SASHA'S DESTINY By Shelly Douglas

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Published by Blushing Books®,

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ABCD Graphics and Design

977 Seminole Trail #233

Charlottesville, VA 22901

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Sasha's Destiny

EBook ISBN: 978-1-68259-995-2

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

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Prologue

It was Friday night, and we decided to run some errands on our own after work before meeting in a bar that was just outside of town. As usual, Tony cautioned me about the evils of driving under the influence and eyeballed the half a glass of wine I consumed before calling our favorite restaurant to see if we could get a reservation for dinner. There was a seven-thirty opening available for us, so he walked me to my car and watched as I started the ignition before driving away. Turning up the volume on the radio, I was singing harmony to my favorite song when bright red and blue flashing lights appeared in my rearview mirror.

SHIT!

The road was murky and lonely, and my breathing quickened as I checked one more time to make sure it was a real police car. You hear all sorts of bad things happening to women on dark, desolate roads, so one can't be too careful these days. Immediately after pulling over, an officer in an authentic-looking uniform approached my car. I rolled down the window and my heart skipped a beat as he angled his head downward.

"Do you know how fast you were going, ma'am?" he asked in a heavy Southern drawl, flipping open his badge for me to see.

"I thought I was going the speed limit, officer. I'm really sorry if I wasn't."

"Well, you weren't, ma'am. You were going about ten miles over the limit. I'd like to see your license and registration, please," he stated in a stern tone, lowering his cap.

It was hard to see what he looked like because of the slightly tinted glasses he wore, and his face was covered somewhat by the visor on the police hat. Obediently, I pulled out both forms of identification and handed them to him.

That was the moment his voice became low and gravelly. "Step out of the car, please. I'd like to do a sobriety check."

My heart started beating wildly inside my chest. "Oh my God. I only had a half a glass of wine, for God's sake," I defended with lips curving downward while my shaky hand pulled on the car handle.

Undeterred, he gently took my arm and helped me out of the car. "Let's see if you can walk a straight line, ma'am."

"Jesus, I'm in four-inch heels. I couldn't do that cold sober."

While crossing his arms, his lips pursed before he watched me stagger in front of him. And true to form, I tripped.

"I don't think we need to bother with a breathalyzer, do you? Please put your hands on the trunk, ma'am. I'm going to have to make sure you aren't carrying any firearms. And if I were you, I'd dispense with the jokes. This is no laughing matter."

"Seriously, you're going to frisk me?"

"Yep. You are under arrest for speeding and intoxication while driving."

"I can't believe this."

The officer lightly frisked me up and down and read me my rights under Miranda. Then his hand rested firmly on my back, helping to bend my ass over the trunk.

"To tell you the truth, ma'am, if it was my choice, I wouldn't take you down to the station. I'd escort you home and turn you across my knee. What I think you need is a good old-fashioned spankin' while those panties of yours are dangling around your ankles. In fact, maybe I *should* do the honors," he said, his deep, Southern drawl morphing into a voice that I recognized. "Right here and right now."

"Oh my God, Tony, haven't you had enough fun?"

"Don't even bother turning around, young lady. "It's been a while since I've reddened that naughty heinie of yours."

"You can't be serious. We're outside, for God's sake. Someone might see us!"

My face flushed a sizzling shade of scarlet as I obediently unbuttoned my jeans and jerked them downward.

"You'll be spanked on your bare bottom," he declared with determination, hooking his fingers into the elastic of my pink cotton boy shorts. After he slid them down, I felt his warm hand rub my cool, naked behind before making hard contact right across it.

"Please, Tony. You can't do this here!"

"I can and I will. Now, let's count how many infractions you managed to incur tonight. You were drinking and driving!" *Smack!*

"You were speeding." Smack!

"You were driving alone on a dark, desolate road." Smack!

"Come on, Tony! Please stop! This is so embarrassing!"

That's when I heard the familiar sound of a glove snap and a plastic container open. The heat rose in my face at the same time as a familiar wanton sensation pinged deep inside my belly.

Sweet Jesus.

"Maybe I need to make sure there aren't any drugs being hidden in here," he said, parting my quivering cheeks with his hands.

"Tony, are you insane?"

And then his wet finger gently rimmed the circumference of my delicate anus. Twice.

"Please, don't," I said, hoping he would.

His thick finger slowly pushed into my crinkled rosette before twisting and turning, giving me a thrill he knew I loved. As I bent over further, my hips wiggled and waved.

He pulled out his finger and gave my bottom a swift warning swat. "Be still. Stay in position and let me do my job, young lady."

"Please, officer. I promise to be good," I moaned as his long extremity slowly re-entered and exited my pulsating rosebud.

"Yes, I'm sure you will be, since your bum has been spanked like an insolent little girl. Now get your adorable reddened fanny into my car so I can escort you to dinner."

"What will I do with my car?" I asked like he was going to hand me a myriad of choices.

His finger exited my behind and then he gave my tender buttock a possessive squeeze. "You will leave it here, and we'll pick it up tomorrow."

Once we both were in the patrol car, I couldn't resist the obvious question.

"Who in the world agreed to lend you their police cruiser? This is so authentic. I'm truly impressed!"

Lowering his blue tinted shades, Tony's mouth curled into a mischievous smile. "Remember, my brother Dario is a firefighter, darlin'. He has lots of friends on the force," he bellowed in a heavy Southern drawl.

I shook my head as we both burst into fits of laughter. Most couples go to the movies on Friday night.

Chapter One

THE POSTER CHILD

Unlocking the door of Ciao Bella at 10:00 on a Saturday morning, I thought to myself, Sasha, you deserve this physical and emotional torture. Ciao Bella is an upscale, high-end boutique that caters mostly to clientele who do not need to read a price tag. These are the kind of customers who like to be pampered, dressed, and entertained all at the same time. Most of the faces that show up in this shop have been injected, stretched, pulled, and sewn together. It doesn't take an Einstein mentality to figure out why so many of them are cranky. I would be, too, if my neck felt like it was being strangled all day long.

As soon as I turned on the lights, the phone rang. "Good morning, Ciao Bella. Sasha speaking," I said in a business-like tone, knowing full well that it was my boss, Lara, checking to make sure someone had opened the store on time.

"Good morning, Sasha," Lara cheerfully responded. "Only seven hours to go before your day off." I am working what Lara refers to as the trinity—the busiest shopping days of the week: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. And it should be emphasized that, of the five part-time employees in the store, no one else is sick enough to take on this task.

My large leather handbag was not yet put away, our store music had not been turned on, the computer was still off, and my first customer was already pressing her turned-up nose against the door glass.

What are people thinking when they come to a shop such as this one? Too bad I wasn't a telepath. Wouldn't it be amusing to hear a true assessment of themselves as they try to shove their size twelve body into a pair of size six denim straight-leg jeans? Do they think because the jeans cost \$250, that helps them magically fit? These women say they want honesty, but they can't handle the truth. Allow me go on record by saying that the customer's happy face is what everyone is working for, and the goal is to know which clothes will get them to that euphoric state. What they probably need is a stiff one, but we weren't supposed to recommend a man or bar.

Most of the time, we all knew these women hadn't a clue about what they wanted or liked. So, our collective sales job was to run many types of clothing into their dressing rooms on the outside chance that one item might work. And this kabuki theater we played always had the potential to turn into a three-hour marathon. Recently, one customer, who shall remain nameless, muttered continuously throughout this exhausting routine. "I don't like stripes or patterns, nothing colorful, black is boring, turtlenecks are too hot, scoop necks show too much skin, forget sleeveless or short sleeves because I hate my flabby arms, shouldn't cling or look too generous—but should make me feel special. Does anything come with that cardigan? I hope it's not wool. Never mind, honey. Is Lara here? She always knows what I want."

Does this woman know that I'm in menopause and could murder her before lunch?

And speaking of lunch, well, we weren't supposed to eat during the work day. Lunch had always been something I looked forward to, but you won't get one here. Just cranky women complaining that we don't have the clothes they want. In all honesty, we only have shelves and racks of pants, sweaters, tops, jackets, dresses, suits, coats, toppers, and vests of every size, shape, and fabric imaginable. We just didn't have in stock what they envisioned on their way to our store. And God help us if we couldn't order it.

Someday, I'll be the poster child for the statement: every woman should have a career to fall back on in case her husband dies.

WHATEVER THE CUSTOMER WANTS

We had a mantra in our small women's boutique, one that began and ended with the words, whatever you want. So, when waiting on husbands who were shopping for their wives, we usually aimed a little higher to please. Not that the husbands were tough customers—on the contrary, they were easy pickings. Usually, they were just looking for attention—someone to stroke their fragile egos. And the activity we absolutely loved to play with them was the widely popular how much money they were willing to spend in the shortest amount of time game. For example, when a handsome customer asked you to quickly try on a four-hundred-dollar sweater that was a size smaller than what you would normally wear, you never refused. You just squeezed into it, stuck your C-cup girls out as far as they could go, and put a smile on your face. Usually, this little game was harmless—the husband watched you prance around, agreed to buy the merchandise, asked you to wrap it, paid for it, and then winked at you as he left. But after working in this store for two years, who would know that my next sale was going to be a little different? Okay, extremely different.

One night a week, our store was open until 9:00 in the evening and two of us usually worked the late shift. Most of the time, Lara and Charlene worked the later hours, but when Lara was out of town, sometimes I was called upon to team up with Charlene. Unfortunately, on that evening while filling in for Lara, Charlene had to leave early, so I'd agreed to stay and lock up by myself. By 7:00, it seemed I was going to have one boring evening when a good customer came strolling in.

Tony was an old friend, and I'd helped him shop on many occasions. It was not unusual for him to stop in to buy his girlfriend, Linda, a gift, and he'd always been a pleasure to work with. Oh, and did I mention he's dark, handsome, and Italian?

We were alone in the store making small talk when I noticed that it was starting to snow outside and would have liked nothing more than to go home. But closing the store early was never acceptable for any reason, so I decided to make the best of the two hours I had left by listening to my handsome customer ramble on about every subject he could think of.

When I first started working in this store, Tony had asked me to try on a top that he had in mind for Linda. I remember looking to Lara for approval because a fashion show seemed a little odd, but she felt it was perfectly all right. So, being that we had plenty of time to kill until

closing, I decided to take the initiative and try some things on for the handsome man. You know, a little, innocent fashion show to pass the time.

As I was in the dressing room, changing, I heard a deep voice ask, "Are you dressed, Sasha?"

"No... and don't even think about coming in here, Mr. Colucci," I retorted with a sharp tongue, standing there in my favorite black lace bra (the one with daisies on the straps), matching lace bikini panties, and high-heeled shoes.

Suddenly, his face poked through the curtain, and I took a step backward in amazement, narrowing my eyes at him. "Okay, now I know you've lost your mind." On one hand, who did he think he was, waltzing into my dressing room? On the other hand, I was fifty years old and this alpha, Italian man seemed, well, interested in me.

As he crept closer, my look of stone must have turned to mush.

What the hell, Sasha. Just go for it.

Losing control over my ego happened in a matter of minutes as he touched my face and told me how beautiful I was. It was hard to imagine that at my age, someone still found me attractive. He placed small kisses on each of my cheeks and softly pressed his lips to mine.

After a loud gasp erupted from my throat, he pulled back a bit and smiled at me. "Come on, Sasha. I can't believe you're that surprised. We've known each other a couple of years now, and I've always paid more attention to you than the others. Are you going to tell me that there isn't an attraction between us?"

There didn't seem to be an answer coming out of my mouth, which was extremely unusual for me. Immediately taking charge, he stepped into the dressing room, turned my body around and hugged me from behind—planting sweet kisses up and down my neck. We were now able to see our reflection in the mirror as he held me in his arms.

"What are we going to do about this, Sasha?"

Though I was obviously aroused to my hot little core, attempting to be nonchalant seemed a good idea at the time. "Have you gone mad? In case it hasn't occurred to you how crazy this scene is, let me spell it out for you, big boy. Number one: I'm standing in a dressing room—where I work, by the way—with your arms around me wearing only my bra, panties, and high heels. Number two: you happen to have a girlfriend, lest you forget, who is a good customer

of ours..." I had to pause because I thought there was a third reason, but unfortunately it wasn't coming to mind.

"Okay, that's two, my dear, and if you can't come up with a third, you'll need to stop talking." In that moment, he turned me around and placed his soft lips back onto mine. His velvety tongue began teasing me, tenderly entering my mouth, tasting me with a hunger I hadn't felt in a long, long time. Putting my arms around his warm neck, I pulled him in, instinctively wanting more, electricity pulsating in a southern direction. I was indeed attracted to this man, and it wasn't just his looks. He seemed to want me, and there was something hot about the way he took control of the situation. Tony was unlike any man I had ever been with before.

It only took a few minutes for reality to set in. But once it did, I was back to my original self and could feel my cheeks heating up as I peered down at the carpet.

This must be what Sybil feels like. Do I have a multiple personality disorder?

Slowly looking me up and down, Tony was obviously very pleased with what he was seeing. Taking a piece of my wavy brown hair, he smoothed it behind one ear as I gazed up into his deep hazel eyes. "Number One: although you look sexy as hell in what you're wearing, you know that was not an acceptable way to speak to me, Miss Sasha," he said, placing his rather large hand on my fanny. "Number Two: I recently broke it off with Linda, which would mean I'm single and able to make my own big boy choices. Number Three: in case you are still interested in making a sale tonight, I'll take the size small, red cashmere sweater, and don't bother to wrap it," he continued with a lopsided grin on his face.

I HATE BEING ALONE

It had only been a year since my husband Doug passed away, and looking back, that time in my life still seems surreal. We moved to Cleveland from the San Diego area two years ago so he could start a new job with a high-profile law firm. I was along for the dutiful ride and decided to take a part-time job in a high-end boutique just to keep busy.

Doug had worked hard for so many years to get to that position, and then it all came crashing down when we got the bad news. He struggled bravely for the next year and underwent an array of different treatments. My part-time job gave me a brave face to put on a few times a week, and I gave him as much support as possible. But with the cancer's aggressiveness, Doug never had a chance. Finally, his body just gave out.

Believe me, I'd struggled. Loneliness, depression, and anxiety were all part of my daily routine. Don't get me wrong, Doug's law firm had been great through my grieving process. His funeral was paid for in full, but his death benefits didn't exactly leave me financially secure. Thank God I still had my *little job*, as he liked to call it.

Working part-time in the shop gave me enough money to live on, but emotionally, it wasn't enough. I didn't like living alone and was going through all sorts of day-to-day issues. Tony was a breath of fresh air that I assumed would be a short-term happening. He was so exciting and handsome, but unfortunately, it seemed he was on the rebound from a recent relationship. And since his ex-girlfriend was a customer of mine, that made me nervous.

By that Saturday, my much-needed break was near, and who came sauntering into the store but my new best friend Tony, red sweater in hand. As he walked up to me with a sweet, sly smile on his face, I wondered who in the hell he'd bought that sweater for.

Quietly, I removed the receipt from his hand and started entering his name in the computer for a refund when he stopped me.

"Since you looked so great in the sweater, and red certainly seems to be your color," (my poor blushing cheeks should know) "I thought maybe you would like to keep it," he whispered under his breath. Thank God no one else was paying attention, because we needed to have that exchange of words in private.

"We can't do this right now, Tony. Are you out of your mind?"

"No, and I'd curb the disrespect, young lady," he replied with a scowl.

Jesus, our conversation was going in a bad direction, and people around the counter seemed to be eavesdropping. Imagine that.

"Who did you think the sweater was for? You know that Linda and I aren't together anymore..." Of course, the next words out of his mouth were, "When are you working a Thursday evening again?"

Uh-oh—Lara wasn't going to be happy if she found out. Oh, she loved her Thursday evening regular customers. But I don't think she wanted *this* kind of regular customer.

Did I mention that Tony is an ex-Marine? Well, he doesn't have much in the patience category, and I learned very quickly that he expects honest answers to his questions. "I'll see, I'll try, and I hope," usually won't cut it with someone like him. But I don't own the store...

"I'll have to check with Lara to see if it's okay first," I said quietly.

Jesus. What's wrong with me? And what would the AARP people think?

Luckily, I found Lara sitting in the office, and she was fine with me working on Thursday from one to nine, since she would be in New York again on another buying trip. Perfect! But how could I get rid of Charlene for the evening?

Rushing off to find her, I left Tony standing there, amused as hell, with a Cheshire cat grin on his face. Why couldn't we just go out to dinner like everyone else?

I LOVE THURSDAYS

I loved working the late shift on Thursdays. It was so relaxing not having to rush around, getting ready to open the store. That was probably why my friend lobbied for the evening position. Speaking of Charlene, I forgot to talk to her about maybe leaving early. I hadn't heard from Tony since Saturday, and admittedly got excited thinking about the possibility of being alone with him again. It was hard to imagine that I'd have to twist Charlene's arm—who doesn't love to leave early?

Driving to work, I was getting more and more excited about my day. I'd been so lonely living by myself, and the idea of seeing Tony again was giving me the incentive I needed to keep going. After much deliberation that morning, I decided to wear a new short, black knit skirt, hot pink cashmere turtleneck, black tights, and tall suede zip boots to complete the outfit. Hopefully, none of my co-workers would be suspicious because we all tried to look stylish and contemporary. After all, we worked in a boutique, not a bookstore.

Unfortunately, it was 1:00 and I wouldn't be seeing Tony until the very end of the day. Charlene and I both showed up for work at the same time, with the usual banter. "Hey Charlene, how's it going?"

"Just fine, Sasha—you look nice today. What's the occasion?"

Uh-oh. Time for a little white lie.

"Nothing, really. I just decided to go for a skirt today, you know, something different." This was indeed the beginning of a very long workday, but I did feel sexy as hell in the boots, so how bad could it be?

The day dragged on and on until 5:30 finally arrived. It was dark outside and Charlene and I were the last people standing. Not one customer came in, so we sat down on the store's black leather couch and chatted, waiting for someone to waltz in.

By the time the clock struck 8:00, I was worried that maybe Tony had changed his mind. I hadn't heard from him since Saturday, but just couldn't believe he would stand me up. Charlene and I were running out of conversation when I'd decided to see if she might agree to go home early. Of course, she didn't want to leave me by myself in the store. We aren't supposed to work alone at night, but I convinced her that it would only be for about an hour and that I'd be fine.

Just then, as luck would have it, Tony's face appeared in the glass of the front door. My nervous stomach literally flipped at the sight of him. Casually strutting in, he grinned at Charlene and said hello, but raised an eyebrow in my direction as if to say, why in the hell is she still here?

"Hi, Tony. How are you?" I greeted him nonchalantly, hoping that he hadn't also spilled the beans to Charlene about breaking up with his girlfriend.

"I was passing through the neighborhood and decided to stop in." Okay, that sounded innocent enough, since we've all known him for so long and he lived close to the store.

"Charlene, since Tony is here, I'm not technically alone if you leave. That is, unless you think a busload of forty-year-old women are coming over to shop at 8:00!"

"You don't have to ask me twice," was her enthusiastic response. Running to get her coat, she dashed out the door before I could change my mind.

The obvious silence in the store made me nervous.

"So, what would you like me to try on for you tonight?" I asked teasingly.

"Nothing baby. Let's talk." Tony walked over to the couch and patted the cushion next to him. "Sasha, even though you saw me as a friendly customer, I always thought of you as a good friend. I certainly never wanted anything to happen to your husband, but to be honest, I've always been attracted to you. Then, last Thursday, something inside me... just sparked! I think we'd be good together, and I need to know if you feel the same way. Unfortunately, Linda didn't take the break-up well. But we just weren't right for each other, and I'm too old to play those kinds of games," he admitted, speaking in short staccato sentences, gesturing with his hands.

I shook my head and smiled as a calm swept over me. I'm also too old for underhanded schemes, and it was refreshing to hear honesty from a man. But then his eyes darkened, and an unfamiliar chill ran through my body as he continued.

"Last week you offered to give me a fashion show, which you knew was going to lead me on, and we ended up in a dressing room, kissing, while you were standing in nothing but your delectable bra and panties. And once again, you're working by yourself at night, which you know you aren't supposed to do. Is any of that considered acceptable behavior? I don't think so. Do you know what you need, young lady?" he asked with a stern expression, crossing his arms.

"No, but I have a feeling you're going to tell me," I said, never knowing when to keep my large trap shut.

"What you need is a good, old-fashioned spanking."

I literally felt my jaw unhinge.

"I'll bet it's been a long time, hasn't it? Wait a minute. You've never had a spanking before, princess, have you?"

"No, never," I said, swallowing hard.

He leaned in and gave me a tender, light kiss on my lips that turned into a delicious, deep, satisfyingly possessive kiss. Flashback: I was sixteen again and making out on my parents' sofa that was covered with a protective white sheet. But that wasn't the case, was it? Nope, we were on the black leather couch of my employer, and I was far from the age of a teen. Then, as quick as the kiss ended, he grasped my arm and I found myself upended over his knee with one strong hand wrapped around my waist, holding me in place. Dangling, I grabbed onto his leg while he spoke to me in a low, serene voice, "Well, I think it's about time, don't you?"

"Oh my God! You wouldn't dare—" But before I could finish taunting him, my black knit skirt was tugged upward and his large hand had covered my small behind, stroking and patting it seductively. Of course, that sexy prelude was followed by some quick sensuous swats. I might have been a novice in the world of spanking, but that did not feel like a punishment.

"I'm sorry, my sweet, but these tights and panties are coming down, too," he said, carefully peeling all the spandex and black cotton off my backside.

"No! Please, Tony, don't do this. Jesus, you are insane!" I yelled, grabbing a pillow to bury my flushed, embarrassed face in.

"Ahh, I see a beautiful rosy blush forming on this sexy bottom, exactly the shade that was on your cheeks in that dressing room," he said quietly, ignoring my comments. "Now, behave yourself and stop squirming, or I'll have to stand you in the corner."

Stand me in a corner? Am I in a time warp?

The swats turned into spanks, first on one cheek and then the other, building a hard and steady rhythm. As I bucked and writhed, he pulled my body closer, bumping the hard bulge tenting his jeans underneath me. I'd often wondered what a spanking like this would feel like, and the distinct curling in my belly made it perfectly clear. Trying not to make noise, I hissed through my teeth and groaned—after all, we were in a public place and someone might hear through the windows. For God's sake, what if someone looked in the windows? What was I thinking? Had I lost my mind? I knew it was late and the store was not in the middle of town, but what if someone passed by and observed our little sexy scene?

I attempted to pull away, but that only made Tony more steadfast. "Stop, please! Stop! What if someone sees us?" At that point, I was begging—but the man obviously didn't seem to care.

Without even flinching, and with a total lack of public concern, Tony switched from spanking my bare backside to softly caressing and patting my fiery, red skin. "I can hardly wait to make this beautiful heinie mine. Has anyone ever possessed your bottom, my sweet Sasha?"

I shook my head. It was all I could do to respond.

"Do you want there to be a next time? Do you, sweetheart?"

Nodding with my head down, I slid off his knees and dragged my panties and tights upward. After smoothing my skirt down, Tony pulled me up onto his lap and smiled. A face streaked with tears, combined with a definite aroma of my arousal, told the dual tale of my embarrassment and stimulation. Words weren't necessary.

"Please look at me when I speak to you, baby." He lifted my chin with two fingers, and I had no choice but to stare into his beautiful hazel eyes topped with the most beautiful lashes I'd ever seen. Women would kill for eyelashes like his.

"There is nothing to be ashamed of, Sasha. The same kinky things seem to excite us." He paused and whispered in my ear, "Tell me the truth, were you a little turned on by that spanking, young lady?"

Still unable to speak, my face radiated with heat as I nodded.

His large thumbs gently swept the tears from my cheeks. "Good. Then our next step is to explore what type of things feel right together."

Casually, he got up from the couch and headed toward the front entrance. "Make sure you lock this door right after I leave," he warned, though his eyes sparkled, "unless of course, you want another spanking."

Naturally, I hopped up and followed him to the door. It was then that he turned to mumble those three words every woman wants to hear. "I'll call you."