

# HONOR BOUND

*by*

RADCLY*f*FE



2005

## CHAPTER ONE

Mac Phillips looked up from his seat at the main monitoring station as the door to Command Central opened at 0625. He tried to suppress a grin but failed as he recognized the tall, trim, dark-haired woman who strode purposefully toward him. He stood and extended his hand with a smile. “Welcome back, Commander.”

Smiling warmly, United States Secret Service Agent Cameron Roberts shook the hand of the boyishly handsome blond agent. “It’s good to be back, Mac.” Despite the personal difficulties sure to come, she realized just how much she meant it.

She looked around the large open room that occupied the eighth floor of a brownstone apartment building overlooking Gramercy Park in Manhattan. It had been almost six months since she’d been in charge of the Secret Service security detail that worked out of this space, and she had not expected to return; at least, not in any official capacity.

Heading this unit was not a posting she had welcomed originally. She had spent most of her career in the investigative division of the Secret Service, tracking counterfeit funds used in illegal drug transactions. Working with members of the DEA, ATF, and Treasury Department in the field, she had considered the protective arm of the Secret Service a place for rookies and bureaucrats. Guarding diplomats, foreign visitors, and members of political families did not interest her.

Until now. Now, it mattered a great deal.

“Is Egret back on the ground yet?” Cam asked. She shrugged her shoulders, trying to work out the residual stiffness from her midnight flight. She’d been in Miami on a new assignment, pursuing a trail of treasury forgeries that the agency hoped would lead to a network of

cocaine importers, when the call had come reassigning her.

This change in her orders was completely unexpected, and the fact that she had been instructed to report to New York City immediately, with no explanation and no interim briefing in DC, bothered her. No one had suggested that there was potential trouble on this end, but then that didn't mean anything. The federal government depended upon multiple security agencies with overlapping spheres of interest and influence, and there were never-ending turf struggles. Even those with a need to know often didn't get critical information until it was too late to be useful. She'd had personal experience with that kind of foul-up more than once. And once, it had nearly destroyed her.

"Long flight?" Mac couldn't help but notice the strain in her expression.

"The usual." Shaking off the cloud of fatigue, she dispelled the memories along with it. She wouldn't let that kind of screw-up happen here, not with something—someone—so important at stake. She would find out who, or what, was behind her transfer.

But first things first. She had work to do before her initial meeting with the woman she was charged to protect. A woman who, under the best of circumstances, was an unwilling participant in her own protection, and one who was certain to be even more resistant now.

Cam refocused on Mac. "I'll need to be briefed before I meet with her. I've been in the air most of the night and haven't been informed of her location."

"She's back in the nest," Mac affirmed, pointing toward the ceiling and the penthouse apartment above them that comprised the top floor of the building. "They returned from China late last night, but Egret didn't want to remain in Washington. They came up by car about 0300. That wasn't in the plans."

"I guess some things never change." Cam smiled to herself. *She always has to remind everyone who's really in charge of her life.*

Mac shook his head, but he wasn't smiling. He regarded his chief seriously for a moment and tried not to think about how close she had come to dying only months before. She looked fit and healthy now, but he knew that she had only been back on active duty for six weeks. As usual when on duty, she wore an impeccably tailored, understatedly expensive suit and appeared capable, competent, and cool—all the things he knew she was. He also knew from experience that it was hard to tell very much beyond that just by looking at her. She rarely revealed

what she was feeling, but could always be counted on to say exactly what she was thinking.

“The team will be very happy to have you back,” he said.

“What about you, Mac?” She leaned one hip against the edge of the desk, her dark gray eyes studying his. “I’m bumping you out of the commander’s seat.”

“You mean out of the hot seat?” He laughed, shook his head, and leaned back in the swivel chair, gesturing with one hand to the array of computer monitors, audiovisual equipment, and satellite feeds from the NYPD and New York Transit Authority on the long counter in front of him. “I’m an information man. This is what I want to be doing, and these last few months of doing your job proved it to me.”

“Good,” Cam said briskly. “I’m glad you’re okay with it, because no one is more important than the communications coordinator, and I need the best.”

“Thanks.” Mac felt good about her confidence in him. “You’re doing me a big favor, Commander. I’m no good at the VIP stuff, and with this kind of detail, that’s key.”

Cam didn’t need him to tell her that knowing how to handle high-profile personalities was a requirement of the work. It was one of the reasons she was good at this particular assignment, and it was also the reason her next task was going to be so difficult. Blair Powell, code name Egret, had had Cam removed once as head of her security detail, and she was going to be very displeased to find she had returned.

*She has every right to be angry, Cam thought. This reassignment changes everything. Jesus, how am I going to explain this to her?*

Six weeks ago, they had spent five nights in one another’s arms. If she had known then that she would be back heading Blair’s security detail, she might have made a different choice. *Yeah, right.*

Blair’s face briefly flickered into her mind, and the instant surge of heat that accompanied the image told her she was kidding herself. She had wanted her then, badly. Had wanted her for months—too much for procedure or protocol to have stopped her. She wasn’t sure what she was going to do about those feelings now that circumstances had changed, but the one thing she did know was that she had a job to do.

Cam stood abruptly. “I’ll see everyone at 0700 in the conference room. Bring what you have on her itinerary for the week, projected out-of-town events for the immediate future, all pertinent problematic field reports from the time I was gone, and anything else that you think

needs my attention. I need to be up to speed by the time I meet with her this morning.”

Mac nodded, then watched Cam walk toward the small glass-enclosed cubicle in one corner that served as their conference center. He saw her looking casually left and right toward the center of the room where several work areas were partitioned off by low dividers. He knew that she was assessing the monitoring equipment that the men and women assigned to her command utilized twenty-four hours a day to observe and protect the only child of the president of the United States.



At precisely 0700, Cam walked into the conference room carrying her second cup of coffee. She set it down at the end of the rectangular table and looked over the faces turned toward her. They were all familiar. No one had transferred out during her absence, and that pleased her because all of them were confirmed good agents. She had seen to that when she first took command almost a year before, demanding that anyone not one hundred percent committed to the task of guarding the president’s daughter transfer out. Those who had chosen to stay had proven themselves under fire.

“Well,” she began, allowing a faint grin to pull at one corner of her mouth. “At least I won’t have to learn any new names. And we can skip all the introductory bull and get down to business.” She looked down the room to where Mac sat with a pile of memoranda in front of him. “Mac?”

“Nothing new planned on the foreign front until the trip to Paris with the vice president and his wife next month.”

“Right.” Cam settled into her chair with her PDA. “We’ll need the routine advance information on motorcade routes, local hospitals, and transit lines for each day’s events. That should all be in the database. I assume they’ll be staying at the Hotel Marigny, as usual. That needs to be confirmed.”

She turned to the collegiate-looking African-American man on her left, who happened to be fluent in nine languages with a working command of seven others. “Are you still doing the advance work on the foreign travel, Taylor?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Good. Then you can contact the secretary at the Protocol Department in Paris to review the scheduled functions—charity dinners, museum outings—whatever they have planned. I want guest lists for any pre-announced gatherings and seating placements for theatre and dinner engagements.” The French were notorious for changing itineraries at the last minute, and Paris was an international city where terrorism was a very real threat. “Keep after them. Make sure we’re current by the time we’re in the air. I don’t want to be surprised.”

“Got it.”

“Fielding.” She looked at a burly redhead two seats to her left.

“Ma’am?”

“Check with your buddies in intelligence and make sure we have the latest on any dissident activity in France, particularly active cells in Paris. I want photos and bios distributed to all team members before we depart. Mac will schedule a pre-flight briefing for sometime the week before we leave.”

Taylor and Fielding nodded and made notes while Cam signaled Mac to continue. He shuffled some printouts and said, “Domestically, there’s the opening of the Rodman Gallery in San Francisco in three weeks.”

“Where’s she staying?” Cam asked absently, her mind still on the Paris details. International travel placed any recognizable political figure at risk, and when that individual represented a country as widely hated as the USA, the risk escalated.

“We don’t know yet.” Mac sounded uncomfortable.

Cam looked up, narrowing her eyes. “You don’t *know*? She must have reservations by now. Who’s handling her itinerary?”

Mac blushed but kept his eyes on hers. He had forgotten how unforgiving she could be about any breach in protocol. He prepared himself to be dressed down. “She is, Commander.”

“She is,” Cam repeated in disgust. She knew damn well it wasn’t Mac’s fault. Struggling with her temper, she closed her electronic notebook and stood. “Is there anything pressing that the team needs to discuss this morning, Mac?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Who’s heading the day shift?” She looked over the team.

“I am, ma’am.” The answer came from a smooth-featured, dark-haired woman in her late twenties. She might have been any one of the earnest, athletic, all-American types so often associated with

government agents except for the surprising intensity in her voice.

“Fine,” Cam acknowledged with a quick nod. After one nearly career-ending lapse in judgment, Paula Stark had proven herself to be cool and levelheaded. She was an invaluable asset as a member of the shift that spent the most time in direct contact with the first daughter. “Then go get your detail organized.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Stark replied, getting to her feet.

“Mac,” Cam added crisply, “if I might speak with you, please.”

Chairs scraped as agents hastened to get out of the conference room. They’d all seen Roberts take people apart if she felt they had been lax in guarding the president’s daughter—no matter how difficult Blair Powell might make that job.

When they were alone, Cam looked at Mac and raised an eyebrow. “Okay. You want to tell me what the hell is going on? First, I get called back with no explanation and no notice. Then you say that Egret is bypassing normal security protocols. What else is happening that I don’t know about? I can’t work in the dark here.”

“I’d tell you if I could, Commander, but I don’t *know* why you’ve been recalled.” He looked across the table into Cam’s unreadable dark eyes and chose his words carefully. He liked her; he respected her; he was happy to serve under her. But they weren’t friends. They didn’t share personal confidences. He didn’t know, for sure, what her past with the first daughter had been. “No one reported any problems to me, either about my command or anything else. As for Ms. Powell...” He shrugged, looking exasperated. “Ms. Powell is difficult.”

Cam almost smiled at that enormous understatement but did not. She remained silent, watching him, waiting for the rest.

“She remains very reluctant to reveal her plans or destinations. She refuses to discuss personal...uh, relationships, so we have no intelligence regarding potential threats from that area. She slips our surveillance—” He halted at the soft curse from Cam, then added quickly, “Not very often, but it happens.”

“You reported that?” Cam asked. Fighting fatigue, she rubbed her face briefly. *God, Blair is stubborn.* But she couldn’t blame her, not really. Living under the constant scrutiny of strangers was wearing, even under ordinary circumstances. And Blair Powell’s circumstances were far from ordinary.

Mac straightened. “No, ma’am, I did not.”

“Reasons?” She stared at him hard. The kind of breakdown in security he was describing usually demanded reassignment of the agents involved, often with demotions. But she knew Mac Phillips, and she knew he wouldn’t circumvent regulations just to save his own skin.

He met her gaze directly, and his voice was steady and sure. “Because she works with us most of the time, and I made the command decision that she was safer with *us* than with replacements she might not trust. Even if there were some problems.”

Privately, Cam agreed. She had made similar choices herself where Blair was concerned. Had she been asked at the time, she wouldn’t have been able to defend these, not according to regulations. But then, Blair Powell couldn’t be dealt with by the book.

“I guess I’d better inform Egret that I’m here,” Cam stated. She wondered just how much Mac knew. “I’ll review the plans for the remainder of the week with you later.”

He stood. “Yes, ma’am.”

As he watched her walk out, he understood that the subject of his breach in protocol was closed. Whoever had made the call to bring Cameron Roberts back as commander of the first daughter’s security detail knew what they were doing. Roberts understood what it took to guard Blair Powell. He wondered fleetingly what would happen upstairs when Egret learned of the change in command and decided there was some information he would rather not have. What he didn’t know, he couldn’t testify about.

## CHAPTER TWO

Blair Powell, in paint-spattered jeans and a T-shirt with the sleeves and lower half carelessly ripped away, stared at a five-foot square canvas. Totally engrossed, she was barely aware of the paintbrush in her hand. She walked slowly back and forth in front of the unfinished work, her mind as empty as she could make it. She let the color, the movement, and the depth of the images take form without conscious direction. Just as she reached to add a hint of red to one corner, her doorbell rang.

“Damn,” she muttered, glancing at the clock at the far end of her loft. Just a little after eight a.m. It was much too early for a briefing with Mac, but it couldn’t be anyone else. She didn’t get unexpected visitors.

She set the brush aside and wiped her hands on a soft cloth. Pushing an errant strand of blond hair behind one ear, she crossed to the door. When, out of habit, she glanced through the peephole, she blinked in surprise and stopped with her hand on the doorknob. She looked again, her heart suddenly racing. Hurriedly, she pulled open the door.

“Cam!” She didn’t try to hide her pleasure, an uncommon lapse in her usual reserve. Blair had learned not to allow her emotions to show, because her feelings were the only private things still left to her.

Since she was twelve years old, her father had been a public figure, and as a result, she had been as well. Strangers had photographed her, or written about her, or sought to be close to her, all because of her father. Bombarded with all that attention, she had never been sure if someone really cared for her or merely her reputation. Cameron had been different, and Blair had let her get close.

“I can’t believe it. God, I’ve missed you.”

Cam’s pulse quickened. It had only been six weeks, but it had felt like months. Blair was every bit as beautiful as the last time Cam had seen her. Blond hair verging on gold, thick and wild with a hint of curl, fell around her face in an untamed mane. Blazing blue eyes and a smile that could melt the polar ice caps made an already attractive face stunning. A deceptively lithe body hid well-toned muscles. And underneath all that, seething sensuality coupled with an unbendable will. Astonishing.

“Hello, Blair.” Cam wanted to touch her, but couldn’t. She didn’t want to hurt her and knew she was about to. Her face revealed little of her desire or her regret as she smiled softly.

Blair was too intent on how good it was to see her to notice the slight reservation in Cam’s tone. She reached out, grabbed the agent’s hand, and pulled her into the loft, slamming the door behind them. In the next instant, she had her hands in Cam’s hair, her lips on Cam’s mouth, and her body pressed hard against Cam’s, pinning her to the wall. When she’d temporarily satisfied her need to taste her, she pulled away a fraction and gasped, “I’ve missed *that*, too. It feels like forever.”

“Blair...” Cam made an enormous effort to get her body under control. The unexpected onslaught had gone straight to her head. And other places. Her stomach knotted with need and her blood burned. She felt herself swell and grow heavy with arousal.

Shaking her head, she tried to quiet her lust. She had to tell her, and quickly, because she wasn’t strong enough to resist. Didn’t want to resist. “I...”

“When did you get back?” Blair threaded her arms around Cam’s waist and leaned her hips into her. “I thought you were still on that case in Florida. Did it wrap up already?”

As she spoke, Blair started working on the buttons on Cam’s shirt with one hand. She had been planning on spending the day painting, but that was before. Her fingers shook she was so hot for her.

They’d had only a few days together, and that had been weeks ago. Five short days after almost a year of denying the attraction growing between them. A near tragedy had finally brought them together, then Cam had left for Florida and Blair had accompanied her father to Southeast Asia. Nothing about the future had been settled—there hadn’t been time—but none of that mattered at this moment.

“God, I want you,” Blair whispered, almost groaning the words. No one, no one had ever done this to her before. Made her *want* so badly, or ache so deeply. More than sex, more than intimacy. Cam created an explosive combination of the two that scorched through her, leaving her always hungry.

“Blair,” Cam gasped, grabbing for the hand on her shirt. “Wait.”

“Too late.” Blair laughed, throaty and low, shifting to straddle Cam’s thigh. The added pressure between her legs made her gasp again, her eyes closing momentarily with the rush of excitement. “Oh, God. Way too late, baby. I need your hands on me. Now. I’m so, so ready.”

“I’m working, Blair,” Cam said gently, feeling her shudder and hoping Blair couldn’t sense her own urgent response. Trembling, suddenly light-headed, she swallowed a moan as Blair thrust into her again. “We can’t.”

“You can be a few hours late for wherever you need to be. You’re a regional director now,” Blair muttered. She wasn’t really listening to anything except the need singing through her pelvis. “I can’t wait.”

*She’ll never forgive me.* Cam moved her fingers to Blair’s wrist, circling it softly. “I’m working *now*, Blair. Here.”

Something in Cam’s tone finally penetrated Blair’s consciousness, a hint of sympathy that eclipsed the desire Blair could feel simmering in Cam’s body. With effort, she took one step away so that their bodies were no longer in contact. Her hands shook. She shivered lightly but steadfastly ignored the rush of persistent arousal.

“What do you mean?” she asked, her voice unnaturally calm.

She searched Cam’s eyes for the answer, because Cam’s eyes never lied. Not to her. What she saw in them hurt, deeply. Hurt in a way she hadn’t thought she could ever hurt again.

“Damn you,” Blair whispered on a breath, not knowing which of them she meant. “What have you done?”

“I’ve been reassigned, Blair. To you.” Cam watched Blair back away, forced to let her go. *Jesus, I had hoped it wouldn’t be this hard. I just need a little time to find out what’s going on. Then I can explain, make you understand.* “Blair—”

“When?” Blair interrupted coldly, retreating across the room. She needed space between them. She had to stop wanting her long enough to think. “When did you find out?”

“Yesterday.”

“And you said *yes*? Without even talking to me?” *What about us? Didn’t that mean anything to you? I thought...oh, what a fool I was to think—*

“Blair, please,” Cam said quietly. “There was no time. I received a directive from my superiors informing me that the president of the United States requested me to assume responsibility for his daughter’s security. I could hardly say no.”

“Of course you could,” Blair said bitterly, “if you’d wanted to. There are plenty of other people who can do that job. Mac is handling it just fine.” *Don’t do this; please don’t do this!*

“It’s not that simple,” Cam said, knowing her words would not help. She wasn’t sure how to explain that part of her didn’t *want* anyone else to do the job. Couldn’t explain that every day while she was somewhere else, doing something else, she worried about Blair. She couldn’t forget that there was an UNSUB, an unidentified subject, who had stalked Blair, photographed her, left messages for her, and ultimately, shot at her—and he was still out there. She *wanted* to be with her. She needed to be with her. “It’s not just *about* us.”

“No. It never is.” Blair turned away, struggling with disappointment and betrayal.

Clearly, whatever she thought had been developing between them was over. Cameron Roberts was not the kind of woman to compromise her professional ethics by carrying on a clandestine affair with someone she was supposed to be guarding. It would have been difficult for them to see each other under any circumstances; now it would be impossible. Blair swallowed her pride and made one last attempt to undo what had already been done. This decision had been made without regard for her feelings, like so many others in her life.

“I could speak to my father,” Blair said, disguising the hope in her voice. “The security director can name someone else to command the detail.”

“I’m sorry.” Cam struggled not to go to her. No matter how hard Blair tried to hide it, Cam could hear her anguish. “There’s a reason I’ve been recalled. I don’t know what it is yet, and neither does Mac. Until I find out, I’d prefer you not say anything.”

“This is what you want?”

“I didn’t mean to hurt you, but your safety is more important than anything else.”

“That’s not an answer, that’s an excuse. Answer me, Cam. Is heading my security detail more important than *us*?”

“Yes.”

Blair’s face was a careful blank. “Well, that’s it then, isn’t it?”

“I’m sorry,” Cam said again, unwilling to offer further excuses that would only be insulting to them both.

For the time being, she didn’t have any choice except to assume the responsibility that had been given to her. And in truth, she wouldn’t want it any other way. She had to know what was happening. Still, watching Blair’s eyes turn cold rocked her. She couldn’t think about losing her, not and still do what she needed to do.

“No need to be sorry, Commander,” Blair said dismissively. “We both know how important your job is to you. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m busy.”

Cam worked to keep her voice neutral. “I understand. I’ll need to discuss plans for the rest of the week with you.”

Blair walked past her, careful not to touch her, and opened the door. “Then you can come back this afternoon for the scheduled briefing.”

“As you wish,” Cam said resignedly, stepping out into the hall.

The silence that ensued when the door closed solidly behind her was lonelier than anything she could ever have imagined.



“Mac,” Cam said into her transmitter as she keyed the penthouse elevator outside Blair’s apartment.

“Go ahead, Commander.” Mac automatically checked the monitor providing visual surveillance of the hallway in front of the elevator. His eyes switched to the adjoining screen showing the interior of the elevator as Cam stepped in.

“Sign me out to my apartment,” she said tersely. “It’s the same address as before. Someone pulled a few strings to get it back for me.”

She wanted a shower, a change of clothes, and a few minutes to herself. She needed to banish the sound of Blair’s disappointment and

the image of the pain in her eyes. She had to meet with her later in the day to confirm the agenda for the upcoming weeks, and she needed to be in control of herself when she did.

The very first moment she had seen Blair Powell, she'd been attracted to her. Out of duty, she had ignored those feelings for months. But, as time passed, she had come to know her, and desire had turned to caring. She hadn't been able to withstand both the demands of her body and the yearning of her heart, and—finally—she had succumbed.

Finally, she had touched her.

But it had been different then—then she hadn't been charged with protecting her. For those five days, she hadn't been a Secret Service agent and Blair had not been the first daughter. Now, everything had changed—she was professionally responsible for Blair's safety again. Now, she would somehow have to learn to live with her need, because she wasn't going to be able to touch her again.

Already, she ached with the loss.

Mac studied Cam's face in the monitor, and even with the mild distortion of the transmitted image, he could make out the tense set of her jaw and the grim line of her mouth. *Uh-oh. Things must not have gone well with Egret.* He wasn't surprised. Cameron Roberts had been shot in the line of duty, shot while guarding Blair Powell. Shot *in place* of Blair Powell when she'd stepped in front of her and stopped a bullet from a sniper's rifle.

The commander didn't remember the nightmarish scene as she'd lain bleeding on the sidewalk while agents surrounded Egret and dragged her to cover. Mac remembered it very well.

He remembered the president's daughter screaming Cam's name as Cam went down, and her struggling to break free of the restraining arms—struggling to go to the dying agent, heedless of her own safety. He remembered her sitting by Cam's bedside for almost two days while Cam's life hung in the balance. And he knew, too, that Blair Powell had requested that Cam be removed from her security detail once she recovered. He couldn't imagine she would be happy about this new arrangement.

"You're scheduled for a briefing with Egret at 1300 hours," he said while glancing over the day's events printed out on a clipboard by his right hand. When in doubt, revert to procedure.

“I’ve got that,” she snapped as she walked quickly through the lobby, nodding curtly to the doorman as he hastened to hold the double glass doors for her.

Once outside, she stopped under the short green awning and surveyed the rooftops, barely visible through the trees, of the buildings across the park. It was the first time she had been back since the shooting. She stared at the sidewalk and recalled seeing the fine red mist on her hands and the clear, blue sky overhead as she lay on her back, feeling life slip away. She shivered lightly, thinking that it might have been Blair that day and not her. Then she shrugged the memory away and crossed the street toward her apartment on the other side of the square.

When she’d stripped off her jacket and eased out of her weapon harness, she walked to the windows that overlooked Gramercy Park directly opposite the Aerie. Staring at Blair’s penthouse, she thought about her up there now—in that space that should have been a haven. The windows facing the street in Blair’s loft were bulletproof, the fire escape ended one level below her floor, and the skylights on the roof above were crisscrossed with woven titanium mesh that would require a blowtorch to cut. *A posh fortress, but a subtle prison nonetheless.*

Cam couldn’t blame her for hating it. She couldn’t even blame Blair for being angry with her. She wished she could change it, but the facts of Blair’s life were beyond anyone’s control.

She turned away from the image of Blair’s smile and the memory of Blair in her arms. Wanting her would not help either of them now.



After Cam left, Blair waited motionless on the other side of the door, listening to the distant hum of the elevator climbing to the penthouse to carry Cam downstairs. Long after she knew Cam was gone, she hoped foolishly that the agent might return. By the time she finally turned back into her empty loft, she had managed to replace longing with anger, a familiar antidote to disappointment.

If only she could convince her body that she no longer cared. Cam’s arrival that morning had been so unexpected that she hadn’t done anything except react. Few women had ever been able to excite

her the way Cameron Roberts did, with little more than a smile. It was one of the things that made her security chief so frightening. Blair made a point of keeping everyone at arm's distance, physically and emotionally, but she had failed miserably with Cam. She'd been ready in a heartbeat just at the sight of her standing outside in the hall.

Walking through the loft, she was still throbbing with the aftermath of unanswered arousal. She was so angry with herself for allowing this to happen that even her body's automatic response seemed like a betrayal.

"Shower," she muttered under her breath, shedding clothes as she crossed to the partitioned area in the corner that adjoined her sleeping alcove.

She twisted the dial and stepped under the still-cold spray, gasping at first contact. Her nipples were still full and tender from the recent stimulation, and the wetness between her legs was not from the rivulets of water running down her body. She leaned against the far wall and let the warming cascade engulf her. She closed her eyes, and that was a mistake.

As soon as she surrendered to the soothing beat of the water on her skin, she saw Cam's face. She felt Cam's body along the length of her own—remembered being pressed together against the door. She imagined Cam's hands on her, just as she had imagined them so many times during the weeks they had been apart. Ordinarily such remembrances produced just a pleasant hum of pleasure, but she was already aroused, painfully so. The pinpricks of heat on her skin seemed to streak directly between her legs, and the tingling pressure building there warred with her self-control.

*I will not think about her.*

She grabbed soap and began to lather her neck and chest, smoothing her palms over her breasts and stomach. The flicker of her fingers passing over her nipples made her breath catch. Without consciously meaning to, she caught one between her thumb and forefinger and squeezed, arching her back slightly into the warm spray as the sharp pinpoint of pleasure-pain seared down her spine. It was too good, too good not to lift her hands and cup both breasts, squeezing as she rhythmically twisted her erect nipples until all she could feel was a steady burning pleasure beneath her fingertips.

Legs trembling, she pressed her shoulders harder against the rear shower wall for support. She ached inside. Still massaging her breasts with one hand, she pressed the other to her stomach, running her fingers lightly over her skin, moving lower with each stroke. Her pulse beat between her legs like a second heart. She knew how hard she was, had felt the stiff swelling as she straddled Cam's thigh. If she touched herself, she would never be able to stop. She had been close the minute her lips had found Cam's mouth.

*I am always so damn ready for her.* She imagined Cam's fingers where her own brushed through the hair at the base of her belly, and her clitoris twitched.

"Ah, God," she whispered, shuddering at the memory. She needed to ease the pressure, couldn't think of anything else. Her fingers slid lower, one on either side of her distended clitoris. Her hips jerked as she squeezed lightly, and she had to brace herself with one arm against the wall to keep from falling.

Her mind was empty of everything except the exquisite sensation of her fingertips rubbing over her blood-engorged flesh. She was dimly conscious of her muscles quivering and the pounding pressure of her orgasm building. Faintly, she heard herself whimpering with each teasing stroke. Neck arched, she thrust her hips steadily back and forth as her hand moved faster between her legs, setting her nerves on fire. When the inferno roared from her pelvis and scorched along her veins, she choked back a cry, her fingers squeezing down with each spasm, milking each pulsation to the very end.

As the contractions finally ebbed, she leaned weakly forward into the spray, both arms outstretched, palms against the opposite wall, barely able to stand. Her body was satisfied, but she took no satisfaction from it. She still felt hollow.

"Damn you, Cameron," she whispered.