

Chapter 8

Bradley and I spent the next few hours researching cruises. We nally settled on two that we knew would take them out of communnication with the the real world.

The one I decided would be perfect for Alan and Lydia was one that required them to y to Austrailia where they would board their ship for a thirty-day All-inclusive cruise around Austrailia and New Zealand, then on to Bali. After a three day stay in Bali they would y back home to Canada. In total they would be gone for a total of thirty-eight days.

The trip for Fiona would require her to y to San Diego where she would board her ship for a thirty-ve day cruise with stops in Hawaii, Tahiti and Marquesas returning to San Diego. With travel days to and from San Diego, this too would be a total of thirty-eight days.

I booked the cruises that were both scheduled to depart their ports in 2 weeks. I also booked three ve-day Caribbean cruises departing in three weeks. These were for the three 'ladies' that Adam was banging in the oce. I didn't want them around when the serious head-hunting of my selected employees was happening.

As to how they all were going to be notied of their lucky wins, well, I was arranging everything through Graystone International's Travel Agency. On Monday, when I returned to the oce, I would send out a group email to all staff, advising that Fredericks Design Co had recently completed a remodel of the Halifax head oce space and as a 'thank you' to Fredericks Design Co staff, the name of every employee had been entered in a prize draw.

And guess who the winners are going to be? You guessed it. Alan Fredericks, Fiona Fredericks, and the three bimbos from the marketing department. However, knowing that all the staff contribute to the success of the business, I also purchased ve other cruises, and they would be awarded to other staff members through a random draw. I would also make sure that every other employee received a generous bonus.

I snickered as I mentioned this to Bradley. "Might as well reward the employees with some ot that eight million in company funds. I don't imagine that will be possible once ownership transfers to the four vipers. The great thing is, being sole owner, I don't need anyone's approval for the bonus expenditure."

Bradley burst out laughing at the name I had given to Adam, Fiona, Alan and Lydia. "Woman, you are hilarious. I pray to all that's good and holy that I never get on your bad side!"

"Yeah, I kind of take after my grandmother in that. I treat everyone with respect. But betray me, and you're dead to me. And there is no coming back from that. When I'm done, that's it. Harsh perhaps, but I don't have room in my life for those that betray my trust. I don't like being lied to, cheated on, or being made to look a fool."

Bradley studied my expression, reading it correctly. "I will bear that in mind, Red. But please remember, that sometimes what looks like betrayal is actually done to protect you."

That comment put a bit of a damper on the evening. I decided to call it a night. I was tired, and needed some sleep. We had to be up by at least ve-thirty to give us time to get ready, and leave for the airport. Morning trac in Halifax could be brutal. Thankfully my route wouldn't take us anywhere close to the oce, or the route that Adam, Fiona or Alan would take.

I made sure Bradley was settled in the guest room then retreated to my room for a much needed shower before crawling into bed. My mind drifted back to Bradley's comment. It denitely gave me pause for thought. It brought me back to my earlier thoughts regarding trust.

Counting today, I had known the adult version of Bradley Gray for a total of three days. The logical, analytical part of me asked what I really knew about this man. What was it about him that made me feel like I could trust him? I went through the list I had compiled in my head. He was smart. He was kind. He was well respected, and well liked in the business community. He was ethical. He ran his business with honesty and integrity. A rarity in the cut-throat business world.

Even without all that, my gut told me I could trust him. There was just something about him that exuded a sense of peace and tranquility for me.

Not once in all the time I had known Adam did I ever experience that feeling. In fact, when I rst met Adam, I really didn't like him. It was only because of his persistence, and my emotional turmoil from dealing with the grief of my mother's death, and my grandparents illness, that he wore my resistance down.

I realized now that grief, exhaustion, and the loss of loved ones, really messes with a persons mind and perceptions. I was now coming out of the fog of grief, allowing me to see people and their actions clearly. I would grant myself some grace when it came to succumbing to Adam's attentions. Now that I see him clearly, I know my initial response to him was the correct one. He was not trustworthy. He was a conniving, manipulative, scumbag. I am going to throw him out like the trash he is, I can hardly wait to do so.

Thinking this I drifted off to sleep, where my dreams were lled with Bradley Gray, kissing me, carressing me, making love to me. At one point during the night I woke myself up, calling his name in the throes of passion. My body ached for him in a way I never imagined could happen. When my breathing evened out, and my body calmed down, I slowly fell back to sleep, with the vague hope he hadn't heard me crying out his name.

The alarm woke me at ve-thirty. I hit the snooze button and lay there for another ve minutes, thinking about my dream. I may be a virgin, but I have certainly seen enough movies to know what happened during s*x. And yes, I have certainly thought about, dreamed about it often in fact. But never with such a desire and need coursing through my body. A desire and need ignited by the man currently staying in my guest room.

All I could think was, 'less than two months until I am free of Adam. Two months. Fifty-two days. It seemed like a life-time, though I know the time will be lled with a ton of work. And after the two months? Well, I guess we will see if Bradley was serious about pursuing something with me.

The alarm buzzed again, nally forcing me to get my butt out of bed and into the shower. Half an hour later, squeaky clean, hair done, light makeup on, and fully dressed, I was ready to face the day. I left my bedroom and went to the kitchen to start the coffee. We would have breakfast on the plane, but I rarely started my day without a cup or two of strong coffee.

I was standing in the living room, sipping my coffee, and looking out at the city spread before me. The water in Halifax Harbour was still, and smooth as glass, reecting the sunrise. I could see one of the bridges to Dartmouth off in the distance, already teeming with commuter trac. I loved this view. For whatever reason, the city called to me.

When my grandparents died and left me their business and their fortune, I had already been living in this penthouse. I purchased the second penthouse suite on this oor, and renovated both suites, combining them in to one unit. All three bedrooms were huge, with walk-in closets, and full ensuite baths. My home oce was also large, housing several work areas. which included a design table, a computer station dedicated to security surveillance, and my work station and desk area.

The kitchen was a dream, with everything a gourmet cook could dream of, while the dining area was large enough to house a table that could seat twelve. The living room area was spacious, allowing a couple of different seating areas. Sliding doors opened to a wrap around balcony. Yes, it was an extremely large suite for just one person. But I had dreams of this being a space t for a family. For now, with or without a family to ll it, I used it as my headquarters to oversee the running of my conglomerate.

My thoughts were interrupted by the clearing of a throat. "Hey beautiful, I sure could us a cup of that coffee." Bradley's voice, still husky with sleep, spoke from just behind me. I could get used to waking up to that voice for the rest of my life.