

Chapter 4

John still wasn't sure when Trip had become more like a friend than a boss, but there wasn't any point denying it. Trip was known in the office as straight laced and by the book, but since Sam's death, something changed in Trip. John was told he was going to learn what changed this weekend. Whatever it was, it must have been a doozy. Right before they had all left to come to the Moores' to go over Sam's case file, a psychologist assigned to evaluate John had been murdered. Trip had gone to great lengths to keep it quiet. Trip believed the death was related to Sam's and to Thelma's deaths. Thelma had been Trip's kinda-sorta-not-really girlfriend. She had died just hours after getting information for Trip. The sad thing was that Trip never received whatever information Thelma had apparently died over.

John shook his head regretfully and looked over at his true best friend, Chet. Chet was so incredibly smart and had computer skills that John couldn't even comprehend. John had thought many times Chet could be the world's greatest hacker, programmer, or both. John smiled and chewed on another ice cube. He could barely turn on a computer or use his smart phone, while Chet could probably program his smart phone to drive a car. John didn't really know if that was true or not, but it wouldn't surprise him. A voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Why don't you take a picture?" Jessica asked. "It will last longer and be a bit less creepy."

Jessica had come up the steps without John noticing her. John turned toward Jessica, smiled, slipped his arm around her back, pulled her close, and kissed her. She immediately jumped back with a look of shock on her face. John laughed. He had forgotten about the ice cube he had been chewing on.

"Your lips are freezing," Jessica said. She took the cup away from John, tipped it up, and took one of the ice cubes in her mouth.

"What's wrong?" John asked. "A little too hot for you down there?"

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" she replied. "Your . . . what do you call them, ex-in-laws, widower-in-laws?"

"The Moores?" John offered. Jessica smiled and punched John lightly on the arm. John mouthed, "Ow," and rubbed his arm.

"You big baby," Jessica said, smiling at him. John had no idea how to classify his relationship with Jessica. He knew they were dating, and that they were boyfriend and girlfriend, but after that . . . well it was all so complicated . . . or maybe it wasn't.

John had been married to Sam for a few years before he ever met Jessica. Even then, he knew Jessica was something special. John would never cheat on Sam, and everyone knew that; even the Mafia. One of the biggest problems with

the Mafia sting was John's refusal to go along with some of the guys and their escapades with women.

Jessica and John had always had what could best be described as a combative relationship. Chet had once joked they should both be locked in a room together, and both Jessica and John had turned a deep shade of red. What made things even weirder was Jessica had become best friends with Sam. While Jessica would never have done anything to break up Sam and John's marriage, once Jessica got to be friends with Sam, Jessica would have rather died than hurt Sam.

When Sam died, Trip sent his best interrogator, Jessica "The Hammer" Hammerstein into the box with John. It did not go well. John quit the FBI, told Jessica he hated her, and cut off all communication to everyone, except an occasional chat with Chet.

When Jessica and Chet brought John back into the FBI, Jessica and John began to admit their feelings for each other. John knew he was crazy about Jessica; in fact, he had to admit he loved her. He wasn't about to tell Jessica that. He didn't want to seem any weirder a boyfriend than he already was. John had only ever had one girlfriend his entire life, Sam. He knew he had been acting like a fool the past couple of weeks around her, and he was determined that was going to end.

"Hey," Jessica said softly. "Did you get lost somewhere? You seem to be staring out into outer space."

"Sorry," John replied. "Just thinking." Jessica smiled and took both of his hands in hers.

Chapter 5

“Nervous?” Jessica asked with an impish smile on her face.

“Nah,” John said, pulling his hand out of hers and waving it like he didn’t have a care. “I mean, all I have to do is tell my former in-laws the events that lead to their daughter’s death while I was slightly inebriated,”

“Slightly?” Jessica interjected, interrupting John.

“Drunk as a lord?” John asked. Jessica thought for a second and nodded. John continued. “And, I get to do it in front of my boss, my team, and, more importantly, my friends. Not to mention I get to tell everyone that I, John Fowler FBI superagent, have no clue as to the cause of my wife’s death.”

Jessica looked John in the eye, smirking.

“So it’s like any other Tuesday?” she asked, her eyes twinkling.

John thought for a second and nodded. “Yeah, and see, that’s the problem. It’s Friday.” Jessica leaned in close and softly kissed John. John started to kiss Jessica harder when he felt her hand on his chest pushing him away.

“Easy, cowboy,” she said, looking into his eyes. “We do have an audience downstairs.”

John shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t care. I--” Jessica quickly put her finger on his lips. She was insistent that John not tell her he loved her until he was absolutely sure. John gently removed her finger. “Care,” he said, and Jessica smiled. “For you deeply. You’re the most important thing in my life right now, and I want everyone to know it.” Jessica was smiling broadly. “In fact, I think I should shout it off from the top of this staircase.” Jessica got a concerned look on her face.

“John,” she said quickly. “I don’t think that’s necessary.”

“Oh, you’re wrong, Jessica,” John replied. “They need to know.”

“John,” Jessica said, starting to look upset. “This really isn’t necessary.”

“Especially since the sound carries all the way down here,” Jeremiah called out.