
Chapter 1

Cherry Calhoun flipped the ‘closed’ sign over on the door to her bakery and moved behind the counter. It was Saturday, the day she donated anything that was left over to the soup kitchen. Pulling the racks out of the display cases she set them on the counter and began making up boxes and arranging pastries in each one.

Thankfully it had been a busy week, but there were still plenty of pastries, rolls and a few of her specialty Baby Cakes left over. Hopefully they would make the weekend a little brighter for those in need. She added the last of the Cherry Tarts, another signature item and was just getting ready to tie the box with string when someone rapped on the door.

“Sorry, we’re closed,” she called without looking up, but the tapping continued.

Sighing, she came out from behind the counter and pointed to the sign before glancing up, shocked to see the large man on the other side of the glass door.

Holy shit, it was the ‘bobby guard’ she realized. Her first instinct was to hurry and let him in, her second was to tell him to go to Hell. Months ago, she’d gone to a lot of trouble to slip her

number into his pocket and the jerk never called despite sending her all sorts of subtle signals indicating his interest. Now here he was, showing up out of the blue.

Watching him, her arms crossed over her ample chest she recalled how disappointed she'd been, hurt really and made up her mind. He'd kept her waiting for weeks, feeling extremely bad about herself, rejected. Alternately she dieted and binged, convinced it was her size that turned him off. She'd fought that battle most of her life and was about sick of it. Showing him the kissy face, she then spun around and pointed to her ass as she walked away.

AND WHAT AN ASS IT WAS, he couldn't help thinking as he watched her hips sway. Cherry Calhoun was a one of a kind woman, with her bright red hair, and her skin-tight jeans that hugged a bottom made for a man like him. Screw the emaciated fashion models. Give him a soft, full-figured woman and he was in heaven.

He met a lot of women in his line of work. The O'Malley women were all beautiful as was his last assignment in town, Rebecca Kord, but they couldn't hold a candle to Cherry. He should have called her, he knew that, but time got away from him and he didn't want to contact her until he was going to be around for a while.

Most of his relationships were short lived. It was hard to maintain anything more permanent when he was traveling so frequently. All that was changing now, he was ready to put down some roots. Oh, he'd still do some consulting work, and he had several contracts to fulfill yet, but the majority of his business would be security systems now. That meant he would have time for a more in-depth commitment, and he'd certainly like to get to know Cherry better, if he could get in the door that is.

“Come on, Cherry, let me in,” he called through the glass. “I just want to talk to you for a few minutes.”

“Ever heard of a cell phone?” she yelled back. “Oh yeah, I gave you my number once upon a time,” she called out smiling as she tied up another box. “Must have been pretty important to you, seeing how you never used it,” she mumbled under her breath.

It seemed ignoring him was easy, but he felt certain she could only stand the steady rapping on the glass for so long. Finally she marched to the door, flipped the lock and yanked it open.

“Okay buddy, you’ve got five minutes,” she snapped, stomping away.

“Is this all you’ve got for a lock?” he asked, bending to inspect the inside of the door. “Hell, I could have opened this with a credit card.”

“So why didn’t you?” she shot back.

“I didn’t want to be rude,” he explained with a wide grin.

“Oh, you didn’t want to be rude. I suppose it wasn’t rude to wink at me and indicate an interest until I made a fool of myself and slipped my number in your pocket. Or maybe it wasn’t rude to give me the thumbs up sign, causing me to buy that new dress, which by the way is still hanging unworn in my closet. And it’s certainly not rude to show up weeks later, pounding on the door to my store and refusing to go away. No, Mr. Bobby Guard, you’ve been a perfect gentleman.”

“Call me Chad, or C.W.”

“Huh?” she asked, raising her blue eyes to his.

“My name is Chadwick Fenton, bobby guard was the best little Julianna could do and it sort of stuck. After that, everyone thought my name was Bobby.” Taking a card out of his pocket he handed it to her.

Chadwick W. Fenton: Private Investigator, Security Systems

Personal Protection, Consultations

Your Safety Is My Priority

“SO, YOU’VE BEEN ON A CASE?” she asked appearing slightly deflated now that her tirade was over. You still could have called. What kind of case anyway?”

“I could have, but I never know how long each case will take and I knew if I started talking to you it would be difficult to keep my mind on business. Most of them are missing persons, runaway brides, possible abductions, actual kidnappings, that sort of thing.”

“I would have waited until you got back if you’d bothered to explain things to me,” she said softly.

“Really?” he asked, encouraged.

“Yes really, you big jerk. It would have been better than wondering what happened and thinking you were playing me,” she insisted.

“Now there’s an appealing idea,” he said with a provocative smile as he leaned on the counter. “Playing with you is definitely something I’m... Hey wait,” he said, moving the cover away from the box she was closing. Reaching in, he plucked two cherry tarts from the paper and popped one into his mouth, giving an appreciative groan. “This is wonderful,” he sighed, quickly eating the other one. “What else have you got in there? I’m starving. I just got back in town, haven’t even been home yet.”

Cherry handed over two more tarts and covered the box.

“These are going to the soup kitchen at the shelter. I always drop off my leftover baked goods on Saturday night. You’ll have

to go buy some dinner. A man your size could wipe out my entire donation,” she said, batting his hand away.

“So come out with me?” he offered, straightening to his full height. “I’ve been looking forward to this.”

Cherry paused. “I can’t, I have other plans tonight.”

Chad’s eyes narrowed. She’d barely stopped her hand from flying to cover her mouth as the words slipped out.

“Oh,” he said with a frown. “I didn’t realize you were seeing someone.”

“I’m not, um, he’s just a friend,” she explained cautiously.

“Well then perhaps I could come along?” he suggested, sensing something wasn’t right.

“No, no, I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

He watched her face pale as she busied herself stacking her boxes and carrying them into the kitchen.

Chadwick followed; patient for the moment as she checked the ovens, made sure the cooler door was secure and got her purse and jacket out of her office.

“Cherry, do you really have a date or are you angry with me for not calling?”

“What, you don’t believe it’s possible for me to have a date?” she demanded.

“Of course I do, you’re gorgeous. It’s just that I have sort of a sixth sense for when I’m being lied to. I guess that’s why I’m good at what I do. It goes with the territory. But Cherry, I really, really don’t like it.”

“Your job?” she asked, avoiding his eyes as she slipped her arm into her jacket.

“No, being lied to,” he replied softly as he came up behind her and held the coat.

“Oh, well then it’s a good thing I always tell the truth,” she sang out cheerfully.

He may have been tempted to believe her if he hadn’t seen

her reflection in the shiny stainless refrigerator and watched as she bit her lip.

“In fact, I’ve been known to exact a little ‘over the knee’ retribution on occasion,” he drawled in warning as he turned her around and buttoned her coat.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, that’s so,” he replied, touching his nose to hers.

“Well you better borrow another set of knees if you want to get my fat ass over them,” she quipped.

Chad froze; silence hanging between them as his eyes narrowed. He was tempted to bend her over her work table, but it was much too soon in their relationship for that. Besides, if and when he spanked her, he wanted her to know his knees were more than enough to support her.

“I’m going to let that comment slide,” he ground out. “You don’t know me very well yet, but for future reference I don’t care for anyone making nasty, derogatory remarks about someone I care about. You might want to keep that in mind. And for your information, I happen to think you have a spectacular ass.”

“You do?” Cherry asked, blushing wildly.

“Yes, I do. Now, do you want some help carrying these things to your car?”

“That would be nice, but could you go and make sure I locked the front door first?”

“Sure, not that it’s much of a lock. You should let me show you what’s available as far as security.”

“Um okay, maybe another time. I really have to run.”

Chad secured the door and flicked off the lights. Lifting most of the boxes he followed her out the back door and waited while she locked up. Her car was a hatch back with plenty of room for transporting her goodies and she loaded up the back and was inside lowering her window before he spoke.

“When can I see you again?” he asked, leaning down, his blue eyes determined.

“How about next weekend?”

“How about tomorrow?”

“Well, I’m usually pretty busy on Sunday as it’s my only day off, but maybe we could do something.”

“Sounds good to me. I’ll give you a call in the morning. Are you sure you don’t want me to follow you to the shelter and give you a hand with these?” he asked, indicating the boxes in her car.

“No, I’ll be fine. I go there all the time and there’s always someone around to help. Do you need my number again?” she asked.

Chad smiled and pulled the small scrap of paper out of his jeans pocket proving he had kept it all this time. He enjoyed her blush as she waved and closed her window.

Chad watched her drive away and walked to his black SUV. Forcing himself not to follow her he pulled through a drive through and picked up a couple of sandwiches. Instinct told him she was lying about having a date tonight and he was half tempted to stake out her house. Instead he went home, wolfed down his meal, hit the shower and fell into bed. His last case had been a tough one. It hadn’t ended well. Often by the time the police exhausted their efforts and he was called in by the family, the results were less than welcome. The final report he’d submitted two days ago had been quite gruesome and he forced it from his mind.

In the last year he’d only had two cases he considered enjoyable. One had been guarding Rebecca Kord, where he’d become familiar with the wild O’Malley women and ultimately met Cherry. The other involved a runaway bride. He’d made a bundle on that one; chased that girl all the way to Mystic Seaport. She’d been cute as a button and full of sass. Cherry had the same qualities.

He’d read in a gossip rag that his client had finally managed to get his girl down the aisle. Good for him, but a man who got

involved with a spunky redhead had better be prepared to stay on his toes.

It was during those two cases that he'd begun to see spanking as something other than abuse or sexual foreplay. He frequently wondered how many of the young women he failed to get to in time might still be alive if they'd had a strong man to look after them and curtail some of their risky behavior.

Susan Shaughnessy was nearly despondent when he'd finally located her for best-selling author Marcus McCarthy. She would have been easy pickings for a man with evil on his mind and there were a number of times while guarding Rebecca Kord that he knew for a fact some naughty bottoms were going to pay the price. He still laughed every time he thought about Bridget O'Malley Winston accidentally tasing her husband, Dell. Granted he'd seen it all on camera, courtesy of a tiny chip he'd planted in Rebecca's necklace, but still. He couldn't help but think the men of the O'Malley clan had the right of it. 'Beautiful brat' came to mind whenever he thought of Bridget. He wouldn't have minded being a fly on the wall when Dell recovered.

Cherry was another story entirely. She seemed responsible, generous and ran her own profitable business. Sadly, it was hard to imagine many opportunities where she would need correction, but those derogatory comments would have to stop and quickly. The girl had no idea how appealing she was. She would not be expecting unwanted male attention, making her a great target. No, he'd have to do something about that. Yawning, he fell asleep picturing her luscious ass positioned over his knees as his huge hand painted her pale skin to match her hair.