
Chapter 1

“**T**his place is a little creepy.” Calliope Ingalls handed her husband a 200-mm lens and took the 125-mm he’d just removed from the camera body. She put the old one in her bag as he attached the new.

“That’s part of the charm, baby,” he said with a wink. “Remember, not fifty miles from here, they hanged people they thought were witches. I think the history contributes to the atmosphere, which I might describe more as spooky rather than creepy.”

“Same difference.” She smiled shyly before she turned her attention back to the landscape around them. “Maybe I should give you a dictionary. I think the terms spooky and creepy are listed together.”

Calliope blinked coquettishly as he looked up from

the camera dials he'd been focused on. She'd expected to see lust, but instead she saw anger, a slow burn that she knew could turn into a fire. Maybe she'd been a little too flippant today. She'd made remarks in the car about the cold, about the traffic, and about her desire to go home. Maybe the comment about the dictionary had taken things a little too far.

“Someone's being a smart-ass today. Are you acting out because you didn't get the belt last night?”

“No, Master.” She held up her hands as if offering her surrender. “I'm just pointing out the obvious.”

He narrowed his eyes, and Calliope's nipples hardened. She had indeed missed a good, hard spanking last night, but using the leather in the hotel would have attracted attention. She always made noise when he used the belt.

She licked her lips slowly as he studied her. Would he spank her out here in the open field? It was definitely what she wanted. But he could punish her for being a smart-ass and make her wait until they were home, which wouldn't be for another two days.

Hopefully, he'd reward her obvious attempt to lure him into a spanking while they were out here in the middle of nowhere. The alternative was too much to bear.

Calliope worried her lower lip as her Master

continued to study her. Why didn't he say something? Waiting for his decision was pure torture, but it was something her Master was very good at.

What she wanted now wasn't punishment, though; she wanted fun, for the both of them. Her Master loved whipping her, almost as much as she enjoyed being on the receiving end. But to start a scene without asking him... What had she been thinking?

"Forgive me, Master. I've overstepped my bounds." She lowered her gaze to the ground.

"So, you have, bad girl. I should refuse you, but I'm afraid you'd pout."

"No, Sir, I wouldn't." Her heart beat just a little faster. The tone of his voice indicated he was unhappy with her, and she didn't like that. Not one bit.

"Are you saying I'm wrong?"

"No, Sir, I..."

"Show me your breasts."

Calliope wasted no time. She put down the camera bag, then grasped the edges of her heavy sweater. The cold New England air assaulted her skin and stomach as she pulled the sweater and her bra up, exposing her heavy breasts.

"Hard nipples." Her Master's voice was deeper than before.

"For you, Master."

“For me, or for the cold?”

She shook her head. “Only for you.”

“We’ll see.” He inclined his head toward her waist. “Take off your belt, then undo your jeans and lower them and your panties to your knees.”

Her fingers fumbled with the belt, but after she pulled the thin leather through the loops, she quickly undressed, holding the belt out to him.

“I think not.” He flashed a look that said her ass was about to become very, very sore. “Pick up the bag and follow me.”

He started walking without waiting to see if she’d obey him, and Calliope fell into step behind him. It was difficult to walk with her clothes in such restricting positions, but she did the best she could, holding the bag in front of her.

The rental car was parked under a copse of trees, and as Calliope walked she thought about bending over the hood, her Master’s belt licking her cold ass as she clutched the metal under her. What would the people who rented the car next think if they knew someone had been thoroughly spanked on the vehicle they were driving?

She almost giggled at the thought, until her Master passed the car and went to the tree that was nearest it. It was old, with a huge trunk and low-slung branches.

Calliope almost tripped as she watched him grab a branch and tug as if to test its sturdiness.

This hadn't been what she had in mind, not at all.

"Master?" She stopped at the car, then looked at it pointedly when he glanced her way.

"Over here, little slut."

Oh crap. She'd been put on display before, tied to a cross or hung from chains in the ceiling, but that was always in a club, not out in the open where anyone could drive up and see her arms tethered to a tree branch.

"Master, I..."

"Now, Calliope." He undid his belt buckle. "You know how I get if you make me wait."

Oh yes, she knew. Better to take what he had in mind than argue about it. Arguing would double the whipping and assure that, when they got home, he would deliver a penalty for her behavior.

Calliope hurried to him. The tree branch wasn't that much higher than her head, which was a good thing. Maybe, just maybe, if someone drove up, they wouldn't notice her hanging there. Maybe her Master could get her down before they got out of their car.

Master looked at the bag, then looked at the ground. Calliope put it down, then held out the thin belt she'd been wearing. He placed his camera on the bag, took the leather and wrapped it figure eight-style

around her wrists, using the ends to secure them together.

When he was done, he unsnapped the camera strap and stretched it out to its full length. He stepped under the tree and pointed to the spot next to him.

What had started out as an idea to get a few licks from the belt was spiraling out of control. Calliope trusted her Master to control things, to make sure she wasn't harmed, and that the scene played out right. She knew better than to balk outwardly, but inwardly she grew increasingly nervous about this wide-open playroom.

Calliope stepped into the spot he'd indicated. Her Master threw the strap over the tree branch, tugging on both ends. The branch swayed, but it was obvious it would hold her weight as he whipped her.

"Up." She lifted her arms, and he threaded the strap through the leather around her wrists. He pulled the ends until her arms were high above her head. A telltale *click* told her he'd fastened the lanyard catches together to keep her arms in place.

He stepped in front of her and pulled his belt from the loops of his pants. "You thought you could top me from below, didn't you?"

"Yes, Master. Forgive me." The cold made her shiver,

and she wanted him to get this over with, so she could properly apologize.

“We’ll see.” He folded the belt in half. “I had planned on a nice, leisurely spanking after we met with Sir Silas. I was going to make your ass throb, then give you a good, hard fuck that made both of us come. But your mouth changed all that. You won’t come today.”

“No, Master, I won’t come. Forgive me for ruining your plans.” Sir Silas. She’d forgotten about him. The resort owner was due here by one to discuss the photos he’d hired her Master to take. What time was it now? Her wrists were bound too tightly for her to get a look at her watch. Would they finish her punishment before he arrived? Somehow, she doubted it.

Master took a step forward and thrust his fingers between her thighs, finding the slave ring that hung from her clit, marking her as his. He tugged it roughly, and she gasped as pain rocked through her.

“Who does this pussy belong to?”

“You, Master.”

His hand moved to her breasts; he tugged on each nipple in turn, twisting them until she gasped in pain. “And these tits?”

“Yours, Master.” She kept her gaze fastened to the ground.

“And your ass? Your mouth?”

“All yours, Sir.”

He grasped a handful of her hair and pulled her head up. He looked directly into her eyes. “What do you say?”

“I’m so sorry for overstepping my bounds, Master. Please punish me as you see fit.”

“Do I need your permission for that?”

“No, Sir. My body belongs to you.” He trailed the leather up and down her thighs before stretching it out between his hands. He placed it in front of her lips, and she kissed it in several spots, a sign that she accepted the spanking she was about to receive.

He turned it over, and she repeated the actions. That’s when she heard the sound of tires rolling up beside them. She froze and twisted against her bonds. Fear gripped her stomach, something she hadn’t felt during a scene since the first time she’d submitted to Henry.

“It seems Sir Silas is here. We’ll have an audience for your whipping.”

She tugged again, and the branch shook above her. Red and orange leaves fell around her feet as her Master reached up and grasped her wrists. “What’s gotten into you, Calliope? You haven’t acted this way in years.”

“I... I don’t know. I have a... Please, let me go.”

“No.” He let go of her and stroked her cheek. “As

your Lord and Master, I'm ordering you to get ahold of yourself."

She turned her gaze to his as she tried to control her breathing. His expression asked her if she needed to use her safe word, something she'd never done. He would release her, but he wouldn't be happy about it. But then again, neither would she.

"I'm fine, Master. Forgive me."

He stroked her cheek again and nodded. "We'll discuss this later. Are you better?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Am I interrupting?"

Her Master put the belt between her lips, then stepped around her. She imagined him offering his hand to the darkly handsome resort owner.

"Not at all. My sub and I have had a difference of opinion, and I felt immediate correction was needed. I'm afraid there isn't much privacy at the hotel for this type of thing."

"I'm sorry about that. I wish my hotel was done; then you could have stayed there and had all the privacy you needed," Silas answered. She tried to remember him as she'd seen him last—at a club in Boston. Her Master had been hired to document a collaring ceremony where a Domme claimed her slave.

Sir Silas had been there—a beautiful blonde submis-

sive at his feet—as they’d watched the Domme whip, then collar the equally stunning woman the Domme had claimed.

Calliope had been more than a little intimidated by the striking subs, with their thin bodies and high breasts. When she’d voiced her insecurities to her Master, he’d forced her to strip, then stand on display in the middle of the room for all to see, hands clenched behind her back, head bowed.

She’d heard many words of praise from Doms and Dommes alike that night, not only for her ability to obey but also for her ‘womanly curves’. Calliope had thought the euphemism was just another way for them to say she was fat; she’d flushed with pride as she listened to her Master tell them all how much he loved her, how he wouldn’t change a hair on her head.

Then he’d chained her to a wall and given her twenty-five strikes with a single-tail. Back at the hotel he’d fucked her so hard she thought she would die from the bliss.

She’d felt the whipping for days afterward, but she’d also absorbed his praise. It had seeped into her soul and strengthened the bond they shared. Today’s outburst would put a slight dent in the bond, but her Master would repair it; she had no doubt.

Behind her, the men talked in low tones, and she

wanted to clear her throat, remind them that while they talked she stood here half-naked. Goose bumps formed on her body as the cold continued to wrap around her.

She closed her eyes and centered on her submission. Her Master wanted her in this position, and this was where she would stay without complaint. Her arms ached, but at least they weren't pulled so tight that she couldn't flex them a little.

The men's voices drifted toward her as she contemplated her spanking. She should have thought about Sir Silas showing up before she put on her little show.

She shifted a little, then jumped as something pressed against her leg. She looked down to see if an animal was sniffing her legs. Instead, she saw the edge of her Master's belt trailing up the inside of her calf.

"I was worried you'd fallen asleep," he said. "I called your name to see if you remembered your manners, but you didn't answer."

"Forgive me, Master. Hello, Sir Silas."

"Hello, Calliope. It's quite a pleasant surprise to find you tied to a tree."

She held back a snort that would have angered her Master. "Thank you, Sir."

"Calliope?" Her Master gently slapped the leather against her ass. "Where are your manners?"

"Sir Silas, I've angered my Master, and I'm going to

be punished. It would please him, and me, if you would watch.”

He stepped in front of her, and she hazarded a glance in his direction. He and her Master were polar opposites. Where Henry was blond with deep blue eyes and a tall, angular build, Sir Silas was dark with black hair that hung around his broad shoulders. She didn't get a look at his eyes, but she was sure they were dark.

“I'd be honored to watch. Thank you, Calliope.”

Her Master had been lightly spanking her bottom, getting her ready for the belt. The swats started out small but increased in intensity. She knew Henry was going to blister her behind, and she deserved it.

Sir Silas stepped behind her, and Henry moved her hair just enough to kiss her shoulder.

“We're ready to begin.” He slapped both cheeks, the sound of his palm slapping her flesh echoing among the trees.

“As you wish, Master. Please punish me for my behavior.”

“Make sure I know you're feeling it.” When he stepped away from her, the cold seemed to envelop her. But she didn't have long to feel its effect.

The belt flew through the air immediately, the sound unmistakable. Calliope cried out as the leather kissed her ass. The sting was harsh, the pain intensifying as it

settled into her ass. A second stroke landed and then a third.

Henry fell into a steady rhythm, striking her ass from first one side and then the other, the sting growing worse with each strike. Calliope cried out, twisting and turning as much as she could. She pulled against the strap, wanting to free herself, but knowing she couldn't.

What would Sir Silas think of her movements? She knew many Masters demanded their submissives stay still and silent for whippings. But Henry told her he enjoyed hearing her cry out, liked to see her squirm.

The belt landed on her ass, her thighs and even lower, almost to her knees. She never counted. Henry didn't believe in limiting the number of strokes in a whipping, unless he used a single-tail. Even with a crop or cane he spanked until he thought the punishment had run its course.

He was relentless, striking her ass with the leather without a break. She tried to lose herself in the spanking, but she knew that wasn't the point of this one. It was meant to remind her that she'd overstepped her bounds. She wasn't supposed to feel pleasure from it. She remembered the lashes she'd received the first night she'd met Sir Silas. By the tenth one she'd been flying, soaring into space, as her Master demonstrated his dominance over her.

How she wished that could happen again tonight.

Her cheeks throbbed as one hard lash of the leather bit into her at the spot where her ass met her thighs. She cried out again. “Master! Forgive me.”

Several more, hard strikes landed, and then Henry stroked her thigh. “Enough,” he whispered in her ear. “We’ll discuss your behavior further at the hotel tonight.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Henry undid the camera strap, putting one arm around her as her arms fell to her sides. He held her close and kissed her tenderly. “I love you, Calliope. Thank you for your submission.”

“I love you, Master. Thank you for my whipping. It reminds me that you know best.”

He kissed her again and then pinched a nipple. She’d forgotten about the cold until he’d done that. The nub seemed frozen in place, and the pinch had hurt almost as much as the belt. Her body ached from the chill as he worked to untie her wrists.

“Right your clothing so we can go on our tour. I’m sure Sir Silas has better things to do than to spend too much time out here.”

“Yes, Sir.” He walked back to Sir Silas as she pulled down her bra and sweater. She held in a cry of pain as she pulled up her panties and jeans.

When she was dressed, she put her hands behind her back and bowed her head.

“You may come to us, Calliope,” Henry said. “I’m eager to see what this place has to offer.”

SILAS HOPE DIDN'T SOUND like he was from New England. Instead of the low, drawn-out vowels she'd heard from other residents of this area, his accent was nonexistent. As she followed along behind her Master and his new employer, Calliope wondered about the man's origins.

What had made him want to build a resort here? He wasn't expounding on his reasons. Instead, he was telling Henry where everything would be built. His house would be a little farther back from where she'd just been whipped, connected to the hotel by a walkway. It would be on stilts, so the house itself was up in the trees.

“Interesting,” Henry said when he'd described the structure. “I'd like to see the plans for that.”

“I'll show them to you tonight, at dinner. The house will have three bedrooms and two baths, a living room, dining room, kitchen and, of course, a dungeon. I've taken to calling it a playroom, actually, since it will be in the air.”

Her Master held out his hand. “My camera, my little slut.”

Calliope reached into the bag Henry had given her before they’d started the tour. She checked the lens as was her custom, then handed the camera to Henry.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Master.”

A flush crossed Calliope’s face when she realized Sir Silas was staring at her.

“How long have the two of you been married?”

“Almost three years,” her Master replied as he trained his lens on a large boulder. “We’ve been together for four. I was afraid I’d lose her to someone else if I didn’t put a ring on her finger and a collar around her neck.”

Calliope fingered the small piece of black leather that demonstrated her Master’s ownership. She had different ones for different occasions, and she never went without a collar, even when she bathed.

“I have to say I loved watching her take your belt. I’ve never tried letting a sub be vocal like that. I rather enjoyed it.”

Her Master’s chuckle made Calliope’s clit tingle with need. “I had to soundproof one of the rooms in our loft. If not, the neighbors would be calling the cops every time I took a belt, crop, or whip to her ass, which is quite often.”

Her Master spoke again. "One of the harshest punishments for my little slut is making her stand still and be quiet. She's very shy around people she doesn't know, but when we're alone together she's very vocal. Her noises make me very hard."

"I could see how that would happen."

Calliope's gaze cut to her Master, who placed his hand on his crotch and shifted his cock. He was indeed hard.

"When we get back to the car I'll have her suck you off, if you like. I love watching her suck other men. It takes her out of her comfort zone."

"I'd be happy to lend her my cock, so she can show her submissiveness." Both men laughed, and they started to walk toward an area with very tall grass. She fell in behind them, mentally preparing herself for getting down on her knees in front of Silas Hope and taking his cock in her mouth while her Master watched.

"Tell me again what you have in mind for your photographs," Henry said.

"Augstown has been abandoned for more than one hundred and fifty years," Silas said. "It was an original settlement starting around 1635. During the witch trials the population expanded, and it was a nice farming settlement for a while. Then it steadily died out until the mid-1800s. Actually, I'll have to

check my dates. It may be more like the early 1800s. One of the things I'd like for you to do is photograph the graveyard that's here. There's very little written historical background on Augstown. I'm hoping taking photos of the cemetery will help provide some."

"Calliope can do that. She's quite an accomplished photographer herself." Henry clapped Silas on the shoulder. "And we come as team, professionally."

"Good to hear." They stopped at the edge of the foliage, and Calliope stepped up next to her Master. He clasped her hand, squeezing it gently. It was something he did quite a bit when she was going to do something for him that she wouldn't do otherwise—like suck off Silas Hope.

The touch reminded her that she belonged to Henry, that she was his submissive and watching her was what he wanted.

"What's in there?" Henry asked, cocking his head toward the grass. It was knee-deep on him, thigh-deep on her.

"That's where the original town was, or at least the heart of it," Silas said. "We haven't cleared off a lot of the foliage yet, but we've walked it off, as in measuring it loosely. There are outlines of four buildings in there, with some remains being higher than others. It's a little treach-

erous for walking because you never know what you're going to run across."

"Hmm." Calliope could tell from the way Henry focused on the patch of overgrown land that he wanted to explore. His adventurous spirit was one of the first things that had attracted her to him.

"I'd like to go inside." He waved his hand over the weeds. "You have snakes up here?"

"Not in this cold," Silas replied. "But I'd advise against going inside. I just signed for the land, and I haven't had a chance to get someone out here to clean up this patch yet. I want someone who will do a good job. It's one of the first things I wanted you to take photos of—revealing the original structures."

Henry's short nod made Calliope smile. He was going to ignore Silas' warning. "What's the bigger structure in the back?"

"It's the church," Silas said. "Most of it has survived, and the graveyard is in the back of it. We can skirt around this area and go to the church, that way Calliope can see the cemetery."

"I'm going to go through. You two can go around, and I'll meet you back there."

Henry put a foot out at the same time Silas put a hand on his arm. "It's not a good idea. I had a friend almost break his leg falling over something sticking out of

the ground. He still walks with a bit of a limp. I'd rather we went around."

"And I'd like to take some photos of all this before it's disturbed. Surely you can understand that." When Silas didn't say anything, Henry cocked his head. "I'll be very careful, and I'd appreciate it if you'd escort Calliope to the church. I'll meet you there."

She could tell that Silas wasn't happy with the arrangement, but he nodded. Henry turned to her and tipped her face up.

"Be good for Sir Silas and obey him until we're back together." He kissed her gently. "I love you."

"Yes, Master, I'll be good." She leaned over and brushed her lips against his crotch. When they were alone, it was the standard way she said hello or goodbye, a reminder that she served him. She knew he would want her to do it now with Sir Silas watching. "I love you too."

"Watch your step, Henry," Silas said as he put his hand on her elbow and guided her to the left of the brush.

"I will. And take care of my girl."

"I will. I promise."

She'd only taken a few steps when Henry called out her name. "Just because I'm not around doesn't let you off the hook for work. Take out a camera and see what

you can find while you're walking. It will help me plan out our work when we start."

"Yes, Master." She reached into the bag for an SLR, taking the cap off the lens when she had it out of the bag. "I'll follow your lead, Sir Silas."

They walked for some ways and she stopped to photograph trees or rock outcroppings. The ground was uneven and as she walked she wondered what her Master was finding. She understood Sir Silas' trepidation of him going into the overgrown area by himself.

"How did you and Henry meet?"

Calliope stopped and focused on a long piece of wood lying on the ground. After she'd captured the image, she lifted her gaze to Sir Silas. "At a photography show in Denver. A mutual friend had an exhibition at a museum, and we were looking at the same photograph. I said something about the woman in the picture being beautiful, and he said..."

She started to walk, going past her host.

"He said?"

What was she doing? She'd never told anyone what Henry had said. "He said I was as beautiful." There, that was partially the truth. He'd also told her that he wanted to own her, he wanted her to be his, to serve him in all things.

"He was right. You're very lovely."

“Thank you, Sir Silas.” She smiled at him as she took a step, almost tripping over the wood she’d just photographed. He clasped her arm and kept her upright. “Thank you, again.”

“I’ll tell you the same thing I just told your Master. Watch your step.”

“Of course.” They walked a little farther, and she clicked off a few more photos. “You’re not from around here, are you?”

“Depends on your definition of being from around here.” He chuckled. “I was born in Salem, but soon afterward my father joined the navy. We lived all over the world when I was young, until he retired and moved here. When I graduated from high school, I joined the navy. I served for ten years, and I’ve been out for three years now.”

They came to the end of the weedy patch, and he pointed to the east. “And you? Have you always lived in Denver?”

“Yes, well not in Denver proper. I grew up in Aurora and only moved to LoDo when Henry and I married.”

“LoDo?”

“The Lower Downtown Historic District. Master bought a good portion of a building to use as a loft and a studio.”

“Very trendy area, I’m sure.”

She couldn't tell if he was being judgmental or if he was asking a question.

"Yes, it is. I like it very much. Lots of things are within walking distance, and Master and I travel a lot. He likes being in a building where the access is controlled for that very reason. He thinks it lessens the chances of our being broken into."

Sir Silas nodded his agreement. "Is this the loft with the soundproof dungeon?"

Heat made her face flush, and Calliope studied the ground as she walked. "It is."

"Henry's lucky to have found a sub like you. I've yet to find my match."

"I wasn't submissive before I met Henry." What was she doing? She didn't want to talk about this with him. This was something private, only to be shared with her Master.

"You think that, but Henry knew how to bring it out of you. I'm sure you dreamed about being tied up, or whipped, before you met him. Admit it."

She shook her head furiously. "No."

"Liar."

Calliope came to a full stop. "How dare you." Then she remembered her Master's command to obey Sir Silas. "Forgive me, but—"

"Apology accepted, but don't go any further with it."

He flashed her a look that told her if she were his sub, she would be on her knees right now. “First time submissives always think they could only submit to their Masters. But if the two of you divorced for some reason, you would miss being submissive and seek another Master.”

“Never. I love Henry too much for that.”

There was an uneasy silence. “I think we’ve crossed into a place we shouldn’t be. We’ll change the subject. Tell me how you got into photography.”

Calliope launched into her story, about how she’d taken photographs in high school for the yearbook and newspaper. She went through her college years, talking about her dreams of traveling the world to take photographs. But that dream didn’t come true until she met Henry.

And then it seemed they’d come full circle, back to her relationship with Henry, and how her life had changed, both personally and professionally, when they’d met.

They were coming around the edge of the overgrown area now and in the distance she could see the church. Henry was walking around, looking down. Calliope thought he was probably in the cemetery examining the gravestones.

“I think you’re going to have a good time in here,

Calliope," he called out as they drew near. "This is going to be the job of a lifetime. I've never documented something that's died then come back to life."

"What did you see in the brush, Master?"

"Lots of bricks and things sticking out of the ground. I can see how your friend lost his footing, Silas. It was hard to find things to take photos of while I was trying to watch where I was putting my feet." He chuckled. "But, I also found lots of things that I'd like to set up shots with that will make some interesting studies. This is going to be great."

Calliope loved it when her Master found a new site. He always acted like a little kid at Christmas, opening present after present, his excitement bursting out of him like rays of sunshine, exactly as it was right now.

"What's farther back?" He pointed to the land that stretched off behind the dilapidated church.

"Lots of land," Silas said. "Not sure what it was all used for. We've only explored a little bit of it. Once again, when we start clearing the land we'll get a better sense of what's there, obviously. We could take a trek out there now, see if we find anything interesting."

"Sounds like a plan." Henry looked at her and winked, and then she gasped as a look of extreme pain passed over his face. One minute he was there and the

next he was gone. A loud thud filled the air and Calliope gasped.

“Master?”

“Henry!” Sir Silas rushed past her. She watched him sidestep a few of the larger tombstones before he knelt down.

Calliope hurried to his side, bile rising in her stomach as she looked down. Her Master lay on his stomach, both arms above his head.

Silas pulled a cell phone from his pocket and tossed it to her.

“Call 9-1-1. Tell them we’re at the Augstown cemetery and we need medical assistance.”

Her fingers fumbled with the unfamiliar phone until she hit the right buttons.

“Nine-one-one, what is your emergency?”

“What... He’s...” Silas turned Henry over. Blood covered the side of his face, but his eyes were open. There was blood on a nearby stone. He’d obviously hit his head. “Henry, he’s...”

“Ma’am? Where are you?”

“Dead. Augstown... Dead.” Her voice trembled, and her hands shook. Tears threatened to fall but somehow, they didn’t. All she could do was stare at the man she loved, someone who had just winked at her, who now lay at her feet motionless.

Silas stood and grabbed the phone from her. "This is Silas Hope. We're at the Augstown cemetery. A man has fallen and hit his head on a gravestone, but I think he might have had a heart attack or something first. He's not breathing. What can we do?"

Calliope put her hand against Henry's warm cheek. The sound of a woman's voice circled around them. He must have put the phone on speaker. Silas thrust the phone in her hand.

"Check his pulse," the woman was saying. "If you don't find one, you need to start CPR. Does he have a history of heart troubles?"

"No," Calliope said.

Silas tipped Henry's neck back. She watched him press his fingers against his skin. It was obvious to her he found nothing, because he was moving his fingers from place to place, searching for a heartbeat.

"Ma'am, is the victim your husband?"

Victim? Who the hell was she talking about? The earth spun faster. "Yes."

"Ma'am, what is your husband's name? Is he diabetic?"

"His name is Henry Ingalls, he's thirty-four years old and no, he's not diabetic."

The woman's voice seemed to drift away, and then she spoke again. "A sheriff's deputy is in the area, and

he's pulling up next to your cars now. He needs to know exactly where you are. Can you yell, or move around so he can find you?"

"We're at the back of the property, in the cemetery. I'll run toward him." He stood and put his hand on her shoulder. "I'll be right back."

Calliope nodded. She heard Silas' feet as they hit the dirt and grass. He was screaming that they were down here. There was the sound of a siren and a car as it made its way along the rutty, overgrown area.

The tears that had threatened her earlier now stained her cheeks. She clasped Henry's hand and squeezed, hoping, praying, she would get a response. There was none.

"Henry, I love you."

She closed her eyes and in her mind she heard his laughter, felt the warmth of his hand against her cheek.

Oh, Calliope, you know I love you too, my little slut. And I always will.

She laid her head against his chest and sobbed.