

THEIRS TO MASTER

MIAMI MASTERS BOOK SIX



BJ WANE

BLUSHING BOOKS

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CHAPTER 1



“Slide two more down here, Paige.”

Paige Wilcox lifted her hand to the two cops sitting at the other end of the bar. “Coming your way, guys.” Sticking a frosted glass under the beer spigot, she pulled the lever, drawing their refills one at a time. Old-fashioned rock-and-roll resonated amid the chatter of personnel from Fort Lauderdale’s cop shops and the courthouse. Here at The Precinct, their favorite hangout, officers unwound with their counter city law enforcement employees from the D.A. office, and she loved the camaraderie and good-natured teasing of the Friday night crowd.

“Heads-up,” she called before sliding first one then the other glass down the shiny mahogany bar top. The guys caught their drinks with appreciative grins, one sending her a two-fingered salute she returned with a smile.

She’d picked up the part time evening job bar tending in the club a year ago and loved every minute she spent mixing drinks and shooting the breeze with the city’s finest. After her rebellious teen years, her grandmother would have never believed Paige would one day be on friendly, first-name terms with a good number of cops and district attorneys. A stab of longing pierced

her heart. She would give anything if both her mother and grandmother were still with her. Even though she had as yet to do something noteworthy with her life, she would have liked them to know she'd outgrown the trouble she'd been so fond of getting into.

Fighting back a yawn, Paige wiped down the bar and tossed the damp cloth into a Rubbermaid box under the counter before squatting to do a quick liquor count. As Mel, the owner and other bartender often said, it wouldn't do to run short. She'd been up since 5:30 a.m. taking care of the two dogs she was pet sitting before heading out to clean the first of two houses. While she enjoyed not answering to anyone but herself and her clients running a cleaning business, the monotony of doing the same, tedious chores day in and day out, and working six days a week was starting to get to her. It was time for another change, something she'd gotten good at in the last thirteen years. As with men, she'd grow bored and the urge to try something new would creep up on her, leaving her powerless to resist. Unlike her twin sister, Penny, Paige couldn't be bothered with going to college, and she'd never find satisfaction with an eight to five job, stuck in an office with a demanding boss.

"You want to pop up and get our usuals, sugar?"

Paige jerked, banging her head under the counter. "*Tiddle twat!*" she muttered, rubbing her crown as she pushed slowly to her feet. The amusement in that familiar voice curled her toes, and her body reacted with the same warm flush she experienced every time she heard it. Before turning around, she tried to guess which Carlson brother this time had her fired up on all cylinders with just a few words. Her libido never failed to jump-start when either man spoke to her, or assessed her with those dark brown eyes, or brushed his fingers against hers when she handed over a drink. The fact she experienced the same quick reaction to both men always left her flustered, and just a touch annoyed.

Pivoting, she aimed a smile at Troy and Trevor seated at the bar, her heart tripping at the sight of the two hottest city employees it'd

been her pleasure to serve. *Man candy. Hunk on a stick. Drool worthy. Panty melting. Hunk a hunk a burning... lust.* Every one of those euphemisms described the brothers who were so far out of her league they may as well be on the moon. Unlike a few other regular patrons, neither man had ever made a pass at her, never even hinted one might be interested in rolling around on her bed for a few nights of hot, sweaty sex, but that hadn't kept the fantasies from giving her more than one sleepless night.

"Tiddle twat? I must have really startled you." Trevor, the one with the sexy face scruff and a twinkle in his eyes cocked his head and winked.

"You did. I didn't hear you come up." Glancing at Troy, she nodded, stretching her smile. "Detective. You two haven't been by in a while." Setting two glasses on the bar, she reached underneath and grabbed the whiskey. She knew her customers.

"Too many bad guys to track down. How have you been, Paige?" Troy asked, his low, deep voice sending a delightful shiver down her spine. If she didn't know better, she'd think he wanted an honest answer and would care about her reply instead of delivering polite platitudes. Both men possessed that way about them, talking to you as if you mattered, as if they really wanted to hear what you had to say. Maybe that accounted for her continued, uncharacteristic responses to the brothers whenever they came in.

"I'm good, thanks." Adding sour mix to the whiskey, she dropped in a slender straw and slid the drinks over. "At least we're not being plagued with a serial killer, or some other such cretin. And spring break is still weeks away, so you don't have those headaches to deal with yet." A shadow crossed both men's faces, Troy's jaw clenching when she joked about a serial killer. "Have I missed something in the news?"

"No, nothing you need to worry about," Trevor soothed. Of the two, he seemed to be the easygoing one. He often expressed more of a sense of humor than his brother. "No openings for us on your schedule yet?"

They'd asked her to put both of them on her waiting list for cleaning services a few months ago, but so far Paige hadn't been able to squeeze them in her busy schedule. She may flit from job to job, but with every position she'd held, she'd given her all, ensuring the only complaint when she moved on would be over her leaving.

"Not yet." She shrugged. "What can I say? My clients stick with me, I'm that good." She drawled the double innuendo on purpose, just to tease. Both men carried a hard edge vibe that went against her independent nature regardless of the attraction she couldn't seem to control, but that never stopped her from wanting to get under their skin the way they had hers.

"You don't say." Troy glanced askance at his brother. "It looks like we'll have to keep waiting, bro."

"By the time she squeezes us in, our places will be a mess. Might take extra effort on her part to... please us." Paige's face warmed from Trevor's wink. She could swear there was a hidden meaning in their innocent remarks, but their expressions remained bland and just a touch too innocent.

To settle one craving, she plucked her half-eaten candy bar off the shelf and bit into the nutty chocolate, enjoying the pleasant wave of awareness their presence and chummy banter always produced. If she couldn't have one in her bed, she could damn well enjoy their company.

"I see you haven't given up your penchant for junk food." Troy eyed the candy with an amused tilt of his lips.

She yanked her arm back with a mock frown. "Mine."

"You should try sharing sometime, sugar. You may like it." Reaching across the bar, Trevor chucked under her chin before the two of them slid off the stools and strode through the crowd to join a table of three others.

Damn, those two have nice butts. Paige gave herself a moment to enjoy Trevor's lingering touch and the flutter of her now damp pussy as she watched them walk away without a backward glance. It wasn't just her they showed little personal interest in. The

brothers had a way of politely rebuffing the blatant attentiveness and obvious advances of the clinging women who frequented the bar. Troy adeptly sidestepped one woman's groping hand as they waded through the crowd, but Trevor winked at her with that amused curl to his lips. Yeah, Paige acknowledged with a sigh, there was good reason the cop groupies refused to give up on getting one—or both—men's personal attention.

With a sneer toward the woman, she got back to work. The crowd dwindled around 10:00 only to pick up again close to 11:00, clock-out time for the second shifters. Some nights she could swear every cop in the city stopped by The Precinct on their way home. By the time 1:00 am rolled around and Mel announced last call, she was more than ready to get off her feet and head home.

"Fill 'er up, baby." A glass slammed on the bar and Paige shifted down to pick it up, avoiding direct eye contact with the one guy she couldn't stomach to be around.

Her teeth snapped together to control her irritation at the way Detective Mike Evans called her baby with a snide connotation and insolent look in his inebriated blue eyes. Everyone knew the twenty-five-year veteran Vice cop drank too much, and of the trouble it caused him on the job. But thus far, no cops showed an inclination to cross the ever-present blue line, not even for a reckless, rude screw-up like Evans.

"Mike, I think you've had enough. Hitch a ride home with someone or I can call you a cab." Mel intercepted her reach and snatched the glass off the counter.

"Fuck you, old man. I'll say when I've had enough. Besides, I was talking to this sweet piece of flesh, not you," Mike leered, drawing several scowls from those close enough to hear him.

Before Paige could let loose with a scathing reply, Mel held up his hand and Mike's partner, Aaron Devri, strolled up. "Let's go, man. I'm beat and my old lady will have my hide if I don't get home." Gently taking Mike's arm, Aaron steadied him before Mike shrugged him off with a belligerent glare.

“I’ve been telling you you need to get that broad under control. No man should kowtow to a fucking cunt.” Mike switched his glare back to Paige. “That includes you, Wilcox.”

Paige’s red-head temper rose to the surface, and she leaned her hands on the bar top, leveling the jerk with a steely eyed glare. “No woman would be dumb enough to have you, so if you think—”

An ominous low voice cut off her irate retort. “Apologize to the lady. Now.”

Paige shuddered at the underlying menace in Troy Carlson’s tone and piercing cold look he leveled on the other cop. Trevor, the usually affable District Attorney, stood behind his brother portraying the same incensed expression. She didn’t need either man coming to her defense, but surprise kept her from saying anything—that and, okay, the touch of pleasure from the macho interference on her behalf. What woman wouldn’t be thrilled when two hunks came to her defense?

“Fuck you, Carlson. I don’t need this shit. I’m outta here.” Shrugging off his partner’s reaching hand, Mike stormed toward the door.

“Sorry, Paige,” Aaron said, his eyes as apologetic as his voice as he flipped her a quick look before following his partner.

“He needs to quit babying the guy,” Trevor growled before his face softened as he addressed Paige. “I don’t blame you for snarling at him, sugar, but don’t bait him. That man’s been a ticking time bomb for far too long.”

Now, why was it a generic endearment coming from him could give her a warm fuzzy, yet hearing something similar from an asshole made her itch to send his balls up into his throat? And that was *before* Evan’s crude comment.

“No one talks to me that way, but thanks for stepping up.” Turning to Mel, she added, “You too, boss.”

Mel squeezed her shoulder. “You’re a good girl, Paige.” He delivered a scathing sweep of the few people still lingering. “You all know I support law enforcement a hundred percent, but I’ll ban

Evans the next time he gets out of line. Now, clear out, I'm shutting down."

Paige breathed a sigh of relief when everyone filed out without complaint, the Carlsons the last to go with a final nod to her. "Well, wasn't that fun?" Reaching under the counter for her purse, she slung it over her shoulder and lifted a hand to Mel. "See you tomorrow night."

"You take care, girl."

She didn't let him see her small smile as she went out the back door leading to the rear employee parking spaces. A cross between a father figure and boss, Mel always protected her back. It was the way Troy and Trevor had jumped to her defense that rattled her. They weren't steady weekend customers like some others. According to Mel, they usually stopped in during the week. In the year she'd been bar tending, she doubted they'd come in on a Friday or Saturday night—the only nights she worked at The Precinct—more than a dozen times. But their rare appearances didn't negate her response. In fact, it always surprised her how quick her happy places sat up and drooled when the two of them walked in after she hadn't seen them in weeks.

Sliding into her beloved, 1960's renovated Jeep, Paige tried shoving aside the conflicting emotions of irritation at her continued absorption with the two men and pleasure from the way they'd interfered on her behalf. She swore at the way those two kept her waffling on tenterhooks of pulsing awareness while never exhibiting an ounce of interest in her other than as a casual acquaintance. Her unrequited fascination with the brothers had grown slowly since meeting them shortly after starting the bar tending job, escalating in recent months until it had become her sole source of pleasure, and frustration. Experience reminded her it wouldn't do to read more into the way they'd come to her defense other than as men who weren't afraid to stick up for what's right.

Driving home, she thought back over the past few months, and could pinpoint the exact time frame she'd begun itching for some-

thing new to break up the tedium of her life. Hitting thirty hadn't fazed her as that milestone birthday did some people, but thirty-one? That birthday four months ago sent her into the dumps so deep, she'd failed to pull out of the discontent riding her. *Over thirty* sounded so much worse than simply *thirty*, and seemed to emphasize the fast track to nowhere she'd been on during her twenties, something Rick, her last boyfriend, enjoyed pointing out to her. Splitting with him eight months ago had been the highlight of the past year.

Paige turned into the driveway of the small Cape Cod house that was the only inheritance she and Penny would ever receive. Funny, she mused as she parked and slid out with an exhausted sigh, she could think of nothing she could desire more than the small home she'd grown up in with her sister, mother and grandmother. Although she'd felt for Penny when her sibling had returned to the house one morning with a swollen black eye that ended her three-year relationship with a controlling man Paige never could tolerate, she relished the time they'd been living together again. Because of her sister's insistence, Paige reined in her anger on Penny's behalf and agreed not to enlist her cop friends' help in pressing charges against the jerk. But, damn, that had grated.

Tiptoeing past Penny's room so as not to wake her, Paige took a moment to greet the two greyhounds she enjoyed pet sitting before stripping out of her jeans and tee bearing the bar's logo on the way to the bathroom. A few minutes later, she slid into her double bed and succumbed to exhaustion, two pairs of dark brown eyes following her into sleep.



"LET IT GO, BRO," Trevor advised.

Troy slid Trevor an askance look before returning his gaze to the road, eyeing the streets with a cop's scrutiny as he drove the

two of them back to their twin townhomes in the Pensacola Lake condo complex. "You were just as pissed as me when Evans spouted off."

"Sure, but sitting over there simmering won't help. I doubt Mike is long for the force, especially if he keeps drinking. Let him do himself in. I did enjoy seeing Red's temper flare. The girl doesn't have a reputation for backing down."

Interest colored his brother's voice and Troy sent him a sharp glance with a snort. "Forget it, Trev. Paige would skewer you with those silver eyes alone if you tried anything with her." But Troy had to admit, he'd fantasized more than once about stringing up the pretty bartender and keeping her at their mercy for a few hours. Indulging in ménages with Trevor and a willing submissive was his favorite recreational sport, but one neither of them attempted to play with a vanilla partner. He enjoyed bantering with Paige's feisty, independent nature, but preferred a meeker bed partner to ease the stress of his job as a cop.

"Think of how much fun it would be to tame her," Trevor replied with a grin that hinted at the image in his head.

"Work, not fun. Unlike you lawyers, cops get down and dirty on the streets to bring you the bad guys. I need a tamer diversion during my time off."

"Admit it, Troy. You've wondered what it would be like to have her sandwiched between us," his brother prodded in his usual, affable way. "The girl's got legs up to her delicate neck and can mix a damn fine martini. What's there not to like?"

"I didn't say I don't like her," he returned as he pulled into their complex. The two-story condos circled a one-acre lake that was home to a slew of Canada geese the residents enjoyed feeding. "Or that she isn't attractive."

"Or you haven't indulged in a few fantasies of your own? You forget how well I know you."

Troy forgot nothing, notably the close bond he shared not only with his older-by-a-year brother, but with five other guys. After

pummeling on each other the first few days spent at a summer camp for juvenile delinquents, their small group discovered they'd all come from troubled childhoods. Even though their circumstances were as varied as their personalities, they'd formed a bond that still held tight today, twenty-three years later, and had expanded to include a shared interest in BDSM proclivities.

Parking in the drive adjacent to Trevor's, he cut the engine of his Tahoe and grabbed the door handle. "Last I checked, I've still got a dick, so, of course I've thought of her. Now, get out of my vehicle, moron." Trevor's deep chuckle echoed in the quiet dark, and Troy smiled at his only sibling over the hood. "Get your mind off Paige and onto Crystal. She's free for the afternoon tomorrow and wants to meet us at the marina." The BDSM decked out mega yacht their multi-millionaire friend, Zachary Allen-Vancuren had surprised each of them with a deed to guaranteed bondage fun galore to satisfy their needs and their privacy.

"Good. That way we can stick around afterward and drum up a game—that is, if any of the others can pull themselves away from their girls," Trevor returned.

Trevor, Troy knew, found their friends' recent decline into commitment a good thing, but he was still on the fence about the recent changes within their group. Not that he didn't adore their women, he did. They complemented each of the guys to a tee, but regardless of their obvious happiness, neither he nor Trevor were inclined to follow suit. He worried those newly formed relationships would soon result in splintering the tight circle the seven of them had formed together.

Troy nodded. "With any luck, they'll wear them out and the girls will be only too happy to leave us to a few hands of poker while they recuperate. I'm heading in. Catch you tomorrow, Trev."

"Later, bro." Trevor lifted his hand as he strode next door to his identical house.