” Devyn said. “Facial recognition?”

Jet shrugged again. “A big, fat nothing.”

Cain frowned. Weber was good. He’d buried his past and scrubbed any images of himself.

“I have the jet prepped,” Killian said. “It’s a short flight to Geneva.”

Cain crossed his arms. “I don’t like the idea of going in without knowing who this guy is.”

Jet rose. “We *have* to go. We have to hand off the chip and find what we can, then take him down.”

Cain scowled. “I don’t like it.”

“There’s too much at stake,” she said. “The swarm drone technology can’t fall into the wrong hands.”

“I know that.”

“It’s worth the risk.”

“I disagree,” he said.

Cain sensed Devyn watching him. Yeah, he was known to take risks. To do whatever was necessary to achieve the mission.

But Jet was too important.

“We’ll ask around about Weber,” Devyn said. “Someone must know something.”

“We can’t risk tipping him off,” Cain said.

Devyn rolled her eyes. “I’ve done this once or twice before, Shade.”

“Sorry.” He ran a hand through his hair.

“Everyone start packing,” Killian said. “We’ll fly this afternoon.”

“I’ll arrange a hotel for us in Geneva,” Jet said. “And keep searching for info on this guy.” She looked at the screen and Weber’s picture. “Who are you?”

That was a question Cain also needed answered.

A FEW HOURS LATER, the Sentinel Security jet touched down in Geneva.

In the seat beside Cain, Jet's nose was pressed to the window.

"It's *beautiful*. God, look at the lake. And the mountains."

Cain flicked a glance out the window, but then his gaze moved back to Jet. He'd been to Geneva before, but watching the expressions flit across her face was more interesting.

She didn't hold anything back. She showed exactly who she was, and what she was thinking and feeling.

"I got us suites at the Beau-Rivage Genève," she said. "It's this fabulous historic hotel right in the city center."

He nodded. "I know it. Great views of the lake and Mont Blanc."

Jet had spent the short flight running searches on Weber. Cain, Devyn, and Killian had spent it tapping all their contacts. Cain had put a call through to Langley to see if anyone could work out who the hell Markus Weber was.

So far, nothing.

"Shade, I suggest you and I head out to do a little recon of Weber's estate," Killian said from his seat across the aisle. "Get a feel for the security.

"Good idea."

Jet puffed up. "Oh, and what should us ladies do? Go to the spa?"

Devyn crossed her legs. "Actually, we're going shopping."

"What?" Jet said.

"The event at Weber's is black tie. We need dresses."

Jet blinked. "Oh."

As the plane was taxiing, Devyn's phone rang. She took the call, her face sharpening. Cain watched her.

Whoever she was talking to, they had something.

A minute later, Devyn tucked the phone away and smiled. "Markus Weber is a broker. You want something, he finds it, makes the deal, and takes a cut."

"I assume he brokers not legal things," Jet said.

"Sometimes legal, sometimes not according to my contact," Devyn said.

"You want a painting from a museum? No worries. Security schematics of a building? Done. Weapons. Missiles. Drone tech." She tilted her head. "For the right price, apparently he can get anything."

"Why have we never heard of him?" Killian asked.

"Oh, we have." Devyn met Cain's gaze. "Or the name he uses for his business, Flèche D'or."

Cain sucked in a breath. “The gold arrow.” He rose from his seat, and pressed a hand to his hip. “Flèche D’or has always stayed under the radar. He’s never targeted important US interests.”

“You know him?” Jet asked.

“Of him,” Cain said. “We’ve never crossed paths, and he’s usually kept out of the CIA’s way.”

Devyn nodded. “We’ve never gone after him. The CIA has a file on him, but we’ve always had bigger fish to fry.”

“So, who is he selling the drone tech to?” Jet asked.

“My contact didn’t know that,” Devyn said. “But word is Weber keeps scrupulous records.”

“How does your contact know that?” Killian asked.

Devyn’s lips quirked. “Because she’s a very expensive escort who’s shared Weber’s bed a time or two. She’s seen him work. She says he records everything.”

Jet perked up. “I can hack his system and find out.”

Devyn shook her head. “Apparently he also has a fully discrete system that’s not connected to the Internet.”

“Damn.” Jet toyed with her hair. “So, when I go to the party, I also need to find his computer and hack his system.”

“No,” Cain said.

Everyone looked at him.

“It’s too dangerous,” he said.

“Cain, we need to know who he’s selling to,” Jet said. “If we get his records, we could uncover other things he’s selling or sold, that could be putting our country at risk.”

His hands curled into fists. He looked up and saw Devyn watching him.

“I don’t like it. Weber might look clean-cut, but to run a business like this, buying and selling from the world’s worst criminals, he’s dangerous.”

“Cain—” Devyn said.

He shook his head. “He’ll have good guards and security. Getting into his office will be too dangerous.”

Jet reached out and took his hand. “It’ll be fine.”

“I don’t want you fucking near his office,” Cain bit out.

She kept her gaze locked on his. “We’ve got this. You’ll be with me.”

He saw Killian eye their joined hands.

Then the other man cleared his throat. “I don’t like it either, but accessing

his records could save a lot of lives.”

“I suggest you two get to Weber’s estate and find out everything you can on his security,” Devyn said.

Jet squeezed Cain’s hand. He tightened his grip. He wasn’t letting her out of his sight.

“Right, you boys go get your security intel.” Devyn rose. “Hex and I are off to buy dresses.”

CAIN LEANED against the tree trunk, a set of binoculars pressed to his eyes.

He studied the grounds of Weber’s estate and watched two armed guards walking slowly past the fancy boathouse. Thankfully, the grounds were extensive, and had lots of established trees. It gave them lots of good hiding places.

The guards looked good though. He tapped a finger against his thigh. From Jet’s digging, he already knew they were all ex-military and well-trained. Some were even former special forces.

He swung the binoculars across the manicured grounds towards the large house. He saw several small delivery trucks parked out front, with people carrying boxes inside the house. Deliveries for the party.

“Nothing out of the ordinary,” Killian said from beside him.

“There are a lot of guards.”

“Normal for a man like Weber.”

Yeah, a criminal who did deals with dangerous people. Cain hated the idea of Jet in that house. He wished he didn’t have to take her to the party, or sneak her in to hack Weber’s computer.

He blew out a breath. “The guards aren’t following any set patrol patterns, and they’re all armed.”

Killian lowered his own binoculars. “There are guards inside the house too.”

Damn. That just added more dangers.

Usually, that excited Cain. He liked the thrill and the challenge of his work. Now, he wasn’t feeling that so much.

“Do you miss this?” he asked Killian.

“Dangerous missions in foreign countries?” Killian shrugged. “I still get

to do it occasionally, and no, I don't miss it. I'm my own boss, of the company I created, with the team I put together myself. I get to spend more time with my sister." He smiled, his teeth white in the darkness. "And now I have Devyn."

Cain looked back at Weber's house, his gut and mind churning.

"You treading carefully with Hex?" Killian asked.

Cain swiveled to face his friend. "I'm not going to let her get snatched again."

"That's not what I meant."

Cain's jaw tightened. "Yes, I'm treading carefully." As carefully as he could.

"It looks like you two are...getting close."

"So I can keep her safe."

"Will you keep her safe from yourself?"

Cain scowled. "I won't hurt her, Steel." His tone was almost a snarl.

Killian grunted.

"We get this mission done, then I'll just be a distant memory to Jet." The words tasted like a lie.

"Is that what you really want?"

Anger burst through him. He never got what he really wanted. Sometimes, he got a taste of it, then it was yanked away.

"You want me close to her, or to leave her alone? You're sending me mixed signals, Steel."

Killian made a sound. "I don't fucking know, Cain. I just don't want her hurt." He paused. "Or you."

Cain already knew that leaving her would destroy him. "She wants things...things I'm not capable of."

Killian stared at him through the darkness. "We never know what we're capable of until we try, Cain."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Devyn whistled. “Girl, you are going to blow his mind.”

Jet ran her hands down her dress. “I know.”

It was deep green, and covered with shimmering beads. It was short, hugged every curve, and dipped into a super-low V in front. Every time she moved, the light made it glitter. Her hair was styled to look windblown. It’d taken her hours to get right. She had smoky-dark eyes, and red lips. The heels on her strappy, black shoes were wicked spikes that did awesome things for her legs.

Tonight, she wasn’t cute. She was hot.

“Here are your earrings.” Devyn held her hand out. “One of them has a receiver embedded in it. Cain will hear everything said in your vicinity, if you get separated.”

Jet slipped the shiny, diamond dangles into her ears. They were nice, but she’d kill for something with a little more color and sparkle.

She turned. Devyn was wearing a black-and-gold cocktail dress. It was sleeveless, showing off her firm arms, and black at the top. Gold glittered on it from the waist down, until the dress was all gold at the short hem.

They were both a stark contrast to the grand, old-world décor of the hotel bedroom. There was a huge bed with a plush, upholstered bedhead, a fireplace, and glittering chandelier overhead. Outside the French doors, the city lights glinted off the lake.

It was easy to forget just how dangerous this mission was. And just how dangerous the man waiting for her in the living area was.

“Tell me he’s not going to break my heart,” Jet said.

Devyn’s smile slipped. “I can’t, Hex. I love him. I love you. I love you

together. You make him smile, and the way he watches you..."

"How does he watch me?" Jet whispered.

"With wonder and need, and possession. But he's..."

"A lone wolf," Jet said, her chest tight. "Who can't be part of a pack."

"He's never had a family, or love. And I think a part of him is scared and believes it's not for him." Devyn's nose wrinkled. "I know the feeling."

Yes, Devyn had run from her connection with Killian for a long time.

Jet bit her lip. Cain might break her heart, whether he wanted to or not.

Devyn gripped her arm. "Don't let him mess it up. He wants it. He deserves it, and you deserve it, too."

Jet straightened. She needed to be brave. For the man she was falling for, and for herself.

No compromises.

She nodded. "All right, let's wow our guys, because Killian is going to go bananas over you in that dress."

"Hawke doesn't go bananas." Devyn smiled. "At least, not on the outside." She put a hand on her hip, her smile sly. "But he'll show me his appreciation later."

Jet laughed. "Okay, let's put this bad guy out of business."

They headed out of the bedroom. When Jet got her first look at Killian and Cain, she almost went bananas, herself.

God, they were devastating men. They both wore tuxedos that were perfectly tailored to them, lovingly showing off their tall, muscled frames.

Killian looked like a dark god, ready to go to war. His gaze locked on his wife, then traveled lazily over her. His dark eyes were filled with pure heat.

Cain turned, a smile on his face. He was the trickster god, cunning and sly, ready to charm a woman to get what he wanted.

But as she watched, his smile bled away, leaving raw desire behind.

He headed for her.

"Hawke, why don't we wait outside?" Devyn said.

"Why?" There was a frown in Killian's voice.

"Because." Devyn tugged on his arm.

Cain scooped Jet off her feet. "Fucking beautiful. Too beautiful."

"Shade—" Killian growled.

But Jet couldn't look away from Cain. He ignored Killian and kissed her.

Pure bliss. She made a sound of appreciation, wrapped herself around him, and kissed him back.

“What the fuck?” Killian said. “No. *No.*”

“Hawke, you have your finger on the pulse of everything, and are hyper-observant,” Devyn said. “You can’t have missed this.” She gave a low laugh. “Maybe you purposely missed it.”

“I didn’t,” Killian growled. “But he needs his head in the fucking game right now so he can keep her safe.”

“So you and I didn’t get together during a dangerous mission?”

“Devyn—”

“Come on, Hawke.” A door closed.

Jet was too lost in the kiss to see where they went. When Cain lifted his head, she was breathing hard.

“I don’t want Weber, or anyone, to look at you,” he said. “That dress needs a few more inches on the hem.”

She rolled her eyes. “They can look, but only you can touch.”

He groaned and set her down, although he didn’t let her go. His hands roamed over her, down to the bottom of her dress. “What’s underneath?”

She smiled. God, he made her feel sexy. “Why don’t you find out?”

With a growl, he slid the skirt of her dress up, and his hand snaked underneath. Fingers danced up her thigh, and she bit her lip and shivered.

When he found her tiny thong, he gave it a tug, then palmed one ass cheek. “I’ll rip this off you later.”

“Promise?”

There were all sorts of dark promises in his eyes, then his face hardened. “Come on, pixie. Let’s get this over with.”

She gripped his arm. “It’s going to be okay, Cain.”

He smiled at her. “I know. I always get the job done.”

She could pick his fake smiles now. She stepped into him, her chest brushed against his. “We’re all going to get this job done. Together. We stop Weber, keep the drone tech safe, we come back here, and fuck like monkeys.”

His smile turned a little lopsided, but now it was genuine. “Monkeys?”

“Yes.” She lifted her chin. “I have an IUD.”

His eyes flashed. “Really?”

“And I had a health check recently. I’m clean and a hundred percent healthy. And I took the liberty of hacking your health record.”

His gaze narrowed. “You hacked the CIA? And you managed to find my records?”

“It wasn’t easy. And don’t worry, I highly doubt anyone else could do it, or would know who the records belong too.” She cocked her head. “Unless you’ve been having wild, unprotected sex lately, you’re clean too.”

He tugged her so her breasts pressed firmly against him. He lowered his head, his mouth hovering over hers. “I haven’t been having wild sex with anyone since I set eyes on a feisty, smart hacker goddess.”

Her heart did a hard *thump-thump*. “Good.” God, her voice was husky. “I didn’t find your last name in there, though. Care to tell me what it is?”

That sexy smile broke over his face. “Nope. Now, let’s get this done so we can get to the monkey sex part of the evening.”

He led her out of the suite, and they found Killian scowling at them.

“You hurt her, you know the consequences.”

Jet was both annoyed and warmed at Killian’s concern. “Killian—”

Cain nodded. “And I’ll let you.”

She rolled her eyes. *Men.*

There was a limousine waiting for them. Soon, they were seated on the plush seats, driving through Geneva’s elegant neighborhoods. She caught glimpses of the lake and the spectacular view. As they approached Weber’s estate, her nerves ratcheted up.

Please let this go smoothly.

“You’ve got the chip?” Cain asked.

She patted her sparkly black bag with the chip inside. She also had her phone. It looked normal, but had some undetectable upgrades, and all her favorite programs on it. Everything she needed to hack a computer system.

Finally, the limo drove through some grand metal gates—which Jet noted were flanked by several guards—and down a long driveway through manicured gardens. It disgorged them in front of Weber’s grand home she now knew had been built in the 18th century.

“Oh, wow.” Jet stood and stared. She wasn’t sure where to look first. The huge fountain. The enormous house. The other guests—all looking elegant and rich. Her gaze followed the sweep of lawn toward the stunning view of the lake. Perched on the edge of the water was a building that looked as fancy as the house—two large structures joined by a bridge. She realized it was a boat house.

Cain held out his arm. He was so damn handsome. “My lady.”

She slid her arm through his and smiled. It was like they were just a regular couple out for a night of fun.

And not a mission of utmost importance.

She swallowed, willing the ball in her gut to dissolve. *Get the job done, and go home. They had this.*

THEY CIRCLED THE PARTY. The room was large and sumptuously decorated. Weber had no desire to be coy about his wealth. There were glossy parquet wood floors, ornate crown molding on the ceilings, and large windows overlooking the lake.

Cain nabbed two flutes of champagne from a roving server, and handed one to Jet. She was fidgety, and trying to hide her nerves.

She took a big gulp. “Mmm, that’s good.” She leaned into him.

“It should be, for a thousand dollars a bottle.”

“Jeez.” She looked at the glass with wide eyes, then took another sip. Then she scanned the party. “God, how do you do this every day?”

“Sip champagne?”

“Ha-ha. No, the—” she waved a hand and lowered her voice “—being switched on and vigilant. My nerves are shot already.”

“You get used to it. Or become numb to it.”

She looked at his face.

He shrugged and sipped again. “Come on.”

They kept moving. The giant glass windows acted like ornate picture frames for the well-lit grounds and the lake. Inside, Cain noted it was a mixed crowd. He recognized a few wealthy European businesspeople, several socialites, and a few people from Interpol’s watchlist. He spotted Killian and Devyn socializing on the other side of the room.

Then, he saw Weber heading their way.

“Ready?” Cain murmured.

Jet froze for a second, then relaxed. “Yes.”

“That’s my girl,” he murmured.

Weber smiled. “Sara, are you enjoying the party?”

They both turned to face the man. He looked urbane, with an expensive tuxedo and manicured hands. There was no outward sign that he was an international criminal.

“Markus, yes.” Jet smiled. “Your home is stunning. And the party is

amazing.”

“I’m glad you’re enjoying it.” Weber looked at Cain.

“Oh, Markus Weber, this is my colleague and friend, Jake Moore.”

Cain offered his hand. “Your place is mind-boggling. That view of the lake...” He shook his head and fell into the role of an amazed tech guy.

“You work at Dynathon too?” Weber asked.

Like he wouldn’t have already run Jake Moore. “Yeah, I’m not quite the genius that Sara is. I’m just a computer guy. Programming.”

Weber nodded.

Cain got the hint. “Sara, looks like you need a fresh drink. More champagne?”

“You aren’t expecting me to say no, are you?”

It was more a Hex comment than something Sara Mardis would say, not to mention the sassy edge. Jet seemed to realize and froze for a second.

She shot Markus a sheepish look. “Sorry, inside joke. This company Christmas party one year...”

Weber nodded politely.

“Markus, can I get you a drink?” Cain asked.

“I’m fine, thank you.” He held up his half full wine glass.

Cain wandered toward the bar.

“Do you have what I need, Sara?”

Weber’s voice came through Cain’s earpiece. There was a mic receiver in Jet’s earring.

“I do.” Her voice shook a little. Perfect for a regular woman being backed into a corner. “The money, first.”

“Of course.” Cain turned and saw Weber pull out his phone. “The transfer is done.”

Jet pulled her phone out of her bag and tapped. “Oh... Wow.”

“It’s all there, as promised. Now, your end of the deal.”

“Right.” Jet pulled the chip out and handed it over.

Weber took it smoothly, smiling as he pocketed it. “A pleasure doing business with you, Sara. I will of course verify the data before you leave. Please enjoy the rest of the party.”

“I will. I want to look at more of your lovely home. I might be in the market for a lakeside home of my own.” She gave a nervous laugh.

Weber smiled and gave her a nod before he walked away. Some other people caught his attention.

Cain headed back toward Jet.

“Shade.” Killian’s voice in his ear. “Weber’s office is on the second floor, east side. Overlooking the lake.”

Clearly Killian and Devyn had done some exploring.

“Acknowledged,” he murmured.

“Roving guards inside the house,” Devyn said. “I can’t see a set pattern to their movements.”

Shit. That meant the guards were well-trained and would be harder to avoid.

“Got it.” Cain returned to Jet.

She smiled at him. “I rocked it.”

“I heard. Ready for Stage II?”

She licked her lips. Those plump, tempting lips. “I’m not going to get any readier.”

He took her hand. He saw some guests on the stairs. He snagged the attention of one of the white-suited servers. “Excuse me, where are the restrooms?”

“Upstairs, sir.”

“Thank you.”

Cain and Jet moved up the curved stairs with their ornate, black, iron railing. At the top, he pulled her down a hall. He saw some women near the restrooms. Then Cain turned left instead of right toward the restrooms.

He pushed Jet against the wall and nibbled on her lips.

“*Oh.*” She gripped his arms.

“We need to look like an amorous, tipsy couple looking for some privacy. In case we’re caught.”

“Right.” She bit his lip and rubbed her body against him.

Shit. His cock responded. He had to keep some control.

“Come on.” He towed her down the hallway. There were no guards in sight.

They checked a few rooms. Nothing but empty guestrooms. Then they reached a door with a fancy lock on it. It had to be Weber’s office. Cain tested the door and found it locked. He slid a hand into the pocket of his jacket and pulled out a lighter, then twisted it. Lock picks popped out.

“Ooh, very Bond,” she said.

It only took him a few seconds to pick the lock. He glanced down the hall again. All clear. The door clicked open, and he nudged her inside. Once they

were in the spacious office, he closed the door and locked it behind them.

He crossed the space and turned on the lamp on the big, sleek desk. There were shelves on the walls, but no collectibles except for an antique globe and a hunk of black rock.

There was a large painting on the wall— a Gustav Klimt, if Cain wasn't mistaken.

Jet skirted the desk. God, she looked so edible in that bloody green dress. She pulled on thin gloves and leaned over the computer. She nudged the mouse and got to work.

"I need a minute." She frowned. "Hmm, his system is good. Security is top-notch." She pulled out her phone and set it beside the computer.

"Can you break it?" Cain asked.

She shot him a pointed look. "It's good, but I'm better."

He grinned. "Oh, I know."

Her fingers danced and he heard her mutter to herself.

God, he wanted to fuck her, right there on Weber's desk. *No*. He had to get her safe first.

If they got caught in here, Weber would kill them without asking any questions.

"I'm in!" She did a little shimmy, her dress glittering. "Copying the data now."

"You're one in a million, Jet Adler."

She winked at him. "I know."

CHAPTER TWELVE

A *lmost there.*

Jet watched the data upload on her phone. She was sending it to an encrypted Sentinel Security server. She scanned the contents on the screen.

“God, Cain, Weber has a deal to sell the drone technology to an Albanian crime syndicate.” She felt queasy. They *had* to get it back. They had to stop Weber.

She hated the idea that the tech might fall into the wrong hands.

Cain stood near the door, listening.

“There’s a list of a ton of other stuff on here.” *Shit.* Deals for weapons, technology, government secrets.

“Jet, get down.” His voice was low as he quickly crossed the room. “Get your phone.”

“What?”

“Someone’s coming.”

“Crap.” She snatched the phone off the desk and put the computer to sleep. “The lamp—”

The door handle started to turn.

“No time.” He circled the desk and grabbed her, then yanked her under the sleek wood. He pulled her close and they pressed together in the cramped space.

The office door opened, and she heard footsteps.

Jet tensed. Her heart pounded so hard she was sure whoever was in there would hear it. Damn, if they were caught in here...

Weber was not a good guy. If he found them here, they’d be killed.

She held her breath, panic clouding her head.

Then she felt fingers on her jaw and looked into Cain's brown eyes. They were steady, calm.

Cain was with her. He wouldn't let anything happen to her.

She heard the guard mutter and turn off the lamp, and then after an excruciating three seconds, he stomped across the room and left.

When the office door closed, Jet released a shaky breath.

"Good?" Cain asked.

She nodded.

"Have you got all the data?"

She pulled out the phone and checked. "Yes. Let me make sure I didn't leave a trace on his system."

She crawled out from under the desk and checked Weber's computer, then nodded.

"We're good." She pulled off her gloves and shoved them in her handbag, sliding them into a hidden pocket.

They headed for the door.

Cain cracked it and listened. He peered out. "It's clear. Let's move."

She followed him, trying to move quietly. They needed to get back to the main area where the guests were allowed, then they'd be free.

Adrenaline was surging through her. She really had no idea how he did this all the time. She felt like a jittery mess.

Halfway down the hall, they turned left and took another hallway.

Nearly there.

Suddenly, Cain stopped, and she ran into the back of him.

"Fuck," he muttered. He tried a door nearby. It was locked.

Frowning at him, she opened her mouth to ask what was wrong, but that's when she heard the steady tread of footsteps coming.

Shit. She took a step back. But she heard the crackle of a radio behind her. There was *another* guard coming from the other direction.

There was nowhere for them to hide.

She glanced at the locked door, but knew it would take them too long to pick the lock on the door.

Cain grabbed her and whirled them. She swallowed her gasp. He pinned her to the wall and kissed her.

Oh. Despite the circumstances, she couldn't help but kiss him back. Desire mixed with the fear, nerves, and adrenaline. It was a potent combination. She wrapped one leg around his hip and rocked against him.

He was hard. She felt the bulge of his cock pressed right between her legs.

“Got to make it convincing,” he murmured against her lips.

What? Oh, right. The guards. She nodded.

He reached under her dress, and with an impressive maneuver, ripped her thong off.

Oh, God. She shifted her leg and felt him grab the scrap of green silk. He left it tangled around her ankle.

For the guards to see.

Then he kissed her again. Jet felt hot, on fire. This was crazy, but she didn't care.

She let her mouth travel across his jaw, down his neck. She pulled his hair free of its tie, the tawny silk fell around his broad shoulders.

He hitched her higher and she felt him fumbling between them. The guards' steps were getting louder from both directions.

Then she realized Cain had opened his trousers.

Her belly contracted. “Cain?”

“It has to be convincing, or we're dead. It has to be real.” His gaze burned into her.

Oh. God. Desire felt like a blowtorch to her skin.

“Jet?” He kept staring at her.

She knew he was asking permission.

“Do it.” She bit her lip and tilted her hips. “Do it, Cain.”

He shoved her dress out of his way, and then she felt the thick head of his cock brush her folds. She moaned.

“Fuck, pixie. I've never done it bare. Never been inside someone with nothing between us.”

“Me neither,” she whispered shakily. “But we're safe. Do it.”

His gaze locked on her, the crackle of the radio was getting louder.

He surged inside her.

She made a strangled sound. He was big, and she hadn't had sex for a long time. Every nerve ending was alive with sensation.

“I'm sorry,” he said.

“Don't be.” She gripped his shoulders. “Fuck me.”

He pulled back, and she saw something snap in his gaze. He rammed into her.

Jet cried out, clutching him. Impossibly, he was hitting the perfect spot

inside her and she felt her orgasm building.

“Hey, no one’s allowed back here,” a voice said in accented English.

Cain didn’t stop, he kept her pinned to the wall, his big cock sawing inside her.

She felt the guards watching, and didn’t care. All she could feel was Cain.

On the next thrust, Jet came. She shuddered and moaned, body shaking, and drowned in the sharp pleasure.

DAMMIT TO HELL.

Gritting his teeth, Cain fought back his own raging need. Shielding Jet from the guards’ view, he felt her coming on his cock. She looked so beautiful.

He pulled out and her legs dropped to the ground. He was still as hard as steel. He shoved her dress down and tucked himself away.

She was a little unsteady, her face flushed. Hell, he was unsteady too. Blood pounded through his system, his cock was bloody painful.

“You’re not supposed to be back here,” a guard said.

Jet buried her face against Cain’s shirt. He managed to get his shit together.

“Sorry, got carried away.” Cain glanced over his shoulder at the man. Shot him a cocky grin.

One guard was fighting a smile, while the older one was scowling. He wouldn’t be so easily fooled.

Cain crouched and grabbed Jet’s torn panties. He pulled them free and stuffed them in his pocket. “My girl here is sweet, and I couldn’t resist.”

He heard her make a sound, but she kept her head down.

Shit, was she mad? He’d just fucked her against the wall in front of these guys. Had he hurt her?

His gut curdled.

“Let me see your bag,” the older guard ordered.

Jet opened it. The man looked at her phone and lipstick.

He grunted. “Get back to the party.”

Cain lifted his chin and grabbed her hand.

Her heels clicked on the floor as they hurried down the hallway. Soon,

they were back near the stairs. That's when he saw her shoulders shaking.

Shit. His chest filled with concrete. "Jet..."

A giggle escaped her. He froze. She looked up, laughter in her eyes.

Shaking his head, he felt the pressure in his chest ease a little. He towed her through the party and outside.

As soon as they were in the warm night air, her laughter erupted. "Oh my God, we, you..."

"I thought I'd *hurt* you." He stomped toward the limo. There was a damn fleet of them, and he searched for theirs.

"I came hard, Cain. Did you miss that?"

"No." Their driver saw them, and lifted a hand. As the driver slipped inside the vehicle, Cain grabbed Jet and spun her. He pressed her against the side of the car.

She let out a low gasp.

His lips touched hers. "You came, but I didn't." He rubbed his still hard cock against her.

Desire flared in her eyes. "Poor baby."

"Keep it up, and you'll earn more punishment."

He saw another flare. Damn, how could she be so perfect? He opened the back of the limo and urged her inside.

"Hotel," he barked as he put up the privacy screen between them and the driver. Then he pulled out his phone and put it on speaker.

"Shade," Killian's voice said.

"It's done. Jet did the handoff, and she got the data off Weber's system. We almost got caught, but the guards bought our story."

"Okay. Devyn and I will stay a little longer, so we don't arouse suspicion. Tell Hex to get some sleep, we'll meet in the morning. Tomorrow, we make a plan, get that chip back, and take Weber down."

Cain had no plans to let her get any sleep. Desire was now a constant throb in his blood.

"Stay safe," he told Killian.

"They're okay?" Jet asked.

He nodded. "They'll see us in the morning."

"All right—"

He pulled her onto his lap. She straddled him and their mouths clashed.

"God, *God*," she panted as she rocked her hips.

He cupped her ass and squeezed. "That wasn't how I wanted our first

time to go.”

She bit his jaw. “It was memorable.” Another nip. “Besides—” she met his gaze “—until you come too, it’s technically not our first time.” She shimmied against him, grinding on his cock.

Cain groaned. “It’s not going to be in the back of the limousine either.”

“You sure?” she asked breathlessly.

“I’m sure.” He tipped her onto the seat, flat on her back. “I need to keep you busy so you can’t tempt me.”

She smiled up at him.

His heart clenched. She was so pure, so happy. This wasn’t a fake smile, or a coy one, or a sultry one. Those were usually the smiles women gave him.

Jet was so much more, so real.

He shouldn’t be touching her, but there was no way he could stop. He pulled the neckline of her dress down. Her breasts spilled free, covered by the barest of black lace.

He leaned down and sucked one pink nipple into his mouth.

“*Oh.*” She arched up.

He took his time. He lavished one breast with attention, then the other.

Her hands slid into his hair, pulling hard enough that he felt pain in his scalp. He liked it. He slid a hand between her legs. She was wet.

He remembered how tight she’d felt. Sliding into her felt like his version of heaven.

“*Yes, Cain.*”

He pumped two fingers inside her slick pussy. “I want my cock back in here.”

“*Yes. Please. Now.*”

“Next time, I’m coming in here. Filling you up.” He gave her clit a tweak. She cried out. “*So close.*”

He leaned over and kissed her. “You’re not coming yet.”

Her face was flushed with need.

“This is your punishment. You have to wait. Soon, you can come on my cock.”

“Cain—” Her voice was a growl.

That’s when he realized the limo had stopped. He pulled her dress skirt down and the neckline up. She still looked debauched.

He opened the door and pulled her out. She trotted behind him, but couldn’t keep up with his pace.

Cain swiveled, then lifted her and tossed her over his shoulder.

He ignored the shocked looks of the guests at the fancy hotel and strode to the elevator.

“Cain.” She squirmed. “If you flash my girl parts at anyone—”

He caressed her ass, and gave it a quick slap. “Behave. I’ll make sure no one sees anything I don’t want them to see.” In the elevator, he touched his key card to the controls. The car started upward.

He wasn’t sure how much longer he could hold on.

He needed to take her, claim her.

The elevator slowed and dinged. When the doors opened, he strode down the hall toward the door to their suite. He held the card to the lock. As he stepped inside, he saw the staff had left some lamps on.

Then Cain took two steps and dropped to his knees. He laid her on the parquet wood floor. It was hard, and she deserved soft, but he couldn’t wait.

Not this time.

She looked up at him, as desperate as he was.

He gripped the neckline of her dress and tore it down the middle. She gasped, her eyes flickering.

That had turned his pixie on.

“What do you want, Jet?”

He ripped off his jacket, then unbuttoned his shirt and shrugged it off. He opened his belt, lowered his zipper.

Her gaze followed his movements, then flicked back up. “You. I want you.”

No words had ever meant more to him.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

She stared up at the gorgeous male kneeling over her.

He looked like a dark angel fallen to Earth. About to ravish and possess.

Jet was so ready to be possessed. She ran her gaze over his hard chest and abdomen. He was ridiculous with all those sculpted ridges. She knew they were from his job, not just the gym.

His eyes were hot and hungry as they roamed over her. She was totally bare for him. When he'd torn her dress off, it was the hottest thing.

"Christ, you're beautiful," he gritted out.

Tears pricked her eyes. No one had ever said that, and meant it. She could see that this man—this beautiful, driven man who could have anyone—meant it.

"Watching you tonight—" he dragged a hand down the middle of her body, and cupped her between her legs "—made me so hard." He leaned over her, kissed her.

She moaned, her tongue stroking his. He kissed her like the apocalypse was coming. Like he needed her more than anything.

He made her feel like she was on fire. Like it was only the two of them in the entire world.

The hand between her legs stroked, two fingers sliding inside her.

"I'm going to fill this tight, little pussy with my cock."

Jet moaned and arched up. She loved the husky edge to his voice.

"I barely got a taste of you before. I need more. I need you, Jet."

He curled his fingers inside her, and hit a spot. She reared her hips up, an inarticulate sound breaking free of her throat. "Cain... Please." She gripped

his arms. *“Please.”*

“So tight, pixie. I can feel you clenching on my fingers. And you’re so wet. This is all for me.”

“Yes. For you. Touch me, dammit.”

“I am.”

“With your cock.”

His smile was devilish. He opened his pants and freed his cock.

She wanted—no needed—him inside her. She licked her lips. She wanted him bare again. Not a single thing between them.

He lazily stroked his cock, then reached out and tweaked her nipple. She gasped. Every part of her was so sensitive.

“Can you handle this?” He stroked his beautiful cock again.

“Yes. Please fuck me, Cain.”

He leaned over her. The broad head of his cock rubbed between her legs, through her slick folds. She shuddered. Need was a constant roar in her head.

The big, fat tease rubbed his cock against her clit.

“Cain...”

He met her gaze. “I’ve got you, pixie.”

His cock pressed to her folds, and he entered her, just an inch. She felt the stretch.

Then with a single thrust, he buried his cock inside her.

Jet sucked in a breath. *Oh God.*

He’d been inside her earlier, but now, she fully appreciated his girth. How he filled her up.

“Fuck... Jet. I... It’s perfect, you’re perfect.” Cain moved, sliding out, then surging back in.

The floor was hard beneath her, but she didn’t care. She wanted the bruises. She wanted the marks. His marks.

She shifted her legs, gripping his sides with her thighs. The deep, relentless strokes drove the air out of her with every thrust.

“I knew it,” he gritted out. “I knew it would be like this. That I’d never get enough of you.”

One big hand moved down her body, found her clit.

Jet cried out. With his steady, powerful thrusts, and his thumb swirling on her clit, she didn’t have a chance.

Her orgasm crashed over her, tearing through her body. She screamed as waves of pleasure hit her. It was too much, but not enough. She never wanted

it to stop.

“Not done with you yet, pixie.” His voice was deep, dark.

His hands slid under her body and pulled her upright, his cock still inside her. He sat back, pulling her to straddle his strong body.

They were face-to-face.

He used his strength to slide her up and down on his hard cock. Jet gripped his shoulders and found her rhythm, fucking him hard.

His face was taut, his lips curled. He continued to fuck her, his fingers digging into her hips. Hers dug into the broad slope of his shoulders.

“Pixie—”

“Come, Cain. Come inside me.”

The friction of his cock drove her over the edge again, and her second orgasm hit, his lips crashing against hers. It was a desperate kiss, and it felt like a firestorm was raging around them.

Then he thrust her down hard, his cock filling her to the point of pain. Cain threw his head back and let out a low roar. She watched every muscle in that magnificent body of his strain. And she felt his cock throb, felt the warmth of his release fill her.

Jet collapsed against him.

Of course, he caught her. She had no doubt he would.

His hands ran up her back. They were both slick with sweat.

A little giggle escaped her. She’d had her clothes torn off her and been fucked roughly on the floor. She’d never felt so good.

His hand tightened in her hair. “You’re mine, pixie.”

The words shivered through her. “Then that makes you mine too, Cain.” She smiled. “Cain Cavanagh.”

His lips curve. “You uncovered my last name.”

“I have skills, too, you know.” She didn’t tell him that she’d been running certain hacks and searches for weeks now.

He kissed her. “Oh, I know.”

“Why Cavanagh?” she asked.

“Saw it in a newspaper. Can’t even remember who it was talking about, but the guy looked rich, important. The name sounded important.”

She smoothed a hand over his hair. “I like it.”

“I don’t get to use it much.” He stilled. “I’m still not right for you.”

She rolled her eyes. “I say what’s right for me, and it’s you. The next step, you’ll be declaring your undying love for me.”

He smiled and it was sexy as hell. “How about a shower where I lick your pussy until you come on my face, then a big soft bed?” He stroked her jaw. “I didn’t intend to fuck you on the floor.”

“I liked it. Liked that you couldn’t wait.”

He rose with her in his arms, and she held on tight.

Her mouth dropped open. “Jeez, I can barely get myself off the floor, let alone while holding someone else.”

“You barely weigh a thing, pixie.” As she snuggled into him, he headed for the bathroom.

She could get very used to this.

THEY HADN’T CLOSED the curtains the night before, and the early-morning sunshine was in his eyes. Not that he cared, not when Jet’s head was between his legs, and she was sucking his cock.

“*Fuck.*” Cain bucked his hips up.

He heard her make a choked sound, and he started to pull back. But her fingers dug into his thighs, and she sucked harder. Her eyes met his, her gaze hot.

So damn beautiful. Then his eyes rolled back in his head, and he came. He groaned, his hand clenching in her silky hair. Damn. *Damn.*

For a second, his vision dimmed, the pleasure so good it hurt.

Jet slid her mouth off his cock with a pop, grinning at him. Her lips were swollen, her hair messy, and her cheeks flushed.

He yanked her up his body, and she let out a squeak, but then melted into him.

She’d given him access to every part of her during the night. To all of her small, curvy body.

He cupped one breast, loving the weight of it. He flicked his fingers over the nipple. She made a humming sound and squirmed.

She’d kept up with him. She’d taken everything he’d given her, and demanded more. Everything had been hot, hard, and almost desperate. She’d held on for dear life, and clearly loved it.

But looking at her, that real beauty, he wanted to give her more. He wanted to worship her.

He kept caressing her breasts, then lowered his head and kissed her. He took his time exploring her mouth.

He knew reality would intrude sooner than he wanted, but he wasn't rushing this. Not this time.

He shifted her, and brought her breast to his mouth. He sucked her nipple until she was writhing against him.

"My beautiful pixie," he murmured. He laid her on the sheets, and in his head, he imagined he saw pink in her hair.

He stroked his hands over her body, every dip and curve.

"Do you need me?" He didn't mean to say the words aloud. They slipped out and his gut tightened.

Her gaze locked on his like a laser target.

"I need you," she said. "All of you. Always."

The words ignited something inside him. He couldn't deny their connection. That invisible strand he could almost feel between them.

Could she love him? Could this perfect, smart creature one day love a man who'd never been loved?

She pressed into him, her mouth to his throat. Her teeth scraped over his pulse point.

Cain pushed her back. He moved his mouth down her body, nipping her belly before he nudged her thighs apart. "I'm hungry for a taste of something sweet."

He licked her and she bucked her pelvis against his mouth. Her cries were sweet and eager.

"Fuck, Jet, you're so wet."

"I liked sucking your big cock."

God, he loved that sassy tone. He sucked on her clit, and she let out a throaty moan.

"Don't stop...*please*."

He buried two fingers inside her and kept using his mouth. He'd be happy to stay right here all day.

"I'm going to come," she whimpered, her hands digging into the bed.

"Not yet."

"Cain—"

"Soon, pixie." He knelt and flipped her over. That sweet body. He stroked the line of her back. Her skin was a shade of gold he'd memorized. He stroked lower, over her ass and dipped between her cheeks.

He found her warm and wet pussy again. She squirmed against the sheets. Cain moved over her, his cock already hard again.

He eased into her from behind. She moaned, her hands fisting in the sheets. “*Cain.*”

“Feel me.” He bent over and nipped the back of her neck. “No one else is ever getting in here again. Mine. Only my cock.”

She writhed. “*Yes.*”

He gritted his teeth, desire raking his gut. He had to fight not to come. She felt so damn good.

He slowed his thrusts; he wasn’t rushing this time. He slid a hand beneath her and found her clit. “How’s that, pixie?”

“You know it’s good.”

“How much do you want me?”

Her legs spread wider, and he picked up the pace.

Fuck, he loved watching his cock spearing inside her, watching the way her body took him. He wouldn’t last much longer.

He stroked her swollen clit. “Be a good pixie and come for me now.”

She made a humming noise, and he felt her body tightening.

His next thrust was harder, and she shattered. She bucked and shivered, his name on her lips.

Cain shoved deeper, his control once again in shreds. Did she know that she owned him? The covert spy Shade only had one master now. One person he answered to—Jet “Hex” Adler.

On the next thrust, he came. He grunted, loud and deep. His cock throbbed, and he spilled inside her.

Chest heaving, he bent down and kissed her shoulder. She turned her head, and he pressed his lips to hers.

“Cain,” she breathed happily.

He’d never, ever get tired of this. Jet soft and sexy beneath him, filled with his come and murmuring his name.

The dickhead who’d cheated on her had no idea of the prize he’d had and let go. Thank God.

The idea of any man touching what was Cain’s had dark thoughts stirring. It would be so easy to make the asshole disappear.

“Hey.” She nudged him. “Wherever you just went, come back. You’re still inside me, so only thoughts of me.”

He smiled. “I’m always thinking of you.”

“Good. Now, I have a very important mission for you.”

He frowned. What the hell did she need? For him to break into something, or—

She touched her tongue to his lip. “I’m starving, and I really want fresh-baked croissants.”

He grinned at her and squeezed her ass.

“Real Parisian croissants, Cain. I know you must know where to get them.”

“I might know a place.”

“Where?”

He nipped her lips. “Spy secrets, pixie. Ones you’ll never get out of me.”

Her gaze narrowed, and she ran a hand down his chest. “I could try.”

Fuck. He’d never teased and joked in bed before. He cupped her jaw. He liked it. A lot.

But not nearly as much as he liked her.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Oh my God. These croissants were so delicious and flaky and yum. Jet licked her fingers.

Cain was a miracle worker.

She looked up. He was sitting at the table across from her, in cargo pants and T-shirt. The black cotton stretched over his chest, the armbands cutting into his biceps. Hot. His liquid gaze was on her, watching her eat. She shivered. Her belly was full of croissants, and now she was adding desire to it.

This man, this fine, hot man, had worshiped her during the night. She deliberately licked her finger again, and his gaze latched onto it.

“Jet,” he growled.

She grinned. It was so fun and sexy teasing him like this.

And she was in love with him.

She jolted and almost toppled a glass of orange juice. “Oops.” She caught it, taking some deep breaths.

“You okay?”

“Yep. You came through with croissants, so I’m a happy woman.” She knew she was talking too fast.

“Not to mention eight orgasms.”

Eight? Wow. “They weren’t bad. It’s all a bit hazy.”

He leaned closer. “Do I need to refresh your memory?” His hand slid up her thigh. She was wearing leggings, but she still felt his touch. She squeezed her legs together.

“Do you have stubble burn here?” He caressed her inner thigh.

“Why don’t you check?”

His dark eyes flared, and he started to shift, just as there was a knock at the door.

“Dammit.” He rose, adjusting the crotch of his cargo pants. He opened the door, and let Killian and Devyn in.

“You didn’t pick the lock,” he said.

“I thought we’d better not,” Devyn murmured with a grin.

“Morning.” Killian glanced at Jet. “Are you all right?”

She nodded.

Devyn looked at the table. “Ooh, croissants.” She picked up one, then looked at Jet. The redhead’s gaze narrowed, then she looked at Cain. A huge smile bloomed on her face.

Jet fought back a blush. There was no way her friend could know exactly what she and Cain had been doing.

“I see you two had a very good morning.” Devyn winked. “Enjoying... croissants.” She took a bite. “Damn, these are really good.”

“I went through Weber’s data,” Killian said. “Well done getting it off his computer.”

Jet felt a sudden flood of guilt. She’d barely given it any thought. She’d been too busy getting naked with Cain.

She cleared her throat, and pulled her tablet over. “I’ll take a closer look. Is there enough to bring him in?”

“I’ve talked with Interpol,” Killian said. “They’re putting the warrants together.”

“We’ve got to take him down soon, and get the drone data back.” Cain poured Jet a coffee, and handed it to her.

She smiled her thanks at him.

She sensed Killian watching them. God, she felt like a schoolgirl under the watchful eye of a strict dad. She sipped. Ah, caffeine.

Her tablet chimed and she looked at it. An alert had popped up and she frowned.

“Hex?” Killian prompted.

“Hold on.” She raced over to her laptop, and tapped the keyboard. “I bugged Weber’s phone line while we were there.”

Cain’s brows winged up. “When?”

“When we were in his office.”

He shook his head. “Damn, you’re good.”

Warmth hit her. “I know.” She skimmed the transcript of the call on the

screen. “Oh, fuck.”

“Hex, talk to us.” Killian moved closer.

She looked up, worry gnawing at her. “Weber made a call to the Red Clan.”

“Who’s the Red Clan?” Killian asked.

“The Albanian crime syndicate that’s buying the drone tech.”

All three of them stiffened.

“They’re setting a time to meet for the sale,” she continued.

“When?” Cain asked.

“Tomorrow afternoon.”

“Damn.” Cain turned, putting his hands on his hips. “We can’t let that tech fall into enemy hands.”

“I know.” Killian’s brow creased. “We need to arrest Weber and recover the data chip.” He looked at them. “As soon as possible.”

Cain nodded. “Can you light a fire under Interpol? Get the warrants sorted faster?”

“I’ll call them again, or pay them a visit, if I need to.”

“We need a Plan B if the warrants aren’t ready in time,” Devyn said.

“We sneak in and steal the data chip,” Killian said.

“But we’ll lose Weber.” Cain shook his head. “I can’t allow that.” He glanced at Jet, then looked away. “I’m authorized to ensure Weber is neutralized.”

Jet pulled in a breath. She’d heard whispers that Cain often acted as a CIA assassin when required.

What toll did that take? On a man who already thought he wasn’t good enough for a real life?

Well, she wasn’t letting him think that he had to only be the CIA’s boogeyman. She was going to love the hell out of him, show him differently.

“Let me see if I can get the warrants,” Killian said. “I like the idea of Weber in a cell.”

“Where’s the meet going to take place?” Cain asked.

Jet checked the screen. “At Weber’s estate. At the boathouse.”

Cain nodded. “Keep monitoring his calls. Let’s hope we have Weber in cuffs by this evening.”

CAIN HAD JUST GOTTEN off the phone when Killian walked into the bedroom.

He could hear Jet and Devyn talking in the living area. Jet laughed, and he fought back a smile.

“You’re in trouble,” Killian said.

Cain blinked. “Huh?”

“You. You’re standing there with hearts in your eyes because Hex laughed.”

“Fuck you, Hawke. You look the same whenever Devyn walks into the room.”

“I know.” Killian didn’t look upset about it. “You handle Jet with care.” Killian slid his hands into his pockets. “And I want to know your intentions.”

“Intentions? This isn’t the dark ages, and you aren’t her father.”

Killian just stared at him. Cain suddenly felt twitchy, and rubbed the back of his neck. “I don’t know. I want her, hell, I need her, but I’m sure as fuck not what she needs.”

“You should let her decide that.”

Cain shoved a hand through his hair. “I’m a killer, Killian.”

“So am I. That doesn’t stop me loving Devyn. It makes me better equipped to keep her safe.” He gave a rueful smile. “When she lets me.”

Cain needed to change the subject. “The warrants?”

Killian’s expression turned frustrated. “Nothing yet.”

Fuck. Cain wanted to take Weber down properly, not sneak in and kill him.

But he’d do what he had to. He always did. More lives would be lost if he didn’t stop Weber.

“Someone’s stalling the process,” he said.

Killian nodded. “Weber likely has friends in high places.”

Suddenly, Jet raced into the room with Devyn right behind her. Her face was pale.

Cain stiffened. “What’s wrong?”

“I just found that Weber has an encrypted email account. He keeps it hidden and I’m guessing he didn’t want it uncovered. He just emailed with the Red Clan. We have a problem. A *big* problem.”

Cain gripped her shoulder. “What is it?”

“He moved up the meet. The Albanians are coming in tonight. He’s selling the data *tonight* at the boathouse.”

Cain's blood ran cold. *Fuck*. He met Killian's gaze. "Someone tipped him off."

"We have to stop him," Killian said.

Cain nodded. "We have no choice. We have to go in, recover the tech and..."

"Neutralize Weber," Jet said matter-of-factly.

She kept her gaze steady on him. He saw understanding in her eyes.

"He's a bad man, Cain. He's hurt lots of people. For what? More money? Power?" She lifted her chin. "I've gone over his records. He's trafficked women and children, he's sold weapons to terrorists, he's stolen government secrets. He might sit in his fancy mansion doing his business, but his hands are dirty. He needs to go down."

"All right, let's plan," Devyn said.

"The rest of my team are already en route," Killian said.

Cain looked around. "What?"

"I called them in yesterday. Just in case. They land in two hours. Matteo, Nick, Hadley, Bram, and Boone Hendrix. I'm thinking about offering him a job, and want to see him in action again."

"He wouldn't take the job," Jet said. "I know he's good, but he's a loner. His time in Ghost Ops... He lost teammates. I don't think he wants another team. Plus, Atlas wouldn't like New York City."

"God, that dog is gorgeous," Devyn said. "Just like his owner."

Her husband scowled at her. "We're planning an important mission here, remember?"

Devyn smiled. "Right. Don't worry, Hawke, you're still the hottest guy I know."

Cain met Jet's gaze and rolled his eyes. She smiled.

"Don't forget it, Mrs. Hawke," Killian said.

Devyn leaned into her husband's side. "I never do. I know how lucky I am that you finally caught me."

Jet grinned at them.

"Okay, let's start preliminary planning. That way, we'll be ready when the team arrives." Cain's mind ticked over picturing Weber's estate. "Weber has a large private security force."

"We can handle it," Killian said.

Casually, Cain looked at Jet. "It's probably best that you stay here. Use the hotel as a base of operations."

Jet snorted. “Good try, Bond, but not on your life. I’m bringing several drones, and I’ll provide on-site comms and intel.”

Fuck. He didn’t like the idea of her near Weber, his guards, or these damn Albanians. He wrestled with his feelings.

She gave him a faint smile. “I’ve got this, Cain. And I trust my team. I trust you.” She touched his hand.

Screw it. He didn’t care that Killian and Devyn were in the room. He scooped her up and kissed her. She happily clung to him, her legs wrapping around his waist.

Killian made an unhappy, grumbling noise.

Devyn laughed at her husband.

“Mission,” Killian stressed.

Cain set Jet down, and stroked his thumb across her cheek.

Then they got to work.

KILLIAN HAD weapons and gear organized, that included vests and night vision goggles. They were being delivered shortly.

Cain and Killian pulled out the schematics of Weber’s estate, and cross-referenced them with detailed, aerial photos off a CIA satellite.

The dining room table had turned into their war planning table.

Cain glanced over and saw Jet hunched over her computer, fingers flying. Devyn sat on the couch, flicking through aerial photos.

There was a knock at the door, and Killian opened it.

The Sentinel Security team walked in.

“We made it.” Hadley, as elegant as ever, walked straight to Jet and pulled her into a hug. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine.”

“Hear you’ve been having a pretty wild time.” Nick pulled her into a hug as well.

“Oh, you know me,” Jet said. “Always the life of the party.”

Cain tensed. A part of him didn’t like seeing her in another man’s arms. Didn’t matter that the man had his own woman, and considered Jet a friend. Cain shoved his hands in his pockets and tried to chill.

Matteo and Bram hugged her as well. Cain kept a close eye on the

handsome Italian and rugged Irishman.

“How’s Addie?” Jet asked Bram. “Babies okay?”

“She’s fine.” A faint smile crossed the man’s face. “Gabbi and Lainie are keeping an eye on her while I’m away.”

The final man, who lingered by the door was Boone Hendrix. He was tall and fit, wearing well-worn jeans and a gray T-shirt. He was the kind of man that Cain was sure had been the golden boy of his high school and the quarterback of the football team.

Cain already knew the man was good at his job. He’d been Ghost Ops. The best of the best of the special forces from all branches of the military were selected for the Ghost Ops teams. They did the toughest, hardest missions.

Vander Norcross of Norcross Security had been the commander of a Ghost Ops team, and Boone had been one of his men.

Boone caught his gaze and nodded. “Shade.”

“Hendrix.”

“Right, listen up, people.” Killian stepped in front of the group. “Get comfortable. Hex is going to send data packs to your phones.”

Phones pinged around the room.

“It’s got all the intel we have on Markus Weber aka Flèche D’or, and his estate. He’s selling the chip tonight to an Albanian syndicate called the Red Clan. We need to stop it. Let’s get to work.”

Cain had to admit, the Sentinel Security team was good. He watched them plan, ask questions, and work together with ease. They knew each other, their strengths and weaknesses.

He mostly worked alone, in the shadows. What would it be like to be a part of a team like this?

Shaking his head, he forced himself to focus. He couldn’t think of anything except Weber right now.

Turning, he saw Jet had two large, heavy-duty cases out that the team had brought with them. One was smaller than the other. She pulled out pieces of equipment, and he realized they were drones—one large, and one small.

“What have you got there?” He brushed against her, needing the contact.

“Just testing my drones. This is Condor.” She pointed to the large drone. “And this is Swift. They’re for surveillance and thermal imaging.”

“This one’s big.” He eyed Condor. It looked like a spider with long legs and was probably one and half meters across.

“It’s a modified heavy lift cargo drone. It can carry heavier weight. It’s got one weapon, better cameras. I’ll have him high up. Swift can do the sneaky work.”

“I thought that was my job.”

“You’ll never be as sneaky as Swift.”

Cain stroked her hair. “You’ll stay safe?”

“Yes.” Her face turned serious. “Promise me that you will, too.”

He made it a habit to never make promises like that, because he had to achieve the mission, no matter what. But he wanted to. For Jet.

Her mouth flattened. “Come back to me, Cain, or I’ll be mad. I’ll hack every electrical device that you have. I’ll drain your bank accounts. I’ll—”

“I get the picture.” He lowered his head and kissed her.

And distracted her so that she forgot that he never made the promise.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The occupants of the SUV were quiet, as they headed toward Weber's estate.

"Okay?" Hadley reached down and touched Jet's leg. She realized she'd been bouncing it nervously up and down.

"I'm always nervy before a mission." Jet dredged up a smile for her friend. "You know me. Can't sit still."

"It's going to be fine."

Hadley was dressed all in black, and looking badass. Jet looked at the back of Cain's head, where he sat in the passenger seat. Killian was driving, and Devyn sat on the other side of Hadley. The rest of the team was in the second BMW SUV. Jet's drones were packed in the back of the vehicle behind her seat.

She pulled in a deep breath. He'd be fine. He was the legendary Shade.

But she remembered Devyn's words. Cain would do anything to achieve his mission. Her man was a hero, she knew that, even if he didn't.

They drove past large mansions in Vandoeuvres. Some were older, with historic charm, while others were modern and sleek.

They pulled to a stop on the side of the road, out of view of any houses. Here, the trees were tall and thick, proving the perfect cover. Everyone got out, and the second SUV pulled up beside them. She knew Weber's estate was just over the rise.

The rest of the team got out and Jet took a second to appreciate the pack of delicious badassness that they were. Nick and Matteo were grinning at each other, a complete contrast in looks. The muscled and bearded Nick with a tough edge, and the good-looking and charming Matteo. Bram, stoic as

always, stood at the back, but she sensed he was a little more relaxed. Having Addie, and babies on the way, had done that.

Boone Hendrix stood next to Bram. He was tall and broad, and always made her think he should be starring in a Marvel movie. The former special forces soldier had done some contract work for them, as well as their allies at Norcross Security.

“Okay, everyone listen up.” Killian stepped in front of the group. “Hex will stay here, with her drones in the air. We’ll converge on the boathouse from different directions. Everyone will work in pairs. I don’t need to remind you to cover your partner’s back.”

“Weber’s guards are good,” Cain said. “They aren’t just idiots off the street. They’re all ex-military, some former special forces. Stay sharp.”

“Disable them, tie them up,” Killian said. “The more we take out, the easier it will be to get to Weber and the chip.”

“If we’re good, we’ll have all this done before our Albanian friends arrive,” Devyn said.

Jet listened to them go over the plan, saw their set faces. No one looked nervous. They were all so used to this. Her gaze lingered on Cain. His face was impassive as he listened to Killian.

Blowing out a breath, she pulled the boxes with her drones out of the SUV. She huffed as she pulled Condor’s box out. She assembled both drones, and checked her controllers.

She heard the crunch of boots on the dirt and looked up. Cain stood there, watching her. The others were all nearby, checking their weapons and doing their usual mission prep.

“It’s time?” she asked.

“It’s time.”

She nodded. She needed to get her drones in the air. “Be careful, Bond.”

“It’s not my job to be careful.” His face was so serious.

Jet grabbed the front of his shirt. “It is now. You’re not a damn lone wolf anymore. You have friends who care about you. You have—” she wasn’t sure what word to use “—me. You have me. And I have plans for you, and I need you all in one piece for those.”

A faint smile crossed his lips.

“I want more orgasms.” She stepped closer, their bodies brushing. “I want more stubble burn. I might even want more spankings.”

“Pixie.” He lowered his head and brushed his lips over hers. “I can’t go

on a mission with a hard on.”

“Be safe, Cain Cavanagh. I’ll be waiting for you.”

She saw emotion working behind his eyes. She desperately wanted to tell him that she loved him, but she didn’t want to throw him off. He needed his focus on the mission.

Then he kissed her—hard, underscored with hot desire.

“Hey, when did that happen?” Nick’s deep voice from nearby.

“Been boiling for a while,” Devyn replied.

Cain stepped back, gave Jet one more long look, then turned and strode away.

Hadley came over. “Hot.”

“Shut it. You have your own guy.”

Hadley touched Jet’s arm. “We’ll see you soon.”

Jet watched her team disappear into the night. She picked up a tablet and activated the drones. Condor lifted off first and flew upward. She tapped and activated the cameras and thermal imaging.

Next, Swift zoomed up with a high-pitched whir. It was smaller and more aerodynamic. It flew higher and higher until the night swallowed it.

Jet leaned against the SUV and activated her earpiece.

She could imagine her team closing in on the boathouse, and when she opened her laptop resting in the back of the SUV, she could see them all on screen.

Each pair of colored blobs moved stealthily across Weber’s estate.

Cain was paired with Boone, and was coming in closest to the boathouse. She marked them. And then the rest of the team.

Now she saw the smudges of Weber’s guards.

She quietly relayed intel to her team. She watched as they all moved closer, and she flew Swift directly over the boathouse.

“Four heat signatures inside, on the southern half of the boathouse.” The place was a freaking mansion, with huge glass windows everywhere. Calling it a boathouse was the understatement of the century.

Suddenly, a new signature popped into existence. Right near Cain and Boone.

Shit. She touched her ear. “Shade, you have a bogey in range.”

“I see him.”

A second later, his heat signature attacked the guard. She saw the skirmish on screen and wished she had more detail. Her belly tied itself in

knots. *Damn*. Did the guard have a weapon? A gun or a knife?

She saw Cain's heat signature drag the now-still guard away and into a garden bed.

"Neutralized." His voice was cool and unruffled.

Jet released a breath.

"Entering the southern section of the boathouse now," Cain said.

"Acknowledged," Killian replied.

Jet flew the drone into a tight circle. The more intel she could get, the safer her team—the safer Cain—would be.

She stared at her screens. This would all be over soon.

IT WAS A WARM NIGHT, and a trickle of sweat made its way down the back of Cain's neck.

He'd left the guard bound and gagged in the garden. Boone Hendrix moved silently beside him.

They neared the boathouse. It was a fucking fancy place to be just for boats. The two sides of it were large, with high roofs and lots of windows. A small bridge connected the two sides. Several docks jutted out on the lake side of the structure.

Cain paused, Boone behind him. He listened. There were no sounds of guards or conversation. He glanced up to the sky, and then out over the lake. He knew Jet's drones were up there, somewhere, keeping an eye on him.

He lifted an arm and pointed. With a nod, Boone moved into position.

Cain opened a side door. There was no one close by, but he did hear the murmur of voices from deep inside.

They slipped into the building.

"We're inside."

"Acknowledged. We're coming in from the eastern side." Wolf's voice.

Cain heard the murmur of voices, and the lap of water. It was a two-story structure, but upstairs appeared to be a mezzanine loft area; the rest was open for large boats to get docked. There was one yacht moored on the left. Lake-related items were hanging on the walls—nets, oars, fishing gear. There was also a lot of gear stacked around in orderly piles.

He crept forward, sticking to cover. He peered around some crates.

He spotted Weber with three guards. The guy was in a suit again, and Cain wondered if he slept in them. The guards were all big guys, with guns holstered at the hips.

Weber checked his watch. "You confirmed they landed?"

"Yes, sir," the guard replied.

"Good." Weber smiled. "We have a very big payday ahead."

Asshole. There'll be no payday for you. You're getting either a bullet, or a cell.

All of a sudden, gunfire ripped through the quiet boathouse.

Weber and his guards whirled and ducked for cover.

"Fuck." It was Hades' voice through the earpiece. "Two guards appeared out of a doorway. We've engaged."

Cain cursed mentally. Shit went wrong, it always did.

"They weren't on the thermal imagining," Jet said.

"Looks like they just stepped out of some sort of cold storage," Wolf said. "They keep fish in there, maybe?"

"It must've shielded them," Jet said.

Dammit.

More gunfire. Cain rested his hand on his holstered Glock and gritted his teeth. He heard Weber and his guards murmuring furiously.

"Find out what the hell is going on," Weber shouted at someone.

One of the guards lifted a cellphone to his ear.

"I'm hit," Wolf said through the line. "Not urgent."

Fuck. Cain pulled out his Glock. Boone did the same.

"I've got you," Hades said. "We're in cover, but Wolf's bleeding, and we're pinned down."

"Stay down," Killian's cool voice. "We're coming."

Shit, everything had turned to hell.

"Killian." Jet's urgent voice. "There are more guards coming from the main house. A large group."

Killian cursed.

Dammit. Cain gripped the hilt of his gun. Weber must have pulled in extra guards.

"Steel, we need to intercept them before they reach the boathouse," Hadley said.

"Striker and Excalibur, go," Killian ordered. "Hellfire and I are with you."

“Boone and I will get Wolf and Hades,” Cain said.

Cain nodded at his partner. He and Boone crept around the edge of the boathouse. He could hear Wolf and Hades returning fire.

“Get them!” Weber barked. “Whoever they are, kill them.”

Shit. Cain moved closer.

He saw where Wolf and Hades were pinned down behind a wooden boat resting on blocks.

He also saw several fuel tanks against the wall. Damn. He hoped they didn't ignite.

“I'll circle around and take out the other guards,” Boone said quietly.

Cain nodded. “Be careful.”

They needed to rescue Wolf and Hades, and then get that chip.

“Hex, make sure you keep eyes on Weber,” Cain said. “We can't let him get away.”

“Acknowledged, Shade.”

Her voice was a balm. Soothing and calm. He wanted this mission complete, so he could get back to her.

He had no idea what to do after that, but he'd work it out. Maybe he'd finally take Killian up on the job he kept offering Cain.

He crept closer to the gunfire. He heard Boone engage.

He also heard gunfire outside. He saw Weber's head whip around, the man's face hardening.

He heard it, too, and saw his cushy deal dissolving.

Cain snuck up on one guard who was shooting. He was focused on Wolf and Hades, and didn't sense Cain. There was a reason his code name was Shade.

He slid behind the man and yanked him back. The guy dropped the gun and started to punch out.

Cain dropped him with two hard chops and then zip-tied his hands. He grabbed the guard's gun, then rose with two guns in his hands.

His vision and focus narrowed. He saw three guards. He fired, swiveled, fired. He turned and went down on one knee, and fired again. All three men dropped.

Rising, he strode toward his team members. Hades rose from behind some crates and fired off to the left.

Wolf leaned against the side of the wooden boat. One sleeve of his shirt was covered in blood.

Cain leaned down and slid an arm around the man.

“Let’s move.” He hauled Wolf up.

“Thanks,” Wolf grunted.

There was a lot of blood, but he seemed lucid, so Cain hoped it wasn’t bad.

Suddenly, Jet’s frantic voice cut across the earpieces. “Cain! There’s a heat signature growing out of control right near you. Something’s on fire, and heating up fast.”

Oh, fuck. He met Hades’ gaze. “There were fuel tanks. Run!”

The other man swiveled and ran, firing at the remaining guards to clear a path. They had to get outside.

Cain and Wolf hobbled along, and he heard Wolf groan, but didn’t slow down.

“Boone,” Cain said. “Get out now.”

“I’m out,” the other man replied.

Ahead, Hades slipped out the door.

Almost there.

Cain glanced back and saw flames were licking at the fuel tanks.

Shit.

They weren’t going to make it to the door. But they were near one of the large windows. Cain swiveled and fired on the glass.

The pane shattered.

“That way.” He shoved Wolf toward the window.

The man didn’t even pause. He leaped out the broken window.

Cain gripped the frame and moved to follow, readying himself to jump.

Boom.

The fuel tanks exploded just as Cain leaped.

More windows shattered, and a fireball engulfed him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

God, please let Wolf be okay.

Jet hated when the guys got injured. She chewed on the end of her nail and listened to the gunfire. On the screen, she watched the heat signature at the boathouse growing larger.

“Come on, Cain. Get out.” It was chaos on the screen, the large heat signature was making it near impossible to tell what was happening.

“I’m out.” It was Wolf’s voice, tight with pain.

Where was Cain? They’d been together. She heard shattering glass then a loud boom.

Jet jolted. She felt the explosion’s vibration in the air, even from her location.

Her heart lodged in her throat.

“Fuck, Hex, do you have Shade on screen?” Wolf asked.

“I can’t see anything. One side of the boathouse is alight and it’s blocking everything.”

“Damn. He was behind me, then I saw the fireball...”

When Wolf’s voice trailed off, her insides flushed hot, then cold.

No. No. She couldn’t lose him. “Did he get out? Did you see him get out?”

“No.” There was a pause. “I saw the fireball engulf him.”

There was more gunfire on the line, and she clutched her chest where her heart pounded hard.

She’d lost Weber’s signature. She had no idea where he was.

But all she could think about was Cain.

She pressed a finger to her ear. “Shade? Shade! Where are you?”

Silence.

A silence that tore her to shreds.

Cain.

“I’m here.”

His deep voice cracked her open. She dragged in a deep breath, her hands twisting together. “Are you all right? Are you injured?”

She knew her voice sounded a little hysterical.

“I’m fine, pixie. A little singed, but fine.”

A little singed? That could mean third-degree burns in badass language.

“Shade—”

“I promise. I lost my earpiece when I jumped out the window, and it took a second to find it. But it’s all good. Wait—”

She tensed.

“I have eyes on Weber. He’s crossing the bridge to the second half of the boathouse.” Cain’s tone hardened. “He has two guards with him. The second part of the boathouse isn’t ablaze. I’m in pursuit.”

Jet grabbed her tablet. “You need backup.”

“Hades needs to get Wolf out of here. Steel is busy.” Cain cursed. “There’s a speedboat coming in from the lake.”

She hissed. She pulled up aerial footage from her drone and saw a sleek powerboat slicing toward the boathouse.

“There are four people on board,” she said.

“Has to be the Red Clan. I *have* to get the data chip before Weber hands it over.”

“Shade, I’m coming.” Boone’s voice. “I’m on the other side of the fire. I’m skirting around, but I’ll be there soon.”

Jet gnawed on her lip. “Shade, wait for Boone.”

“I can’t. That boat is coming in fast. I can’t risk them getting the chip.”

She squeezed her eyes closed. “Okay, I’m flying the drone in closer.” She focused on the screen. On helping him.

She could see Killian, Devyn, Hadley, and Bram still holding back the onslaught of reinforcements from the main house.

“There are three heat signatures inside the boathouse. Wait. Two more just joined them.” Add in the four from the boat, and Cain was heavily outnumbered.

“Walk in the park,” Cain drawled.

She rolled her eyes. “Cockiness is not a virtue.”

She picked up Boone moving through the gardens. He wasn't close, but he was coming in fast.

Then she saw two heat signatures in the trees near him.

"Boone, you have two bogeys coming up. West of your location. Ten meters."

"Thanks, Hex. I see them."

They'd be another delay in him getting to Cain.

Her nerves were making her chest tight. *You come back to me, Cain Cavanagh.*

"Entering now," Cain said.

She saw his heat signature and switched to the high-res camera. He was scaling the side of the boathouse.

God, he moved like damn Spider-Man. She saw him pause, open a window, then slip inside.

He'll be fine. He'll be fine.

There was a noise behind her.

She grabbed her SIG Sauer from her holster and whirled.

Hades and Wolf limped out of the trees.

Nick's shirt was soaked in blood.

Shit. She hurried to grab the first aid kit out of the SUV.

"Lainie is going to be pissed," she said.

Matteo lowered Nick to the ground beside the SUV. Nick leaned back against it and hissed.

"Yeah, my kitten won't be happy." His face was pinched.

"Here." She handed the kit to Matteo.

He ripped it open. "Painkillers first, then I'll patch you up."

Nick grunted.

Once she was sure he was okay, Jet stepped back to her mini command center. Boone was on the move again. Killian and the others were still fighting.

She watched the boat cut its engines, gliding into the boathouse.

"Shade, the Albanians have arrived," she said.

"I have eyes on them."

He sounded so calm, so composed. He'd done this so many times. He was good at it and thrived on it. Could he ever give it up?

She watched the Albanians step off the boat.

Cain was now alone with nine bad guys.

CAIN CREPT along the upstairs mezzanine. He heard Weber talking.

“Here they come,” the businessman said.

Cain crouched at the railing. He saw the small speedboat pull into the boathouse.

There were four people aboard. Three men, and one tall, strong-looking woman. They were all stone-faced and carrying weapons.

He pulled in a breath.

Down below, Weber was smiling, flanked by two guards. He knew there were another two in here somewhere, but he couldn't spot them.

He couldn't let these people get away with the drone data.

“Weber,” one of the Albanians said with a heavy accent.

“Dobroshi. Welcome.”

“Why is your building on fire?” Dobroshi asked. “Are there problems?”

“Nothing my personal security can't handle.” Weber shrugged. “I have enemies, but you need not be concerned.”

The Albanians all traded glances.

Then, Dobroshi jerked his chin up. “Let's get this done. You have the drone data.”

Weber held up the data chip, and Cain stiffened.

The Albanians moved forward.

“The money first,” Weber said.

The woman stepped closer, a tablet in hand.

Weber pulled out his phone. A second later, it dinged.

“Transfer complete.” Weber smiled. “A pleasure doing business with you.”

Dobroshi just grunted.

Cain let his focus narrow. He was out of options. He *had* to destroy the data chip.

He took another breath, gripped the railing, and leaped over it. He had his gun in his other hand and fired on one guard, who dropped. He fired on the second guard, but the man was already diving for cover.

Cain hit Weber and they both crashed to the floor. He heard a bone snap and Weber yelled.

The data chip flew out of the man's hand, and skittered across the concrete floor.

“My arm!” Weber clutched his arm, it was clearly broken.
Cain jerked his head up. The Albanians were all pulling their weapons.
He rolled and gunfire peppered the concrete. He rose, then dove behind some crates.

Fuck.

Bullets ripped into everything. He saw Weber crawling across the floor.
Dammit, Cain needed to get the chip.
He peered around. It was still on the floor, but he could see one of the Albanians advancing on it.

He touched his ear. “I’m pinned down.”

“Shade?”

Jet’s voice. He closed his eyes. “The Albanians are firing, and they’re about to get the chip.”

Shit. He couldn’t let that happen. He reloaded his gun.

“Get ready, Shade.” Boone’s deep voice.

A second later, there was a hail of gunfire from the mezzanine.

Cain glanced up and spotted Boone firing on the Albanians. They scattered.

Cain darted out and raced to the chip. His fingers brushed it.

Bullets ripped past him. Cursing, he dove and rolled. He’d missed grabbing the chip.

He came up in a crouch and looked up.

Dobroshi had grabbed the chip and was glaring at Cain. The man turned and ran for the boat. He leaped over the dead bodies of his colleagues.

The hail of gunfire ceased. Cain glanced up and saw Boone wrestling with another guard who’d appeared from somewhere. Cain sprinted after Dobroshi.

The man leaped onto the speedboat, setting it rocking.

Cain didn’t slow down. He took several more steps and leaped.

He sailed through the air and crashed into the Albanian.

They fell to the floor of the boat, grappling in the tight confines.

Fuck, he was strong. His body was all slabs of muscle. Cain elbowed the guy, and with a grunt, wrestled to get on top and pin him down. Dobroshi rammed an elbow to Cain’s gut. The air rushed out of him, and he gritted his teeth.

He didn’t let go.

He got the man in a headlock, holding tight.

“Drop it,” Cain gritted out.

The man jerked, desperately trying to get air.

Cain tightened his hold. “Drop it, asshole.”

“Fuck you,” the man said in Albanian.

“No, thanks,” Cain responded in the same language.

He pulled tighter. Then finally he felt the man sag, and the chip fell from his meaty fingers.

Then he slumped, unconscious.

Cain heaved and shoved him overboard. He hit the water with a splash and sank down.

Swiveling, Cain scooped up the chip. His fingers curled around it.

He touched his ear. “I have the chip.”

“Thank God,” Jet said. “Now get out of there!”

He scanned the boathouse. Where was Weber? There was no sign of him. Was he dead? Had he run?

Cain stepped off the boat and stalked across the space.

Suddenly, the lights went out.

He froze. “Hex, we lost the lights.”

“I’m on it.”

There was a scrape of sound. Cain swiveled, then heard the clang of metal.

What the hell was that?

Suddenly, someone rammed into him from behind. Cain fell and hit the concrete.

Shit.

He rolled, just as someone kicked him. A hand wrenched the chip away from him.

“You almost ruined everything.”

Weber. He was just a dark shadow looming over Cain.

Cain gritted his teeth, his eyes adjusting to the lack of light. “Your little empire ends tonight, Weber.”

“No, *you* end tonight.”

Cain tracked the man’s voice, and pushed to his feet. Weber wasn’t a fighter, and he didn’t know Cain had excellent night vision. Cain swiveled, and punched Weber in the face.

Weber yowled and Cain grabbed the chip back. Then he dropped it to the floor.

The lights came on.

Weber's gaze was on him as Cain brought his boot down, and crunched the chip to dust.

"No! I could've sold it again," Weber cried.

"You're not selling anything again."

Weber's expression changed as something snapped inside of him. His features twisted, turning ugly, and he no longer resembled a suave, wealthy businessman.

With a roar, he charged at Cain.

He shoved him hard. Cain took a step back.

But instead of concrete floor, there was nothing.

He fell, cursing as he crashed into a deep hole in the boathouse floor. He found himself standing in knee-high, murky water.

What the fuck?

Above, there was a clang as Weber closed a large metal grate over the hole.

With a laugh, Weber padlocked it closed. His arm was hanging at his side and blood stained his clothes.

"I always plan for contingencies. This boathouse is rigged with explosives. I had them planted in case I ever needed to cover my tracks." He glared down at Cain. "Or remove unwanted problems."

He held up his phone and touched it. He swiveled it so Cain could see the timer on the screen. It showed five minutes in glowing red, and started ticking down.

Weber smiled. "Enjoy the fireworks, up close and personal."

Then the man turned and limped away.

Fuck. Cain kicked the wall. *Fuck.*

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Jet tapped her foot, waiting to find out what the hell was going on.

“The data chip is destroyed.”

Cain’s strong voice had her releasing a breath and smiling. “Great work.”

“But Weber escaped. He’s injured. Boone, you there?”

“Here. The other guards are down. I see Weber.”

“Stop him.”

Jet frowned. Why wasn’t Cain going after him?

“On it,” Boone replied.

“And everyone steer clear of the boathouse,” Cain continued. Then he let out a sigh. “Weber has rigged the boathouse with explosives.”

What? Jet almost dropped her tablet. Nearby, she heard Nick and Matteo curse.

“Shade?” Killian’s voice.

“It’s failsafe. To cover his tracks. We have—” Cain paused “—I’m guessing four and a half minutes before it goes off.”

“Cain, get out of there,” Jet said.

The three seconds he was silent felt like an eternity.

“I can’t, pixie. He’s trapped me in here.”

Her heart lodged in her throat. “No—”

“There’s no time for anyone to get here and free me. It’s too risky.”

“No.” She felt like her world was caving in. She felt either Nick or Matteo touch her back. “Cain. Get out now!”

“If I could, I would, Jet. For you, I’d do anything.”

A sob welled up inside her.

“Guys, get off the line,” Cain said quietly.

She heard Nick and Matteo step away. The line went eerily silent.

“Pixie, I didn’t want it to end like this.”

“Cain...” Tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Meeting you...hell, you exploded my ordered, simple existence to smithereens. Best damn thing that ever happened to me.”

The tears rolled off her chin.

“You challenged me, made me laugh, turned me on. You made me feel, pixie. Something I’ve tried all my life not to do.”

“Cain, I can’t lose you. *Please.*”

“If I could—” He let out a harsh expulsion of breath.

“I love you, Cain Cavanagh.”

“Fuck. Jet.” His voice was tortured.

“You’re everything I’ve ever wanted. You see me, and I see you. Your parents sucked, your foster parents failed you, Max didn’t always give you what you needed, but you are loved, dammit. I love you.”

“Jet—”

“And I’m *not* letting you die.” She whirled. She heard him calling her name, but she was too busy. Her mind churned. She needed to get him out of there.

She heard gunfire close by.

“Wolf, Hades.” It was Bram. “There are guards headed your way.”

The men snapped to attention, even though Nick had a bullet wound. They both pulled their guns.

“Hex, get back and take cover,” Nick growled.

No. Heart pounding, she grabbed her tablet and swiped.

A man came over the hill, firing.

Nick aimed and took him out.

Jet stayed focused. She heard a deep whir in the air.

Condor flew down from the sky. She tapped on the tablet, then the drone hovered right above her. She dropped her tablet.

“Hex!” Matteo yelled.

She grabbed the arms of the drone, then it took off, following the flight path she’d set on the tablet.

It flew forward, lifting her off her feet.

Oh, God. She tightened her grip, her body swinging.

The drone zoomed over the hill, with Jet dangling below it, then flew across the gardens. Air rushed into her face, whipping her hair around.

She saw the boathouse ahead, half of it burning and all lit up. She saw pops of red near the mansion. The secondary gunfight in full force.

Condor flew lower. She was right at the max weight for the cargo drone, but it seemed to carry her just fine. They sped toward the northern part of the boathouse that wasn't burning.

How much longer until the explosives detonated? Her throat went dry. She had to beat the bombs and get Cain free.

"Jet?" His voice in her ear.

"Yes?"

"Where are you?"

"You'll find out soon enough."

"If you come anywhere near this fucking boathouse, your punishment will be big. Huge. You won't be able to sit on your sore ass for a week."

Fear and panic threatened to close her throat. Not because of his threat, but because he was in danger. She wanted this man. Wanted to love him, make a life together. Wanted to grow old with him.

"Not much of a threat, Bond." Her voice was thick.

"Jet, dammit." A harsh breath. "I need to know you're safe. If I know you're safe, it makes everything worthwhile."

"You know I'm not very good at following orders."

The drone dipped and she gasped. She was nearing the boathouse.

A guard on the ground saw her and fired. With a gasp, she closed her eyes, but thankfully no bullets hit her.

She tightened her hold and looked ahead. *Almost there.*

"I won't let you die, Cain. I'll never give up on you. Never leave you."

She flew toward one of the large windows and lifted her feet.

Time to save the man she loved.

THERE COULDN'T BE much time left before the explosives went off. Cain felt like he could hear the ticking countdown in his head.

He dragged in a harsh breath. What the hell was Jet doing? His chest was so damn tight. He gripped the bars above his head. He'd already searched the hole. It was solid concrete. No way out.

At least it was too far away for Jet to reach him.

He closed his eyes and saw her face. Smiling at him. Sassing him.

She'd be safe. She'd be okay. Killian, Devyn, and the others would look out for her.

A crackling sound caught his attention, and he glanced over. He saw the flicker of flames.

Shit. The fire from the other half of the boathouse had spread. He blew out a breath. Soon, it wouldn't matter.

Suddenly, there was a crash of shattering glass.

His head jerked around.

Then his mouth dropped open, and his body locked.

Through the bars of his prison, he watched a large drone crash through one of the windows.

With Jet hanging off it.

No. No. *No.*

The drone hovered and Jet dropped.

She caught her balance, and scanned around. She spotted him and ran over.

“Get out!” he roared.

She shot him a feisty look. “Not without you.” She drew a handgun, aimed it, and fired on the padlock. She kicked the lock aside, then grabbed the grate and heaved.

She grunted. “Oh, fuck, that's heavy.”

It swung open.

“Condor, home,” she yelled.

The drone lifted up and then shot away, back through the broken window.

All Cain could think was that the bomb was about to go off at any second.

“Punishment.” He leaped out of the hole and grabbed her hand.

She shot him a grin. “I'll take whatever you give me, Cain Cavanagh.”

He wanted to kiss her, but there was no time. They couldn't make it out of the boathouse before the bombs detonated.

Holding tight to her hand, he ran toward the water. “We need to get—”

He felt the low rumble deep in his bones before he heard it.

Boom.

Cain didn't turn to look. They were out of time.

He picked up speed, but Jet stumbled. He hauled her off her feet and into his arms, then sprinted.

Boom. Boom.

There was no time to take a boat. He reached the water's edge and jumped.

They hit the water with a splash. He kept Jet close and looked up through the water.

Orange flames spread above the water.

Cain kicked, swimming away from the boathouse. Vibrations assaulted his skin through the water. Debris peppered the surface around them.

He shielded Jet's body with his own and kicked harder, dragging her out into the lake.

They finally came up for air, treading water.

"Holy cow," Jet muttered.

He turned. *Christ.* One side of the boathouse was engulfed in flames, and the other side...was gone. Blown to rubble.

Flames reached into the night sky.

"Crap, I've lost my earpiece," she said.

"Are you crazy?" He grabbed her. "You flew on a fucking drone into a building ready to explode. Have you got a death wish?"

"No." Her eyes sparked. "The stubborn, hardheaded man I love was trapped, and I couldn't let him die!"

"Jet." *Fuck.*

Emotion swamped him. He yanked her to him and kissed her.

She made a sound, then wrapped her legs around him. It was easy enough for him to keep them both afloat.

He kissed her ravenously, releasing all his fear into it.

She bit his lip, hard. "Cain, I can't live without you. You matter to me."

Shit. It felt like she'd reached inside him, grabbed his heart with her hand, and squeezed it. She'd brought it to life.

She blinked, water clinging to her lashes. "Do you have something to say to me?"

His heart was pounding. "Maybe."

She smiled. "Are you brave enough to tell me?"

"I'm thinking about it." He slid his arms lower and squeezed her ass, keeping her close. "I'm still not good enough for you."

She rolled her eyes.

"I'll still mess up. I'll make you mad."

"Oh, I don't doubt it."

He pressed his forehead to hers. "Jet Adler, I love you."

Her face softened. “You do?”

“Yes. You gave me no choice. You’re smart, beautiful, competent, sassy, cu—”

Her fingers tightened. “If you say cute, Cain, I’ll hit you.”

He smiled. “You love me. You showed me how. You’re the bravest woman I know.”

She smiled. “I don’t know, Devyn is tough competition.”

He cupped her face. “Bravest because you took me on, and didn’t back down, and didn’t give up.”

“It’s lucky that I really love you.” She rubbed her lips over his.

“Shade? Hex? Are you there?”

He suddenly realized he’d been hearing a voice in his ear for a while. Killian’s sharp baritone.

“Jet flew into the damn building.” That was Hadley’s panicked voice. “Right before it blew.”

Cain touched his ear. “We’re here. We’re both okay. We’re in the lake.”

Voices broke out on the line.

Jet smiled at him, and he smiled back. He nuzzled her cheek. “You’re not getting out of your punishment.”

She grinned. “I certainly hope not.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Jet watched the flames devouring Weber's boathouse.

It was over.

The data hadn't fallen into enemy hands. She wondered idly if Weber had escaped. In that instant, while treading water in Lake Geneva with the man she loved, she didn't care.

As far as she was concerned, they'd won.

She looked at Cain. She'd won.

He loved her.

The roar of an engine caught her ear, and she spotted a speedboat heading their way, slicing cleanly through the water. It pulled up alongside them. Killian was at the controls, with Devyn standing by his side.

Devyn leaned over and held out a hand. "We are damn glad to see you two."

Jet grabbed Devyn's hand, and Cain lifted her from behind as she climbed into the boat. It wasn't easy, especially with her waterlogged clothes.

A second later, Cain hauled himself in with a flex of his muscles. Of course, he made it look easy.

"You okay?" Killian wrapped a blanket around Jet's shoulders.

She grinned. "Who doesn't like a little late-night swim in a lake?"

Killian arched a brow. "Or a drone ride into an exploding building?"

Cain made an unhappy sound.

"He's already yelled at me about that," she said.

"And he's not done." Cain sat beside her, then lifted her into his lap. Then he kissed her.

Killian made a sound low in his throat.

“I think you’d better get used to it, Hawke,” Devyn said, sounding amused.

Jet made a humming sound and kissed Cain back.

He broke the kiss and rested his chin on her head. “I’m still planning to give you a red ass as part of your punishment.”

“TMI.” Devyn held up her hands, but she was smiling.

Killian was silent as he pointed the boat toward shore.

When they arrived, the Sentinel Security team was waiting for them. There were firefighters working to put out the blaze, and police swarming around. Nick was being treated by paramedics.

The police were rounding up Weber’s guards.

“Weber?” Cain asked.

Killian jerked his head.

Jet turned and saw Weber sitting on the ground, cradling his broken arm. His face was bruised and swollen. He was going to have two killer black eyes.

Boone stood over him, his muscular arms crossed.

“He tried to escape,” Killian said. “Boone stopped him.”

“And beat the shit out of him,” Devyn added.

Two people in suits—a man and a woman—emerged from the chaos.

“Looks like Interpol has arrived,” Killian noted dryly. “After the hard work’s been done.” He strode over to meet them.

“We won,” Jet said.

“We sure did, pixie.” Cain hugged her close.

“Is this the bit where you disappear into the sunset?” she asked quietly.

“The sun went down a while ago.” He scanned the scene. “But yes. I usually make the mess to get the job done, then leave it to others to clean up.”

Jet bit her lip and fiddled with the blanket.

His arm squeezed around her. “Today, my only plan is to take you back to the hotel, get you warm, and fuck you in the shower.”

Warmth bloomed in her belly. “Sounds like a pretty good plan.”

A FEW HOURS LATER, Jet stepped out of the shower and wrapped herself in a fluffy towel.

She was warm, and her legs felt like jelly, thanks to what Cain had done to her under the warm water. After he'd had her screaming, he'd left her to wash her hair. She grabbed another towel and ran it over her head.

They'd all be flying back to New York in the morning. She was keen to get back to her computer room, and her apartment.

Her belly swirled. And for her and Cain to talk about what they did next.

She bit her lip. Would he always be off on a mission, just popping in to see her occasionally? How the hell could she live with the dread of knowing he was off doing something dangerous but having no idea where he was?

In the bedroom, she pulled on her pajamas. When she walked into the living area, there was no sign of Cain. She glanced at the view of the lake. It was still stunning, but she was so glad not to be in it anymore.

Interpol had arrested Weber. The CIA had all of his personal data. The drone tech was safe.

She headed to Cain's bedroom and paused in the doorway.

He was standing beside the bed. Fully dressed in jeans and a black Henley. A leather jacket rested on the bed beside the suitcase that he was packing.

Shock slapped at her, her skin turning ice cold. This wasn't a man getting ready for bed.

He looked up, an unreadable expression on his face.

"You're leaving." Her voice was wooden; hollow.

Another person who'd said they cared for her, but were still leaving her, anyway.

"My boss called," Cain said. "I need to tie up some loose ends."

She pressed her lips together. She wouldn't cry. Maybe a part of her had always known it would come to this.

She saw his gaze drop to her mouth.

"Jet—"

She shook her head. "You don't need to say anything."

He tossed a shirt in the suitcase and strode over to her. "Where's my feisty pixie?"

She held up a palm to stop him.

He stilled. "I thought I'd give you one more chance."

She cocked her head. "For what?"

"I'll never be good enough for you. I don't know if I can love you the way you deserve."

Something hot poked through the ice forming around her heart. “Don’t pretend this is about me, Cain. If you want to leave, leave.” She lifted her chin. “Just don’t lie to me. God, if you don’t love me, you shouldn’t have said the words.”

“Don’t love you?” He grabbed her. “I’m so in love with you, you’re all I can see.”

She struggled against him and smacked his chest. “So why are you leaving?”

“I’ll only leave if you want me to. My plan is to go to CIA headquarters, tie up loose ends, and resign.”

Jet stilled. “What?”

“I accepted Killian’s job offer at Sentinel Security.”

She blinked.

“I’ve never lied to you. I love you, Jet.”

Air rushed back into her lungs. She stepped back, looked around, then snatched a book off the bedside table. She threw it at him.

Luckily, he had good reflexes and dodged.

“You just gutted me, Cain! I thought—”

He snatched her up and tossed her onto the bed. His big body came down on top of hers.

“You want me?” he asked. “In your life?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

“As I am? With all the scars, the flaws, the—”

“Yes.” She cupped his cheeks. “I see those, along with all the good things. I love them all.”

He kissed her. It was long, hard, and left her with no doubt how he felt.

“Then you’ve got me, pixie. Forever. I’m *never* letting you go.”

She smiled, love filling her like sunshine. “Then you’d better buckle up, Bond, because it’s going to be a hell of a ride.”

CAIN SIPPED HIS BOURBON. The seat in the booth was comfy, and it was early, so Ember was quiet. Later, the crowds would pack the nightclub, eager for fun and escape.

He’d been back to Langley and resigned, much to his boss’ horror. He’d

tied up his cases, and handed them off to other agents.

Most of his colleagues had been shocked to see him leave.

Once he got back to New York, he was planning to enjoy a week off. He'd already hired a yacht. He was going to take Jet on a sailing holiday around the Bahamas. Just the two of them. And hopefully some tiny bikinis for her. He smiled. He'd also organized very good satellite internet from a contact, so she could still stay connected.

When he wasn't keeping her busy doing other things.

It hadn't taken him long to pack up his near-empty D.C. apartment. His lease had been month-to-month, so there'd been no problem with him vacating it at short notice.

Now, he'd made one more detour to New Orleans for one last thing.

Then he could get back to his pixie.

He smiled. They texted each other during the day, and called each other every night. A whole week he'd been away, and he was so eager to see her. He'd also coaxed her into two very memorable video call sex sessions. His cock twitched. Yes, he was *very* eager to get to New York.

The staff door at the back of Ember opened, and two men strode out.

Dante was wearing black suit pants and a black shirt. His shaggy, dark hair was tousled. The other man was a couple of inches taller than Dante, a littler leaner, but all hard-packed muscle.

Dante's brother Colton.

He wore black motorcycle boots, well-worn jeans, and a black T-shirt that left no doubt about how in shape he was. Black ink covered his forearms.

Colton was a bounty hunter. A good one. He only took the toughest cases. Last Cain had heard, Colt had nabbed a serial killer who'd escaped custody and killed some college students.

As the men approached, Colt spotted Cain and lifted a hand.

Cain jerked his chin in response.

Colt's hair was shorter and a shade lighter than Dante's, his eyes ice blue, and a short beard covered his jaw. The two didn't look much alike.

Cain knew the Fury brothers—all five of them—weren't related by blood. They were related by brotherhood and a harsh childhood. They'd grown up together in foster care. They'd had each other's backs from a young age.

Once, Cain would have killed for family like that. He thought of Jet, Killian, Devyn, and the others. Now, he'd found his own little tribe.

Colton kept walking, while Dante slid into the booth on the other side of

Cain.

“Shade.”

“Dante.”

Then the man looked past Cain’s shoulder, and his brow creased.

Glancing back, Cain saw a woman crossing the club, in casual clothes, a bag in hand. She was headed toward the employee door. Medium height, serious curves, and a face hidden by hair that was clearly dyed black. It didn’t suit her. Her shoulders were hunched, and she was moving fast.

A woman with something to hide, who was hoping no one would notice her.

“Problem?” Cain asked.

Dante made a sound, watching the woman disappear into the back. “Not sure yet. New hire.”

“She in trouble?”

Dante’s expression sharpened. “If she is, I’ll find out. And I’ll deal with it. I take care of my own.”

Cain nodded. He didn’t doubt it. The Fury brothers had a reputation for it.

Dante reached into his pocket and pulled out a small, black box. He set it on the table “I got what you asked for. Wasn’t easy.”

Excitement licked at Cain. He grabbed the box and flicked it open. Then he smiled. “It’s perfect. I owe you.”

“You already transferred the money. You don’t owe me anything.” Dante’s lips quirked. “I’ve never seen you smile like that. She must be something.”

“She is.” Cain slid the box into his pocket and rose. “If you ever need anything, Fury, just call. If you’re in New York, come and see us. I’ll introduce you to her.”

“You’ve really left the spy gig?”

“Yep. Not a single regret.” It was true. And he realized now that his work hadn’t been fulfilling him for a long time. He’d just believed there could never be anything else for him. It had taken connecting with Jet for him to realize he could have more.

Dante rose too and held out his hand. “Good luck. I want an invite to the wedding.”

Cain shook and nodded. “Done.”

Now, it was time to get back to his pixie.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Jet bumped her front door open with her hip.

It'd been a long day. She needed food. She turned on the entry lights, and dropped her keys on the hall table.

God, she loved her short commute. She rubbed the back of her neck. She'd been back in New York a week now. Thankfully, Austin hadn't messed up her work too badly while she'd been gone. Her mom was due back from her cruise in a few days. She was going to freak out when Jet told her that she was in love.

She sighed as she headed into the dark living room. A week without Cain. It was silly to miss him so much. They hadn't ever lived together—hell, he hadn't even been in her apartment—but she felt like there was a gaping hole in her life.

Sometimes, she wondered if she was totally crazy and that she'd imagined him.

She snorted. She had a long string of texts to prove that wasn't true. Although, she hadn't heard much from him today.

Maybe he'd gone on a final mission? Maybe he was working with some gorgeous agent?

Stop it. She cut the voice in her head off. Cain was a lot of things, but he wasn't disloyal.

Her living room was drenched in shadows. She stared in the direction of the kitchen with a sigh. She didn't really feel like cooking for one. Maybe she'd just have eggs on toast.

She stopped and scanned the darkness. Something was off...

Something tickled her instincts. She set her bag down on the dining room

table and smoothly drew her SIG. She saw a flash of movement in the shadows.

She aimed at the dense patch of darkness, her heart pounding. She knew the building had top-notch security, because she'd installed it and she monitored it. No one should be in here.

"Come out, or I'll shoot you."

A low chuckle came from her left. She swiveled.

"You aren't going to shoot me."

Cain. His deep voice held a hint of teasing. It washed over her, leaving her giddy. She didn't lower her gun. "Maybe I will, for scaring me."

"Nothing scares my pixie." He strode out of the shadows and into the light.

God, the man was so damn hot. Her pulse sped up. And he was hers.

She set the gun down, then ran at him. When she jumped, he caught her.

"Jet—"

Their mouths collided. She gripped him tight. The kiss was filled with so much. Everything.

"Missed you." She nipped his lips, then moved her mouth, running over his jaw, his neck. She bit him.

He groaned, his hands cupping her ass. "I missed you every second we were apart."

His mouth took hers. Jet felt the force of the kiss—the longing, the desire, the love.

She moaned, sliding her hands into that glorious, thick hair of his. He spun and set her on the edge of the table.

"I like this." He fingered her hair, and its new pink ends.

She smiled at him. "I couldn't wait for some color. I went to a local salon. My mom won't be happy."

He ran his fingers over her face and groaned. "Damn, I couldn't wait to get back to you."

"You're here to stay?" She couldn't keep the hint of doubt from leaking into her voice.

He stepped closer, his mouth touching hers. "I'm here to stay."

The next kiss went up in flames, edged with vicious need.

She started on the buttons of his black shirt, and he yanked her shirt over her head. They tore the rest of each other's clothes off like desperate teenagers.

Jet slid off the table and hopped a little to get her panties off.

So smooth, Jet. But Cain was watching her with fiery need, so he clearly didn't care. She dragged him to the floor.

He frowned. "It's too hard for your pretty skin."

She grinned. "It doesn't matter because you'll be on the bottom."

She pushed him onto his back. That perfect cock was on full display. She grabbed it and stroked.

A groan rumbled out of him, and she straddled him. "No time to play. I need you inside me. It's been too long."

His hand clenched on her hip and squeezed. "Too long."

She shifted, then notched his cock between her legs, and slowly sank down, taking him deep inside her.

Jet moaned as he filled her. She'd missed him so much. His body. The way he made her feel.

"Fuck, pixie." His voice was so deep.

She lifted her hips, then sank back down, those thick inches pushing inside her. She pressed her hands to his chest, digging her fingers into his hard muscles.

Then all she could do was feel.

She rode him hard, her hips slapping against him. His hands were on her hips, urging her on. God, the emotions on his face: desire, need, love.

"Jet."

"*Cain.*"

"Damn, I love you so much." He lifted his hips up to meet her plunge.

She leaned down and kissed him. It was so good, so intense. She angled her hips, hitting just the right spot. A second later, she detonated.

The climax moved through her like liquid heat, and her body shook.

Then his hands dug into her skin, and he came with a low groan. "*Pixie.* Coming inside my pixie."

She felt another jolt of intense pleasure.

Finally, she collapsed on top of him, feeling completely boneless. "So glad you're home."

His big hand cupped the back of her skull. "I've never had a home."

She lifted her gaze. "You do now." She glanced around at her apartment. There were wild splashes of color—in the art, and the pillows on the couch, and the knickknacks on the shelves. Most of them were hot pink and teal. It didn't scream hot badass. "You can change and add whatever you want." She

smiled. “We’ll make it ours.”

His hand tightened in her hair, and he sat up, so she was cradled in his lap. “I do have one thing.”

She raised a brow, and watched as he reached over and grabbed his discarded trousers. He rummaged in the pocket and pulled out a small box.

Her heart stopped, then restarted with a deafening pound. She looked at his face.

For the first time ever, she saw a little uncertainty on Cain’s handsome face.

“Jet, you’re mine. I want you every way I know. I want every asshole out there to know you’re mine, too.”

A giggle escaped her.

He flashed her a sexy smile. “Everyone is going to know.” He opened the box.

She gasped. It was a beautiful ring with an oval-shaped, hot-pink gem.

“It’s a pink sapphire. I had a contact chase it down. This bright pink is rare. Unique. Just like the woman I love.”

She held out her hand. “I want that ring.” She met his gaze. “And I want you. Yes, I’ll marry you, Cain Cavanagh.”

He slid the ring on her finger.

Then she smacked his arm. “My God, you proposed to me on the floor while we were both naked.”

His gaze traveled down her body. “I’m not sorry.”

She laughed. She wasn’t either. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

A moment later, Cain rose in that display of strength she loved.

“Bedroom,” he said. “I want to make love to my fiancée.”

A few months later

CAIN WALKED into the swanky Manhattan restaurant and raised a brow. Nice of the asshole hacker they were about to bring down to pick such a nice place for his lunch.

A waitress spotted him and stopped to give him a long, interested look.

He smiled, but kept walking.

He had a woman, and he had no interest in any others. Besides, his feisty tech goddess would stop all his electronics from working if he even looked at another woman.

He was totally okay with that. He only wanted Jet.

He spotted Devyn and Nick at a table, looking like business colleagues out for lunch. Sitting alone, at a table by the windows, was Kevin Sanders aka the hacker known as Vagabond.

Cain didn't let his gaze linger long on the man. But he already knew that Sanders was twenty-seven, five foot nine, with a slim build, and brown hair. He worked as a computer programmer by day, but on the side, he hacked government and corporate servers, stole sensitive information, and threatened to make it public unless a ransom was paid.

Needless to say, no one was very happy about that. Especially not the FBI field office he'd hacked. The government had hired Sentinel Security to take him down.

Cain's gaze fell on the woman sitting at the far end of the bar. His lips quirked.

His pixie was wearing a fitted, gray skirt and a silky, green tank top. Her hair was loose, the beautiful pink tips almost brushing her slim shoulders. His heart squeezed and his cock got excited.

Yeah, that's my girl.

He forced himself to the other end of the bar. They couldn't tip Sanders off yet.

After the guy was arrested, then Cain could claim his woman and drag her home, and get his hands under that skirt.

Home.

Over the last few months, Jet had thrown herself into making one for him. They'd redecorated a few things in their apartment. They cooked together every night. She dragged them out on weekends—to picnics, to concerts, museums, long walks around Manhattan playing tourist.

She made him laugh. She came alive for him in bed. And at work, she still sassed him and let him get away with nothing.

Jet "Hex" Adler was the best fucking thing that ever happened to him.

And the second-best thing was accepting Killian's job offer. Cain loved working at Sentinel Security.

He ordered a beer that he didn't plan to drink. Out of the corner of his

eye, he saw Sanders eating a steak and smirking.

The guy was expecting a big payday for his latest hack.

It's not coming, asshole. Cain pretended to sip his beer and glanced at the other end of the bar. He saw Jet lazily tapping on her tablet. A businesswoman out for a working lunch.

Then Killian strode into the restaurant, his suit jacket flaring open. He strode past Cain, his gaze locked on Sanders.

Show time.

As Killian neared Sanders table, the hacker looked up and froze. Yeah, he knew who Killian Hawke was.

“Don't do anything stupid, Kevin.” Killian sat in the chair across from the other man.

“Who are you?” Kevin spluttered.

Killian leaned forward, his voice low, but it came clearly through Cain's earpiece. “Don't waste my time. We know you're Vagabond. It ends today.”

“Vagabond? You have no proof of that.” Sanders puffed his chest up.

Killian smiled. “Well, you just sort of confirmed it by not asking what or who Vagabond is, and on top of that, unfortunately for you, my hacker is better than you.”

“No one is better than me,” Sanders snapped.

Cain smiled. *What an idiot.*

Sanders' phone rang. He pulled it out and stared at the screen. “What the fuck?”

Cain heard Minion noises fill the restaurant. He swallowed a snort as he glanced at his fiancée. She was on her tablet, grinning. She glanced up at him and winked.

Damn, now he was as hard as a rock.

“My hacker accessed your system,” Killian said. “She downloaded all the hacks you've ever made. It's all the proof we need.”

Sanders decided to be dumb. He jumped up and ran in Cain's direction.

Cain rose from his stool and stuck a foot out. He tripped the guy and with a shout, Sanders stumbled.

“You're not going anywhere, Kev.” Cain gripped the back of Kevin's neck and slammed him face first into one of the tables. Plates and glasses rattled.

Sanders groaned, his breathing fast. “I didn't do anything!”

Cain snorted. “Sure you didn't.”

The click of heels made him look up as Jet approached.

“Here’s our hacker now.” As Sanders tried to lift his head, Cain jammed him harder into the table. “She’s better-looking than you, and a hundred times better with a computer than you.”

“A thousand times better.” Jet leaned down. “I got everything. Even your hidden files. Not a bad firewall, and I liked your little booby-traps, but I did get through them.”

Devyn, Killian, and Nick joined them.

“I’ll take him from here.” Nick grabbed the sniveling hacker and yanked him upright.

“Nice work,” Killian said as he took Devyn’s hand. “We’ll see you at the office.”

As the others left, Jet stepped closer to Cain. “God, I love watching you be all badass.” Her cheeks were flushed.

“Are your panties wet, pixie?” he murmured.

She bit her lip. “If you buy me a drink, Bond, I’ll let you find out.”

She swiveled and walked toward the bar, putting a swing into her hips. The little tease was asking for a spanking.

Suddenly, a guy in a suit approached her. “Jet?”

She turned her head and blinked. “Brandon?”

Cain frowned. The douchebag ex.

Brandon Doyle. Cain had researched him.

“You look great.” Brandon was smiling, and the asshole’s gaze was on Jet’s body.

“Thanks.” She turned toward the bar.

Brandon grabbed her arm. “Can I buy you lunch? I...I’m not seeing Brandice anymore.”

No, the model had dumped him when he’d failed to get a promotion at the finance firm where he worked.

“Ah, that’s a hard no, Brandon,” Jet said, her tone tart.

“Look, I know I fucked up.” Brandon spread his hands. “It was the dumbest thing I ever did, leaving you.”

Jet raised a brow. “You mean cheating on me.”

Cain was done.

He stalked up to Jet and fit his front to her back. He glared at Brandon.

The man froze.

“It was the best thing you ever did for me,” Jet told the man. “Brandon,

this is my fiancée Cain. He's former CIA."

"Ah..." Brandon swallowed.

Jet lowered her voice. "He knows hundreds of ways to kill people."

Fuck, Cain wanted to laugh. He kept his face blank. "Thousands."

Brandon took a step back. "Look—"

"Sorry, we've got to go," Cain said. "I'm feeling the need to fuck my fiancée. Hard." He nudged her forward.

They headed out of the restaurant.

Jet giggled. "Did you see his face?"

"Yes." Cain leaned down and nipped her ear. "But I wasn't joking about fucking you. Move faster."

She looked back over her shoulder at him. He saw the desire and love dancing in her eyes. "I love you, Bond."

"Love you back, pixie."

EPILOGUE

One year later

Jet sipped her frothy cocktail, appropriately called the I Do, and hummed. “Ooh, this is so good.”

Hadley, looking gorgeous in her strapless, hot pink bridesmaid dress shook her head. “You’re so calm. I was a mess on my wedding day.”

Jet rolled her eyes. Hadley had been gorgeous on her wedding day. She’d looked beautiful and totally in love as she’d headed down the aisle to Bennett. They’d been married at a stately home outside of London. It had reminded Jet of something out of a Jane Austen novel.

Sipping her drink again, Jet crossed her legs, admiring her strappy, white heels. “There’s nothing to be stressed about. The sun is shining, I have the best job in the world, and today, I’m marrying the man I love.”

Her heart thumped. Today, she’d become Jet “Hex” Cavanagh. She couldn’t wait.

Cain was already hers anyway. He’d adjusted to civilian life well. Killian and Devyn had helped him a lot. There’d been a few bumps here and there. You couldn’t be a deep-cover spy almost your entire life and just turn that vigilance off overnight.

She knew he’d always scan the street, carry a weapon, and be overprotective. She could live with that.

“This is why a Vegas wedding is best.” Devyn sipped her drink from where she sat on top of a table. Her fitted dress was pale pink on top and bright pink on the bottom. “Quick, easy, no fuss.”

“Yes, but you didn’t invite us,” Jet said. “I’m still mad about that.”

“Killian was in a rush.” A secretive smile curled the redhead’s lips.

Lainie popped her head inside the tent. Like all Jet’s friends, she wore a pink dress too. Hers was a blush pink satin. “It’s time.”

Oh. Jet’s pulse sped up. She finished her cocktail with a final, long sip, and set her glass on the dresser inside the tent that had been set up for her to get ready in. She rose.

The mirror beside the dresser framed her perfectly. She’d picked a short wedding dress. It had a delicate lace bodice with long sleeves and a deep V neckline. She loved the short, sassy skirt that swung around her thighs. Her hair was loose, the pink tips vivid against her dark hair, and her makeup fresh and dewy.

“Ready?” With a smile, Hadley held out a bouquet of lilies and dahlias, all in shades of pink.

“I’m ready.” She licked her lips. “He’s out there?”

Devyn nodded. “Oh yeah, he’s out there.”

“And he looks hot,” Hadley added.

“Keep your eyes off my man.” Jet shot her friend a mock glare. “My soon-to-be husband.”

The white tent flap opened, and Jet’s mother stood there, wearing a lovely teal dress with pink flowers on it. Her eyes softened. “You look gorgeous, my sweet girl.”

“Thanks, Mom.”

Her mother hugged her. “He’s waiting for you.” Her mom smiled. “He looks hot.”

“*Mom.*” Jet’s mother had been shocked to come home from her vacation to find Jet engaged. She’d been wary at first, but Cain had won her over. Now, Bonnie Adler totally loved him.

Jet looked around at her friends. “Let’s go.”

There was a flurry of activity. Devyn held open the tent flap as Jet ducked outside.

It was a beautiful day with a vivid-blue sky overhead. They were on the rooftop of the Sentinel Security warehouse, and it had been transformed. There were urns of greenery and flowers everywhere, and most of the flowers were hot pink. Ahead, she saw a glimpse of the rows of white chairs where their guests sat.

A string quartet started, music filling the air.

“Ready?” Her mom held out her arm. She was walking Jet down the aisle.

“More than anything. I love him, Mom.”

“And he loves you.” Her mom kissed Jet’s cheek. “Watching you two, and your friends, has restored my faith in love.”

From nearby, Hadley smiled. “Okay, let’s get you married, because if we wait much longer, your man is going to come looking for you.”

The others all left to find their seats. Hadley was Jet’s only official bridesmaid, while Killian was standing up with Cain.

The music from the quartet swelled. Hadley went first, striding down the aisle, looking gorgeous. Jet clutched her mom’s arm as they walked down behind her.

Jet smiled at her guests. She saw Addie and Bram, each holding one of the twins: Murphy and Fiona. Bennett was with them, his eyes glued to his wife as she stalked down the aisle. Nearby were Nick and Lainie, and Nick’s sister, Nola. Matteo sat with his arm around a crying Gabbi.

In the row behind them sat Remi and Mav, and the rest of Mav’s billionaire friends and their wives. On the other side of the aisle sat the Norcross clan. Jet held back a smile. If a small army invaded, they’d regret it. There was enough firepower here to take down any invading force.

Killian’s sister Saskia was there with her husband, Cam Morgan. Vander Norcross and his wife Brynn sat with his brothers and the other Norcross employees, along with their other halves.

Norcross Security’s tech wizard, Ace Oliveira, stood at the end of one row, bouncing his tiny daughter on his hip. The fussy toddler was wearing a hot pink dress. He caught Jet’s gaze and winked.

She saw all their family and friends there. Nina and Ellen. Santi, Sentinel Security’s bomb disposal expert. Austin from cybersecurity. The crew from reception. The faces all blurred together, and she was grateful they were all there.

Then she looked forward and the air clogged in her lungs.

Cain was waiting for her, Killian at his side. But all she could see was the man she was going to marry. The man she was going to claim as hers.

He wore a white shirt that was open at the throat, with a dark gray vest. His hair was up in a bun.

He looked hot.

She would never, ever get tired of looking at him.

His dark gaze was locked on her, and it never wavered.

Her mom stopped at the end of the aisle. “Go, my precious girl. The way

he's looking at you is giving me a hot flush."

"I love you, Mom." She kissed her mother's cheek.

Then Cain was there, reaching for her. She put her hand in his.

"Hey," she murmured.

"You look beautiful, Jet." His eyes were filled with emotion. "Thanks for making me fall in love with you."

"Don't make me cry." She clung to his hand. "Want to get married?"

"More than anything I've wanted in my entire life."

"Then let's do it, because I'm yours, Cain Cavanagh. Now and forever."

"SHADE IS NOW A MARRIED MAN."

Cain turned to see Vander Norcross holding out a glass of amber fluid.

"I hope that's bourbon." Cain took the glass.

"It is. Knob Creek. Heard it's your favorite."

Around them, the wedding reception was in full swing. Cain had eaten good food and danced with his new wife.

Wife. *Shit*. He couldn't hold back a smile.

He and Vander clinked their glasses together.

"Congratulations," Vander said.

"Thanks." Cain saw the man watching his dark-haired wife, a police detective, talking with Jet, Hadley, and Devyn.

"Married life agrees with you," Cain said.

Vander nodded. There was an intensity about the man. Cain recognized a warrior when he saw one. He knew Vander was dangerous, protected his friends and family, and helped keep the peace in San Francisco.

"I never thought I'd marry." Vander frowned at his drink. "I always worried that it was too dangerous for me to love a woman."

Cain sipped the very good bourbon. "I worried that I couldn't give Jet what she needed." He paused. "You got over your fear."

"Not really, but Brynn is very stubborn. Even as I fell for her, I worried that if anyone hurt her...that I'd lose it." A faint smile crossed Vander's face. "Luckily, Brynn can look after herself. And it looks like you're giving your Jet everything she needs."

Cain looked over. Jet was laughing hard at something. As always, she

was herself, no holding back. “I think we’re both lucky bastards, having women who never gave up on us.”

“Cheers to that,” Vander said. “Now, I think I might drag my wife off into a dark corner.”

The band switched to an upbeat song and more people headed for the dance floor. Night was falling over New York, and lights flickered on around the rooftop.

Cain spotted Dante Fury leaning against a railing. He walked over to join the man.

“Fury.”

The man turned. “Shade. Or should I say Cain now?”

Cain nodded. “Shade is gone.”

It was true. He wasn’t the same man he’d once been. Shade had been closed off, not letting anyone close. Loving Jet, and her loving him in return, had changed him.

“Congrats,” Dante said. “She seems like a hell of a woman.”

“She is.” Cain swirled the ice in his glass. “I heard you’ve been busy down in New Orleans.”

“Yeah. My brothers and I had some run-ins...with people out to hurt what’s ours.” Dante’s tone darkened. “They’re regretting it now. We’ll always protect our people.”

“You need any help, I’m there,” Cain said.

“Thanks, Cain.”

As the man walked away, Cain thought about the people who mattered to him. The connections he’d made. Over the last year, he’d let more and more people into his life.

He wasn’t alone anymore.

There was a deep *woof*, followed by Jet’s laughter. He looked up and saw her patting down a large German Shepherd. The good-looking dog was wearing a pink bow tie, and belonged to Boone Hendrix. The man was standing beside Jet, shaking his head.

Boone had turned down the opportunity to work for Sentinel Security. The guy seemed easy going on the outside, but Cain saw the hints of his demons, even though Boone hid them pretty well.

Yes, Cain recognized some of his old self in Boone. He knew for now that Boone needed the solitude of his farm in Vermont. Cain hoped the guy found what he needed.

Jet looked up and saw Cain watching her. She blew him a kiss.

He set his glass down and headed her way.

“Boone, is your dog trying to steal my wife?”

“Probably,” Boone said. “Atlas has a thing for pretty ladies.” He whistled, and his dog bounded over to him. “Come on, Atlas. Let’s give the newlyweds some privacy.”

“Hello, Mrs. Cavanagh.” Cain pulled Jet close.

“I like the sound of that,” she said.

“Me too.” He lowered his head and kissed her until she moaned.

“We can’t leave yet,” she said breathily.

“We could sneak out. I really want to fuck my wife.”

She groaned again. “I have to toss the bouquet.”

“So toss it, then let’s get out of here.” He bit the side of her neck and felt her shiver. “I promise I’ll make it worth your while.” He slid a hand down and squeezed her ass.

Jet stepped back. “Hold that thought.” She raced over to Hadley, Devyn, and the others.

They were married. She was his. Forever. He trusted his pixie. She’d never betray him, leave him, or abandon him. She’d always have his back. And he knew that she felt the same.

Killian appeared. “You look smug.”

“Probably as smug as you every time you look at Devyn.”

“You also look happy.”

“I guess I should’ve listened to you sooner. Claiming the right woman... best thing in the world.”

Killian smiled. “Falling in love is a journey. We all have to take the twists and turns to get there, but it’s worth it.”

“Hell, yeah.” Cain gripped Killian’s shoulder. “Thanks for being there, Steel. For not giving up on me.”

Killian nodded. “Always.”

A familiar whir filled the air.

Cain looked up and saw Jet’s drone, Swift, sail across the rooftop with her bright bouquet attached to it.

“All the single ladies, get on the dance floor,” Jet yelled, holding her tablet.

A small group of women assembled, and Cain laughed as she flew the drone overhead. Flowers rained down, and cheers and applause broke out.

She was one-of-a-kind, his wife. He wouldn't change a thing about her. She looked at him, beaming. Happiness and love filled him. Somewhere, he knew Max was grumbling about all of this.

“Sorry old man, I have no regrets.”

Then Cain strode forward to claim his bride, so he could finally get them started on their wedding night.

I hope you enjoyed Jet and Cain's story!

Hex is the final Sentinel Security book for now. I still have a few Sentinel ideas floating around, but for the moment, I have some new series on the boil.

If you want a peek into the future for Jet, Cain, and the Sentinel Security gang, then read the Hex Bonus Epilogue: [GET MY EPILOGUE](#)

Keen to learn more about the Fury Brothers? Stay tuned for Dante Fury's story called *Fury* (Fury Brothers #1) coming later in 2023.

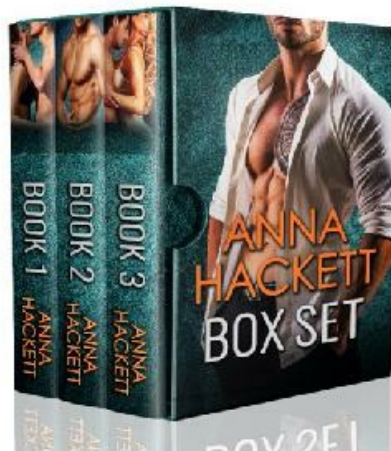
And what about Boone Hendrix and his dog Atlas? Don't worry, his turn is coming too. Boone's book is coming at the end of the year as part of my other new series, *Unbroken Heroes*.

For more action-packed romance, check out the first book in the **Billionaire Heists**, *Stealing from Mr. Rich* (Monroe and Zane's story). **Read on for a preview of the first chapter.**



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PREVIEW: STEALING FROM MR. RICH



Brother in Trouble

Monroe

The old-fashioned Rosengrens safe was a beauty.

I carefully turned the combination dial, then pressed closer to the safe. The metal was cool under my fingertips. The safe wasn't pretty, but stout and secure. There was something to be said for solid security.

Rosengrens had started making safes in Sweden over a hundred years ago. They were good at it. I listened to the pins, waiting for contact. Newer safes had internals made from lightweight materials to reduce sensory feedback, so I didn't get to use these skills very often.

Some people could play the piano, I could play a safe. The tiny vibration I was waiting for reached my fingertips, followed by the faintest click.

"I've gotcha, old girl." The Rosengrens had quite a few quirks, but my blood sang as I moved the dial again.

I heard a louder click and spun the handle.

The safe door swung open. Inside, I saw stacks of jewelry cases and wads of hundred-dollar bills. *Nice.*

Standing, I dusted my hands off on my jeans. "There you go, Mr. Goldstein."

"You are a doll, Monroe O'Connor. Thank you."

The older man, dressed neatly in pressed chinos and a blue shirt, grinned at me. He had coke-bottle glasses, wispy, white hair, and a wrinkled face.

I smiled at him. Mr. Goldstein was one of my favorite people. "I'll send you my bill."

His grin widened. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

I raised a brow. "You could stop forgetting your safe combination."

The wealthy old man called me every month or so to open his safe. Right now, we were standing in the home office of his expensive Park Avenue penthouse.

It was decorated in what I thought of as "rich, old man." There were heavy drapes, gold-framed artwork, lots of dark wood—including the built-in shelves around the safe—and a huge desk.

"Then I wouldn't get to see your pretty face," he said.

I smiled and patted his shoulder. "I'll see you next month, Mr. Goldstein." The poor man was lonely. His wife had died the year before, and his only son lived in Europe.

“Sure thing, Monroe. I’ll have some of those donuts you like.”

We headed for the front door and my chest tightened. I understood feeling lonely. “You could do with some new locks on your door. I mean, your building has top-notch security, but you can never be too careful. Pop by the shop if you want to talk locks.”

He beamed at me and held the door open. “I might do that.”

“Bye, Mr. Goldstein.”

I headed down the plush hall to the elevator. Everything in the building screamed old money. I felt like an imposter just being in the building. Like I had “daughter of a criminal” stamped on my head.

Pulling out my cell phone, I pulled up my accounting app and entered Mr. Goldstein’s callout. Next, I checked my messages.

Still nothing from Maguire.

Frowning, I bit my lip. That made it three days since I’d heard from my little brother. I shot him off a quick text.

“Text me back, Mag,” I muttered.

The elevator opened and I stepped in, trying not to worry about Maguire. He was an adult, but I’d practically raised him. Most days it felt like I had a twenty-four-year-old kid.

The elevator slowed and stopped at another floor. An older, well-dressed couple entered. They eyed me and my well-worn jeans like I’d crawled out from under a rock.

I smiled. “Good morning.”

Yeah, yeah, I’m not wearing designer duds, and my bank account doesn’t have a gazillion zeros. You’re so much better than me.

Ignoring them, I scrolled through Instagram. When we finally reached the lobby, the couple shot me another dubious look before they left. I strode out across the marble-lined space and rolled my eyes.

During my teens, I’d cared about what people thought. Everyone had known that my father was Terry O’Connor—expert thief, safecracker, and con man. I’d felt every repulsed look and sly smirk at high school.

Then I’d grown up, cultivated some thicker skin, and learned not to care. *Fuck ‘em.* People who looked down on others for things outside their control were assholes.

I wrinkled my nose. Okay, it was easier said than done.

When I walked outside, the street was busy. I smiled, breathing in the scent of New York—car exhaust, burnt meat, and rotting trash. Besides, most

people cared more about themselves. They judged you, left you bleeding, then forgot you in the blink of an eye.

I unlocked my bicycle, and pulled on my helmet, then set off down the street. I needed to get to the store. The ride wasn't long, but I spent every second worrying about Mag.

My brother had a knack for finding trouble. I sighed. After a childhood, where both our mothers had taken off, and Da was in and out of jail, Mag was entitled to being a bit messed up. The O'Connors were a long way from the Brady Bunch.

I pulled up in front of my shop in Hell's Kitchen and stopped for a second.

I grinned. *All mine.*

Okay, I didn't own the building, but I owned the store. The sign above the shop said *Lady Locksmith*. The logo was lipstick red—a woman's hand with gorgeous red nails, holding a set of keys.

After I locked up my bike, I strode inside. A chime sounded.

God, I loved the place. It was filled with glossy, warm-wood shelves lined with displays of state-of-the-art locks and safes. A key-cutting machine sat at the back.

A blonde head popped up from behind a long, shiny counter.

"You're back," Sabrina said.

My best friend looked like a doll—small, petite, with a head of golden curls.

We'd met doing our business degrees at college, and had become fast friends. Sabrina had always wanted to be tall and sexy, but had to settle for small and cute. She was my manager, and was getting married in a month.

"Yeah, Mr. Goldstein forgot his safe code again," I said.

Sabrina snorted. "That old coot doesn't forget, he just likes looking at your ass."

"He's harmless. He's nice, and lonely. How's the team doing?"

Sabrina leaned forward, pulling out her tablet. I often wondered if she slept with it. "Liz is out back unpacking stock." Sabrina's nose wrinkled. "McRoberts overcharged us on the Schlage locks again."

"That prick." He was always trying to screw me over. "I'll call him."

"Paola, Kat, and Isabella are all out on jobs."

Excellent. Business was doing well. Lady Locksmith specialized in providing female locksmiths to all the single ladies of New York. They also

advised on how to keep them safe—securing locks, doors, and windows.

I had a dream of one day seeing multiple Lady Locksmiths around the city. Hell, around every city. A girl could dream. Growing up, once I understood the damage my father did to other people, all I'd wanted was to be respectable. To earn my own way and add to the world, not take from it.

“Did you get that new article I sent you to post on the blog?” I asked.

Sabrina nodded. “It’ll go live shortly, and then I’ll post on Insta, as well.”

When I had the time, I wrote articles on how women—single *and* married—should secure their homes. My latest was aimed at domestic-violence survivors, and helping them feel safe. I donated my time to Nightingale House, a local shelter that helped women leaving DV situations, and I installed locks for them, free of charge.

“We should start a podcast,” Sabrina said.

I wrinkled my nose. “I don’t have time to sit around recording stuff.” I did my fair share of callouts for jobs, plus at night I had to stay on top of the business-side of the store.

“Fine, fine.” Sabrina leaned against the counter and eyed my jeans. “Damn, I hate you for being tall, long, and gorgeous. You’re going to look *way* too beautiful as my maid of honor.” She waved a hand between us. “You’re all tall, sleek, and dark-haired, and I’m...the opposite.”

I had some distant Black Irish ancestor to thank for my pale skin and ink-black hair. Growing up, I wanted to be short, blonde, and tanned. I snorted. “Beauty comes in all different forms, Sabrina.” I gripped her shoulders. “You are so damn pretty, and your fiancé happens to think you are the most beautiful woman in the world. Andrew is gaga over you.”

Sabrina sighed happily. “He does and he is.” A pause. “So, do you have a date for my wedding yet?” My bestie’s voice turned breezy and casual.

Uh-oh. I froze. All the wedding prep had sent my normally easygoing best friend a bit crazy. And I knew very well not to trust that tone.

I edged toward my office. “Not yet.”

Sabrina’s blue eyes sparked. “It’s only *four* weeks away, Monroe. The maid of honor can’t come alone.”

“I’ll be busy helping you out—”

“Find a date, Monroe.”

“I don’t want to just pick anyone for your wedding—”

Sabrina stomped her foot. “Find someone, or I’ll find someone for you.”

I held up my hands. “Okay, okay.” I headed for my office. “I’ll—” My

cell phone rang. Yes. "I've got a call. Got to go." I dove through the office door.

"I won't forget," Sabrina yelled. "I'll revoke your best-friend status, if I have to."

I closed the door on my bridezilla bestie and looked at the phone.

Maguire. Finally.

I stabbed the call button. "Where have you been?"

"We have your brother," a robotic voice said.

My blood ran cold. My chest felt like it had filled with concrete.

"If you want to keep him alive, you'll do exactly as I say."

Zane

God, this party was boring.

Zane Roth sipped his wine and glanced around the ballroom at the Mandarin Oriental. The party held the Who's Who of New York society, all dressed up in their glittering best. The ceiling shimmered with a sea of crystal lights, tall flower arrangements dominated the tables, and the wall of windows had a great view of the Manhattan skyline.

Everything was picture perfect...and boring.

If it wasn't for the charity auction, he wouldn't be dressed in his tuxedo and dodging annoying people.

"I'm so sick of these parties," he muttered.

A snort came from beside him.

One of his best friends, Maverick Rivera, sipped his wine. "You were voted New York's sexiest billionaire bachelor. You should be loving this shindig."

Mav had been one of his best friends since college. Like Zane, Maverick hadn't come from wealth. They'd both earned it the old-fashioned way. Zane loved numbers and money, and had made Wall Street his hunting ground. Mav was a geek, despite not looking like a stereotypical one. He'd grown up in a strong, Mexican-American family, and with his brown skin, broad shoulders, and the fact that he worked out a lot, no one would pick him for a tech billionaire.

But under the big body, the man was a computer geek to the bone.

"All the society mamas are giving you lots of speculative looks." Mav gave him a small grin.

"Shut it, Rivera."

"They're all dreaming of marrying their daughters off to billionaire Zane Roth, the finance King of Wall Street."

Zane glared. "You done?"

"Oh, I could go on."

"I seem to recall another article about the billionaire bachelors. All three of us." Zane tipped his glass at his friend. "They'll be coming for you, next."

Mav's smile dissolved, and he shrugged a broad shoulder. "I'll toss Kensington at them. He's pretty."

Liam Kensington was the third member of their trio. Unlike Zane and

Mav, Liam had come from money, although he worked hard to avoid his bloodsucking family.

Zane saw a woman in a slinky, blue dress shoot him a welcoming smile.

He looked away.

When he'd made his first billion, he'd welcomed the attention. Especially the female attention. He'd bedded more than his fair share of gorgeous women.

Of late, nothing and no one caught his interest. Women all left him feeling numb.

Work. He thrived on that.

A part of him figured he'd never find a woman who made him feel the same way as his work.

"Speak of the devil," Mav said.

Zane looked up to see Liam Kensington striding toward them. With the lean body of a swimmer, clad in a perfectly tailored tuxedo, he looked every inch the billionaire. His gold hair complemented a face the ladies oohed over.

People tried to get his attention, but the real estate mogul ignored everyone.

He reached Zane and Mav, grabbed Zane's wine, and emptied it in two gulps.

"I hate this party. When can we leave?" Having spent his formative years in London, he had a posh British accent. Another thing the ladies loved. "I have a contract to work on, my fundraiser ball to plan, and things to catch up on after our trip to San Francisco."

The three of them had just returned from a business trip to the West Coast.

"Can't leave until the auction's done," Zane said.

Liam sighed. His handsome face often had him voted the best-looking billionaire bachelor.

"Buy up big," Zane said. "Proceeds go to the Boys and Girls Clubs."

"One of your pet charities," Liam said.

"Yeah." Zane's father had left when he was seven. His mom had worked hard to support them. She was his hero. He liked to give back to charities that supported kids growing up in tough circumstances.

He'd set his mom up in a gorgeous house Upstate that she loved. And he was here for her tonight.

"Don't bid on the Phillips-Morley necklace, though," he added. "It's

mine.”

The necklace had a huge, rectangular sapphire pendant surrounded by diamonds. It was the real-life necklace said to have inspired the necklace in the movie, *Titanic*. It had been given to a young woman, Kate Florence Phillips, by her lover, Henry Samuel Morley. The two had run away together and booked passage on the Titanic.

Unfortunately for poor Kate, Henry had drowned when the ship had sunk. She'd returned to England with the necklace and a baby in her belly.

Zane's mother had always loved the story and pored over pictures of the necklace. She'd told him the story of the lovers, over and over.

“It was a gift from a man to a woman he loved. She was a shop girl, and he owned the store, but they fell in love, even though society frowned on their love.” She sighed. “That's true love, Zane. Devotion, loyalty, through the good times and the bad.”

Everything Carol Roth had never known.

Of course, it turned out old Henry was much older than his lover, and already married. But Zane didn't want to ruin the fairy tale for his mom.

Now, the Phillips-Morley necklace had turned up, and was being offered at auction. And Zane was going to get it for his mom. It was her birthday in a few months.

“Hey, is your fancy, new safe ready yet?” Zane asked Mav.

His friend nodded. “You're getting one of the first ones. I can have my team install it this week.”

“Perfect.” Mav's new Riv3000 was the latest in high-tech safes and said to be unbreakable. “I'll keep the necklace in it until my mom's birthday.”

Someone called out Liam's name. With a sigh, their friend forced a smile. “Can't dodge this one. Simpson's an investor in my Brooklyn project. I'll be back.”

“Need a refill?” Zane asked Mav.

“Sure.”

Zane headed for the bar. He'd almost reached it when a manicured hand snagged his arm.

“Zane.”

He looked down at the woman and barely swallowed his groan. “Allegra. You look lovely this evening.”

She did. Allegra Montgomery's shimmery, silver dress hugged her slender figure, and her cloud of mahogany brown hair accented her beautiful

face. As the only daughter of a wealthy New York family—her father was from *the* Montgomery family and her mother was a former Miss America—Allegra was well-bred and well-educated but also, as he'd discovered, spoiled and liked getting her way.

Her dark eyes bored into him. "I'm sorry things ended badly for us the other month. I was..." Her voice lowered, and she stroked his forearm. "I miss you. I was hoping we could catch up again."

Zane arched a brow. They'd dated for a few weeks, shared a few dinners, and some decent sex. But Allegra liked being the center of attention, complained that he worked too much, and had constantly hounded him to take her on vacation. Preferably on a private jet to Tahiti or the Maldives.

When she'd asked him if it would be too much for him to give her a credit card of her own, for monthly expenses, Zane had exited stage left.

"I don't think so, Allegra. We aren't...compatible."

Her full lips turned into a pout. "I thought we were *very* compatible."

He cleared his throat. "I heard you moved on. With Chip Huffington."

Allegra waved a hand. "Oh, that's nothing serious."

And Chip was only a millionaire. Allegra would see that as a step down. In fact, Zane felt like every time she looked at him, he could almost see little dollar signs in her eyes.

He dredged up a smile. "I wish you all the best, Allegra. Good evening." He sidestepped her and made a beeline for the bar.

"What can I get you?" the bartender asked.

Wine wasn't going to cut it. It would probably be frowned on to ask for an entire bottle of Scotch. "Two glasses of Scotch, please. On the rocks. Do you have Macallan?"

"No, sorry, sir. Will Glenfiddich do?"

"Sure."

"Ladies and gentlemen," a voice said over the loudspeaker. The lights lowered. "I hope you're ready to spend big for a wonderful cause."

Carrying the drinks, Zane hurried back to Mav and Liam. He handed Mav a glass.

"Let's do this," Mav grumbled. "And next time, I'll make a generous online donation so I don't have to come to the party."

"Drinks at my place after I get the necklace," Zane said. "I have a very good bottle of Macallan."

Mav stilled. "How good?"

“Macallan 25. Single malt.”

“I’m there,” Liam said.

Mav lifted his chin.

Ahead, Zane watched the evening’s host lift a black cloth off a pedestal. He stared at the necklace, the sapphire glittering under the lights.

There it was.

The sapphire was a deep, rich blue. Just like all the photos his mother had shown him.

“Get that damn necklace, Roth, and let’s get out of here,” Mav said.

Zane nodded. He’d get the necklace for the one woman in his life who rarely asked for anything, then escape the rest of the bloodsuckers and hang with his friends.

Billionaire Heists

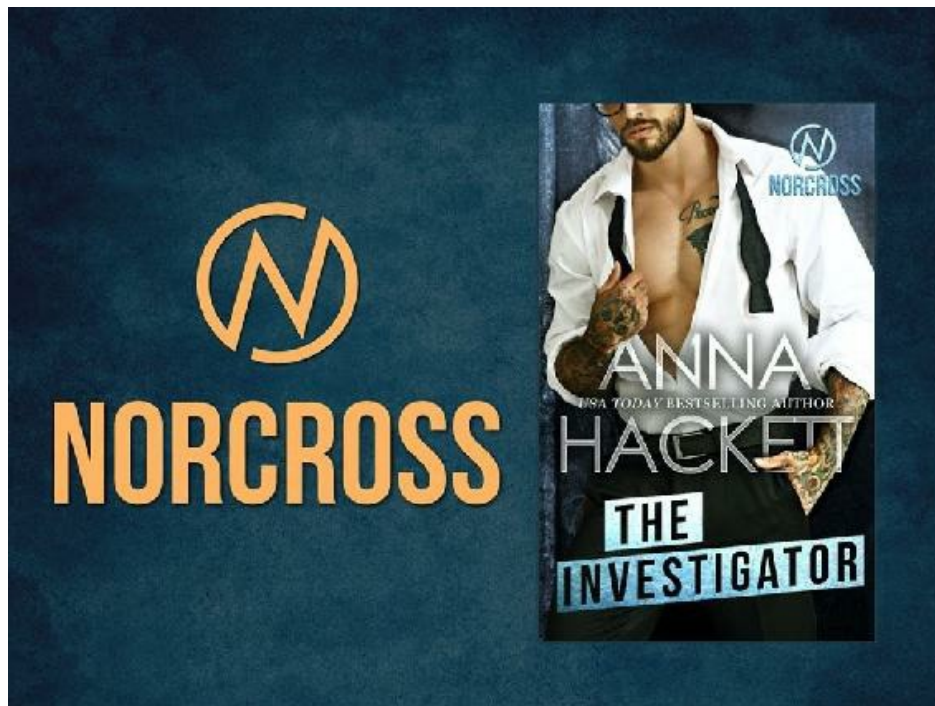
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PREVIEW: NORCROSS SECURITY

Want more action-packed romance? Then check out the men of **Norcross Security**.



The only man who can keep her safe is her boss' gorgeous brother.

Museum curator Haven McKinney has sworn off men. All of them. Totally. She's recently escaped a bad ex and started a new life for herself in San Francisco. She *loves* her job at the Hutton Museum, likes her new boss, and has made best friends with his feisty sister. Haven's also desperately

trying *not* to notice their brother: hotshot investigator Rhys Norcross. And she's *really* trying not to notice his muscular body, sexy tattoos, and charming smile.

Nope, Rhys is off limits. But then Haven finds herself in the middle of a deadly situation...

Investigator Rhys Norcross is good at finding his targets. After leaving an elite Ghost Ops military team, the former Delta Force soldier thrives on his job at his brother's security firm, Norcross Security. He's had his eye on smart, sexy Haven for a while, but the pretty curator with her eyes full of secrets is proving far harder to chase down than he anticipated.

Luckily, Rhys never, ever gives up.

When thieves target the museum and steal a multi-million-dollar painting in a daring theft, Haven finds herself in trouble, and dangers from her past rising. Rhys vows to do whatever it takes to keep her safe, and Haven finds herself risking the one thing she was trying so hard to protect—her heart.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I'm a USA Today bestselling romance author who's passionate about *fast-paced, emotion-filled* contemporary romantic suspense and science fiction romance. I love writing about people overcoming unbeatable odds and achieving seemingly impossible goals. I like to believe it's possible for all of us to do the same.

I live in Australia with my own personal hero and two very busy, always-on-the-move sons.

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