

---

# HIS CHERISHED LOVE

Cuffs & Spurs Book Eight

---

ANYA SUMMERS



Published by Blushing Books  
An Imprint of  
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.  
A Virginia Corporation  
977 Seminole Trail #233  
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2019 All rights reserved

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Anya Summers  
His Cherished Love

EBook ISBN: 978-1-947132-22-1

Print ISBN: 978-1-947132-61-0

v1

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

---

## Chapter 1

---

The air was thick with the scents of stale, burnt coffee, and unwashed bodies. They assailed him the moment Jack entered the station through the back entrance. Phones rang, their shrill tones peppering the ever-present hum of voices in the building space. A discordant symphony of sounds and smells all carried with it an undercurrent of despair.

*Home sweet home.*

Better known as the Jackson Hole Police Department.

Jack had missed this place while on medical leave, even the disgusting sludge they served as coffee around here that ate away at a person's stomach lining like a kraken in a kiddie pool. And he truly must have been bored out of his mind if he'd considered comparing the station coffee to imaginary sea creatures.

Ten weeks.

That case had stolen ten weeks of his life. No work. No playing with a submissive at the private BDSM club Cuffs & Spurs, where he belonged as a member. Nothing but bad daytime television, pain meds, and lately, physical therapy. In retrospect, it might have been worse. He could be a permanent resident of King Hill Cemetery.

That's what happened when a suspect took a cheap shot while you were attempting to apprehend them. He'd been lucky. Or so they said. The bullet had passed through the brachial artery on his right arm. He'd nearly bled out on the street and would have, too, if his partner or the paramedics had been any slower. As in, another five minutes and he'd have been dead. Instead, they'd saved his life.

It had given Jack some bad moments over the last ten weeks, the knowledge of how close he'd come to dying. And that had been compounded by being faced with the emptiness of his daily life without work. He *was* the job. Jack had made it his life to the point where it left no room for anything else. No one at home, no wife or kids, who would miss him should he die on the job. His friends and colleagues would, of course. Some of his friends, he considered his brothers. They would mourn his passing. Yet they were all building their own families. It left him wondering who would visit his grave once he was gone.

Fuck. Thirty-five years old and already envisioning his lonely headstone. The only grave without flowers placed upon it. The incident had made him re-evaluate his life and permanent bachelor status on a level he still wasn't comfortable with. But it was not like he'd had anything better going on the last few weeks. There were only so many times a guy could watch his favorite movies or binge watch his favorite television shows before boredom set in. Moreover, Jack was not familiar with being inactive and the last few weeks had driven him crazy.

Luckily for him, the doctors in the operating room had repaired his torn artery, stitched up the bullet wound, and given him a transfusion for the blood loss he'd sustained. But they hadn't repaired his psyche with regards to his stupid mistake. Jack had entered the warehouse all gung-ho and alone, not waiting for Mitch Martin, his partner, to arrive.

Stupid, rookie mistake. One that had nearly got him killed. He had known better. If Mitch had missed his texted coordinates

and hadn't arrived when he did, Jack wouldn't be standing in the station now, enjoying the scent of bad coffee.

The only reason they'd caught the suspect had been due to a mere fluke. Jack had returned fire before he fell and that one shot had hit the perp in the leg and taken him down.

The medical leave had given him time, far too damn much time to observe the lack in his life. That first week at home alone by himself in his one-bedroom apartment? Utterly eye opening. Before his injury, living alone had been something he'd never really contemplated or considered as a deficiency. He enjoyed his space, enjoyed having a place to escape to at the end of a long shift after he'd been on the job for eighteen hours because he'd been on the scene of an accident with victims that were DOA; dead on arrival. Home had been the place where he showered, got some shut eye, and watched the sports networks when he had a chance.

Except, during his first week home following his life-saving surgery, the simple act of walking into the kitchen to grab something to eat had been exhausting. And, for someone who never liked to depend on anyone, in his hazy pain killer state, he'd yearned for company and, hell, to be taken care of for a change of pace. As someone who eschewed emotional entanglements of any kind, that had been a jarring wake up call.

Although, he had to admit the club members had stepped up. Mason came weekly, bearing trays of food that his chef wife, Emily, had whipped up for Jack. Even though she had a newborn, she'd taken the time to cook for him, for which he would be forever grateful otherwise he might have starved during those first few weeks. Tibby, her sous chef, had done the same. She and her daughter, Arianna, had stopped by briefly a few times, their arms loaded with baked goods. Jack needed to do something for them to show his gratitude.

But he'd never been so physically weak in his life, or ever noticed so keenly how alone and solitary an existence he had

until he'd executed a wobbling walk, his leg muscles straining with every footstep, on a simple trip to the damn bathroom. Even his foraging trips from the couch to the kitchen for food had been exhausting.

He trod down the scuffed buff and gray linoleum floor that he didn't think had been updated since the eighties, his black, military style boots squeaking on the tile. He might be a detective now, but he preferred footwear that made it easier to chase a suspect, like the kind he'd worn while he was a traffic cop. Plus they blended fine with his jeans and blue dress shirt.

The inside of the Jackson Hole Police Station was rather nondescript. Ivory walls with wood paneling along the base. Inside the main bull pen were black metal and mahogany colored wood desks, partnered up, facing one another in pairs. Gray metal filing cabinets lined one wall. There was a secondary bull pen with desks for the traffic officers. The arched windows lining the south wall allowed natural light to infiltrate the station. Often, since he'd made detective, those windows were his only chance of garnering any sunlight. The golden light of the early morning sunshine slanted across the tiles.

Weekly briefing meetings were held in the main conference room, where Chief Sheffield was apprised of statuses of ongoing investigations and assigned new cases. And, in some instances, chewed his staff out over a fuck up that had allowed a suspect to walk free.

The chief's dark walnut, wooden office door was closed, which was normal. The normality of it made Jack feel at home. On the opposite side of the room stood another heavy wooden door, reinforced with steel plating, which opened to a hall that led to the holding cells and interrogation rooms. The second floor contained offices for the prosecuting attorney, county judge, court clerks and administration.

"You're back!" Officer Sarah Jeffries commented with a generous smile as she walked by. Jeffries was nearly as tall as Jack,

her mocha skin smooth, defying her age, her black hair in a pixie cut that grazed her jawline. The woman was tough as nails, the mother of three, and a damn fine cop. Reed thin, but Jack knew from experience that her slender form was packed with muscle. He might have a good sixty pounds on her, but she was wily and quick-footed in the boxing ring. She'd nearly knocked him out the last time they had sparred.

"I am. How are the boys?" He wasn't going to mention that there was a sheen of sweat coating his back, or that he prayed he'd make it through a full day without needing a nap. Wouldn't do to have a detective sleeping on the job.

"Giving me more gray hair on a daily basis."

"Aren't teenage boys supposed to do that to their parents?"

She chortled and slapped her thigh. "Ain't that the truth. Glad to see you up and around."

"Thanks, Sarah. You tell those boys, if they stray out of line, I'll stop by and help them clean up their act."

Sarah pursed her lips and nodded. "Oooh, I never thought of that. But I will use it the next time they sass me."

"Stone? A word."

Jack turned toward the gruff voice of their Chief of Police, Rick Sheffield. He stood straight as a drill sergeant in the door-frame between his office and the bull pen. His hair, what remained of it, had long ago gone stark white. In Jack's thirteen years with the Jackson Hole Police Department, the chief's hair had never been any other color. Granted, there were now more lines and crevices in his weathered face. His ice blue eyes had witnessed more than their fair share of tragedy and corruption.

"Yes, sir." Jack grimaced internally as he marched toward the door. The chief left it open for him as he waltzed back into his office. Dammit, he would probably be put on desk duty. Jack hated frigging desk duty. Besides being boring to the point where he dreamed about a shootout, it made the days crawl by. He needed action to keep himself from nodding off. Having said

that, too much action would make him relapse on his recovery and put him on more leave.

He would take the desk duty, bitching included, over more leave time. He shivered at the thought.

Jack entered the chief's office and was brought up short. The chief wasn't alone. Unease settled in the pit of Jack's stomach.

"Close the door behind you and have a seat, Detective." The chief indicated the chair covered in navy blue fabric nearest the door, the only empty chair in his office. The back wall was lined with wooden shelves in the same walnut wood as his office door. In addition to his desk and the chairs, along the far right wall, the room held an umber brown couch framed by two end tables. The thing looked like it had been stylish at one time. Like, back in the eighties.

Jack followed orders and shut the door behind him. He studied the man who occupied the other chair, dressed in a slick, nondescript black suit. His appearance screamed law enforcement. But he wasn't internal affairs. After Jack's injury, internal affairs had interviewed him—a couple of times. Granted, they may have hired someone new who wanted to take a chunk out of his ass over his mistake. Well, the man could get in line.

But if he ruled out internal affairs, his other guess would be Federal Agent. The man wore his black suit with the uptight aura of a Fed. Jack could practically smell it on the guy. He hated that his back shot up like a tom cat protecting his territory at the thought of an agent in his police department. It did not matter that he had coordinated investigations with the Feds over the last few years, their superior attitude tended to rub him the wrong way. Likely because of their ability to claim jurisdiction and invade an investigation his department had operated on for months. He tended to be bitter when it came to jurisdictional bullshit.

"From what your doctor mentioned in the letter he submitted to the department, he recommended you for light duty for the



next four to six weeks. Tell me, how do you feel? And no bullshit. If you aren't physically or mentally ready to come back, it's understandable and I won't hold it against you. If you need more leave time, say the word and I will put the paperwork through."

Jack diverted his attention from the man in black back to Sheffield. He appreciated the way the chief cut through the bull and didn't mince words. Sheffield had sat with him on that first night after his surgery after all of his friends had left so he wouldn't be alone in the hospital. Not that he remembered much from his morphine-induced state, except that each time he was woken by a nurse, Sheffield had been there. The chief considered his officers his responsibility and wanted to make sure Jack made it through the worst of it before he left him alone. "I can do the job, Chief, if that's what you're worried about. Yes, the arm is still being troublesome at times, but it won't hinder me or any investigations."

He didn't mention that the injured arm was his shooting arm. The chief knew it. His doctor knew it. And so did Jack. It was taking time in physical therapy to rebuild the injured muscle. The damn bicep still trembled like he had performed a thousand pushups after a thirty-minute session at the firing range. Nor did he mention that he'd missed the bull's eye in training practice. Hell, he'd missed the paper target altogether a few times, let alone the shadowed outline of imaginary suspects on the target. He would get better, and back into fighting shape. It was just taking one hell of a lot longer than he liked.

Patience was not one of his virtues. Not that he had many of those, either.

The chief studied him a moment as Jack lowered himself onto the padded navy chair. Jack kept his face as straight and unreadable as possible, hoping like hell he masked the pain that battered his system. It was more of an annoyance now than a hindrance.

Yeah, his arm hurt like a son of a bitch at times. Lately,

between the doctor mandated physical therapy and his own need to return to his post, he'd been pushing his body and abused muscles to the point of exhaustion. That was the thing no one told you about recovering from an injury or surgery. It could be damn painful business.

The first time he'd run after his injury, he had tossed the entire contents of his stomach afterwards.

The chief steepled his fingers as he stared. Jack liked the man. He had a weight of responsibility that would cripple most people and he made carrying it look easy. The chief finally responded. "Be that as it may, I would rather err on the side of caution before tossing you back to the wolves. Which brings me to the gentleman beside you. Detective, I would like you to meet Special Agent David Carson. He has requested assistance on a case he is working in the area and I think it would be perfect for you."

Jack nodded. *See? A fucking Fed.* "Good to meet you, agent. What's this case you want the JHPD's help with?"

Special Agent David Carson looked to be in his forties, given the gray dotting his black hair, trimmed in a short military style cut. Carson shifted his tall, lean form in his seat so that he faced Jack. "Let me start by saying, I'm glad you survived the injuries. Chief Sheffield informed me about the particulars of the case. It can be tough to get hurt on the job and have to go back. I'm a handler overseeing an individual who is in the US Marshalls' witness protection program. It is the Bureau's belief that her life is in danger. Again, unfortunately. Your job will be to tail her, keep an eye on her at home and at work."

"You mean you want me to babysit?" Jack's voice dripped with derision. The case was on par with desk duty.

Carson's face hardened, which turned his hawk like features uber sharp. His blue gaze contained a cold fury. "Look. She helped the Bureau bring down the Giancarlo organization ten years ago. This town is the third place she has started over in the

last decade. We believe Dominic Travino, the man who took over the mob connections from Giancarlo, is after her. Even after going underground and shifting his operation into online scams, he's never stopped hunting her."

*Well, fuck me.*

The Giancarlo mob case? Jack remembered seeing all the reports on the news about the case. It made whoever the witness was infinitely more interesting, and the stakes in tailing her that much higher. He tried recalling all the particulars of that case but drew a blank. However, the name Travino rang a bell. The man had a particular skill set for vengeance, and meting out that vengeance in bloody, brutal ways. He would execute someone only after he'd beaten them until their face was unrecognizable and dental records the only thing that could identify the victim. "And you think Travino is in Jackson Hole trying to locate the witness? Why not move her?"

"Yes, we do. Recently, he was sighted on street cameras in Laramie. That's far too close for comfort. The Bureau does not want to move the witness again, if at all possible. Don't get me wrong, we will if we need to, considering what our witness did to help us break this case wide open. The Bureau and I would like her to be able to live her life without constantly having to look over her shoulder. Our objective at this time is to force Dominic Travino into the open so we can apprehend him. We don't know how many of his hired thugs he has with him. But knowing Travino, I'd say he has at least half a dozen men."

Jack studied the agent and leaned back in his chair. "You plan to use this person as bait to catch him. Is it the Bureau's policy to put someone under witness protection in clear and present danger?"

Agent Carson nodded in the affirmative. "More or less, that's the plan. She already is in danger. Her life has been on the line since the moment she agreed to help us out and became an informant. I hate even contemplating putting her life in the line of fire

once more, considering how much we owe her. But until we catch him, she will be running for the rest of her life.”

“What’s the catch?” There was a hell of a lot more involved here. And this case was proving far more interesting than a simple tailing job.

The agent’s brow quirked. Probably didn’t expect that Jack would pick up on that. But he’d been in law enforcement for too long to realize that nothing was as simple as it seemed. Even the best laid plans encountered hiccups. “She can’t know you’re tailing her. I’ve worked with her over the last decade. If she knows that Dominic has caught her trail again, she’ll run, and it will get her killed.”

“What does it matter to you whether she lives or dies? And why aren’t the US Marshalls working on this? I thought they were in charge of WITSEC, the Witness Security Program.” There was a part of the equation Jack was missing. The agent was far too invested in this witness. Why would a Federal Agent be involved and not the US Marshalls? Not that he shouldn’t care about an individual who helped them crack a huge case, Jack did with each of his victims, but he also kept an emotional barrier up between them. Emotions clouded one’s perception. The fact that they kept creeping into his cases lately had almost gotten him killed.

“When this case first began, to collect the evidence needed to convict Raoul Giancarlo, my partner Nicolas went undercover. He spent an inordinate amount of time with the witness. He began to worry that his cover was blown and made me swear that if anything ever happened to him, I would ensure she was protected at all costs. And there’s not a day that has passed since he lost his life on that case when I haven’t watched over her. It’s the least I could do. When she was placed into the Witness Security Program, I requested the US Marshalls keep me involved in her protection.”

Jack respected the hell out of that. It was never easy to lose a

partner. His first partner had died of a heart attack a few years back. Even under normal circumstances, it had been difficult. Losing a partner in the line of duty was not something a person would recover from well—if ever. “And who is the woman your partner fell in love with undercover?”

“Raoul Giancarlo’s daughter, Victoria.”

“We have Victoria Giancarlo living in Jackson Hole? Get the fuck out! But her image was splashed all over the place by the media. Surely, I would have recognized her if I crossed paths with her.” Jack tried to recall images of Victoria Giancarlo. They had been plastered across the headlines for months following the trial. All he truly remembered were her haunted, sad eyes the color of burnt caramel.

“Doubt it. She underwent some plastic surgery after Travino found her the first time in Santa Fe. He beat her pretty badly. Broke her nose and jawbone before my team and I reached her. The surgery altered her features enough that she can play it off as a case of mistaken identity. And the fucker still managed to get away.”

“And what is her alias now?” Jack asked, more intrigued by the case than he wanted to admit.

“Before I go any further, I need assurances that you are one hundred percent in on this. That I can trust the information shared in this office goes no further—not your partner, not the other officers in the department, not your girlfriend. It is essential that her identity remain hidden. There cannot be a casual word uttered on Main Street and a journalist catch a whiff of it. She would be hounded, and the media would be able to get a clear image of what she looks like now while Travino is still on the lam. My office, in coordination with the Marshalls, is working to catch this fucker.”

Jack blew out a breath. He glanced at the chief. The chief gave him a blasé stare, leaving the decision up to him. It wasn’t his normal protocol. The chief was doing it to give him a chance

to ease back into work, to take a job that would likely be more boredom than anything else. If Jack said no, the chief would put him on desk duty for the foreseeable future. That was worse than having to babysit. They had tag-teamed him and backed him into a corner. With a nod of agreement, he said, “You have it.”

“Her name is Rayna Thompson.”

Shock riddled Jack. And he wasn’t shocked often. Rayna was Victoria Giancarlo? Rayna, who steered away from him every time he got near her? Rayna, with her sweet little body and heart-shaped ass, about whom he’d wondered more than once what she looked like naked.

Carson continued, “I’ll give you all her particulars; where she works, lives. There’s a townhome next to hers that is available, where we plan to install you over the next week, get camera surveillance installed and so on, as soon as we get a hold of the owner. The Bureau will pay for the housing and anything you might need in that vein. We’ll want to install surveillance at her home and places of employment, if possible. I’ll give you access to my files on Travino. Unlike her father, who tended to do his dirty work in the shadows, Travino has no problem airing the dirty laundry. Two years ago, we discovered a film of one of his executions on social media video sites.”

“I know the owner of the townhome personally. He’s a friend of mine. Served in the army for eight years and understands classified ops. If part of the plan revolves around installing me next door to the witness,” Jack struggled to keep the shock from his features regarding Rayna, “I believe we should bring him in on this operation, or at least advise him. He’s worked with the department before and is trustworthy not to go blathering to anyone. He’s also her boss at one of her places of employment.”

“You’ve met her?” Agent Carson asked, his eyes narrowing slightly as he studied Jack.

Not as much as Jack would have liked, he thought—in the physical sense, anyhow. He’d watched her at the club on more

than one occasion. First, because she was a beautiful woman wearing next to nothing in club uniform: a skin tight, black halter top with the club logo across her ample chest, a pair of Daisy Duke style jean shorts, and a black collar and cuffs. Wearing that, paired with her hickory colored hair that fell in soft waves around her shoulders, she was a knockout. Of course Jack had looked. Not doing so would be like asking the sun not to shine. Second, she rubbed him the wrong way with her whole hands-off vibe and piss off attitude. She didn't scene with anyone—that he knew about, anyway. Since she began working at the club eight months ago or so, she hadn't expressed interest in anyone. It made her intriguing and different from the majority of the women who attended their club. But at least now he understood her behavior a bit more.

“We have friends in common,” Jack explained. He wouldn't call the two of them friends, more like strained acquaintances. In this instance, it was a moot point. He would tail her, guard her back until they caught the perp.

Carson cocked his head to the side. “That will work in our favor, I think. I'd want to run a background check on the landlord first. I ran a check on the business, but this is another reason why I wanted to work with local law enforcement. You guys understand the area and the people here better than I do. But I agree, if we can work with the landlord, all the better.”

“We have Spencer Collins' background check info on file from the last case he worked with us.”

Agent Carson gave Jack a patronizing smile. “Our background checks are a little more thorough. Get me his info and I will run him through our system. Then we can get you moved in this week.”

“Understood.” The Feds got all the cool toys. And yeah, Jack was green with envy and would love to have access to their system on some of his cases.

Jack pulled out his phone. Luckily, he still had Spencer's

personal info saved from the last case he had worked with the department on, when Garrett had been blackmailed by an ex-girlfriend. Jack had never deleted it, on some level he must have known he would need the information again.

The hum of eager anticipation to sink himself into this case helped him ignore the twinges of pain in his bicep. He didn't like that Carson wanted to keep Rayna oblivious that a monster was hunting her. If it were him, he would want to be informed of the threat, and would be royally pissed that he wasn't apprised of it. However, the decision ultimately rested with Carson, the Bureau, and the Marshalls as to the best course of action.

Her ignorance would make the case more challenging. The ploy of installing him next door meant he would be in her sphere a lot. And if his body revved to life in a way it hadn't in months at the thought of being near her, he disregarded it. Rayna was a case, and only that. There was an unwritten rule about not getting involved as it tended to cloud one's judgement. Although, it had floored him that he'd missed the fact that Rayna was Victoria Giancarlo, daughter of the famed New Jersey mob boss, Raoul Giancarlo.

In his defense, more often than not, his gaze had been trained more on her ample cleavage spilling over the top of her uniform, or her heart-shaped ass as she strode away, than on her face.

The fact that she made his dick twitch whenever she neared was a trifling matter. Jack had learned long ago not to let that part of his anatomy do his thinking for him.