

## CHAPTER 1



"What the fuck are you doing here?"

It was a lazy Saturday afternoon, and I was holed away in my apartment, cleaning, because that was what I did when I was anxious and unhappy—clean. The cats had already gone running at the sound of the vacuum cleaner as I viciously attacked the carpet and even did the walls.

This was some serious mental anguish, here.

And the reason for my upset was standing blithely on my doorstep in faded to almost ripped jeans and a skin tight black t-shirt. How was it that he managed to wear the most casual of outfits as if he was in a ten-thousand-dollar handmade Italian suit? His huge arms were crossed over that amazing chest of his, long, thick runner's legs in that wide legged stance that managed to take up just about as much space as possible.

Even the distortion of the peephole couldn't ruin that man, nor could what I had thought might have been my drink addled impression of him, dammit. He looked just as imminently fuckable as I remembered.

Which meant that I was in *truh-bull*.

He'd had to bang on the door hard enough to practically knock

it down in order to be heard over the vacuum and the stereo, which was blaring Halestorm's *I Miss the Misery* as I caterwauled along with it. Luckily, for me, this was an older building and they hadn't skimped on the sound proofing. At least none of my neighbors had complained yet, anyway.

To say that I didn't want to see him was the understatement of the millennia. We'd had a night—*one night*—almost two weeks ago after meeting at a local bar.

I didn't usually do that kind of thing.

I *don't* usually do that kind of thing.

In fact, I'd never done it before in all of the thirty-mumph years of my life. Casual sex just didn't do it for me. I needed to be emotionally attached to the person I was with—at least have known them for more than a minute and a half. I don't condemn how anyone else lives their life—more power to them, in fact. I just had known all my life that that kind of encounter would hold absolutely no interest for me.

Boy, was I wrong.

The things I'd let him do to me—the way I'd let him handle me—talk to me—when he took me back to his place still made me blush fire hydrant red. Even two weeks later.

And now, there he was, in all of his glory.

Damned if it wasn't pretty damned fine glory, too. He was almost everything I'd ever dreamed of—physically—in a man—well over six feet, black haired—although it was a bit long for me, waving slightly down to just rest on his shoulders—built like the proverbial shithouse.

And dominant with a capital D.

There were some things about what happened that night that I knew I didn't want to remember, frankly. I was drunker than I ever allowed myself to get in public, and he was very adept at turning my noes into yeses without ever making me feel threatened.

It was some potent trick, believe me. Up until then, I'd believed that I had a highly developed sense of self preservation and

security, but he proved me completely wrong, and it had rattled me more than I liked to admit.

I stood there in front of the door for a long time, trying to decide whether or not I wanted to even let him know I was home. I'd been outright avoiding him for the past two weeks and I had the voicemails and texts—which had started out as sexts—on my phone to prove it. Although, granted, they had died off kind of abruptly a few days ago. Why I hadn't just deleted them, I'll never know—perhaps because it had been a long, dry spell and it was feeling kind of nice—in a somewhat uncomfortable way—to have someone pursuing me—especially a man like him. I had to give him some points, however. At least, he hadn't descended to the lowest common denominator and sent me a dick pic, but then he hadn't struck me as a crass kind of a guy at all.

Quite the opposite, which was surprising, considering the prurient nature of our encounter. He had to have been some smooth operator in order to get me to fall for him. I was not an easy target for any man. Although the fact that he hadn't sent me a picture of his endowment made me wish I had had the presence of mind to take one myself, especially when its massive presence was mere inches from my face.

Apparently, patience wasn't one of his virtues.

That velvet soft but iron hard voice drifted through the door to me, soft but with a bit of power behind it. "I know you're home, Tawna. Your car's in the parking lot."

Fuck me.

Less than a minute later, I heard, "And you turned down the music as soon as I started knocking."

Son of a bitch. How much of an idiot could I be?

Seconds later. "And you're standing in front of the door right now, trying to decide whether or not to open it."

I bit my lip, frowning fiercely. He sounded so damned smug!

"Do the smart thing and open it," he almost crooned through the

door, as if he was pressed up against it the way he wanted to be pressed up against me. "So that I don't have to break it down."

With an irritated sigh, I did what he said, knowing I'd have to guard against that becoming a habit with this man. His demeanor was altogether too commanding, as if he was quite used to barking orders.

And I had a distinct weakness for dominant men.

Considering what I knew about him, I figured it was best to go on the offensive as soon as I got it opened. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

His smile really wasn't distinguishable as one, not much more than a mere upturn of the ends of those full, sensual lips. He took off his sunglasses and looked down at me at the same time he moved forward, and I was caught, mesmerized by his slate grey eyes, and before I knew it, he was standing in my apartment, closing the door behind him and dropping his sunglasses into the key bowl on the small phone stand I kept right there for convenience.

And then, he simply began to walk towards me. Nothing really more threatening than that, although the man was so naturally intense, never breaking eye contact with me once as he danced me back into my living room.

I stopped and put my hand out as he took a step forward and my palm landed on his chest, just above his heart. It was like touching a blast furnace—completely unyielding and hot enough to practically melt my hand into his skin.

Suddenly, I remembered that, at one point that night, I had gotten cold. He'd risen immediately to adjust the heat, then had come back to bed and surrounded me with his warmth. He'd pressed his lips to that spot where jaw became neck, murmuring, "I think you run a little cold, honey, but that's okay. I run hot enough for the both of us."

A whimper wanted to escape my mouth at the memory—and all of the accompanying sensations that flooded through me—but I

managed to bite down on it. Somehow, I didn't think this man needed any encouragement at all.

To his credit, he *did* stop as soon as I touched him, waiting more patiently than I would have thought he could, frankly, for me to say something.

"No" came to mind, of course, but I couldn't seem to get *it* past my lips. Mewls, whimpers, and moans, yes. They were all crowded in there, anxious to be born, to encourage him to create more of them within me. But anything that would stop him—or even just something intelligent like, "Why don't we sit down and have some coffee and get to know each other a bit before I end up under you again?"—completely eluded me in the face of his proximity to me and the memories that continued to flood back into my mind like scenes from a sizzling porno.

"I—"

Well, that was at least something that was more neutral than most of what I wanted to say.

His eyebrows went up expectantly, but there wasn't any more.

There was no more of me, just visceral visions of him with me that I knew would be burned into my mind for the rest of my life.

His big paw came up to grasp my wrist, cuffing it, his long, thick fingers easily overlapping around it. He used that careful grip to give what I recognized, for him, was a gentle tug, but it still sent me crashing to him, mashing my body up against his. He abandoned my arm in favor of sliding one of his around me, not my waist but my mid back, hand splaying there firmly, and I knew that now I couldn't move away from him, even if I wanted to.

And I knew I *should* want to—if just on general principles. I didn't know him. He didn't know me. I didn't *do* this kind of thing, I kept repeating to myself like some refrain from a song I couldn't get out of my mind.

But, apparently, I did.

With him, anyway.

His head lowered and I thought he was going to kiss me, but he merely pressed his mouth to mine and growled, "*Mine.*"

I knew he heard my sharp intake of breath at that bold statement.

With that, he simply lifted me, using the arm that was already there to clutch me to him, and heading unerringly for my bedroom. It was a small place and good guess on his part, since he'd never been there before.

My bed was a mere queen, and I wondered fleetingly if he was going to even fit on it. And then he put me down, his hands going immediately to the hem of my old, clean but stained, threadbare t-shirt, landing on my tummy and making my breath hiss into my lungs from that very abrupt—and possessive—contact. His hands were so damned big that they covered more than all of me as they glided up, deliberately touching every bit of me they could on their way.

"Look at me, Tawna."

I responded to that husky order much more readily than I wanted to, hearing myself panting heavily as I did so and hating myself as well as his self-satisfied look as my eyes found his.

For several days after our...encounter, I was mortified to realize that I couldn't recall his name. I knew that I knew it—I blushed to remember that he had made me say it at different points during the night and that I screamed it uncontrollably more often than that.

Quinton Palmer. Quint, he'd said with a broad smile when he'd introduced himself to me at the bar, his hand engulfing mine completely, but what I'd noticed, even in my inebriated state, was that he didn't crush my hand as we shook.

This was a big man who knew how to temper his considerable strength.

*Schwing!*

His palms had worked their way up to cover my breasts but failed to stop there as I wanted them to. Beyond dragging them over the tips, he didn't touch them, continuing on to insert his

fingers into the collar of my shirt and, in one fluid movement, lift it off me to fall, completely unnoticed, to the floor.

I was bare beneath—I didn't usually wear underwear unless I was going out, and he surprised me by keeping his eyes glued to mine rather than staring down at my breasts as most men would have.

But then I was beginning to discover that he was *not* most men.

They were bigger than they should have been for my frame, a happy genetic accident and one of the few physical qualities with which I was satisfied.

He squatted in front of me, making me feel somehow even smaller than I was, to tug my elastic waist shorts down, and I heard a low rumble of appreciation from his chest at the fact that I was bare beneath, although he didn't stare there, either, and I began to wonder if he was some sort of gentleman dom, but then that really didn't jibe much with what had already happened between us.

"Goddamn, woman," he groaned as he rose slowly, his eyes finally overtly appreciating various areas that greeted them—although he didn't touch anything, much to my dismay, until he stood once again to cup the back of my neck, forcibly tilting my head back even further than it was just so that I could look at him, "I had thought I—" He cut his statement off abruptly and I was left very curious about what he had started to say—not that he let me dwell on it at all.

Instead, he lifted me as if I was a rag doll, holding me helplessly over him for a long moment. I could see the muscles working in his jaw and a vein throbbing in his temple just before he lowered me to the bed, flipping me onto my tummy, then dragging me back by my hips up onto my hands and knees, plastering my bottom up against the bulge in those jeans that I had already noticed looked as if they were going to split open around him—in several spots—at any moment. He ground himself against me, his own breath coming in great gusts already, teasing himself—and me—as my body wept its

tribute to what he was doing to me, dampening the material over his cock.

I felt—and heard—him lower his zipper, his fingers brushing unapologetically against my privates, making me try to press myself even harder into him.

But, as I felt him come to rest, not inside me, but occupying the whole area—and more—between my lips, the full, thick length of his shaft keeping me spread open from my bottom flower to where the tip claimed several inches of my mound.

He chuckled at my eagerness, then reached down and caught the back of my neck in one hand, pressing my cheek a bit more than firmly into the mattress and making me have to bite back a groan, only with only partial success, I was mortified to realize.

How the fuck did he know just what I wanted? Just exactly how to handle me?

Another knowing chuckle from above me.

Bastard.

He proceeded to rock his hips slowly, almost gently, which served to drag his cock over my clit as it strained ever upwards, hoping to catch my entrance, although Quinton kept it well away from there, preferring to tease and tempt me with what I wanted—him filling me—hard and fast—to the point of discomfort and his fingers manipulating my clit as he did so.

Suddenly, I felt a monstrous swat to my bare behind as he pulled back a bit more than he had been, and a full-fledged yelp exploded from my mouth. I clenched my teeth together, hoping to prevent any further totally embarrassing outbursts, but the second smack was harder—if that was even possible—than the first, and I knew I'd be wearing his crimson handprints on my ass for quite some time to come.

"Someone is going to get a spanking."

I automatically tried to raise my head to look back at him and protest vehemently—I remembered what his spanking—spankings—were like. Vividly, more so than I remembered most of that night,



and more than enough that I knew I never wanted to be on the receiving end of another of them.

He knew how to control his strength, all right, and he also knew how to use it too damned well!

As he continued to scourge my ass, bringing me immediately to the point of tears, what should have been a vociferous complaint at his declaration became much more of a breathy, muted mewl.

"Nooooo."

I was glad I couldn't see what had to be his annoying grin of triumph.

His transition from punishment to possession was an admirably seamless one. One moment, I was receiving a spanking I wasn't at all sure I could take much more of—like I had a choice—and the next, I found myself speared by him in one smooth, gasp inspiring motion. He wasn't at all shy about making absolutely sure that I took every single tremendously imposing inch of him, either, to the point that he used his own knee to knock mine—where they were positioned at the edge of the bed—callously apart, then arched himself and stretched out over my back, so that I was completely surrounded and occupied by him, trapped helplessly beneath him, my wrists held above my head by a hand that was still warm from having laced into my behind.

I was whimpering, with no way to stop it—or him—I knew. Large parts of me—parts I didn't often confront—adored every single bit of him making me feel so undeniably submissive and subjugated. There was another part of my brain, though, that had already sounded the alarm, noting that I was in danger, acknowledging the fact that this man was more than big and strong enough to make me do anything he wanted me to—and to do anything at all to me that struck his fancy. But that only added to my desire, instead of triggering any sense of self-preservation.

Had I been in my right mind—which didn't seem to be possible around him for longer than it took for him to take me in his arms—I would have protested. I would have fought him. I

would have done *something*—extricated myself somehow and fled to safety.

But I didn't want to do that. My body sang and hummed and tingled in all the right places and I didn't think I could live if it stopped.

Besides, any fantasies I had about getting free of him were just exactly that—fantasies. I had just about as much possibility of getting away from him as I had of being able to lift a house off of me.

As he curled himself over me, which had the side effect of pushing that unyielding column of flesh up into me even further, he pressed sharply down on my neck, once, as if to remind me of his hold as he began to fuck me and talk to me at the same time—what was a truly combustible combination for me.

"Oh yes, and you are going to get your bottom striped by my belt, too, when we're done here, young lady. How many times did I call you? How many texts? To say nothing of the fact that you hightailed it out of my place without so much as a peck on the cheek that morning."

My first—automatic—impulse was to want to explain to him why I had done what I'd done—that I'd felt so overwhelmed by what had happened between us—that I still held firm to the idea that I couldn't do something like that, even though I obviously had—that I needed some time to sort things out and get my head around him and how almost eerily well he seemed to know what I wanted.

But the rebellious side of my nature rose up at that idea, and even if I had been physically capable of saying all of that—which I most certainly was not, considering my position—I wouldn't have. I didn't owe him anything. He was a one-night stand. Nothing more, nothing less.

Wasn't that supposed to be the essence of the whole encounter—no accountability on the part of either partner? Apparently, he hadn't read the fine print.

The fact that I had been obsessing over him for the past twelve days did not enter into the equation. Neither did the fact that, when I masturbated—which I did about ten times more than usual lately—he was the impetus for each and every time. I had replayed everything I could remember about what we'd done, and the potent combination of shame at my actions and the remembered passion had gotten me off in record time, every damned time.

He varied his rhythm—at times pumping into me so hard and fast, I felt my bones shake—sometimes accosting me slowly, making me feel every inch of me was thoroughly possessed by him. And he continued to talk to me, which was very nearly worse.

"I want more. I will *have* more of you than I am even having right now. I will have your mind and your heart and your body and your very soul. I will own you completely, punish you strictly, cherish you tenderly and fuck you savagely."

For what seemed like forever, he held me totally immobile and took me, in the barest sense of the word, his cock driving into me so hard that I had to practically scream at every thrust, which only seemed to spur him on.

And when he could somehow tell that I was close, he loosened my hands—that he knew I would have no strength to lift against him anymore, anyway—and brought his between my well splayed legs to press and swirl the enormous pad of his thumb over my clit as I felt my arousal dripping down onto those fingers.

"Come, baby. You know you want to. You know I'm not going to let you get away from it. There's nothing you can do to stop me from bringing you off."

As much as his words excited me—and they did—I still did my best to try to shake my head, the only overt movement I made—I was able to make—in answer to his challenge. Somehow, he sounded so sure of himself, so arrogant, and it annoyed the crap out of me. And, surprisingly, because of that, I had another defense that kicked in automatically, even though I knew I was just delaying the inevitable. I wouldn't be able to put it off indefinitely,

but I could defy him for a short while longer and, regardless of the way my body was clamoring for the release I knew only he could give me, my stubborn side won out and kind of turned all of those sensations off—or rather diverted them for a bit—so that things weren't anywhere near as acute as they had been.

I could tell that he was surprised when my moans died down a bit in volume because he actually paused for a nanosecond, and then he immediately redoubled his efforts.

I knew it was futile to try to resist him, and I lost the battle in a depressingly short amount of time as my passions came raging furiously back—as if pissed off for having been sublimated, even for that short amount of time—wresting control away from me and seizing my body—intellectually and physically.

It was here. It was *seconds* away.

"No!" I cried on an agonized moan that rose in volume as I hit the bliss full body on. "No, no, no—pleeeeaassee!"

"Yes, little girl," he hissed. "I will always *make* it yes for you."

That first spasm nearly knocked me completely out. I had to fight to retain consciousness as the rest of them piled onto and over me, my body shuddering and shaking in his arms so badly that if I hadn't heard him shout, I wouldn't have known whether or not he'd come—I was too overtaken by the way ecstasy was raging violently through me. My eyes were wide open and I was having to drag great gulps of air into my lungs and it wasn't enough.

Nothing would ever be enough again after this *but* this.